

THE 20th DAY OF THE MONTH OF DECEMBER
FOREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY IN THE FLESH OF OUR LORD, GOD & SAVIOR
JESUS CHRIST
COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLY HIEROMARTYR IGNATIUS THE GOD-BEARER
AT VESPERS

On “Lord, I have cried ...,” 6 Stichera: 3 of the forefeast, the composition of
Anatolius, in Tone I:

O ye people, let us celebrate the forefeast, of the nativity of Christ, and lifting our thoughts up to Bethlehem, let us elevate ourselves in mind; and with the eyes of our souls let us gaze upon the Virgin, who cometh to give birth in the cave to our Lord and God. Joseph, beholding the magnitude of His miracles, supposed that he beheld a man wrapped as a babe in swaddling-bands, but perceived from the testimony of things that He was the true God, Who bestoweth great mercy upon our souls.

O ye people, let us celebrate the forefeast of the nativity of Christ, and elevating our mind to Bethlehem, let us soar aloft in thought and behold the great mystery in the cave; for Eden was opened when God issued forth from the pure Virgin, being perfect in both divinity and manhood. Wherefore, let us cry aloud: O holy God, Thou beginningless Father! O Holy and Mighty One, Thou Son Who didst become incarnate! O holy Immortal One, Thou comforting Spirit! O Holy Trinity, Glory be to Thee!

Hearken, O heaven, and give ear, O earth! For, lo! the Son and Word of God the Father cometh to be born of the Maiden who knew not a man, at the good pleasure of Him Who begat Him in dispassion, and with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit. Prepare thyself, O Bethlehem! Open thy gates, O Eden! For the Author of all creation remaineth what He was before, yet taketh form, granting the world great mercy.

And 3 Stichera of the holy hieromartyr, in Tone IV:
Spec. Mel.: “Called from on high ...”:

O blessed Ignatius, * thou wast fittingly called God-bearer * when the Master, in His mercy, embraced thee, * revealing to thee the dogmas * of the highest philosophy. * Then didst thou receive * most splendid radiance, * as a sponge soaketh up water, * drawing it forth from the depths of enlightenment. * Wherefore thou didst follow in the steps * of Christ our God, Who called thee. * Him do thou entreat, ** that He save and illumine our souls.

Wounded with perfect love * when zeal for salvation enkindled thy soul, * impelling thee to go to the Master, * O most sacred father, * thou didst give voice to ever-chanted words: * “I am the wheat of the Creator, * and it is fitting that I be ground fine by teeth of the wild beasts, * that I may be shown to be pure bread * for the Word my God!” * Him do thou entreat, ** that He save and illumine our souls.

Thou wast crucified with Christ, * O thou who art manifest in sanctity, * when thou didst cry out the divinely inspired words: * “My Love is crucified, * and I hasten to share in His suffering!” * Wherefore, O blessed Ignatius, * making thy transit, like the sun, from the East to the West, * thou didst travel, shedding enlightenment; and, adorned with a royal diadem, * thou hast been brought before Christ. * Him do thou entreat, ** that He save and illumine our souls.

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

O God-bearing Ignatius, soaring aloft to Christ Whom thou didst desire, thou hast received the reward of the sacred ministry of the Gospel of Christ, which thou didst complete in the shedding of thy blood. Wherefore, as the wheat of the immortal Husbandman, thou wast ground by the teeth of the wild beasts and hast been shown to be sweet bread for Him. Pray for us, O blessed spiritual athlete.

Both now ..., in Tone VIII:

O Bethlehem, receive standing as the metropolis of God; for the never-waning Light cometh to be born within thee. Ye angels, marvel in the heavens! Ye men, give glory on earth! O magi, bring ye most glorious gifts from Persia! Ye shepherds, piping, sweetly sound forth the thrice-holy hymn! Let every breath praise the Creator of all!

If this forefeast of the nativity of Christ falleth on Saturday, at Friday vespers the dogmatic Theotokion of the tone of the week is not chanted.

On the Aposticha, these Stichera, the composition of Cyprian, in Tone III:

Lo! the time of our salvation draweth nigh! Make ready, O cave! The Virgin approacheth to give birth. O Bethlehem, land of Judah, adorn thyself and rejoice, for from thee hath our Lord shone forth! Hearken, ye mountains and hills, and ye parts of Judea which lie round about, for Christ cometh, that He might save man whom He created, in that He is the Lover of mankind.

Verse: God shall come forth out of Theman, * and the Holy One out of a mountain overshadowed and densely wooded.

O Bethlehem, land of Judah, splendidly prepare the divine cave for human habitation, for therein God will be born in the flesh from the holy Virgin who knew not a man, that He might save our race.

Verse: O Lord, I have heard Thy report, and I was afraid; * O Lord, I considered Thy works, and I was stricken with awe.

The composition of Andrew Pyrrhus: **C**ome ye all, and with faith let us celebrate the forefeast of the nativity of Christ, and noetically offering hymnody like a star, with the shepherds let us give voice to the glorification of the magi: Salvation hath come to mankind through the Virgin's womb, restoring the faithful.

