

SUNDAY ON OR AFTER THE 18th OF DECEMBER
THE SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST
COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLY FATHERS
AT LITTLE VESPERS

At "Lord, I have cried ...," Stichera to the Resurrection and the Theotokos, as usual.

AT GREAT VESPERS

After the Introductory Psalm, we chant "Blessed is the man ...,".

N.B. If this Sunday fall on either the 18th or 19th of December, at "Lord, I have cried ...," we chant three Stichera to the Resurrection, three by Anatolius, and four to the Fathers. But if it fall between the 20th and 23rd of December, we chant three Stichera to the Resurrection, one Sticheron by Anatolius, three Stichera for the forefeast, and three to the Fathers.

The Stichera for the forefeast, in Tone VI, the composition of Anatolius:

Spec. Mel.: "Having set all aside ...":

The never-setting Sun doth come to shine forth from the Virgin's womb and enlighten all the world. Let us make haste to meet Him with pure eyes and deeds; and let us now make ready in spirit to receive Him Who cometh unto His own through a strange birth, as He hath been well pleased to do. In that He is compassionate, and so that He might lead us up who have estranged ourselves from the life of Eden, He is born in Bethlehem.

God the Word, Who is borne up upon the shoulders of the cherubim, having united Himself hypostatically to the flesh, hath made His abode within the womb of the all-immaculate one and become a man; and He hath come to earth to be born of the tribe of Judah. The holy cave is beautifully adorned, like a most magnificent palace, for the King of all; and the manger, wherein the Virgin Mary layeth the Infinite One like a babe, is like a fiery throne, serving for the renewal of creation.

In a manger of dumb beasts the Virgin doth lay Thee, O beginningless Word of God, Who, in a manner transcending understanding, hast received a beginning. For Thou hast come to put an end to that foolishness which I assumed through the malice of the serpent, and to be wrapped in swaddling clothes, that Thou mightest rend asunder the rags and chains of my transgressions, O Thou Who alone art good and the Lover of mankind. Wherefore, I glorify Thee and I hymn and most joyfully worship Thine advent in the flesh, whereby I have been set free.

The Stichera to the holy Fathers, in Tone VI & same melody:

Unto the ends of the earth hath the memory of the forefathers been manifest as truly filled with light and shining with rays of grace; for Christ, the radiant Sun, shining from afar on high, doth lead forth an assembly of stars which shine with Him, and in the midst of Bethlehem a nativity is revealed to be that of God and man. Therefore, piously clapping our hands, with faith let us all join chorus to utter pre-festive praise unto His nativity. (Twice, if the Sunday fall before December 20th)

Rejoicing today, Adam is adorned with the glory of divine communion, as the foundation and confirmation of the wise forefathers; and with him Abel doth leap for joy and Enoch is glad, and Seth danceth together with Noah; the all-praised Abraham doth chant with the patriarchs, and from on high Melchizedek doth behold a birth wherein a father had no part. Wherefore, celebrating the divine memory of the forefathers of Christ, we beseech Him, that our souls be saved.

With gladness the assembly of the divinely wise children in the furnace hath shone forth, proclaiming the nativity of Christ on earth; for the Lord, descending like a precious dew, doth preserve unconsumed her who gave birth to Him, keeping her undefiled and enriching her with divine gifts. Wherefore, the God-pleasing Daniel rejoiceth in gladness, for he clearly foresaw the Stone uncut from the mountain, and with boldness he doth now pray in behalf of our souls.

Glory ..., to the Fathers, in Tone VI:

Daniel, the man of divine desires, seeing Thee, the Stone uncut by human hands, O Lord, prophetically called Thee a babe born without seed, the Word incarnate from the Virgin, the supremely immaculate God, the Savior of our souls.

Now & ever ..., of the forefeast, in the same tone, the composition of the Byzantine:

Adorn thyself well, O cave, for the ewe-lamb approacheth, bearing Christ in her womb! O manger, receive Him Who by His word hath loosed us mortals from irrational activity! Ye shepherds, piping, bear witness to the awesome wonder! O magi from Persia, bring ye gold, frankincense and myrrh to the King, for the Lord hath revealed Himself through the Virgin Mother! And, gazing down upon Him, His Mother made obeisance to Him as though she were His handmaiden, and greeted Him as she held Him in her embrace, saying: "How wast Thou sown within me, and how didst Thou spring forth within me, O my Redeemer and God?"

Or, if this Sunday fall on the 18th or 19th of December: Now & ever ..., the Dogmaticon of the Tone of the week.

Entrance. Prokeimenon of the Day. Three Lessons:

READING FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS [14:14-20]

And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan. And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought back again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people. And the king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlomer and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said: Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.

READING FROM THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY [1:8-11, 15-17]

In those days, Moses said unto the sons of Israel; The land I have set the before you, go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them. And I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone: The Lord your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude. (The Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you, as he hath promised you!) So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes. And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's.

READING FROM THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY [10:14-21]

Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: he doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name. He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen.

At the Litiya, the Sticheron of the temple.

And this Sticheron to the Fathers, in Tone I:

The prophets of great renown, splendid in the rays of divine eloquence, are ever blessed, and, putting forth the sayings of the Spirit as fruit, they preached to all the ineffable nativity of Christ God; and having lived most wondrously, they ended their lives in accordance with the Law.

