

THE 17th DAY OF THE MONTH OF DECEMBER
FOREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST
COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLY PROPHET DANIEL
& OF THE THREE HOLY YOUTHS, ANANIAS, AZARIAS & MISAEAL
AT VESPERS

On “Lord, I have cried ...,” 6 Stichera, 3 of the holy prophet, in Tone IV:

Spec. Mel.: “As one valiant among the martyrs ...”:

The wondrous Daniel, * having made his heart * a pure abode of the Spirit, * and having been illumined by Him * doth manifestly proclaim * the revelation of things to come; * and, adorned with the splendor of prophecy, * he clearly interpreteth the hidden dreams ** of most iniquitous and mighty kings.

Having rendered thy body strong beforehand * with intense fasting, * thou didst close the mouths of the lions; * for, standing in their midst, * O wondrous prophet, * and lifting thine eyes unto our good God, * thou didst remain unharmed * through the ineffable power * of the Redeemer of our souls ** Who most gloriously doth accomplish all things.

O wondrous prophet, * thou didst behold the Unapproachable One, * the just Judge, * sitting on a throne, * surrounded by angels. * And, marveling at the awesome and terrible sight, * thou didst describe it for all who came after thee, * telling all of the second coming ** of our incarnate God.

And 3 Stichera of the holy youths, in Tone IV:

Spec. Mel.: “Thou hast given a sign ...”:

Observing the God-given laws, * O all-blessed ones, * ye did not defile yourselves with abominable foods, * but for the Master * Who doth glorify His favored ones, * ye kept the beauty of your souls incorrupt, * preserving the flower of your flesh * untainted and unwithered ** and your splendor comely.

Enkindled by the divine flame, * the youths prevailed over the fire; * for the honored ones * were seen to be bedewed therein, * forming a most splendid choir, * chanting in melodious hymnody; * wherefore Daniel rejoiced, * having beheld the immutable kingdom of Christ, ** in that he is an all-excellent prophet.

Marveling at the wisdom of thy words * and the understanding of the youths, * O right wondrous Daniel, * the tyrants appointed you * to rule and govern the land of Chaldea, * O honored ones; * for the adversary knew to marvel most manifestly * at your virtue and the splendor of life; ** for ye restrained the passions from gaining power over you.

Glory ..., the composition of Anatolius, in Tone II:

Today, the Prophet Daniel hath spiritually assembled us, O ye faithful, and laid an abundant banquet of the virtues for the rich and the poor, for paupers, wanderers, and household servants, filling a noetic cup with the water of piety, gladdening the hearts of the faithful and imparting the grace of the Holy Spirit, for he is a most splendid luminary who, shining forth in the world, cast down all the worship of the Assyrians and shut the mouths of the untamed beasts. And with him let the three youths be praised who, though not gold by nature, were shown to be tried like gold; for the fire of the furnace melded them together, yet preserved them whole, and naphtha, sulphur and tinder crowned them. May the Lord Who hath led us to the turning of the year grant that we also may attain unto the regal and honorable day of the nativity of Christ, Who through their supplications bestoweth cleansing of sins and great mercy upon us.

Both now ..., of the forefeast, the composition of Andrew, in Tone II:

Come ye all, and with faith let us celebrate the forefeast of the nativity of Christ, noetically offering up hymns of glorification like the star of the magi, and with the shepherds let us cry aloud: The deliverance of the nations hath come forth from the Virgin's womb, summoning the faithful.

On the Aposticha, Stichera from the Oktoechos;

Glory ..., Both now ..., in Tone VI:

Daniel, a man of divine desires, perceiving Thee, O Lord, as the Stone not cut by human hands, foretold that Thou wouldst be born seedlessly as a babe, the Word incarnate from the Virgin, God immutable, and the Savior of our souls.

Troparion of the righteous ones, in Tone II:

Great are the accomplishments of faith! * In the fountain of flame, as in refreshing water, * the three holy children rejoiced; * and the Prophet Daniel was shown to be a shepherd of lions, as of sheep. ** By their prayers, O Christ God, save Thou our souls.