Glory ..., the composition of the Studite, in Tone I:

O thy steadfast and firm soul, O right blessed Ignatius! For, with unwavering desire for Him Who loveth thee, thou didst say: “There is not within me the fire of the love of material things; rather there is in me living water which speaketh in me, saying within me: Come to the Father.” Wherefore, aflame with the divine Spirit, thou didst permit the wild beasts to separate thee quickly from the world and send thee to Christ Whom thou didst desire. Him do thou entreat, that He save our souls.

Both now ..., in the same tone:

O ye people, let us celebrate the forefeast of the nativity of Christ, and lifting up our thoughts to Bethlehem, let us elevate ourselves in mind; and with the eyes of our souls let us gaze upon the Virgin who cometh to give birth in the cave to our Lord and God. And Joseph, beholding the magnitude of His miracles, supposed that he beheld a man wrapped as a babe in swaddling-bands, but perceived from the testimony of things that He was the true God, Who bestoweth great mercy upon our souls.

Troparion of the holy hieromartyr, in Tone IV:

As thou didst share in the ways of the apostles * and didst occupy their throne, * thou didst find thine activity to be a passage to divine vision, * O divinely inspired one. * Wherefore, ordering the word of truth, * thou didst suffer for the Faith even to the shedding of thy blood, ** O hieromartyr Ignatius, entreat Christ God, that our souls be saved.

Glory ..., Both now ..., Troparion of the forefeast, in Tone IV:

Make ready, O Bethlehem! * Open unto all, O Eden! * Adorn thyself, O Ephratha! * For the Tree of life hath blossomed forth from the Virgin in the cave. * Her womb is shown to be a noetic paradise, * wherein lieth a divine garden, * eating from whence we live, not dying like Adam. * Christ is born to raise up His image ** which before was fallen.

AT COMPLINE

We chant a Triodion, the Irmos of each ODE of which we chant twice, the Troparia repeated to make up 6 in number. After each ODE both choirs together chant the Irmos of the ODE.

Triodion, the acrostic whereof is: “To the second”, in Tone II:

ODE I

Irmos: Let us sing unto the Lord, * Who by His divine command * dried up the billowing and impassable sea, * and through it led the Israelite people on foot: * for gloriously hath He been glorified.

Refrain: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

Ineffable is the condescension of the Word of God; for Christ is Himself known as the God-man. Reckoned as God not by being caught up to heaven, but by showing Himself to us all in the guise of a servant; for gloriously hath He been glorified.

Christ cometh voluntarily to serve: the Creator now receiveth the image of impoverished Adam, enriching him with divinity, and granting him a strange restoration and regeneration, in that He is compassionate.

Lord, have mercy! (Thrice). Glory ..., Both now ...,

Kontakion of the forefeast, in Tone III:

Spec. Mel.: “Today the Virgin ...”:

Today the Virgin cometh to ineffably give birth * to the pre-eternal Word in the cave. * Having heard this dance O world, * and with the angels and shepherds glorify the pre-eternal God, ** Who is to appear as a little babe.

ODE VIII

Irmos: The relentless fire, fed with endless fuel, * drew back in fear before the pious Children, * pure in body and in soul; * and as the flame waned in strength, * they sang an everlasting song: * O all ye works, praise ye the Lord * and supremely exalt Him throughout all ages.

“I shall make all of you My kinsfolk, if ye keep My commandments,” Christ telleth men, having issued forth from the womb of the pure one; and, granting peace to them, He now proposeth to look upon the lowly. “Ye who know Me as Lord, hymn and supremely exalt Me throughout all ages!”

Thy nativity was contrary to the order of the flesh, O Word of God, for flesh and blood did not bring Thy holy flesh into being, but rather the coming of the Holy Spirit and the overshadowing of the Most High. And we who know Thee as Lord hymn and supremely exalt Thee throughout all ages.

Diodion, the acrostic whereof is: “Of the third”, in Tone II:

Irmos: Refusing to obey the edict of the tyrant, the three venerable children were cast into the furnace, and confessed God, chanting: Bless the Lord, O ye works of the Lord!

Let us put away from us the dream of slothfulness, and with vigilance of soul let us greet Christ Who is born of the pure Maiden, crying aloud: O all ye Works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord!

Let good works be sufficient for us, the treasure of our soul, that with radiant countenance we may sing to Christ Who is born: O all ye Works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord!

Having caused our talant to increase through good works, as gifts for the Giver, instead of gold, frankincense and myrrh let us offer them to Christ, Who cometh to be born of the divine Virgin Maiden.

Verse: We praise, we bless, and we worship the Lord, hymning and supremely exalting Him throughout all ages.

And we chant the Irmos: “Refusing to obey the edict ...”, and make a prostration.

Irmos: Refusing to obey the edict of the tyrant, the three venerable children were cast into the furnace, and confessed God, chanting: Bless the Lord, O ye works of the Lord!

ODE IX

Irmos: Thou hast magnified, O Christ, the Theotokos who bore Thee: * from her, O our Creator, hast Thou taken a body of like passions to our own, * and released us from all our transgressions. * Wherefore with all generations * we call her blessed and Thee do we magnify.

And each choir, having chanted this Irmos, maketh a prostration.

Having cast off all the defilement of the passions, with chaste mind let us receive the advent of Christ as is meet; for He cometh forth to take up the flesh without defilement, and to grant divine restoration unto all through the Spirit.

