

THE 26th DAY OF THE MONTH OF DECEMBER
SYNAXIS OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS
COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLY HIEROMARTYR EUTHYMIUS, BISHOP OF
SARDIS
AT VESPERS

We do not chant any Kathisma, unless this feast falleth on Sunday.

On “Lord I have cried ...,” 6 Stichera of the feast, in Tone II:

Come, let us rejoice in the Lord, telling of this present mystery: The middle wall of partition hath been demolished, the fiery sword is removed, the cherub doth withdraw from the gate of life, and I partake of the food of paradise, from whence I was driven away because of disobedience; for the immutable Image of the Father, the Image of His eternity, doth assume the guise of a servant, issuing forth from the Mother who knew not wedlock, without undergoing change, yet He remained what He was before - our true God; and He hath received what He was not, becoming a man in His love for mankind. To Him let us cry aloud: O God Who wast born of the Virgin, have mercy on us! (Twice)

The composition of Anatolius: **W**hen the Lord Jesus was born from the holy Virgin, all things were enlightened; for when the shepherds piped, the magi offered homage and the angels sang, Herod was troubled, for God, the Savior of our souls, appeared in the flesh. (Twice)

Thy kingdom, O Christ God, is a kingdom of all the ages, and thy dominion is for all generations. O Christ God Who wast incarnate by the Holy Spirit and became a man through the Ever-virgin Mary, Thou hast shone forth Thine advent upon us as light. O Light from Light, Effulgence of the Father, Thou hast illumined all creation. Every creature that hath breath praiseth Thee, the Image of the glory of the Father. O Thou Who art and ever shall be, O God Who hast shone forth from the Virgin: Have mercy upon us!

What shall we offer Thee, O Christ, in that Thou hast appeared on earth as a man for our sake? For every creature fashioned by Thee offereth Thee thanksgiving: the angels, hymnody; the heavens, a star; the magi, gifts; the shepherds, their wonder; the earth, a cave; the wilderness, a manger; and we, the Virgin Mother. O God Who hast existed from before time, have mercy upon us!

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

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace! Today Bethlehem receiveth Him Who is ever seated with the Father. Today the angels glorify as God the Babe Who was born. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men!

Entrance, and Great Prokeimenon, in Tone VII: What God is as great as our God? * Thou art God Who worketh wonders.

Verse 1: Thou hast made Thy power known among the peoples; with Thine arm hast Thou redeemed Thy people.

Verse 2: And I said: Now have I made a beginning; this change hath been wrought by the right hand of the Most High.

Verse 3: I remembered the works of the Lord; for I will remember Thy wonders from the beginning.

Note: If it be Saturday evening, we chant the usual Prokeimenon, in Tone VI Prokeimenon, in Tone VI: The Lord is King, * He is clothed with majesty.

Verse 1: The Lord is clothed with strength and He hath girt Himself.

Verse 2: For He established the world which shall not be shaken.

Verse 3: Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, unto length of days.

The Great Prokeimenon “What God is as great as our God ...” and its Stichoi are thus chanted on the eve of the feast. Then followeth the litany.

On the Aposticha, these Stichera, the composition of John, in Tone VIII:

A most glorious mystery is wrought today: nature is restored and God becometh a man! He hath remained what He hath been, and what He hath not been, He hath taken upon Himself, without undergoing either commingling or division.

Verse: From the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee. * The Lord hath sworn and will not repent.

Arriving in Bethlehem, O Lord, Thou didst make Thine abode in the cave; Thou Who hast heaven for Thy throne wast laid in a manger; Thou Whom the armies of the angels surround descended unto shepherds, that Thou mayest save our race, in that Thou art compassionate. Glory be to Thee!

Verse: The Lord said unto my Lord: * Sit Thou at My right hand.

How can I recount this great mystery? He Who is incorporeal hath become incarnate, the Word became flesh; the Invisible became visible; the Intangible is touched; the Beginningless One beginneth to be. The Son of God becometh the Son of man: Jesus Christ, yesterday, today, and for evermore!

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

The shepherds hastened to Bethlehem, proclaiming the true Shepherd Who sitteth on the cherubim and lieth in the manger, having taken on the guise of a babe for our sake. O Lord, glory be to Thee!

Troparion of the feast, in Tone IV:

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, * hath shined the light of knowledge upon the world; * for thereby, they that worshipped the stars * were instructed by a star * to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, * and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. * O Lord, glory be to Thee.