Glory ..., Both now ..., Theotokion or Stavrotheotokion:

AT MATINS

One canon from the Oktoechos, and two of the righteous ones:

ODE I

Canon of the holy prophet, the acrostic whereof is: “With hymns I will crown the wise Daniel”, the composition of Theophanes, in Tone VIII:

Irmos: Let us, O ye people, send up a hymn * unto our wondrous God * Who hath freed Israel from bondage, * chanting a hymn of victory * and crying aloud: * We sing unto Thee, O only Master.

O Savior and Benefactor, Cause of every good thing, Who lovest mankind: with thy radiant effulgence illumine my mind, that I may praise the glorious memory of Thy prophet.

Thou didst shine forth in chastity like the dawn and didst save the chaste Susanna who was in danger; for God, Who knoweth all secrets, raised thee up to condemn the cruel elders.

The descendents of Abraham, strengthened by the fear of God, valiantly spurned the most iniquitous food; and, nurtured by desire for piety, have been taken up into the greatest glory.

Theotokion: **O** most sacred Daniel, thou didst perceive the only Ever-virgin, the most pure Maiden, as the noetic mountain from whence was cut the Chief Cornerstone Who hath crushed all delusion.

Canon of the three holy youths, the acrostic whereof is: “I hymn the three youths and the great Daniel”, the composition of Theophanes, in Tone VIII:

Irmos: Having passed through the water as upon dry land, * and having escaped the malice of the Egyptians, * the Israelites cried aloud: * Unto our God and Redeemer let us sing.

Let us glorify the beginningless Word Who was divinely begotten of the Father before time began, and Whose likeness was seen by the youths in the furnace.

Firmly reviling the words of the impious tyrant, the noble youths did not wish to defile themselves with vile foods like the all-iniquitous Chaldeans.

Ye fed yourselves spiritually with the word of God and bodily with foods ye grew yourselves, and showed yourselves to the king as more comely of appearance than those who ate gross foods.

Theotokion: **O** Maiden who sprang forth from David and hast given birth to the Redeemer, thou healest the venom which the serpent poured bitterly into the ears of Eve.

ODE III

Canon of the holy prophet

Irmos: **O** Lord, thou art the confirmation of those who flee to Thee, * Thou art the Light of those in darkness, * and my spirit doth hymn Thee.

Receiving understanding and wisdom from God, thou didst interpret obscure dreams for the kings.

Scattering the food-offerings, O glorious one, thou didst slay the material serpent; for thou didst first vanquish the immaterial demons.

Theotokion: Illumined with radiance, O glorious one, thou didst behold the mountain manifestly blessed by God, the adornment of mankind.

Canon of the holy youths

Irmos: **O Lord, thou art the confirmation of those who flee to Thee, * Thou art the Light of those in darkness, * and my spirit doth hymn Thee.**

The youths of David, having acquired an understanding taught by God, O Master, kept the laws of their fathers with godly wisdom.

Fire did not consume the most pure bodies of the pious ones, for they had already been consumed by the fasting which nourisheth the soul.

Wondrously bedewed in the midst of the furnace, the three youths sing universal and most laudable praise.

Theotokion: **T**hat thou mightest show forth Thy birthgiving from the body of the Virgin, O Master, Thou didst save the bodies of the virginal youths in the furnace.

Kontakion of the holy prophet, in Tone III:

Spec. Mel.: “Today the Virgin ...”:

Enlightened by the Spirit, * thy pure heart became the receptacle of the most splendid prophecy: * for beholding far-off things as though they were present, * and, cast into the pit, thou didst tame the lions. ** Wherefore, we honor thee, O blessed and glorious Prophet Daniel.

Ikos: **J**esus Christ, our true God, Whose divine advent thou didst manifestly proclaim, do thou entreat without ceasing for those who with gladness celebrate this thy divine memorial and honor thee with love, that we be saved from all temptations, sins and evil circumstances, for thou hast boldness before Him, O divinely wise one; and grant that I may open my lips to hymn thine excellent discourse.