Gazing upon Christ Who abaseth Himself, let us elevate ourselves above the passions, which drag us down; and having learned the faith, with goodly zeal let us humble ourselves in spirit, so as not to think on haughty things, that having done high deeds we may exalt Him Who is born.

Irmos: Thou didst contain within thy Womb * the God whom nothing can contain, * and hast brought forth joy to the world, * wherefore we sing thy praises, * O Virgin Theotokos.

Christ commandeth those of right mind to home in His advent from the Virgin. For, lo! He cometh to be born.

At Thy second coming, O Christ, deign that I may dwell with Thy sheep at Thy right hand, for I honor Thine advent in the flesh.

And the Irmos: “Thou didst contain within thy Womb ...,” is chanted, following which all make a prostration.

AT MATINS

On “God is the Lord ...,” the Troparion of the forefeast, in Tone IV:

Make ready, O Bethlehem! * Open unto all, O Eden! * Adorn thyself, O Ephratha! * For the Tree of life hath blossomed forth from the Virgin in the cave. * Her womb is shown to be a noetic paradise, * wherein lieth a divine garden, * eating from whence we live, not dying like Adam. * Christ is born to raise up His image ** which before was fallen. (Twice)

Glory ..., that of the holy hieromartyr, in Tone IV:

As thou didst share in the ways of the apostles * and didst occupy their throne, * thou didst find thine activity to be a passage to divine vision, * O divinely inspired one. * Wherefore, ordering the word of truth, * thou didst suffer for the Faith even to the shedding of thy blood, ** O hieromartyr Ignatius, entreat Christ God, that our souls be saved.

Both now ..., that of the forefeast.

After the 1st chanting of the Psalter, the Sessional Hymn, in Tone I:

Spec. Mel.: “Thy tomb, O Savior ...”:

Be glad, O Bethlehem! Make ready, O Ephratha! For, lo! the Ewe-lamb, bearing the great Shepherd in her womb, cometh to give birth; and the magi, seeing the divine star beforehand, rejoice, chanting with the shepherds in uprightness of heart.

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

He Who bowed down the heavens and made His abode within the Virgin cometh in the flesh, to be born in the cave of Bethlehem as was written, and to be seen as a babe, imparting life to babes in the womb. Wherefore, rejoicing, let us now greet Him with uprightness of heart.

After the 2nd chanting of the Psalter, the Sessional Hymn, in Tone IV:

Spec. Mel.: “Go thou quickly before ...”:

O ye virgins, anticipate the joy of the Virgin! O mothers, with the magi and the angels, the shepherds and us, praise ye the journey of the Mother of Christ our God; for the Virgin cometh to give birth in the city of Bethlehem to a Son, the pre-eternal God, Who saveth the world from corruption.

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

Rejoice, O Sion! Adorn thyself, O Bethlehem! For the Sustainer of all, having sent forth a star, hath announced His infinite condescension, before which the hosts of heaven tremble: Truly He Who alone is the Lover of mankind is immutably born of the Virgin!

Canon of the forefeast, with 8 Troparia, including the Irmos; and that of the holy hieromartyr, with 6 Troparia.

ODE I

Canon of the forefeast, the acrostic whereof is: “Chanted are these hymns of the forefeast”, the composition of Joseph, in Tone I:

Irmos: Let us all chant a triumphant hymn unto God * Who wrought wondrous miracles * with His upraised arm, * and saved Israel, * for He hath been glorified.

Let us begin today to celebrate the forefeast of the nativity of Christ Who was born in the flesh from the Virgin Mother in the cave of Bethlehem in His surpassing loving-kindness.

The pre-eternal God, Who is seen as a babe, is wrapped in swaddling bands and laid in a manger, releasing me from the bonds of sin. Glory be to His might!

Theotokion: Eden is opened to Thee Who in the flesh wast born in Bethlehem from the divine Virgin Maiden, O Master; we hymn Thine awesome dispensation.

Canon of the hieromartyr, the composition of Andrew of Crete, in the same tone.

Irmos: Let us all chant a triumphant hymn unto God ...,

Celebrating with splendor, let us form ourselves into ranks; in a sacred manner the martyr Ignatius doth summon the Church of Christ to his much-hymned suffering.

O Ignatius, as the most radiant luminary of the Church thou hast enlightened all the ends of the earth, and, having arrived from the East, thou hast shone upon the lands of the West.

Emulating the tribulations of Paul in the cities and towns while thou wast a prisoner, O Ignatius, thou wast in nowise troubled, making steadfast the Churches of Christ by thy frequent epistles.

O all-blessed Ignatius, we all hymn thy glorious memory, and with hymns we honor Him Who crowned thy most precious head, O thou who art blessed of God.

“Let my flesh be lacerated, let my blood flow forth! In my desire I make haste, ready for the wild beasts, adorned for crushing, for the fire, for the sword, for being devoured!” the martyr cried aloud.

Theotokion: Adorn thyself, O Eden, for Ephratha hath been made ready for the Creator, Who is to be born from the Virgin Mother in the cave of Bethlehem, in His surpassing loving-kindness.