Glory ..., in Tone III, the composition of Germanus:

Come, ye lovers of the feasts of the Church, and with psalms let us praise the assembly of the forefathers: Adam, the forefather of us all, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and, after the Law, Moses and Aaron, Joshua, Samuel and David, and, with them, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and the twelve prophets, together with Elijah, Elisha and all the rest, Zechariah and the Forerunner; who all preached Christ, the Life and Resurrection of our race.

Now & ever ..., of the Forefeast, in Tone III:

Radiantly adorn thyself O Bethlehem, for Eden hath been opened! Make ready, O Ephratha, for Adam is restored, and Eve with him; for the curse is annulled, the salvation of the world hath blossomed forth, and the souls of the righteous are adorned. And bearing hymnody as a gift of offering instead of myrrh, they receive spiritual salvation and incorruption. For, lo! He that lieth in the manger hath commanded previously, that a spiritual hymn be chanted by those who cry out unceasingly: O Lord, glory be to Thee!

But if this Sunday falls before the 20th of December:

Now & ever ..., Theotokion in Tone III:

Without seed, through the divine Spirit and by the will of the Father didst thou conceive the Son of God, Who is begotten of the Father without mother before the ages; to Him that, for our sake, was born of thee without father didst thou give birth in the flesh, and thou didst nourish Him as a babe with thy milk. Wherefore, cease thou never to pray that our souls be delivered from misfortunes.

At the Aposticha, the Stichera of the Resurrection.

But if this Sunday fall on the 24th of December, these Stichera, in Tone II:

Spec. Mel.: "O House of Ephratha ... ":

O house of Ephratha, * thou holy city, * glory of the prophets: * adorn thou the house * wherein the Divine One is born.

Verse: God shall come from Teman, * and the Holy One from the mountain overshadowed and densely wooded.

O Bethlehem, land of Judah, * splendid habitation of Him Who is incarnate: * prepare thou the divine cave * wherein God is born in the flesh of the holy Virgin * who hath not known man, that He might save the world!

Verse: O Lord, I have Thy report, and I was afraid; * O Lord, I have considered Thy works, and I was amazed.

Come ye all, let us faithfully celebrate the forefeast * of the nativity of Christ, * and noetically let us put forth like a star the hymn * of the glorification of the Magi, and with the shepherds let us cry out: * The salvation of all hath come from the Virgin's womb, summoning the faithful.

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

Rejoice, ye honorable prophets who dedicated yourselves well to the Law of the Lord, and by faith revealed yourselves to be unshaken and unbreakable pillars of Christ; and, having passed on to heaven, beseech ye Him to grant peace to the world and to save our souls.

Now & ever ..., of the forefeast, in Tone II, the composition of Cyprian:

Behold, the hour of our salvation draweth nigh! Make ready, O cave, for the Virgin approacheth to give birth! Rejoice and be glad, O Bethlehem, land of Judah, for from thee our Lord shall shine forth! Lo! hearken, O ye mountains and hills, and ye surrounding lands of Judea, for Christ cometh to save mankind whom He created, in that He is the Lover of mankind!

N.B. But if this Sunday fall before the 20th of December:

Now & ever ..., Theotokion:

O new wonder greater than all the wonders of old! * For who hath ever known a mother to give birth without having known a man, * and to bear on her arm Him Who sustaineth all creation? * Yet it was the will of God to be born. * O most pure one, who carried Him as an infant in thine embrace * and before Whom thou hast a mother's boldness: * cease not to pray on behalf of those who honor thee, ** that He have compassion and save our souls.

After the Blessing of the Loaves, "Virgin Theotokos, rejoice ...," (Twice)

And the Troparion to the Fathers, once, 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!

N.B. But if this Sunday fall on the 24th of December, the above Troparion of the fathers twice, and the following Troparion of the forefeast, once, in Tone IV:

Once Mary, pregnant with a seedless pregnancy, * was registered in Bethlehem with the elder Joseph, * as being of the seed of David. * And while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered, * but there was no room for them in the inn. * But the cave showed itself to be a beauteous palace for the Queen, ** and Christ is born to raise up the image that fell of old!

AT MATINS

At "God is the Lord ...," the Troparion of the Resurrection, (Twice);
Glory ..., that of the Fathers 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!

Now & ever ..., either the Theotokion, or the Troparion of the forefeast, in Tone IV:

Once Mary, pregnant with a seedless pregnancy, * was registered in Bethlehem with the elder Joseph, * as being of the seed of David. * And while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered, * but there was no room for them in the inn. * But the cave showed itself to be a beauteous palace for the Queen, ** and Christ is born to raise up the image that fell of old!

The usual Kathismata and the Sedalions of the Resurrection, with their Theotokia.
The Gospel Lesson of the Tone of the week.

N.B. But if this Sunday falls on the 24th of December, we chant these Sedalions:
After the first chanting of the Psalter, this Sedalion, in Tone IV:

Spec. Mel.: "Joseph was amazed ...":

In the fathers, in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Judah and the other patriarchs, Jesse, David and the rest, didst Thou mystically prophesy the manifestation of God which would come to pass on earth, that of Thy pre-eternal Son from the Virgin, Christ, Who hath appeared in Bethlehem prophesying in the Spirit and Who calleth out to all that are in the world.

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., the above is repeated.

After the second chanting of the Psalter, this Sedalion, in Tone VIII:
Spec. Mel.: "Of Wisdom ...":

O ye faithful, let us joyously celebrate the feast of the divine fathers, and, honoring Adam and Abel, blessing Seth and Enos, let us hymn Enoch, Noah, Shem and Japheth. Let us praise Abraham, who shone forth in faith before the Law, and the divine Isaac, Jacob, Judah and Levi, and the chaste Joseph, and let us faithfully cry aloud: O God-bearing forefathers, entreat Christ God, that He grant remission of sins unto those who, with love, celebrate your holy memory.