Sessional Hymn of the holy youths, in Tone VIII:

Spec. Mel.: “Of the Wisdom ...”:

In the flame the youths prophetically inscribed the image of the Trinity with the pen of faith in immaterial ink; and they mystically beheld the Word's extreme descent to the earth proclaiming it to all. Wherefore, having received the dew of the Spirit from heaven, they pour forth gifts upon the faithful who cry out to Thee together: O Christ God, as Thou art compassionate grant remission of transgressions unto those who with love celebrate their holy memory!

Glory ..., Sessional Hymn of the holy prophet, in the same melody:

Enriched by the grace of prophecy, thou didst describe the birth giving of the Virgin in shadowy images, but didst clearly interpret the dreams of the king. And, cast into the pit as a martyr, thou didst most gloriously teach the lions to fast, O blessed one. Wherefore, thou hast destroyed the worship of the ungodly, O right wondrous Daniel. Entreat Christ God, that He grant remission of sins unto those who with love celebrate thy holy memory.

Both now ..., Theotokion, in Tone VIII::

Rejoice, O fiery throne of God! Rejoice, O Maiden, thou royal seat and bower all-adorned with divers colors, thou bridal-chamber hung with gold and purple, cloak of scarlet hue, decorated temple, sword of lightning, lamp of great radiance! Rejoice, O Theotokos, thou twelve-walled city, gate of beaten gold, tabernacle adorned by God! Rejoice, O glorious Bride who hast let the Sun fall like rain! Rejoice, thou only goodly wonder of my soul!

Stavrotheotokion: **U**pon beholding the Lamb, Shepherd and Redeemer * upon the Cross, * the ewe-lamb exclaimed weeping, bitterly lamenting, and crying aloud: * “The world rejoiceth, having received deliverance through Thee, * but my womb doth burn, beholding Thy crucifixion, * which Thou hast endured in Thy merciful loving-kindness. * O long-suffering Lord, * Thou abyss and inexhaustible well-spring of mercy, * take pity, and grant forgiveness of sins ** unto those who hymn Thy divine sufferings with faith!”

ODE IV

Canon of the holy prophet

Irmos: **F**rom the overshadowed mountain, * from the only Theotokos, * the Prophet in divine vision * foresaw Thy coming in the flesh, O Word, * and with fear he glorified Thy power.

Preserving the law in piety, O prophet, thou didst truly come to know the Bestower of wisdom Who teacheth men profound mysteries, illumining them in darkness.

Living a sacred life, O thou who wast revealed by God, thou wast called a man of divine desires; for, having manfully trampled the passions underfoot, thou hast been translated to the life which ageeth not.

The grace of the Comforter which dwelt within thee, O Daniel, showed thee to be the radiant victor over tyrants and kings, and the abode of wisdom.

Theotokion: **T**he Prophet Daniel beheld Thee, O Word, as the Stone cut, not by human hands, from the mountain of the Virgin Theotokos; and he cried out and hymned Thy divinity.

Canon of the holy youths

Irmos: **O** Lord, I have heard the mystery of Thy dispensation; * I have considered Thy works, * and I have glorified Thy Divinity.

By divine grace the most wise Daniel, divinely illumined in mind, interpreted the dreams of the kings.

The suffering of the youths in the furnace shone with miracles; for they prevailed upon the tyrant to acknowledge Thee, O Almighty One.

The melodies of the instruments and the harmonious playing of music did not lead the valiant ones astray, and they did not worship the golden image.

Theotokion: **W**ith hymns the children in Babylon honored thy supremely divine Son, Whom they recognized in the furnace, O all-hymned one.

ODE V

Canon of the holy prophet

Irmos: **T**hou hast enlightened * with the knowledge of God * the ends of the universe * that lay in the night of ignorance, * do Thou also, O Lord, illumine me * with the dawning of Thy love for mankind.

Illumining thy struggles of suffering with the proclamation of prophecy, thou art resplendent in both, full of divine inspiration.

By splendors of wisdom which pass understanding thou hast been shown to be most wise, O blessed and divinely eloquent Daniel who art most great, enlightening all things.

Theotokion: **O** pure one, the glorious Prophet Daniel with images described the mystery of the ineffable incarnation of the Most High Who came forth from thee.