ODE III

Canon of the forefeast

Irmos: The stone which the builders have rejected, * the same hath become the cornerstone: * this is the rock upon which Christ hath established the Church, * which He hath redeemed from among the nations.

Let all creation chant the hymns of the forefeast unto Him Who was begotten of the Father before the morning-star, and hath now shone forth ineffably from the Virgin, and is born in the flesh in Bethlehem, in His surpassing loving-kindness.

A star hath shone forth from the tribe of Judah, which the kings have recognized. They make a journey from the lands of the East, and hasten to arrive, that they might gaze upon Christ Who is born in the flesh in Bethlehem.

Theotokion: **P**erceiving the incarnation of Christ, Isaiah manifestly prophesieth in the Holy Spirit, saying: “The Lord is born from a Virgin as a babe, for our regeneration! His government is upon His shoulders!”

Canon of the holy hieromartyr

Irmos: **The stone which the builders have rejected ...,**

O father, thou hast been shown forth as a model of sacred suffering, a tower of endurance, a rule of courage, a pillar of the Church, the confirmation of the Faith, a sign of virtue: having been crowned with honored sufferings in Christ.

Truly wast thou called the God-bearer, O father, for held in the arms of the Lord while yet a babe, thou wast set forth by Him Who saith to us: “Be ye for Me like unto this child!”

“I am the pure wheat of God,” thou didst cry, O father; “and I hasten to be ground by the wild beasts, that my body may be crushed, that my members may be devoured, that I may become food for the beasts, that I may be shown to be pure bread for God!”

Thou didst complete the strange contest of martyrdom with endurance, and didst show forth wondrous courage surpassing all who suffered before thee, consumed with love of unremitting zeal which, like fire, set thy soul aflame.

Ever burning in spirit, the hieromartyr cried out with love in the midst of his afflictions: “I press on toward Christ, rejoicing! I am crucified with Christ! I no longer live myself, but Christ alone liveth within me!” said he.

Theotokion: **C**ome forth, O Isaiah, and cry aloud: “Behold! a Virgin will conceive in her womb the Redeemer of the world, and will give birth in a cave! And the name of Him Who will be born is Jesus, God is with us, Emmanuel, Sabaoth!”

Kontakion of the forefeast, in Tone III:

Spec. Mel.: “Today the Virgin ...”:

Today the Virgin cometh to ineffably give birth * to the pre-eternal Word in the cave. * Having heard this dance O world, * and with the angels and shepherds glorify the pre-eternal God, ** Who is to appear as a little babe.

Ikos: **O** truly awesome wonder past all telling! He Who giveth existence to all, in His goodness hath entered the womb of the holy Virgin, and cometh to be born in the cave, and to be laid in a manger. And His star is a herald from on high to the magi who come to do Him homage with gifts, drawing from afar those who zealously follow the prophecy of Balaam, who said: “A star will proclaim beforehand the little babe, the pre-eternal God!”

Sessional Hymn of the holy hieromartyr, in Tone III:

Spec. Mel.: “Awed by the beauty of thy virginity ...”:

Guided by Christ God, thou didst make bright thy sacred vesture, having truly received witness, O God-bearer; for thou didst provoke the wild beasts to separate thee from the world, emulating the wondrous Apostle Paul. Wherefore, in Rome, O father, thou didst finish thy martyrdom as is meet.

Glory ..., another Sessional Hymn of the holy hieromartyr, in Tone VIII:

Spec. Mel.: “Of the Wisdom ...”:

Shining forth like a star from the East, thou didst illumine the world, resplendent in the rays of thy discourses; thou didst drive away the darkness, and like Paul didst valiantly finish the race, enduring tribulations among the nations and in the cities. Wherefore, like wheat thou wast ground by the teeth of wild beasts, as an offering for thy Lord, O blessed God-bearer Ignatius. Entreat Christ God, that He grant remission of sins to those who honor thy holy memory with love.

Both now ..., Sessional Hymn of the forefeast, in the same melody:

The Word of God, Who shone forth without commingling from the bosom of the Father before time began, and within time came forth seedlessly from thy womb, O most pure one, lifting up him who of old had grievously stumbled, raising him up to his primal beauty. The armies of the incorporeal beings come forth for His nativity and mystically send forth hymns of victory to mortals, crying: Glory to God Who hath given us peace, breaking down the middle wall of enmity, as is His good pleasure!

ODE IV

Canon of the forefeast

Irmos: Foreseeing in the Spirit O Prophet Habbakuk, * the incarnation of the Word, * thou didst proclaim, crying aloud: * When the years draw nigh, Thou shalt be known; * when the season cometh, Thou shalt be shown forth! * Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

O ye mountains and hills, ye groves of woods, ye rivers and seas, and every living creature, leap up in gladness! For Jesus our salvation cometh to be born of the Virgin in the city of Bethlehem!

Take up thy psaltery, O Prophet David, and chant openly, inspired by the Holy Spirit; for Christ God, the Lord of glory, Who without commingling shone forth from the bosom of the Father before the morning-star, is to be born from the Virgin!

How can the least of caves, exceedingly poor, receive Thee Who art born in the flesh, O Word? How art Thou wrapped in swaddling-bands, Who clothest the sky in clouds? How dost Thou lie in a manger of dumb beasts as a babe.