AT COMPLINE

On some other day, the canon of the hieromartyr Euthymius is chanted, the acrostic whereof is: “Christ Who hath been born crowneth thee with swaddling bands, O father”, the composition of Theophanes, in Tone IV:

ODE I

Irmos: Through the deep of the Red Sea, * marched dry shod Israel of old, * and by Moses’ outstretched hands, * raised in the form of a cross, * the power of Amalek was routed in the wilderness.

Wrapped in the wounds of stripes, thou didst piously worship the everlasting Lord Who was born and wrapped in swaddling bands.

The Lord Who was laid in a manger received as a Nativity gift the drops of thy blood and the sores of thy wounds, as better than gold, frankincense and myrrh, O father.

The Lord Who hath been born and received gold from the magi, O holy hierarch, receiveth from thee thine ardent love for Him, and the constancy and might of thy true patience.

Emulating the death of the Master by thine own death, O all-honored one manifest in sanctity, thou didst utter the words of the Master, praying radiantly for those who slew thee.

Theotokion: Today the Creator of all is born from thee for us, O blessed one, and He Who hath wrapped the sea in mist is wrapped in swaddling bands, O Ever-virgin Mother.

ODE III

Irmos: Thy Church, O Christ, rejoiceth in Thee crying aloud: * Thou, O Lord, art my strength, * my refuge and foundation.

As a hierarch, instead of frankincense, gold and myrrh, thou didst offer the wounds of martyrdom to Christ Who was born in Bethlehem.

Thou didst emulate Stephen, the protomartyr of Christ, O Euthymius, praying for the salvation of those who slew thee.

With constancy of mind and valor of soul thou didst denounce the impious Leo who was raging against the Savior.

Thou didst carefully keep the commandment of the Savior, O venerable Euthymius, laying down thy life for thy friends.

Theotokion: Thou wast a field holding the uncontainable Creator, containing Him in the flesh, O divinely joyous and all-immaculate one.

ODE IV

Irmos: Beholding Thee, the Sun of righteousness, * lifted up upon the Cross, * the Church now standeth arrayed and doth worthily cry aloud: * Glory be to Thy power, O Lord!

Smitted upon thy face, thou wast enlightened by divine grace and the wisdom of discourse, O all-blessed one, becoming a companion of Christ Who was buffeted in the flesh for our sake.

The honors of thy priesthood were not shamed, nor were thy grey hairs disgraced, when the mindless ones, who did not honor thine old age, wounded thee without pity.

As a priceless gift thou didst offer thy precious blood to the Redeemer, Who was wrapped in swaddling bands and laid in a manger, O father Euthymius, for it was shed for Him.

Theotokion: **H**e Who created the immaterial essences is born today as a man, taking flesh from thee, O Mother of God. To Him do we chant: glory to Christ God in the highest!

ODE V

Irmos: **T**hou, O Lord, who camest into the world, * art my light, * a holy light turning from the darkness of ignorance * those who sing Thy praises in faith.

To Thee, O Savior, is brought the animate image who honored the image of Thy precious body and the depiction of Thy body.

To Thee, O Master, is brought a pastor, the namesake of courage, who beareth on his own body the wounds of Thy body.

With the outpouring of thine unjustly shed blood thou didst quench the fire of the rage of the iniquitous, O most sacred and all-blessed Euthymius.

Theotokion: **T**he onslaught of corruption hath ceased, for the Virgin hath given birth incorruptibly to Him Who hath freed corrupted human nature from corruption.

ODE VI

Irmos: **T**he church crieth out unto Thee O Lord, * 'I will sacrifice unto Thee with a voice of praise * having been cleansed of the blood of the demons' * by the blood that for mercy's sake flowed from Thy side.

Emulating the nakedness of the Savior of all by thy nakedness, and enduring wounds and pain, O father, thou didst shed thy blood with His blood.

Made rich in the virtues, O all-blessed Euthymius, thou didst offer to Him Who was born from the Virgin gifts of love, hope and a divinely wise faith which abideth forever.

Having served. Christ lawfully, O divinely eloquent father, upon reaching thine end in blood thou didst receive divine and sanctifying discourse as a reward from Him.

Theotokion: **H**e Who fashioned man according to His image hath restored him in His great loving-kindness, having perfectly clad Himself in him through thee, O Virgin Mother of God.

Sessional Hymn of the holy hieromartyr, in Tone I:

Spec. Mel.: “Thy tomb, O Savior ...”:

Having suffered most patiently, O holy hierarch, wise Euthymius, as the magi offered gifts so didst thou offer thy blood to Christ, Who was born from the Virgin. Wherefore, thou hast received a twofold crown of victory, and standest before the all-holy Trinity, praying that we be saved.

