

THE 24th DAY OF THE MONTH OF MARCH
THE FOREFEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN
AT VESPERS

The usual Kathisma.

On “Lord, I have cried ...,” 10 Stichera: the Automelia of the day, twice, and the martyricon; 3 Stichera Prosomia; and 4 Stichera of the forefeast, in Tone IV:

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

The Archangel Gabriel confirmeth * the mystery hidden and unknown even to the ranks of angels; * and he hath now come to thee who alone art incorrupt, * the comely turtledove, * the restoration of our race, * and crieth out to thee, O most holy one: * “Rejoice! * Be thou made ready by my words * to receive in thy womb ** God the Word!” (Twice)

A splendid palace * hath been prepared for thee, O Master: * the pure womb of the divine Maiden! * Come Thou and enter therein, * have pity on thy creation * which in envy undertook to oppose Thee, * and is now held in thrall to the deceiver, * having lost its primal beauty ** and awaiteth thy saving descent.

The Archangel Gabriel * manifestly cometh to thee, O all-immaculate one, * and crieth out to thee: * “Rejoice, thou annulment of the curse, * restoration of the fallen! * Rejoice, thou who alone hast been chosen by God! * Rejoice, chariot of the Sun of glory! * Receive thou the Incorporeal One ** Who desireth to make His abode within thy womb!”

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

Today Gabriel maketh announcement to her who is full of grace: “Rejoice, O unwedded Mother who knewest not wedlock! Be not amazed at mine awesome appearance, neither be thou afraid; for I am an archangel! The serpent once deceived Eve; but now I announce joy to thee: Thou shalt remain incorrupt, and shalt give birth to the Word, O most pure one!”

Entrance. Prokeimenon. Readings of the day, and the rest of the liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts.

But where there is no liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, on “Lord, I have cried ...” we chant the 3 Stichera from the Triodion, and the 3 Stichera of the forefeast;

Glory ..., Both now ...,

Today Gabriel maketh announcement to her who is full of grace: “Rejoice, O unwedded Mother who knewest not wedlock! Be not amazed at mine awesome appearance, neither be thou afraid; for I am an archangel! The serpent once deceived Eve; but now I announce joy to thee: Thou shalt remain incorrupt, and shalt give birth to the Word, O most pure one!”

On the Aposticha, those from the Triodion, and the martyricon;

Glory ..., Both now ..., of the forefeast, in Tone II:

Today the mystery hidden from before all ages hath been revealed, and the Son of God becometh the Son of man, that, taking upon Himself that which is below Him, He might bestow upon me that which is higher. Of old Adam was deceived, and, desiring to become a god, he failed; but God becometh a man, that He might make Adam a god. Let creation be glad! Let nature dance! For the archangel standeth in fear before the Virgin and offereth her his greeting: “Rejoice!”, the antidote to grief. O our God Who hath become a man in the tender compassion of Thy mercy, glory be to Thee!

AT MATINS

Alleluia, and the Trinitarian hymns of the tone.

But if it be Saturday or Sunday, we chant instead “God is the Lord ...,” and this Troparion, in Tone IV:

Today the first-fruits of universal joy * command us to chant hymnody of the forefeast; * for, lo! Gabriel cometh, bearing an announcement to the Virgin, * and he crieth out to her: ** “Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace! The Lord is with thee!”

The customary Kathismata, and the rest, as usual.

Canon of the forefeast, with 6 Troparia, including its Irmos; and those of the Triodion, in their order.

Canon of the forefeast, the composition of Theophanes, in Tone IV:

ODE I

Irmos: **T**hrough 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.

With gladness doth the world rejoice, sensing the descent of the Lord upon thee; for He descendeth to make His abode within the womb of the Virgin in the tender compassion of His mercy.

Behold! the divine archangel is sent to thee, the Queen, to proclaim the arrival of God the King of all, and to exclaim to thee: “Rejoice, restoration of the first father!”

A lustrous and golden jar is prepared to receive the Manna of life; for at the voice of the archangel He cometh upon thee, making His abode within thee supra-naturally.

The Lord Who dwelleth ever in heaven desireth to make His abode in thy pure womb; for He cometh to make heavenly the nature of mortal man, wisely clothing Himself therein.