Canon of the holy youths

Irmos: **O** Light never-waning, * why hast Thou turned Thy face from me * and why hath the alien darkness surrounded me, * wretched though I be? * But do Thou guide my steps I implore Thee * and turn me back towards the light of Thy commandments.

Having studied the law, O Savior, Thy favored ones, the great Daniel and the three godly-minded youths, did not deny Thee; but, receiving strength from Thee, our Benefactor, they manfully vanquished the tyrant.

Daniel studied Thy mysteries noetically, O Lover of mankind; for in purity of mind he beheld Thee as the Son of man coming upon a cloud, as the Judge and King of all the nations.

Shining like a golden beam, O children, your company shone with splendor greater than that of a sapphire; and set afire with zeal for piety, ye entered the furnace joyfully and formed yourselves into a universal chorus.

Theotokion: **O** Virgin, the divine Daniel clearly prefigured thee as a mountain; and the three youths, beholding the flame bearing dew, with hymns praise thy divine birth giving as that of the Savior, Creator and Lord.

ODE VI

Canon of the holy prophet

Irmos: **As** Thou didst deliver the prophet from the depths * of the abyss, **O** Christ God, * so deliver me also from my sins, * **O** Lover of mankind, * and guide my life, I pray Thee.

Beholding the angelic choirs in most radiant light, thou hast become their most excellent emulator, delighting in the splendors of the King of all.

Proclaiming the salvific coming of the Word, thou didst also foretell the destruction of the temple, the fulfillment of the law, and gifts of grace which pass all understanding.

Theotokion: **B**ehold! the Virgin whose image the glorious Daniel beheld, shall manifestly conceive Christ God within her womb, illumined by the Spirit.

Canon of the holy youths

Irmos: **The** abyss of my sins and the storm of my transgressions * disquieten me and thrust me down * into the depths of despondency; * but do Thou stretch forth Thy mighty arm, * unto me as Thou didst to Peter, * and save me, **O** my Guide.

Having gained control over natural passions through the power of the Word, ye became rulers of the land of the Chaldean peoples, **O** ye wise descendents of David; for virtue knoweth how to render honor to those who have acquired her.

Daniel, having arrayed himself of old in life-bearing mortality, and with food slew the evil serpent which the Chaldeans impiously considered to be a god; and he wisely slew the ungodly priests.

Theotokion: **O** Virgin Mother and Theotokos, by thy supplications entreat the merciful Judge, thy Son, that He deliver me from cruel punishment on the day of judgment; for in thee alone do I set my hope.

Kontakion of the holy youths, in Tone VI:

O thrice-blessed ones, who did not honor an image wrought by hands, * but were defended by the indescribable Essence, * ye were glorified in your ordeal by fire; * and standing in the midst of unbearable flame, ye called upon God, saying: * Speed Thou and make haste to our aid, **O** Compassionate One, ** in that Thou art merciful; for what Thou willest, Thou canst do!

Ikos: **S**tretch forth Thy hand whereby of old the warring Egyptians and the embattled Hebrews were tested. Forsake us not, that death, which thirsteth after us, not swallow us up; and spare our souls, as Thou once didst spare Thy three children in Babylon, who glorified Thee unceasingly and were cast for Thy sake into a furnace, from whence they cried out to Thee: Speed Thou and make haste to our aid, **O** Compassionate One, in that Thou art merciful; for what Thou willest, Thou canst do!

ODE VII

Canon of the holy prophet

Irmos: **T**he Hebrew children in the furnace * boldly trampled upon the flames, * changing the fire into dew, they cried aloud: * 'Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, throughout the ages'.

Protected by the law, O prophet, thou didst not allow thyself to be iniquitously defiled, and, divinely illumined with understanding, thou didst cry aloud: Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, throughout the ages!

Thy miracle filled all with awe; for, caught up, the Prophet Habbakuk appeared before thee, a prophet, bearing food to thee and crying aloud: Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, throughout the ages!

Imprisoned in a pit and offered as food to the lions, O blessed one, thou wast saved, God protecting thee, and didst cry aloud: O God of our fathers, Blessed art Thou!