ODE VII

Irmos: In the Persian furnace the youths and descendants of Abraham, * burning with a love of piety * rather than by a flame of fire, * cried aloud saying: * Blessed art Thou in the temple of Thy glory, O Lord.

Having mingled the most sacred and divinely given anointing of the priesthood with thy blood, thou didst show thyself to be yet more sanctified, crying: Blessed art Thou in the temple of Thy glory, O Lord my God!

Having set thy feet upon the rock of faith, O all-blessed one, thou didst remain unmoved by all the assaults of temptations, crying out: Blessed art Thou in the temple of Thy glory, O Lord my God!

Thou didst draw down upon thee the grace of the divine protomartyr, whose most excellent emulator thou didst show thyself to be, bestowing blessings as rewards upon those who pitilessly slew thee, O all-blessed Euthymius.

Theotokion: Rejoice, O sanctified and divine habitation of the Most High! For through thee, O Theotokos, joy hath been given to those who cry: Blessed art thou among women, O all-immaculate Lady!

ODE VIII

Irmos: Having spread his hands, Daniel closed the lions' jaws * in their den; * while the zealously pious youths, * girded with virtue, * quenched the power of the fire and cried aloud: * Bless ye the Lord, all ye works of the Lord.

Contending mightily, O father Euthymius, thou didst stand before the tribunal; for thou hadst learned the most perfect boundary of love, in that thou didst consent to die for thy friends, who cry aloud: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Splendid in speech and mind, thou didst acquire a splendid soul and a radiant countenance; and now thou hast become yet more splendid, O Euthymius, opposing the God-hating emperors even to the shedding of thy blood, and crying aloud: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

The mighty of the land, committing most iniquitous deeds, fell upon thee, O blessed one, to slay thee; but, stretching forth thy hands to the Redeemer Who was born from the pure Virgin, thou didst cry aloud: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Theotokion: Behold, now a ruler and prince hath manifestly failed from the tribe of Judah, for thou, O all-immaculate one, hast given birth to Christ, the expectation of the nations, for Whom things were stored up of old. To Him do we chant: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

ODE IX

Irmos: A cornerstone not cut by hand O Virgin, * was cut from thee the unhewn mountain: * even Christ, Who hath joined together the disparate natures; * therefore rejoicing we magnify thee, * O Theotokos.

From things here thou hast passed over to the most calm haven, O father; for like a sparrow thou hast been delivered from the snare of those who hunted thee, O most courageous hieromartyr, blessing Him Who delivered thee.

Shining supra-naturally, thou didst depart unto the Master, the Light Who appeared from the heights of the East, illumined with the radiance of the star which hath now shone forth from Judah.

Thou hast now been deemed worthy to join chorus in the broad expanse of paradise, where the radiance of the blessed and the joy of the saints are, O Euthymius, for they have received thee as a victorious spiritual athlete.

Possessing boldness before God as a holy hierarch and martyr, O all-blessed one, amid this present winter ask thou peace for the Church and remission of offenses for those who hymn thee.

Theotokion: O most pure Birthgiver of God, thou hast caused the Rod to spring forth from the root of Jesse, giving birth for us today to Christ, the Flower of the Godhead, the uncontainable God Who hath now been swaddled as a babe.

Stichera of the holy hieromartyr, in Tone VIII:

Spec. Mel.: “O most glorious wonder ...”:

Still dripping with blood, * swathed in its warmth * and emitting the vapor thereof, * thou didst stand before Christ, O divinely eloquent father Euthymius, * stretching forth now the sores of thy wounds * instead of supplications; * and thou didst pray for those who hymn thee earnestly. * O blessed one, ** pray thou for thy flock.

Thou didst offer a gift unto Christ * Who hath been born * and hath become a babe in the flesh, O venerable one: * thine honorable gray hairs, * adorned with the gifts of the priesthood, O father, * and stained with the blood of thy suffering, * the Orthodox Faith, * hope fervent and truly inviolable, ** and love unshaken, O venerable one.

O venerable one, thou hast been shown to be * a tongue moved by the Spirit, * manifestly declaring true doctrines, * divinely exuding God-given grace, * a harp of piety played by God, * the immovable foundation of Orthodoxy, * a mouth flowing with honey, * a treasury of wisdom, ** the trumpet-voiced trumpet of the Churches.