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., the above is repeated.

After the chanting of Psalm 118, and the usual Evlogitaria;
This Sedalion to the fathers, in Tone VIII:
Spec. Mel.: "Of Wisdom ...":

With hymns let us all praise Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the meek David, Joshua, and the twelve patriarchs, together with the three youths that quenched the fiery flame with the power of the Spirit. And let us cry out to them: Rejoice, ye that bravely denounced the deception of the mad king! Pray ye to Christ, that He grant remission of offenses unto those who celebrate your holy memory with love.

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., another Sedalion, in Tone VIII:

From the bosom of the Father didst Thou come down, and in Thine ineffable condescension took upon Thyself poverty like unto ours, in a manner surpassing nature, O Lover of mankind. It was Thy good pleasure to make Thine abode in a cave, O Lord, and as a babe, Thou Who art the Creator and Lord, art suckled at Thy Mother's breast. Wherefore, the Magi, guided by the star, bring gifts unto Thee and cry out: Glory in the highest to God, Who cometh to earth to be born as a man!

N.B. But if this Sunday falls on either the 18th or the 19th of December, this Theotokion:

Like the widow who gave two mites as an offering, I offer thee the praise of thanksgiving which is thy due, O Lady, for all thy gifts; for thou hast been revealed to be a shelter and aid, ever rescuing me from temptations and tribulations. Wherefore, delivered from that which causeth me grief, as from the midst of a burning furnace, I cry out to thee with all my heart: O Theotokos, help me by entreating Christ God to grant me remission of sins, for I, thy servant, have thee as my hope.

The Song of Ascents. Prokeimenon of the Tone.

The Canons:

N.B. If this Sunday fall on either the 18th or the 19th of December: The canon to the Resurrection from the Oktoechos, with four Troparia, including its Irmos; the canon to the Cross and the Resurrection, with two Troparia; the canon to the Theotokos, with two Troparia; and the canon to the fathers, with six Troparia.

But if this Sunday falls between the 20th and the 23rd of December: The canon to the Resurrection from the Oktoechos, with four Troparia, including the Irmos; the canon for the forefeast, with four Troparia; and the canon to the fathers, with six Troparia (excluding the initial two Troparia of that canon, which are to the Resurrection).

If, however, this Sunday fall on the 24th of December, then the canon to the fathers, with eight Troparia, including the Irmos, and that of the forefeast, with six Troparia.

ODE I

Canon to the Resurrection and the Fathers, in Tone VI:

Irmos: He Who in ancient times * hid the pursuing tyrant beneath the waves of the sea, * is hidden beneath the earth by the children of those whom once He saved. * But let us, like the children, sing unto the Lord, * for gloriously hath He been glorified.

Through fear the gates of death are thrown open unto Thee and the everlasting portals are cast down, for through Thine honorable descent the dead of old have arisen, hymning Thy Resurrection with gladness, O Christ.

God, before Whom those of heaven and earth tremble, wisheth to stand before the tribunal of Pilate, as One condemned by the judge of an iniquitous trial, and is struck in the face by the hands of the unrighteous.

Troparia to the Fathers: Today the assembly of the divine fathers doth radiantly celebrate the forefeast of the nativity of Christ, and most glorious grace doth prefigure it, for Abraham and the children of the Law are an image of grace.

Of old the sacred Abraham received One of the tri-hypostatic Godhead, and now the Word of the Father, He that is gloriously praised as co-enthroned with Him, doth through the divine Spirit, descend to the children.

The children that cast down godlessness in the furnace, in number and faith prefigure the divine Trinity, revealing to the world the hidden mysteries of God.

Abraham was delivered from the hands of the unrighteous, and the divine youths and Daniel the prophet were once saved from the flame of the furnace and from the den of wild beasts, wherefore, let us celebrate the forefeast of the nativity of Christ.

Theotokion: O joyous and unwedded Mother, incorrupt Virgin, we bless thee, for thou didst blossom forth from the generation of Abraham and the tribe of David, and gave birth unto Christ, Who of old was foretold by the prophets.

Canon of the Forefeast, in Tone I:

Irmos: Christ is born, render ye glory. * Christ cometh from heaven, meet ye Him. * Christ is on earth, be ye exalted. * O all the earth, sing unto the Lord, * and sing praises in gladness, O ye people, * for He hath been glorified.

The Virgin doth now come to Bethlehem to give birth to Christ, Who becometh a babe in the flesh, Who of His own will beggared Himself, and Who becometh visible. Let heaven and earth rejoice!

Leap up, ye mountains and hills! Join chorus, ye divinely eloquent prophets! Ye people and nations, clap your hands! Our salvation and Enlightenment, Who is born in the city of Bethlehem, hath nearly come.

Theotokion: God is known as a man through the Virgin who hath not known wedlock; He that is abundantly rich becometh poor, enriching those who, through malice, have been reduced to poverty. Let us all hymn Him with praises, for He hath been glorified.

Katavasia "Christ is born ..."

ODE III

Canon to the Resurrection and the Fathers

Irmos: When creation beheld Thee, * Who founded the whole earth upon the waters, * hanging on Golgotha, * it was seized with awe and cried aloud: * None is holy save Thee, O Lord!!