Canon of the holy hieromartyr

Irmos: Foreseeing in the Spirit ...,

As a prisoner thou dost illumine the earth with the effulgence of thy sufferings, O sacred Ignatius; for making thy transit like the sun, shedding rays of martyrdom, thou didst enlighten the whole evening, shining forth from the East.

Bound like Paul between irrational beasts, thou didst hasten to Rome, O wise Ignatius; yet even though thou wast chained thou didst not cease to make the Church steadfast, sending epistles to all the cities, that all the hierarchs of Christ be of good cheer.

“I hasten to become Christ's! I desire Christ alone, for I am wholly Christ's!”, thou didst cry out, O spiritual athlete. “I press onward toward Him; I strive, that I might reach Him! Wherefore, I endure fire, the sword and wild beasts, that I may receive life!”

“Sweet to me is affliction, and lovely are the chains I bear for Him Whom I desire!”, thou didst cry, O spiritual athlete; “Persecutions are sweeter to me than my homeland, as is my being broken sweeter than any gladness; my pangs are dearer to me than all the health of my body.”

“Let the mouths of the wild beasts be my death and their bellies my tomb!”, thou didst cry, O spiritual athlete; “Let no one hinder, let no one break my might; for I hasten to be ground like wheat, that God may find me to be pure bread!”

Theotokion: As God, O Good One, Thou wast well-pleased to be born for our sake in a cave of the earth, abasing Thyself in embracing our low estate in Thy loving-kindness, issuing forth, incarnate, from the Virgin, yet remaining the only Son of the Father and Thy Mother.

ODE V

Canon of the forefeast

Irmos: Grant us Thy peace, O Son of God, * for we know no other God than Thee, * and we call upon Thy Name, * for Thou art the God of the living and the dead.

Rejoicing let the clouds drop forth sweetness; for the Lord draweth nigh already to be born as a babe of the pure Virgin in an earthen cave. O ye divine prophets of God, leap up! For Christ the Truth cometh to fulfill your divine words, being born as a babe.

Theotokion: O Eden which wast locked against me of old, open thyself from henceforth, beholding Christ Who is become a babe in the flesh, for He hath been well-pleased to be born in the city of Bethlehem from the Virgin Maiden.

Canon of the holy hieromartyr

Irmos: Grant us Thy peace, O Son of God ...,

“Such a hierarch hath become for us; wise, venerable, faithful, undefiled and innocent,” cried Paul, describing beforehand the hallowed image of thy sacred character.

Bound and led forth as a hierarch and prisoner of Christ, O Ignatius, thou didst write to the Churches and cities, confirming all in confession.

Piously emulating the corrections of Paul, thou didst endure all tribulations, O right wondrous hieromartyr, thou radiance of the East and star of the evening.

Moved to contend by the desire of Paul, with chains on thy hands thou didst travel the world, O hieromartyr, that by thy sacred sufferings thou mightest be right manifest to all.

We hymn thy struggles, we honor thy fetters with censing and psalms, we venerate the dust of thy relics as rendered redolent of myrrh by thy sacred sufferings.

Theotokion: Becoming like unto mankind through thee, God is born as a babe for our sake, O Bride of God, yet remaineth wholly immutable. God, having become man, is seen in the flesh.

ODE VI

Canon of the forefeast

Irmos: Emulating the Prophet Jonah, I cry aloud: * Free Thou my life from corruption, O Good One; * and save me who crieth out: * O Savior of the world, Glory be to Thee!

To the astrologers doth heaven now shine forth on earth in the city Of David: the King of heaven, Who is born for our sake.

Manifestly doth the prophet speak forth with eloquence, crying out: “O Bethlehem, thou house of Ephratha, wherein God appeareth from the Virgin, leap up and dance!”

In the cave of Bethlehem the Virgin manifestly giveth birth to the Lord and Creator of all, and, having wrapped Him as babe in swaddling bands, she now layeth Him in the manger.

Canon of the holy hieromartyr

Irmos: Emulating the Prophet Jonah ...,

Truly loving Him Whom thou didst unwaveringly desire, and having noetically kindled a fire for Him, O Ignatius, thou didst have in thee the water which liveth and speaketh.

Fulfilling the testimony of thy conscience, thou wast not dissuaded at the sight of the wild beasts, nor wast thou affrighted, for thou didst desire to be ground like wheat by their jaws.

O hieromartyr, thy long torments and unbroken bonds, thy rending asunder in Rome, and the fire of the torturers, which thou didst endure for thy Creator, thou didst reckon as naught.

Burning greatly with the love of Christ, O spiritual athlete, thou didst tread upon the fire of thy trials as upon the morning dew, that thou mightest attain Him Who loveth thee thereby.

Even though, thirsting, thou didst drain the cup of Christ, yet didst thou ever prefer to suffer rather than to live; and thou didst cry out: “These things are to me nothing more than the means whereby I may attain life!”

Theotokion: **A**dorn thyself, O Bethlehem! Prepare thyself, O Ephratha! For He Who was begotten of the Father without mother is carried in the womb by a Mother without father, and is born thereby saving us.