Glory ..., Both now ..., Theotokion:

The pre-eternal God, receiving flesh through thy blood, * hath shown thee to be an intercessor for all, O pure one; * wherefore, deliver thou thy servants * from all want and every evil circumstance, * and from the snares of the most evil enemy, * and grant that all who glorify and do thee homage ** may partake of the splendor of the elect.

Be it known that on the Afterfeast of the Nativity of Christ and Theophany, Little Compline is chanted without the canon of the Theotokos. At Compline on December 26th, after “It is truly meet” and the Trisagion through “Our Father”, we say the Kontakion for the synaxis of the Theotokos: “He Who was begotten of the Father without mother before the morning star ...”

At Nocturnes we read the usual Kathisma. After the first Trisagion, instead of “Behold, the Bridegroom ...,” we say the Troparion of the feast: “Thy nativity, O Christ our God ...,” after the second Trisagion, we say the Kontakion of the synaxis: “He Who was begotten of the Father ...,” then, “Lord, have mercy!”, 12 times, and the dismissal. We do not say the prayers: “Remember, O Lord ...”

AT MATINS

On “God is the Lord ...,” the Troparion of the feast:

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, * hath shined the light of knowledge upon the world; * for thereby, they that worshipped the stars * were instructed by a star * to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, * and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. ** O Lord, glory be to Thee. (Thrice)

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

Spec. Mel.: “When the stone had been sealed ...”:

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, creation was enlightened, recognizing its Creator; and the choirs of the angels were amazed, beholding the Master, Who is inseparable from the Father, assuming the guise of a servant on earth. Glory be to God Who hath become incarnate! Glory be to Him Who hath been born on earth! Glory be to Him Whose good pleasure it was to save our race!

Glory ..., Both now ..., the foregoing is repeated.

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

Spec. Mel.: “Joseph marveled...”:

Why dost thou marvel, O Mary? Wherefore art thou in awe of what hath taken place within thee? “Because I have given birth within time to the timeless Son,” said she; “and am unaccustomed to conceiving a babe, since I have not known a man, how is it that I give birth to a Son? Who hath ever seen a seedless birthgiving? For where God desireth, the order of nature is overturned, as is it written.” Christ is born, that He might restore His image which of old had fallen!

Glory ..., Both now ..., the foregoing is repeated.

Both canons of the feast, the Irmos of each being chanted twice, with 12 Troparia.

ODE I

Canon I, the acrostic whereof is: “Having become man, Christ remaineth God as He was before”, the composition of Cosmas of Maiuma, 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.

That which, though fashioned in the image of God, became wholly corrupt through transgression, having fallen away from the divine life, hath the wise Creator restored, for He hath been glorified.

The Creator, seeing mankind, whom He had fashioned with His own hands, perishing, descended, bowing down the heavens, and becoming truly incarnate, taking upon Himself all the essence of man, through the pure and divine Virgin, for He hath been glorified.

Christ God, being the wisdom, Word, Power, Effulgence and Son of the Father, having made Himself unknowable to the powers of heaven, and even more so to those on earth, hath become a man and restored us, for He hath been glorified.

Canon II, the composition of John of Damascus, in Tone I:

Irmos: The Master saved His people by working a wonder, * making solid the watery waves of the sea of old; * and having willingly been born of the Virgin, * He hath set before us a path leading to heaven. * Let us glorify Him Who is by nature equal to both the Father and mankind.

Thy sacred womb, which was clearly depicted by the bush which burned without being consumed, bore the Word, mingling God with the form of a mortal man and loosing the wretched womb of Eve from the ancient bitter curse. Let us glorify Him, O ye mortals!

The star plainly showed to the magi, Thee the merciful Word, existent before the sun, Who came to bring an end to sin, and wast wrapped in swaddling bands in a meager cave, and rejoicing, they beheld the very Lord Himself, as a man.

Katavasia: The Festal Irmoi of both canons.

ODE III

Canon I

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.

Adam, fashioned of dust, partook of a higher inspiration, yet he was led to stumble into corruption through a woman's deceit, seeing Christ born from a woman, he cried aloud: O Thou Who for my sake hast become like me, holy art Thou O Lord!

O Lord Christ, mingling with clay, Thou didst conform Thyself thereto, imparting Thy divine essence to vile flesh by participating therein, becoming earthly, yet remaining God, and lifting up our horn: holy art Thou O Lord!

O Bethlehem, thou king of the princes of Judah, be glad! For Christ Who doth shepherd Israel, seated on the shoulders of the cherubim, hath manifestly come forth from thee, and, having lifted up our horn, hath established His reign over all.