Having spent three days in the tomb, by Thy life-creating Resurrection Thou didst raise up the dead of ages past, and, loosed from condemnation, they rejoiced with gladness, crying aloud: Behold, Thou hast come as our Deliverance, O Lord!

Glory to Thine arising, O our Savior, for as Almighty, Thou hast delivered us from Hades, corruption and death, and, crying aloud, we say: There is none holy save Thee, O Lord, Lover of mankind!

Troparia to the Fathers: Faithfully preserving the glory of the image and likeness of God, with the fire of the Spirit the children, as champions, extinguished the fire of the golden image, chanting: We know but one Lord!

The captive children, clothed with the wisdom and power of the Spirit, put to shame the wise men of Babylon and boldly cried aloud: None is holy save Thee, O Lord, Lover of mankind!

The Law doth rejoice and joineth chorus with the children and the prophets and doth exult today before the divine advent of the Lord. And Abraham doth rejoice, for from his seed hath the incarnate Lord appeared.

Theotokion: A conception without pangs, an acceptance of thy birthgiving hath transpired in a manner beyond all telling, O Theotokos, for the Word of God, Who is God and was proclaimed by the prophets, hath revealed Himself to be a mystery beyond nature.

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: **To the Son who was begotten of the Father * without change before all ages, * and in the last times, without seed, was made flesh of the Virgin, * to Christ our God let us cry aloud: * Thou hast raised up our horn, holy art Thou, O Lord.**

He, Who in a manner beyond understanding was born of the Father before all ages, hath become incarnate from the Virgin in the latter times, as He Himself knew, wishing to renew mankind which had become corrupt through the counsel of the evil serpent.

The beginningless Son of God, Who is co-enthroned with the Father and the Spirit in the highest, beholding human nature which had been humbled, doth accept a beginning and wisheth to be born in the flesh as a man.

Theotokion: She who is more holy than the angels and all creation doth now seedlessly give birth in the flesh to the Angel of Great Counsel, for the restoration of all who unceasingly chant unto Him: Holy art Thou, O Lord!

Hypacoi, in Tone VIII:

An Angel bedewed the children in the furnace, and hath now put an end to the lamentation of the myrrh-bearing women, saying: Why bring ye myrrh? Whom seek ye in the tomb? Christ God is arisen, for He is the life and salvation of the race of mankind!

ODE IV

Canon to the Resurrection and the Fathers

Irmos: Foreseeing Thy divine self-emptying upon the Cross, * Habakkuk, in amazement, cried out: * "Thou hast cut asunder the strength of the mighty, * O Good One, * and preached to those in Hades, * as the Almighty One.

Thy divine descent into hell, O Christ God, was been revealed to be life for the dead; for Thou didst restrict the dominion of the enemy below, O Good One, opening a path for mortals to heaven.

The most pure body of the Redeemer, which lay in the tomb, did not decay, but, as Almighty, Thou didst break down the gates of Hades and rise again in glory on the third day, O Christ!

Troparia to the Fathers: Let us honor Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as the first-fruits of the fathers, for from their seed hath Christ appeared incarnate from the Virgin, in that He is almighty.

Indicating the coming events of the descent of Christ unto all, Daniel clearly showed forth lions as sheep, for, as a prophet of God, he foresaw the future.

Not attracted by the poison of sin, O children, ye were delivered from the flame; for, being of a wisdom more pure than gold, ye remained unchanged in the furnace of deception.

Theotokion: O honored and most pure one, thine Offspring, Who surpasseth nature, is proclaimed aloud to be the expectation of the nations and the salvation of the world. And today the multitude of the fathers hymn Him.

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: Rod of the root of Jesse, * and flower that blossomed from his stem, * O Christ, Thou hast sprung from the Virgin. * From the Mountain overshadowed by the forest * Thou hast come, made flesh from her that knew not wedlock, * O God who art not formed from matter. * Glory to Thy power, O Lord.

Thou hast given rise unto a staff from the root of Jesse, O Virgin, putting forth the unfading Blossom of the Creator of all, Who as God adorns with flowers all the earth, which cries aloud to Him: Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

O Word of God, Thou hast come to edify me, who have been despoiled through evil food and dragged down in mind and made like unto dumb beasts; and, becoming a Babe, Thou didst lie down in a manger of dumb beasts. Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Theotokion: O Jesus, Habbakuk foresaw Thee incarnate from the Virgin, the mountain overshadowed, breaking down the mountains and hills of evil, and giving over to utter destruction the arrogance of the evil one and the uprisings of the demons.

ODE V

Canon to the Resurrection and the Fathers

Irmos: Thy Theophany, O Christ, the Unwaning Light, * that mercifully came to pass for us, * Isaiah, keeping watch, beheld out of the night, * and he cried aloud: * "The dead shall arise, and those in the tombs * shall be raised up, * and all that are born of earth shall rejoice."

The angel, manifestly symbolizing that which radiates joy, is shown forth as a light-bearer in the tomb, proclaiming the Resurrection to the women; and, setting aside their lamentation, they rejoiced in the risen Christ, from Whom they received unending joy.

O Good One, Who in Thy tender compassion assumed a form like ours, Thou wast willingly nailed to the Cross for the sake of me, who, of old in paradise, rejected Thy holy commandment for the sake of food; and Thou hast died as a man, granting me life.

Troparia to the Fathers: Let us honor today the divine Daniel, of the race of Abraham, the first-fruit of the fathers, as a leader of the Law and of grace; for, as a prophet of God, he foretold the advent of Christ from the Virgin, awaiting beforehand the divine nativity.