Kontakion of the holy hieromartyr, in Tone III:

Spec. Mel.: “Today the Virgin ...”:

The luminous day of thy radiant struggles proclaimeth to all beforehand * Him Who hath been born in the cave; * for thirsting to delight in His love, * thou didst hasten to be devoured by the wild beasts. ** Wherefore, thou hast been called the God-bearer, O all-wise Ignatius.

Ikos: **O**nce Abraham sacrificed his son, prefiguring the slaying of Him Who sustaineth all things; and thou, O divinely wise one, hast offered thy whole self to Him as a sacrifice, becoming food for the wild beasts, and showing thyself to be pure wheat for thy Creator, truly abiding forever in the granaries of heaven, delighting Him by thy zeal. Having forsaken the whole world for His sake, thou hast been called the God-bearer, O all-wise Ignatius.

ODE VII

Canon of the forefeast

Irmos: **T**hy children who were in the furnace **O** Savior, * were neither touched nor troubled by **T**he fire. * Whereupon the three sang, as with a single mouth * **T**hy praises and blessed **T**hee, saying: * '**O** God of our fathers, **B**lessed art **T**hou.'

Showing forth the advent of Christ in the flesh, Jeremiah cried aloud: “God hath appeared on earth, incarnate; and He hath found every path of knowledge, being born of His Mother in Bethlehem.”

Lo! from the root of Jesse a rod hath sprung forth producing Christ as its flower. On Him Who is now born thereon in the cave doth the Spirit of understanding, counsel and divine vision rest.

Let us listen to the sacred words: the Lord is born as a babe for our sake. His government is upon His shoulders, and He is called the Angel of the great Counsel of the great Father, Christ, the Prince of peace!

Canon of the holy hieromartyr

Irmos: Thy children who were in the furnace O Savior ...,

Thou didst have within thee none of the fire which loveth fuel, O Ignatius, but rather the living water which speaketh, the water which crieth aloud: “Come thou to the Father!”, the water which runneth from life to the life which transcendeth us.

“Let the fangs of the wild beasts be for me a sword, weapons and slaughter; let the bellies of the lions be for me a tomb; and let the fire devour me before corruption devoureth my remains!” said Ignatius.

“To me death is sweet,” he said; “to me all the pangs of my labors are sweet: the wild beasts are delightful, and this fire is like dew unto me, if it doth not withhold Life from me. Wherefore, I hasten to die, that I may live with Christ!”

“I prefer not to live in the body, for I desire to live in spirit. A thing of divine love is it for me to live for Christ. To Him do I go; Him. do I love, and Him do I hope to receive!”, he said.

Theotokion: He Who was foretold by the prophet of old approacheth me as a babe born from the Virgin; Adam rejoiceth, and Eve, our first mother, is released from her pangs. And David, the father of her who giveth birth, danceth with her.

ODE VIII

Canon of the forefeast

Irmos: Him of whom the angels and all the hosts of heaven are in awe * as their Lord and Creator, * ye priests hymn, ye children praise, * ye peoples bless and supremely exalt * throughout all ages.

The Lord manifestly cometh to His own by a strange birth, let us receive Him, that, being born in the cave, He may again make His own those who were exiled from the sweetness of paradise.

Lo! our Restoration cometh! With zeal let us give voice to hymns of joy and let us chant the songs of the forefeast, unto Him Who is to be contained by the least of caves.

That which the Lord hath promised, He hath already fulfilled, having given us His Virgin Mother from the seed of David. From her hath a Babe been born in the flesh in the city of Bethlehem, in a manner past all telling.

Canon of the holy hieromartyr

Irmos: Him of Whom the angels ...,

Hymned be Ignatius, the godly hierarch, twice crowned, as martyr and pastor; for, having suffered for the love of God, desiring to be desired, he was not dissuaded from suffering.

With journeys of faith, like the sun from the heavens thou didst valiantly pass over the ends of the earth; and having passed without waning, from the earth to Christ, thou illuminest the world with the light of incorruption.

Thirsting for the cup of the suffering of Christ, thou didst hasten, bound, O wise Ignatius; and having reached the arena, thou didst not pause, crying aloud: "I thirst for Christ with an eternal thirst!"

O the love and ardor of divine zeal! He is crucified to the desires that he might live for Him Who loveth. He thirsteth for Him Who thirsted and loveth Him Who loveth, preferring to die, that He might live forever.

Putting aside the flesh, he immaterially furnished wings to his mind; to soar aloft to Him Who Is, desiring Him Who loveth; for He is truly eternal Desire, Wisdom, the Life of those who have existed.

Theotokion: **C**hrist, the Star, hath shone forth out of Jacob, and the magi hasten to the city of Bethlehem, to hymn, worship and honor Him Who was born from the womb of the pure Theotokos.

ODE IX

Canon of the forefeast

Irmos: **T**he ever-flowing wellspring of life, * light-bearing candlestick of grace, * the animate temple, and most pure cloud, * wider than the heavens and the earth, * the Theotokos do we the faithful magnify.

With the patriarchs and all the righteous, and with the holy prophets let us leap up. The Lord Jesus, our Deliverance, Enlightenment, Life and Salvation, is now born from the Virgin in the city of David!

Already the outer gates of the incarnation of the divine Word have manifestly been opened unto all! Rejoice, O ye heavens! Ye angels, leap up! Let the earth be glad in the Spirit with the shepherd and magi!