Canon II.

Irmos: Look upon the hymns of Thy servants, O Benefactor, * and humble the vaunted pride of the enemy; * bearing far above sin those who hymn Thee * making them unshakably firm by the foundation of faith, * O Thou Good One Who seest all.

Having been deemed worthy to behold the supremely rich Offspring of the most pure Bride, which passeth understanding, the chorus of shepherds bowed down in awe-filled homage; and the ranks of incorporeal beings hymned Christ the King, Who became incarnate without seed.

In His tender compassion, He Who reigneth over the heights of heaven became like us through the unwedded Maiden; the Word Who before was immaterial, was later clothed in material flesh, that He might draw to Himself the first-formed man, who had fallen.

Kontakion of the feast, in Tone III:

Today the Virgin giveth birth to Him Who is transcendent in essence; * and the earth offereth a cave to Him Who is unapproachable. * Angels with shepherds give glory; * the Magi journey with a star; ** for our sake a young Child is born, Who is the pre-eternal God.

Ikos: **B**ethlehem hath opened Eden! We have found Joy in a secret place: come, and let us receive the things of paradise within the cave. There the unwatered Root hath blossomed, bearing forgiveness as its fruit. There an unfailing Wellspring hath been found, from whence David of old longed to drink. There the Virgin hath given birth to the Babe, straightway quenching the thirst of Adam and David. Wherefore, let us hasten to this place where now is born a young Child, the pre-eternal God!

Sessional Hymn, in Tone VIII:

The first-fruits of the nations hath heaven brought to Thee Who liest as a babe in the manger, summoning the magi by the star; and they were in awe to see, not scepters or thrones, but utter poverty. For what is more lowly than a cave? What is more humble than the swaddling bands, wherein the richness of Thy divinity hath shone forth? O Lord, glory be to Thee!

ODE IV

Canon I

Irmos: **R**od 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.

O Christ Thou art He Whom Jacob foretold of old, as the expectation of the nations, and Who hath shone forth from the tribe of Judah, and come to overthrow the power of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria, transforming falsehood into godly faith. Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Shining forth, a Star out of Jacob, O Master, Thou hast filled with joy the wise observers of the stars, the followers of the words of Balaam, the soothsayer of old; manifestly receiving the first-fruits of the nations who have entered in to worship Thee. Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Like drops of rain falling upon the earth, and like the gentle rain upon the fleece, O Christ, Thou hast descended upon the womb of the Virgin. Ethiopia and Tharsis, the islands of Arabia and Saba, and they who rule all the land of the Medes, have fallen down before Thee, O Savior. Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Canon II

Irmos: **T**he renewal of the human race was hymned of old * and proclaimed beforehand by the Prophet Habbakuk, * who having ineffably been deemed worthy to behold in image; * the Word coming forth from the mountain, * the Virgin, as a little Babe, * for the restoration of the people.

Willingly receiving flesh from the Virgin, the Most High hath issued forth as equal to men, to cleanse us of the venom of the serpent's head, leading all from the sunless gates of Hades to life-bearing light, in that He is God.

The nations who of old were overwhelmed by corruption, having escaped the greatest enemy, lift up their hands with hymns of praise, honoring the one Christ as Benefactor, Who hath come to us in His mercy.

Having sprouted forth from the root of Jesse, O Virgin, thou didst transcend the laws of human nature, giving birth to the pre-eternal Word of the Father, in that He Himself was well pleased to pass through thy sealed womb in His strange abasement.

ODE V

Canon I

Irmos: **A**s 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.

Submitting to be recorded among Thy servants at the command of Caesar, Thou hast freed us slaves from the enemy and sin, O Christ; and having abased Thyself for us, Thou hast rendered our nature divine through Thy union and sharing therein.

Behold, the Virgin hath conceived in her womb, as was foretold of old, and hath given birth to God made man, yet remaineth a virgin. O ye sinners who for her sake have been reconciled with God, faithfully hymn her as the true Theotokos.

Canon II

Irmos: **O** Christ Who art our cleansing, come unto us, * who out of the night of the deeds of gloomy delusion, * valiantly hymn Thee as a Benefactor, * granting us an expeditious path, * ascending upon which we find glory.

By His coming in the flesh the Master hath again cut down the cruel enmity directed against us, that He might destroy the soul-destroying ruler, uniting the world with the immaterial beings, making the Begetter accessible to creation.

The people who of old were darkened have finally seen the light of the radiance of the Most High; and the Son bringeth the nations to the Father as an inheritance, bestowing ineffable grace where sin once flourished exceedingly.