Clearly prefiguring through the Angel's descent the coming of the Lord unto us, the children of Abraham extinguished the furnace; and, rendering the flame moist with dew by their faith, they consumed the splendor of the golden image therein.

Through the Spirit, Daniel closed the mouths of the wild beasts in the pit; and, through grace, the children of Abraham quenched the strength of the fire. And, saved from corruption, they proclaim Christ Who is born of the Virgin, entreating Him as the Redeemer of our salvation.

Theotokion: Revealing through the divine Spirit Thy painless assumption of our nature, and keeping vigil in the Law of grace, O Lord, Isaiah cried out: From the race of Abraham and the tribe of Judah doth a Virgin come, giving birth in the flesh without seed.

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: As Thou art the God of peace and Father of compassions, * Thou hast sent unto us Thine Angel of great counsel, * granting us peace. * Wherefore guided towards the light of the knowledge of God, * and watching by night we glorify Thee, * O Lover of mankind.

The most perfect Son of God, the Master by nature, in His tender compassion was well pleased to be called the Son of man and reckoned among slaves, O most Compassionate One. Wherefore, willingly begging Thyself, Thou comest to be born in a cave, O Supremely good One.

O Christ our King, Who art uncontainable in Thy divine nature, how can a little cave receive Thee? How can a manger contain Thee, Who comest in the flesh to Thine own for our sake, from a Mother who knew not wedlock, that Thou mightest save those who have been estranged from Thee, O Lord?

Theotokion: **T**he Shepherd's ewe-lamb hath come to give birth. Make ready, O holy cave! Make haste, ye shepherds, to see the newborn Shepherd and Lamb! Ye Magi, prepare yourselves with gifts to worship Him as King in the flesh.

ODE VI

Canon to the Resurrection and the Fathers

Irmos: **B**eholding the sea of life surging with the flood of temptations, * I run to Thy calm haven, and cry to Thee: * Raise up my life from corruption, * **O Most Merciful One.**

By Thy three-day burial, O Good One, Thou didst bring about the mortification of death and the destruction of Hades; and, having arisen, O good Jesus, in a godly manner Thou hast poured forth life upon those who are in the world. *(Twice)*

Troparia to the Fathers: **H**ospitable was the nature and exalted was the faith of Abraham the forefather. Wherefore, receiving in image the divine mystery, he rejoiced, and, running before Christ, he now rejoiceth exceedingly.

The faith of the youths now holds creation subject by the gift of the Creator, for the all-devouring and shameless fire stood in awe of those who honor Jesus Christ, the Creator of fire.

Daniel the prophet, once closing the mouths of the lions in the pit, showed in a godly manner that through the coming of Christ the savagery of the world would be in harmony with divine peace.

Theotokion: **O** Mary, thou Mother who knewest not a man, from a virginal womb didst thou give birth unto Christ, Whom the prophets beheld in the Spirit; and the fathers who begot Him now join chorus before His nativity.

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: **T**he sea monster spat forth Jonah as it had received him, * like a babe from the womb: * while the Word, having dwelt in the Virgin and taken flesh, * came forth from her yet kept her incorrupt. * For being Himself not subject to decay. * **He preserved His Mother free from all harm.**

O Lady, as thou art a new heaven thou dost come, that Christ, the Sun of glory, might shine forth in the flesh from thy womb, as through a cloud, in the cave; for in His boundless loving-kindness, He wondrously desireth to illumine all who are of this earth with the beams of His own light.

Thou didst perceive our infirmity and misery, O compassionate Christ, and didst not disdain us; but, without leaving the Father, Thou didst empty Thyself and make Thine abode in the womb of her who knew not wedlock, and who now cometh forth to give birth unto Thee, without pangs, in the cave.

Theotokion: Ye mountains and hills, fields and vales, people and generations, nations and every creature: exult, filled with divine gladness, for the deliverance of all, the Word of God, the Timeless One, Who, in His loving-kindness, hath come under time, now cometh with haste.

N.B. If this Sunday falls on the 18th or 19th of December, we chant this Kontakion to the fathers, in Tone VI:

O thrice-blessed ones, * ye 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: * Make speed and hasten Thou to help us, O Compassionate One, * in that Thou art merciful; ** for what Thou willest, Thou canst do!

Ikos: Stretch 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: Make speed and haste Thou to help us, O Compassionate One, in that Thou art merciful; for what Thou willest, Thou canst do!

But if this Sunday falls within the pre-festal period;

We chant this Kontakion in Tone I:

Spec. Mel.: "The choir of Angels ...":

Be glad, O Bethlehem! Make ready, O Ephratha! * For, lo! she that beareth the Lamb and great Shepherd in her womb * hasteneth to give birth. * Beholding this, the God-bearing fathers are glad, * and with the shepherds ** they hymn the pregnant Virgin.

Ikos: Beholding the splendid radiance of thy birthgiving, O Virgin, the God-loving Abraham, the ever-memorable Isaac, Jacob and all the divinely assembled choir of saints rejoice, and, with joyous proclamations, they lead creation forth to meet thee; for thou hast been revealed to be the mediatrix of joy for all, having conceived in thy womb Him Who once was seen in Babylon, Who preserved unconsumed the youths that had been cast unjustly into the furnace, and Who showed thee forth in a manner transcending comprehension. Wherefore, the young maidens chant unto Him Whom thou dost bear in thine arms, hymning thee as the pregnant Virgin.