As a noetic phial the Virgin holdeth Christ as though He were ointment which hath not been poured forth; and He cometh forth to be manifestly poured out by the Spirit in the cave, that He might fill our souls with His sweet fragrance.

Canon of the holy hieromartyr

Irmos: **T**he ever-flowing wellspring of life ...,

Ignatius, the seer of things afar off, the minister of the highest mysteries, performing the immaculate service, as a priest hath made himself a sacrifice through martyrdom, and prepareth himself for the wild beasts and the fire.

Desiring to clothe thyself in the image of God, thou didst remove the ancient image. Wherefore, receiving the pristine beauty of man's primal appearance through that which is new, not that which is old, thou dwellest together with Christ.

By thy sufferings thou didst make thy sacred vesture yet more sacred, O most sacred one; wherefore, having received a twofold crown, with the martyrs and pastors thou dost hymn Christ our God, O Hieromartyr.

“I am the pure wheat of God,” thou didst say; “and I am ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that in sanctity I may be made into pure bread for God Who loveth mankind; and, loving Him, I do not refuse to die.”

Illumined with light unapproachable, and dwelling in the mansions on high, O sacred Ignatius, praying continually to God thy Creator on behalf of thy flock, cease thou never in thy supplications.

Theotokion: **R**ejoice, O pure one, thou animate city of God, wherein God was well-pleased to make His abode! For, without leaving the highest, He descended within thee, like rain upon the earth, O Birthgiver of God, and is born as a babe in the city of Bethlehem.

Exapostilarion of the holy hieromartyr:

Spec. Mel.: “By the Spirit in the sanctuary ...”:

The beginningless Word, the Wisdom of God, communing with us in His ineffable goodness, taught the people of old, holding thee in His arms, O God-bearer Ignatius; and, living in God, thou didst pass, rejoicing, through the sufferings of martyrdom.

Glory ..., Both now ..., Exapostilarion of the forefeast:

Spec. Mel.: “Make ready beforehand ...”:

Adorn thyself, O Bethlehem, as a new dwelling-place! Ye manger and cave, ye company of shepherds, ye magi from the lands of the East, come early unto Him, guided by the radiance of the star; for therein the Virgin already giveth birth to Him Who is most perfect, as a babe.

On the Praises, 4 Stichera of the forefeast, the acrostic whereof is the (Greek) alphabet, the composition of Romanus the Melodist, in Tone VI:

Go forth, ye angelic hosts, * and prepare the manger in Bethlehem; * for the Word is born, Wisdom issueth forth, * and the Church receiveth His salutation. * Unto the joy of the Theotokos * say, O ye people: * O our blessed God Who hast come forth, ** glory be to Thee!

Let the mountains drop forth sweetness! * For, lo! God cometh from Theman! * O ye nations, submit yourselves! * Rejoice, ye prophets! * Leap up, O ye patriarchs! * Clap your hands, O ye mortals! * Christ, the mighty and great Prince, is born! ** The King of the heavens cometh to earth!

Lifting mankind up from the earth, * the Creator hath come, * making His royal image new again. * Rejoice together, ye hosts on high, and sing! * The middle wall of enmity hath been broken down! * He hath come Who hath ruled. * For God is become a man, Christ our God, ** the King of Israel.

Come, O hard-hearted Israel! * Part thou the cloud * which hangeth over thy soul,
* and recognize the Creator Who is born in the cave. * He is the expectation of the
nations. * He shall abolish thy feasts; * for thou wilt not submit to cry out: Christ is
come, ** the King of Israel!

Glory ..., in Tone VI:

Christ draweth nigh! * Prepare thyself, O Bethlehem! * The salvation of the
nations already shineth forth! * Adorn the manger, * assemble the shepherds, * call
forth the magi from Persia, * and summon the armies of the incorporeal intelligences!
** The King of the heavens cometh to earth!

Both now ..., in Tone VI:

Jealousy and fire devoured thee, * O truly mindless deceiver, * and the curse of the
law. * For, lo! the Virgin, as Isaiah foretold, * hath conceived in her womb * and
layeth in the manger the King * in Whom no mighty ruler ** shall be lacking in the
tribe of Judah.

On the Aposticha, these Stichera of the forefeast, in Tone IV:

Adorn thyself, O Bethlehem! Sing, O city of Sion! Rejoice, O wilderness,
betrothing joy beforehand! For the star cometh forth to Bethlehem, heralding Christ,
Who is to be born; the cave receiveth Him Whom naught can contain; and the
manger maketh ready to accept Life eternal. To Him let us all chant and cry aloud:
Save Thou our souls, O Jesus God, Who didst become incarnate for our sake!

Verse: God shall come forth out of Theman, * and the Holy One out of a
mountain overshadowed and densely wooded.

Christ our God, Who manifestly cometh, shall arrive, and will not delay. He shall
manifest Himself through her who knew not wedlock, and shall rest now in the cave.
He Whom heaven cannot contain shall lie in a manger of dumb beasts. Receive Him
Who in thee shall be wrapped in swaddling-bands, Who by His word hath loosed us
from irrationality! The star proclaimeth Him, the magi offer worship, the shepherds
pipe, beholding the strange wonder, and the angels chant on earth, seeing the
deliverance of our race.