ODE VI

Canon I

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.

Christ our God, Whom the Father begat before the morning star, hath come forth incarnate, from a womb. He Who ruleth over the most pure powers lieth in a manger of dumb beasts and is wrapped in swaddling-bands, loosing the knotted bonds of transgressions.

A young Child, a Son, is born of the clay of Adam and given to the faithful: He is the Father and Prince of the age to come, and is called the Angel of great Counsel. He is the mighty God Who exerciseth dominion over all creation.

Canon II

Irmos: **D**welling in the uttermost depths of the sea, * Jonah besought Thee to come and still the tempest; * and I, pierced by the arrow of the tyrant, * chant unto Thee, O Christ * Thou Destroyer of evil, * do Thou come quickly unto my slothfulness!

God the Word, Who from the beginning was with God, now strengtheneth that which of old was seen to be weakened, that he may preserve that which He Himself shares with us, straightway showing it to be free from the passions.

He Who dwelleth in light, and, contrary to His dignity, hath now been well pleased to dwell in a manger, cometh forth from the loins of Abraham for the sake of us who have fallen into the deep darkness of transgressions, that, for the salvation of mankind, He might raise up His fallen children.

Kontakion of the Synaxis, in Tone VI:

He Who was born of the Father without mother * before the morning star * hath today become incarnate from thee on earth without a father; * wherefore, the star announceth glad tidings to the magi, * and the angels and shepherds hymn thine ineffable birthgiving, ** O thou who art full of grace.

Ikos: **O** mystic vine, thou hast given rise to the uncultivated Grapes, for bearing Him in thine arms as on branches, thou didst say: “Thou art my Fruit, Thou art my Life! Wherefore, I have known that I yet am what I was. Thou art my God; for, beholding the seal of my virginity inviolate, I proclaim Thee the true Word Who hast become flesh. I have not known seed, and I acknowledge Thee to be the Destroyer of corruption; for I am pure, since Thou hast issued forth from me, and hast left my womb as Thou found it. Yea, I see that it is pure! Therefore, all creation joineth chorus, crying out to me: Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace!”

ODE VII

Canon I

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 piping shepherds received an awesome vision of light; for the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and an angel cried aloud: Sing ye, for Christ, the blessed God of your fathers, is born!

Suddenly, at the voice of the angel, the armies of heaven cried out: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will among men! Christ hath shone forth: the blessed God of your fathers!”

“What words are these?” said the shepherds; “Let us go and see what hath become of the blessed Christ!” And hastening to Bethlehem, they bowed down in worship with the Theotokos, chanting: “O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou!”

Canon II

Irmos: Captured by the love of the King of all, * the children reviled the uncontrollable rage and ungodly blasphemies of the tyrant, * and the great fire submitted to them as they spake unto the Master saying: * Blessed art Thou throughout the ages

The furnace which had been raised to a sevenfold heat savagely burnt the minions, but spared the youths who were wholly consumed with the fear of God; for the flame crowned them when the Lord freely granted them dew for the sake of their piety.

O Christ our Helper, using Thine ineffable incarnation as a bulwark of defense, and having taken on our form, Thou hast put to shame the adversary of mankind, bearing the richness of Thy deification, which we hope for, having fallen from the heights into the darkness of the uttermost depths.

Thou hast most mightily cast down sin, which is exalted in evil without restraint, frenzied from the perversion of the world; and those whom it formerly attracted hast Thou saved from its snares today, having become incarnate of Thine own will, O Benefactor.

ODE VIII

Canon I

Irmos: The 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.

The daughter of Babylon carried off the captive children of David from Sion to herself; but now she hath sent her own children, the magi bearing gifts, to the God-pleasing daughter of David, who prayeth. Wherefore, chanting, let us sing: Let all creation bless the Lord and supremely exalt Him throughout all ages!

The harps refused to play their sad songs, for the children of Sion would not sing in a strange land; but Christ, shining forth in Bethlehem, hath destroyed all the delusion of Babylon and her musical instruments. Wherefore, chanting, let us sing: Let all creation bless the Lord and supremely exalt Him throughout all ages!

Babylon received the plunder of the kingdom of Sion and its captive riches; but Christ hath drawn its treasures to His Sion, guiding the star-observing kings by a star. Wherefore, chanting, let us sing: Let all creation bless the Lord and supremely exalt Him throughout all ages!