ODE VII

Canon to the Resurrection and the Fathers

Irmos: **O ineffable wonder! * He Who delivered the holy Children from the fiery furnace * boweth His head and asketh baptism of a servant, * cleansing those who cry: * O God our Redeemer, blessed art Thou!**

O strange wonder! The Lord, Who sitteth upon a throne in the highest, by assuming flesh endured death; but He hath arisen through the might of the Godhead, raising with Himself the dead from all ages.

Thou didst shake the might of death and didst rise again, granting resurrection unto those who truly glorify Thee, the Lord, and who chant unto Thee with Orthodox faith: O God, our Redeemer, blessed art Thou!

Troparia to the Fathers: **O** father Abraham, founder of thy race, having begotten Christ in the flesh, thou art clearly revealed by the Spirit to be the father of the nations, unto the salvation of us who chant: O God, our Redeemer, blessed art Thou!

Thy hymn of the inspired ones hath put to shame those who utter soulless noises, for the youths, bodily trampling down unharmed the furnace which burned with fire, chant: O God, our Redeemer, blessed art Thou!

Of old, the prophet Daniel, gazing with spiritual vision, revealed the second coming of Christ, foretelling the dreadful things which shall come to pass therein, crying aloud: O God, our Redeemer, blessed art Thou!

Theotokion: **O** strange wonder, known among the prophets and revealed of old to the fathers: a pure Virgin is come, wishing to give birth unto the salvation of us who chant: O God, our Redeemer, blessed art Thou!

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: **Scorning the impious decree of the godless one, * the Children brought up together in godliness * feared not the threat of fire, * but standing in the midst of the flames, they sang: * O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou.**

The divine vine upon which the incorrupt Cluster did ripen, draweth nigh, coming to give birth unto Him that poureth forth the wine of gladness, watering us who cry out to Him: O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou!

The divine phial which beareth within herself the fragrant Myrrh cometh to pour it out in the cave of Bethlehem, filling with mystic fragrance those who chant: O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou!

Theotokion: **T**he tongs which Isaiah the prophet beheld of old cometh, holding in her womb Christ, the divine Ember, which burns up all the fuel of sin, enlightening the souls of the faithful.

ODE VIII

Canon to the Resurrection and the Fathers

Irmos **B**e thou astonished and afraid, O heaven, * and let the foundations of the earth be shaken; * for lo! He Who of old burnt the sacrifice of the righteous man with water * doth clothe Himself in water! * Him do ye children bless, ye priests hymn, * ye people supremely exalt throughout all ages!

O Thine ineffable condescension toward us sinners, O Christ! For, lo! having tasted death, though Thou art immortal God, Thou wast laid in the tomb as a man. But didst arise again, O Word, raising with Thyself those who were below and who supremely exalt Thee throughout all ages.

Every ear is struck with awe at how the Most High willingly came to earth to destroy the power of Hades by His Cross and burial, and how He hath raised all with Himself to cry aloud: Ye children bless; ye priests hymn; ye people supremely exalt Him throughout all ages!

Troparia to the Fathers: **P**refiguring Thy sacrifice, O Christ, Abraham, obedient to Thee, O Master, went forth with faith, wishing to sacrifice on the mountain the son whom he had begotten; but he returned with him, rejoicing and glorifying and supremely exalting Thee, the Redeemer of the world.

When Thou didst robe Thyself in ever-blazing flame as in a divine robe, O Christ, thou didst utterly extinguish the fire for the three holy children, and by Thy descent the dew crieth out to those who chant: Ye priests hymn and supremely exalt Him throughout the ages!

The prophet Daniel is given over to the lions as an unjust trial, but, through the precept of abstinence, in his piety he subdued the wild beasts as fellow fasters in the depths of the pit. Through his prayers and those of Abraham and the children, save those who hymn Thee in the world, O Christ!

Theotokion: **T**he voices of the prophets faithfully proclaimed Him as Jesus Emmanuel, Who cometh in human form, God and man; and the Virgin Mary, without having known a man, giveth birth in the city of Bethlehem unto a Son, the co-beginningless Word, through the Holy Spirit.

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: **T**he furnace moist with dew * was an image and prefiguring of a wonder past nature, * burning not the Children whom it had received, * so the fire of the Godhead consumed not the Virgin's womb * into which it had descended. * Therefore in song let us sing: * Let the whole creation bless the Lord * and supremely exalt Him throughout all ages.

In gladness let us cry out with the angels: Glory to God in the highest! The Savior is born! The Master cometh, Whom the star doth indicate! The Magi hasten to behold Him, a Babe in a manger! Let all creation bless the Lord and supremely exalt Him throughout all ages!

Amongst slaves wast Thou enrolled of Thine own will, O Master, subjecting Thyself to the law of Caesar, that Thou mightest free mankind from slavery to the evil one, O most merciful God. Wherefore, rejoicing, we chant: Let all creation bless the Lord and supremely exalt Him throughout all ages!

Theotokion: O beginningless Word, I bear Thee as a newborn Babe, although I have in no wise known a man, said the Virgin, marveling. I know not whom on earth I can call Thy father?. Wherefore, with all I chant to Thee: Let all creation bless the Lord and supremely exalt Him throughout all ages!

ODE IX

Canon to the Resurrection and the Fathers

Irmos: Weep not for Me, O Mother, * beholding in the tomb the Son Whom thou hast conceived * without seed in the womb; * for I shall arise and shall be glorified, * and as God I shall exalt with glory unceasing, * those that with faith and love magnify thee.