Verse: O Lord, I have heard Thy report, and I was afraid; * O Lord, I
considered Thy works, and I was stricken with awe.

Dance, O Isaiah, receiving the Word of God! Prophecy unto the Maiden Mary, the
bush which burnt with fire, yet was not consumed by the effulgence of the Godhead!
Adorn thyself well, O Bethlehem! Open thy gates, O Eden! Ye magi, come to behold
Salvation wrapped in swaddling-bands in the manger, Whose star shone above the
cave: The Lord, the Bestower of life, Who saveth our race.

Glory ..., of the holy hieromartyr, the composition of the Studite, in Tone I:

Thine annual festival, O God-bearer Ignatius, hath arisen like an animate pillar and an inspired cloud, proclaiming thy mysteries and the mighty deeds which thou didst show forth when upholding the Faith even to the shedding of thy blood. Yea, blessed and ever-memorable was thy voice when thou didst say: “As the grain of God I am ground by the teeth of the wild beasts.” Wherefore, as thou wast an emulator of the suffering of thy Christ, pray thou, that our souls be saved.

Both now ..., of the forefeast, in Tone VI:

Adorn thyself well, O cave! For the ewe lamb cometh, bearing Christ in her womb, O manger, receive Him Who by His word hath released us mortals from irrational acts! Ye shepherds, piping, bear witness to the awesome wonder! Ye magi from Persia, bring gold, frankincense and myrrh to the King! For the Lord hath appeared from the Virgin Mother! And His Mother, gazing down upon Him, bowed her head like a handmaid, and exclaimed to Him Who was held in her arms: How wast Thou sown within me? How didst Thou spring forth within me, O my Redeemer and God!

AT LITURGY

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

Let all creation chant the hymns of the forefeast unto Him Who was begotten of the Father before the morning-star, and hath now shone forth ineffably from the Virgin, and is born in the flesh in Bethlehem, in His surpassing loving-kindness. (Twice)

A star hath shone forth from the tribe of Judah, which the kings have recognized. They make a journey from the lands of the East, and hasten to arrive, that they might gaze upon Christ Who is born in the flesh in Bethlehem. (Twice)

Truly loving Him Whom thou didst unwaveringly desire, and having noetically kindled a fire for Him, O Ignatius, thou didst have in thee the water which liveth and speaketh.

Fulfilling the testimony of thy conscience, thou wast not dissuaded at the sight of the wild beasts, nor wast thou affrighted, for thou didst desire to be ground like wheat by their jaws.

O hieromartyr, thy long torments and unbroken bonds, thy rending asunder in Rome, and the fire of the torturers, which thou didst endure for thy Creator, thou didst reckon as naught.

Theotokion: Adorn thyself, O Bethlehem! Prepare thyself, O Ephratha! For He Who was begotten of the Father without mother is carried in the womb by a Mother without father, and is born thereby saving us.

Troparion of the forefeast, in Tone IV:

Make ready, O Bethlehem! * Open unto all, O Eden! * Adorn thyself, O Ephratha! * For the Tree of life hath blossomed forth from the Virgin in the cave. * Her womb is shown to be a noetic paradise, * wherein lieth a divine garden, * eating from whence we live, not dying like Adam. * Christ is born to raise up His image ** which before was fallen.

Troparion of the holy hieromartyr, in Tone IV:

As thou didst share in the ways of the apostles * and didst occupy their throne, * thou didst find thine activity to be a passage to divine vision, * O divinely inspired one. * Wherefore, ordering the word of truth, * thou didst suffer for the Faith even to the shedding of thy blood, ** O hieromartyr Ignatius, entreat Christ God, that our souls be saved.

Kontakion of the holy hieromartyr, in Tone III:

The luminous day of thy radiant struggles proclaimeth to all beforehand * Him Who hath been born in the cave; * for thirsting to delight in His love, * thou didst hasten to be devoured by the wild beasts. ** Wherefore, thou hast been called the God-bearer, O most wise Ignatius.

Kontakion of the forefeast, in Tone III:

Today the Virgin cometh to ineffably give birth * to the pre-eternal Word in the cave. * Having heard this dance O world, * and with the angels and shepherds glorify the pre-eternal God, ** Who is to appear as a little babe.

Prokeimenon, in Tone VII: The righteous man shall be glad in the Lord, * and shall hope in Him.

Verse: Harken, O God, unto my prayer, when I make supplication unto Thee.

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS, §311 (4: 14-5: 6)

Brethren: As we have a great High Priest Who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but He that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made a high priest, but He that said unto Him: Thou art My Son today have I begotten Thee. As He saith also in another place: Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Alleluia, in Tone IV: The righteous man shall flourish like a palm-tree, and like a cedar in Lebanon shall he be multiplied.

Verse: They that are planted in the house of the Lord, in the courts of our God they shall blossom forth.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK, §41 (9: 33-41)

At that time, Jesus and His disciples came to Capernaum, and being in the house he asked them: What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them: If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them: Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me. And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he

followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said: Forbid him not, for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

Communion Verse: In everlasting remembrance shall the righteous be; he shall not be afraid of evil tidings.