Theotokion: **T**hou pourest forth in abundance a stream of healings, O Virgin Mother of God; for Daniel clearly perceived thee as the mountain from whence the Savior shone forth, the God of our fathers.

Canon of the holy youths

Irmos: **I**n Babylon, the pious youths did not worship the golden image, * but, bedewed in the midst of the fiery furnace, * they chanted a hymn, saying: * **O supremely exalted God of our fathers, blessed art Thou!**

God-loving voices sang to the Almighty out of the midst of the fire; for, forming a divine choir, Azarias chanted a hymn, saying: Blessed is the God of our fathers!

The harp of the youths theologized concerning the Almighty, the God of all Who manifestly appeared to them in the furnace as they chanted a hymn, saying: Blessed is the God of our fathers!

Having watched as the three youths were cast into the furnace, the king beheld a fourth appear, Whom He called the Son of God; and he cried out to all: Blessed is the God of our fathers!

Theotokion: **P**ossessed of a mind illumined with divine radiance, O Daniel blessed of God, thou didst manifestly foresee the birth giving of the Virgin prefigured in mystical images, and didst cry aloud: Blessed is the God of our fathers!

ODE VIII

Canon of the holy prophet

Irmos: **T**reading down the fiery flame in the furnace, * the divinely eloquent children sang: * 'Bless the Lord, ye works of the Lord'.

Through active vision thou wast shown to be clearly sacred, O prophet, and didst chant with the incorporeal ones: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

We all praise thee, O all-blessed one, and rejoicing on thine honored festival, we cry aloud: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Theotokion: O divinely eloquent one, perceiving the most wondrous Maiden in symbolic images, thou didst cry aloud: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Canon of the holy youths

Irmos: In his wrath the Chaldean Tyrant made the furnace blaze, * with heat fanned sevenfold for the servants of God; * but when he perceived that they had been saved by a greater power * he cried aloud to the Creator and Redeemer; * 'ye children bless, ye priests praise, * ye people, supremely exalt Him throughout all ages'.

Striving to preserve the nobility of Abraham, O venerable ones, ye acquired his own foundational faith and hope, his patience and endurance of temptations, crying aloud: Ye priests bless ye the Master! Ye people supremely exalt Him throughout all ages!

Shining forth like beacons and making the earth like heaven, rendered luminous by the enlightenment of piety, and having formed a universal choir, the youths chant to the Master Who saved them from perils: Ye children bless; ye priests hymn; ye people supremely exalt Him throughout all ages!

The descendents of Abraham, extinguishing the burning furnace and binding the jaws of the lions in their youth, rejoicing, hymn Thee now, the King and Benefactor of all: Ye children bless; ye priests hymn; ye people supremely exalt Him throughout all ages!

Theotokion: The most wise Daniel teacheth the mysteries, and the three divinely wise youths prefigure thy birthgiving, O most pure one, beholding in images Him Who ineffably issued forth from thy womb, Whom the children bless, the priests hymn and the people supremely exalt throughout all ages.

ODE IX

Canon of the holy prophet

Irmos: Saved by thee, O pure Virgin, * we confess thee to be truly the Theotokos, * and together with the choirs of the bodiless hosts * thee do we magnify.

Thou didst reap the harvest of thy pangs, ever dancing in the heavens with the prophets about the most exalted throne of the Almighty.

In the light of the threefold Sun thou dost now stand, crowned, before thine ultimate Desire, rejoicing with the incorporeal choirs.

Theotokion: Beautiful is the glory which thou dost now delight in! For thou, O honored prophet, hast been deemed worthy to proclaim unto all, in images, the all-hymned Maiden.

Canon of the holy youths

Irmos: Saved by thee, O pure Virgin, * we confess thee to be truly the Theotokos, * and together with the choirs of the bodiless hosts * thee do we magnify.

Ye have attained your desired end and stand before your ultimate Desire in the mansions of heaven, O ye spiritually rich youths.

Having produced the grain of incorruption with tears, rejoicing, ye have received the sheaves of your goodly labor.

Splendor hath now shone forth upon you as is meet, and gladness of heart hath blossomed forth; for grief hath fled away from whence ye have made your abode.