Why dost thou lament, O creation, beholding the Bestower of life as a mortal upon the Cross and in the tomb? For He shall rise again, renewing thee with light; for by His resurrection on the third day He hath cast down Hades and raised up with Himself the dead that praise Him.

Though Thou didst go down in the grave as one dead, O Christ, Bestower of life, even so, Thou didst destroy the might of Hades. And raising up with Thyself the dead which it had swallowed up from all ages, and as God Thou didst give resurrection unto those who magnify Thee with faith and love.

Troparia to the Fathers: Celebrating the feast of the fathers who lived before the Law, let us honor Christ, Who, in a godly manner, is begotten from them in the flesh; for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who, through faith, proclaimers of the Spirit and grace, have been revealed to be the foundation of the prophets and the Law.

God, Who by the fire in the bush showed to Moses the godly mystery in a manner beyond understanding, having descended into the fire with the children, showed the flame of the furnace to be dew by the fire of the Essence of His divinity.

The most holy children, assembling with Abraham, and Daniel, the wondrous prophet of God, Isaac and Jacob, with Moses and Aaron, faithfully join chorus before the nativity of Christ, praying unceasingly that we be saved.

Theotokion: All of creation doth rejoice in thy birthgiving, O Virgin, for Bethlehem hath opened Eden unto us. And, lo! delighting in the Tree of Life, we all earnestly cry out in faith: Thou hast fulfilled our prayers, O Lady!

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: **A** strange and most wondrous mystery do I see: * the cave is heaven; * the Virgin the throne of the cherubim; * the manger a room, in which Christ God, * whom nothing can contain, is laid. * Whom we praise and magnify.

O strange, awesome and most glorious mystery: the Lord of glory hath come to earth and, having beggared Himself, He hath entered a cave in the flesh, seeking to restore Adam and to deliver Eve from her pangs.

By Thy swaddling clothes Thou dost loose the bonds of our sinful falls; by Thy great poverty Thou dost enrich us all, O Compassionate One; and having been laid in a manger of dumb beasts Thou dost release mankind from irrational malice, O beginningless Word of God.

Theotokion: **T**he preaching of the prophets hath reached the ends of the earth, for they foretold Him Who was to come in the fullness of time; and He came and appeared incarnate of the pure Virgin; Him let us receive with a pure mind!

Exapostilarion of the Resurrection; Glory , of the Fathers:

Spec. Mel.: "To the disciples ...":

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the elect of the patriarchs, the fathers before the Law, have shone forth like beacons, for all the prophets and the righteous shone forth from them like radiant lamps. With rays of honorable prophecy they have illumined all of creation, earnestly praying to God on behalf of the world.

Now & ever ..., Theotokion:

Wondrous is this blessed event! The unblemished ewe-lamb, the granddaughter of Adam and David, giveth birth unto the Lamb, the beginningless Word, in the latter days, as is meet, and the forefeast of her ineffable birthgiving is fittingly celebrated by the multitude of the fathers.

N.B. But if this Sunday falls on the 24th day of December, the Exapostilarion of the Resurrection is not chanted, but is replaced by this one to the Fathers:

From the seed of Abraham and the divine forefather David is the beginningless Word brought forth, Who of old wondrously saved the youths equal in number to the Trinity by the descent of the Angel into the flame, and Who transformed the lamentation of the myrrh-bearing women into joy.

Glory ..., "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ..." (see above)

Now & ever ..., Theotokion:

Be glad, O Bethlehem! And thou, O Ephratha, make ready, for the Theotokos cometh to the cave and the manger to give birth ineffably unto God. O dread mystery! Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the patriarchs and prophets, angels and men, now radiantly celebrate the forefeast of His divine nativity.

At the Praises, four Stichera to the Resurrection, and four to the Fathers, in Tone V:

Spec. Mel.: "Rejoice ...":

Lift up thy voice, O Zion, Thou truly divine city, and proclaim the divine memory of the fathers, honoring Abraham, Isaac and the ever-memorable Jacob; for, lo! we all magnify Judah and Levi, the great Moses and the wondrous Aaron, and we honor David, Joshua and Samuel. And weaving divine hymns into godly praise on the forefeast of Christ's nativity, we ask that we receive grace from Him, and that He grant the world great mercy. (Twice)

Verse: Blessed art Thou, O Lord, God of our fathers, * and praised and glorified is Thy name unto the ages!

O Elijah, thou who once rode upon a divine chariot of fire, come forth, and thou, O divinely wise Elisha; and joining with Ezekiel and Hosea, rejoice! O ye honored and divinely inspired twelve prophets, join chorus, and all ye righteous, chant in hymns unto the nativity of Christ; ye all-blessed youths who quenched the flame of the furnace with the dew of the Spirit, entreat Christ on our behalf, that He send down upon our souls great mercy.

Verse: For righteous art Thou in all * which Thou hast done for us.

The Virgin Theotokos, she who through the ages hath been preached on earth by the prophets in their utterances, she whom the wise patriarchs and the assemblies of the righteous proclaim, with whom the comely women join chorus: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Hannah, together with the glorious Miriam, the sister of Moses. With them all the ends of the world rejoice and all creation rendereth honor, for the Creator and God of all cometh to be born in the flesh and to grant us great mercy.

Glory ..., in Tone VIII:

The compilation of the teachings of the Law doth reveal the divine birth of Christ in the flesh as being from those who, before the Law, proclaimed the glad tidings of grace to those who lived beyond the Law. Wherefore, in that this birth is the means of deliverance from corruption, for the sake of the resurrection they declared to the souls held fast in Hades: O Lord, glory be to Thee!