Canon II

Irmos: **T**he children who in the time of the Old Covenant * were cast into the fire, * prefigured the unconsumed womb of the Maiden, * which hath supernaturally given birth yet remaineth sealed; * and both wondrously working as a single miracle * moveth the people to hymn the Grace of each.

Mankind, having fled the destructive delusion of becoming divine, unceasingly hymneth the Word Who hath abased Himself, and like the youths and all creation, with fear and trembling offereth meager praise, being corrupt, but wisely enduring.

Thou hast come, O Restoration of the nations, to bring lost human nature back from the hills of the wilderness to the flowered pastures; that Thou mightest extinguish the violent power of the manslayer, having by providence appeared as God and man.

At Ode IX we do not chant the Magnificat, but instead, sing the refrains, as on the feast itself

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, the most pure Virgin Theotokos, who is more honorable and more glorious than the armies on high!

ODE IX

Canon I

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.

Then the second choir chanteth the same refrain, and the irmos. To each of the remaining 6 refrains we assign a Troparion.

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, God Who was born in the flesh of the Virgin.

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, the King Who was born in the cave.

The magi beheld the excellent course of the strange star which had newly appeared, illumining the heavens and marking the birth of Christ the King in Bethlehem, for our salvation.

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, God Who is worshipped by the magi.

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, Him Who was proclaimed to the magi by the star.

The star revealed the newborn infant King to the magi who said: “Where is He, for we have come to worship Him?” But Herod who fought against God, enraged, was troubled, seeking to slay the Christ.

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, the only pure Virgin Theotokos, who gave birth to Christ the King.

Refrain: The magi and shepherds have come to worship Christ Who hath been born in the city of Bethlehem.

Herod inquired concerning the time of the star, following whose course the magi worshipped Christ with gifts in Bethlehem; but, guided thereby to their homeland, they left the cruel murderer of the infants behind in mockery.

Then the first choir chanteth the refrain of Canon II:

Refrain: Today the Virgin giveth birth to the Master within the cave.

Irmos: From fear it may be easier, * for us to prefer silence, * for though not fraught with danger, O Virgin, * it is difficult to fashion hymns fittingly wrought for thee. * Yet, O Mother, grant us the power to chant in such a way, * insofar as it is our will.

The second choir chanteth the refrain

Refrain: Today the Master is born as a babe of the Virgin Mother.

And it likewise chanteth the Irmos:

Irmos: From fear it may be easier ...,

Then the refrains are chanted with the Troparia, as follows:

Refrain: Today the shepherds see the Savior wrapped in swaddling-bands and lying in a manger.

Refrain: Today the Master, Who is intangible is wrapped in rags as a babe.

Refrain: Today all creation rejoiceth and is glad, for Christ is born of the Virgin Maiden.

O pure Mother, having beheld the indistinct images and dim shadows of the Word Who hath newly appeared through the closed gates, but mindful now of His true radiance, we bless thy womb as is meet.

Refrain: The heavenly hosts proclaim to the world the Savior, Lord and Master Who hath been born.

Instead of Glory ..., Magnify, O my soul, the might of the indivisible Godhead in three Hypostases!

Instead of Both now ..., Magnify, O my soul, her who hath delivered us from the curse.

Having attained their desire and been deemed worthy to see the advent of God, the people who delight in Christ are now consoled by this, insofar as thou bestowest life-bearing grace to those who worship this glory, O pure Virgin.

Then both choirs, having come down together, chant the first refrain of the feast, and the Irmos of Canon I, and afterward the first refrain of Canon II, and its Irmos. And all bow down.

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, the most pure Virgin Theotokos, who is more honorable and more glorious than the armies on high!

Katavasia I: 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.

Refrain: Today the Master is born as a babe of the Virgin Mother.

Katavasia II: From fear it may be easier, * for us to prefer silence, * for though not fraught with danger, O Virgin, * it is difficult to fashion hymns fittingly wrought for thee. * Yet, O Mother, grant us the power to chant in such a way, * insofar as it is our will.

Exapostilarion of the feast:

From on high our Savior, the Dayspring of the East hath visited us and we who are in shadowy darkness have truly found Him; for the Lord hath been born from the Virgin. (Thrice)

On the Praises, 4 Stichera of the feast, in Tone IV:

Be glad, O ye righteous! Rejoice, O heavens! Leap up, ye mountains for Christ hath been born! The Virgin sitteth, holding the incarnate Word of God in her bosom, like unto the cherubim. Shepherds marvel at Him Who hath been born; the magi offer gifts to the Master; and the angels say, chanting: O unapproachable Lord, glory be to Thee!