Theotokion: Thou hast departed from the fields of death, O Virgin, having given birth to the Lord, the Bestower of life, Who Bestoweth life upon those who magnify thee with faith.

Exapostilarion from the Oktoechos; and Glory ..., that of the holy prophet:

Let Daniel, the greatest among the prophets, be honored now, for he beheld Christ our God as the Stone cut, not by human hands, from the mountain of the pure Virgin. And with him let the three youths be praised whom the divine and ineffable image of the Virgin saved unharmed by the fire of the furnace, and whereby the world hath been saved.

Both now ..., Theotokion:

The most wise Daniel teacheth the mysteries through the divine Spirit, O all-pure one, and by faith the three children of Abraham prefigure thy seedless birthgiving; for the Word Who is uncircumscribable in His divinity, desiring to be circumscribed by the flesh through thee, O Theotokos, is born in Bethlehem for the salvation of mankind.

On the Aposticha, the Stichera from the Oktoechos, and:

Glory ..., Both now ..., the composition of Malaxas, in Tone VI:

When the noetic Sun of righteousness desired to shine forth from the Virgin's womb, the three youths, equal in number to the Trinity, shone forth upon us beforehand out of the fiery furnace, prefiguring in themselves the awesome mystery. And with them the most splendid Prophet Daniel illumined the ends of the earth with the light of prophecy, proclaiming Christ to be the Stone not cut by human hands, quarried from the Virgin, the mountain overshadowed, Who issueth forth for the salvation of our souls.

AT LITURGY

On the Beatitudes, 8 Troparia: 4 from ODE III of the canon of the holy prophet, and 4 from ODE VI of the canon of the holy youths.

Receiving understanding and wisdom from God, thou didst interpret obscure dreams for the kings. (Twice)

Scattering the food-offerings, O glorious one, thou didst slay the material serpent; for thou didst first vanquish the immaterial demons. (Twice)

Having gained control over natural passions through the power of the Word, ye became rulers of the land of the Chaldean peoples, O ye wise descendents of David; for virtue knoweth how to render honor to those who have acquired her. (Twice)

Daniel, having arrayed himself of old in life-bearing mortality, and with food slew the evil serpent which the Chaldeans impiously considered to be a god; and he wisely slew the ungodly priests.

Theotokion: **O** Virgin Mother and Theotokos, by thy supplications entreat the merciful Judge, thy Son, that He deliver me from cruel punishment on the day of judgment; for in thee alone do I set my hope.

Troparion of the righteous ones, in Tone II:

Great are the accomplishments of faith! * In the fountain of flame, as in refreshing water, * the three holy children rejoiced; * and the Prophet Daniel was shown to be a shepherd of lions, as of sheep. ** By their prayers, O Christ God, save Thou our souls.

Kontakion of the holy prophet, in Tone III:

Enlightened by the Spirit, * thy pure heart became the receptacle of the most splendid prophecy: * for beholding far-off things as though they were present, * and, cast into the pit, thou didst tame the lions. ** Wherefore, we honor thee, O blessed and glorious Prophet Daniel.

Kontakion of the holy youths, in Tone VI:

O thrice-blessed ones, who did not honor an image wrought by hands, * but were defended by the indescribable Essence, * ye were glorified in your ordeal by fire; * and standing in the midst of unbearable flame, ye called upon God, saying: * Speed Thou and make haste to our aid, O Compassionate One, ** in that Thou art merciful; for what Thou willest, Thou canst do!

Prokeimenon, in Tone IV: Wondrous is God in His saints, * the God of Israel

Verse: In congregations bless ye God, the Lord from the well-springs of Israel.

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS, §330 (HEB. 11: 33-40)

Brethren: All the saints who, through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds .and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Alleluia, in Tone IV: The righteous cried, and the Lord heard them, and He delivered them out of all their tribulations.

Verse: Many are the tribulations of the righteous, and the Lord shall deliver them out of them all.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE §62 (11:47-12: 1)

The Lord said to the Jews who came unto Him: “Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchers of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchers. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation. Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered. And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things: Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him. In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trod one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Communion Verse: Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous; praise is meet for the upright.