N.B. But if this Sunday falls on the 24th day of December, the following Stichera are chanted, in Tone IV:

Spec. Mel.: "Called from on high ...":

The proclamation of Isaiah is fulfilled! For, lo! the Virgin beareth in her womb the Incomprehensible and Indescribable One in the flesh, and she cometh most gloriously to receive God. Make ready, O Bethlehem! For it is the King's pleasure that thou didst become His abode. O manger, receive Christ wrapped as a babe, Who in His goodness wisheth to loose the bonds of man's offenses.

Enrolled with slaves, the Master wished to thoroughly erase the handwriting of our transgressions and to enter in the Book of the Living all who had been slain by the thievery of the serpent. And the Virgin beareth Thee, Who bearest all things, Who art wrapped in mortal flesh and hast been well-pleased to dwell in a little cave. Marveling at Thy might, the heavenly choirs of angels and the godly shepherds praised Thee Who art born.

The radiant and animate cloud laden with the heavenly Rain now approacheth to pour It forth upon the earth, that It might water the face of the earth. The spring of grace, the noetic swallow, who is pregnant, giveth birth by the ineffable Word, putting an end to the winter of godlessness. The pure and undefiled palace doth bring forth the incarnate King in the cave.

Glory ..., in Tone VIII:

The compilation of the teachings of the Law doth reveal the divine birth of Christ in the flesh as being from those who, before the Law, proclaimed the glad tidings of grace to those who lived beyond the Law. Wherefore, in that this birth is the means of deliverance from corruption, for the sake of the resurrection they declared to the souls held fast in Hades: O Lord, glory be to Thee!

Now & ever ..., "Most blessed art thou ..."

Great Doxology. After the Trisagion, the Troparion of the Resurrection.

Litanies and the Dismissal.

We chant the Evangelical Sticheron in the narthex.

First Hour and final Dismissal.

AT LITURGY

On the Beatitudes, ten Troparia: six from the Oktoechos, and four from Ode III of the canon to the Fathers.

Troparia to the Fathers: Faithfully preserving the glory of the image and likeness of God, with the fire of the Spirit the children, as champions, extinguished the fire of the golden image, chanting: We know but one Lord!

The captive children, clothed with the wisdom and power of the Spirit, put to shame the wise men of Babylon and boldly cried aloud: None is holy save Thee, O Lord, Lover of mankind!

The Law doth rejoice and joineth chorus with the children and the prophets and doth exult today before the divine advent of the Lord. And Abraham doth rejoice, for from his seed hath the incarnate Lord appeared.

Theotokion: A conception without pangs, an acceptance of thy birthgiving hath transpired in a manner beyond all telling, O Theotokos, for the Word of God, Who is God and was proclaimed by the prophets, hath revealed Himself to be a mystery beyond nature.

After the Entrance, the Troparia to the Resurrection and to the Fathers 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!

N.B. But if this Sunday fall on the 24th of December, the above Troparion of the fathers, and then the following Troparion of the forefeast, in Tone IV:

Once Mary, pregnant with a seedless pregnancy, * was registered in Bethlehem with the elder Joseph, * as being of the seed of David. * And while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered, * but there was no room for them in the inn. * But the cave showed itself to be a beauteous palace for the Queen, ** and Christ is born to raise up the image that fell of old!

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., the Kontakion to the Fathers:

N.B. If this Sunday falls on the 24th of December, we chant "Glory ..." this Kontakion to the fathers, in Tone VI:

O thrice-blessed ones, * ye 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: * Make speed and hasten Thou to help us, O Compassionate One, * in that Thou art merciful; ** for what Thou willest, Thou canst do!

Then "Now & Ever . . .," and the Kontakion of the Forefeast in Tone I:

Be glad, O Bethlehem! Make ready, O Ephratha! * For, lo! she that beareth the Lamb and great Shepherd in her womb * hasteneth to give birth. * Beholding this, the God-bearing fathers are glad, * and with the shepherds ** they hymn the pregnant Virgin.

Prokeimenon, in Tone IV, the Hymn of the Fathers: Blessed art Thou, O Lord, God of our fathers, * and praised and glorified is Thy name unto the ages!

Verse: For righteous art Thou in all which Thou hast done for us.

READING FROM THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS [11:9-11, 17-23,32-40]

Brethren, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child: and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. And what more shall I say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: 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: O God, with our ears have we heard, for our fathers have told us.

Verse: For Thou hast saved us from them that afflict us, and them that hate us hast Thou put to shame.

READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW [1 :1-25]

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judah and his brethren; and Judah begat Pharez and Zerah of Tamar; and Pharez begat Hezron; and Hezron begat Ram; and Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon; and Nahshon begat Salmon; and Salmon begat Boaz of Rachab; and Boaz begat abed of Ruth; and Gbed begat Jesse; and Jesse begat David the king. And David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Uriah; and Solomon begat Rehoboam; and Rehoboam begat Abijah; and Abijah begat Asa; and Asa begat Jehoshaphat; and Jehoshaphat begat Jehoram; and Jehoram begat Uzziah; and Uzziah begat Jotham; and Jotham begat Ahaz; and Ahaz begat Hezekiah; and Hezekiah begat Manasseh; and Manasseh begat Amon; and Amon begat Josiah; and Josiah begat Jeconiah and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon. And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begat Shealtiel; and Shealtiel begat Zerubbabel; and Zerubbabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; and Azor begat Zadok; and Zadok begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; and Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.

Communion Verse I: Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise Him in the highest.

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