O Virgin Theotokos having given birth to the Savior, thou hast abolished the ancient curse of Eve; for thou didst become the Mother of Him in Whom the Father is well pleased bearing the incarnate Word of God in thy bosom. This mystery is not subject to testing but with faith alone we all glorify it, crying out with thee and saying: O ineffable Lord, glory be to Thee!

Come let us hymn the Mother of the Savior, who even after giving birth wast revealed to be a Virgin. Rejoice O animate city of God the King, wherein Christ making His abode, hath wrought salvation! We chant with Gabriel and offer up glory with the magi saying: O Theotokos, entreat Him Who became incarnate from thee, that we be saved!

The Father was well pleased; the Word became flesh; the Virgin gave birth to God incarnate; the star proclaimeth Him; the magi offer Him worship; the shepherds marvel, and creation rejoiceth.

Glory ..., in Tone VI:

Today invisible nature is joined to men through the Virgin! Today the boundless Essence is wrapped in swaddling bands in Bethlehem! Today God guideth the magi by the star, to offer Him homage, announcing beforehand His own three-day burial in their gold, myrrh and frankincense. To Him do we chant: O Christ God Who hast become incarnate through the Virgin, save Thou our souls!

Both now ..., the composition of John the monk, in Tone II:

Today Christ is born of the Virgin in Bethlehem! Today the Beginningless beginneth to be and the Word becometh incarnate! The hosts of heaven rejoice, and earth and men are glad! The magi offer gifts to the Master, and the shepherds marvel at Him Who hath been born! And we cry out unceasingly: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men!

Great Doxology. After the Trisagion, the Troparion of the feast; litanies and dismissal. First Hour and final dismissal.

AT THE HOURS

Troparion of the feast; Kontakion of the synaxis.

AT LITURGY

On the Beatitudes, 8 Troparia: 4 from ODE III of Canon I, and 4 from ODE VI of Canon II.

Adam, fashioned of dust, partook of a higher inspiration, yet he was led to stumble into corruption through a woman's deceit, seeing Christ born from a woman, he cried aloud: O Thou Who for my sake hast become like me, holy art Thou O Lord! **(Twice)**

O Lord Christ, mingling with clay, Thou didst conform Thyself thereto, imparting Thy divine essence to vile flesh by participating therein, becoming earthly, yet remaining God, and lifting up our horn: holy art Thou O Lord!

O Bethlehem, thou king of the princes of Judah, be glad! For Christ Who doth shepherd Israel, seated on the shoulders of the cherubim, hath manifestly come forth from thee, and, having lifted up our horn, hath established His reign over all.

God the Word, Who from the beginning was with God, intending to preserve the nature which He Himself shareth with us, now strengtheneth it, which from of old was weak, by another fellowship with it, straightway showing it to be free from the passions. **(Twice)**

He Who dwelleth in light, and, contrary to His dignity, hath now been well pleased to dwell in a manger, cometh forth for our sake from the loins of Abraham for us who have darkenedly fallen into the darkness of transgressions, that, for the salvation of men, He might raise up His children who have fallen low. **(Twice)**

After the entrance, the Introit:

O Son of God Who wast born of the Virgin, save us who chant unto Thee: Alleluia!

And thus do we chant up to and including the apodosis of the feast.

Troparion of the feast, in Tone IV:

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, * hath shined the light of knowledge upon the world; * for thereby, they that worshipped the stars * were instructed by a star * to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, * and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. ** O Lord, glory be to Thee.

Glory ..., Both now ..., Kontakion of the synaxis, in Tone VI:

He Who was born of the Father without mother * before the morning star * hath today become incarnate from thee on earth * without a father; * wherefore, the star announceth glad tidings to the magi, * and the angels and shepherds hymn thine ineffable birthgiving, ** O thou who art full of grace.

The Trisagion is sung.

Prokeimenon, in Tone III: The Song of the Theotokos: My soul doth magnify the Lord, * and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.

Verse: For He hath looked upon the lowliness of His handmaiden; for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS, § 306 (HEB 2:11-18)

Brethren: He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.

Alleluia, in Tone VIII: Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest, Thou and the ark of Thy holiness.

Verse: The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David, and He will not annul it.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW, §4 (MT 2:13-23)

When the wise men departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take up the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, In Ramah was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child

and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

In place of “Meet it is” we chant the following

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, the most pure Virgin Theotokos, who is more honorable and more glorious than the armies on high!

Katavasia I: 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.

Communion Verse: The Lord hath sent redemption unto His people.