ODE III

Irmos: **N**ot in wisdom, nor in power do we glory, * but we glory in Thee O Christ, * the Hypostatic Wisdom of the Father, * for there is none more holy than Thee, O Lover of mankind.

O earth, so sadly overgrown with the thorns of the passions, dance thou, leaping up; for, lo! the immortal Husbandman now cometh, removing the curse from thee.

Prepare thyself, O undefiled Virgin, thou divine fleece; for upon thee will God descend like rain, to dry up the torrents of transgression.

Be thou well adorned, O divine scroll; for by the finger of the Father will the divine Word incarnate be written upon thee, annulling the transgression of my irrationality.

O golden lamp, bear aloft the fire of the Godhead which shineth forth through thee, bestowing light upon the world; for thereby is the darkness of our evils dispelled.

Sessional Hymn, in Tone IV: Spec. Mel.: “Thou hast appeared ...”:

With the descent of the all-holy Spirit and at the cry of the archangel thou didst conceive Him Who is co-enthroned with the Father and of one essence with Him, O Birthgiver of God, thou restoration of Adam.

Glory ..., Both now ..., another Sessional Hymn, in Tone III:

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

Today all creation rejoiceth, for the angel crieth out to thee “Rejoice!”, O blessed Mary, most pure Mother of Christ God. Today the arrogance of the serpent hath been cast into darkness; for the bond of the forefather’s curse hath been broken. Wherefore, we cry out to thee for all things: Rejoice, O divinely joyous 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.

The mystery appointed from of old before time began hath been manifest; and the earth and the heavens rejoice together and joyously cry aloud.

O palace of the great King, unstop the divine openings of your ears, for Christ the Truth hath come already and maketh His abode in the midst of thee.

The Redeemer hath appeared, setting aright the stumbling of our first mother, making His abode within the womb of her who kneweth not wedlock; to Him let us cry out: Glory be to Thy power, O Lord!

Of old Habbakuk called thee the mountain overshadowed by the virtues, from which our God desireth to reveal Himself, O all-immaculate Virgin, thou only restoration of mankind.

ODE V

Irmos: Thou hast come, O my Lord, * as a light into the world, * a holy light turning from the gloom of ignorance * those who hymn Thee with faith.

O unblemished ewe-lamb! Our God, the Lamb, hasteneth to enter thy womb, taking away our sins.

As is written, the mystic rod doth gradually blossom forth a divine Flower, manifesting it to us from the root of Jesse.

Ripening like a vineyard at the cry of the angel, O Virgin, prepare thou to put forth the ripe and incorrupt Cluster.

Be glad, O Isaiah, thou greatest of the prophets, for the Virgin of whom thou didst prophesy, hath conceived the Angel of great counsel within her womb.

ODE VI

Irmos: The 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.

The Archangel Gabriel proclaimeth to thee, “Rejoice!”, for thou hast ineffably received in thy womb the joy which Eve lost through her transgression, O Virgin.

The fire of the Godhead neither consumed nor in anywise affrighted thy womb, O Maiden, for the bush of old, which burned yet was not consumed, prefigured thee, O all-pure one.

Rejoice, O Virgin, the mountain which Daniel foresaw in the Spirit! For from thee the noetic Stone was cut, which shall demolish the inanimate temples of the demons.

The King of peace cometh unto thee, and through thee He shall reconcile those who have been assailed and deceived by the wicked counsel of the serpent, O Mother of God.

Kontakion of the forefeast, in Tone VIII:

Spec. Mel.: “To the chosen ...”:

Thou art the beginning of the salvation of all of us mortals, O Virgin Theotokos; * for Gabriel, the great supreme commander, the servant of God, * sent from heaven to stand before thee, offered thee gladsome joy. ** Wherefore, we all cry out to thee: Rejoice, O Bride unwedded!

ODE VII

Irmos: Thou didst save the children of Abraham in the fire * and slay the Chaldeans, * who unjustly entrapped the righteous ones. * O God of our fathers, * supremely praised, and blessed art Thou O Lord.

O noetic tabernacle, which the true Bestower of the law, loveth, and desireth to make His habitation, thou hast been filled with sweet fragrance; for through thee He reneweth those who have become corrupt.

The divine choir of the prophets, perceiving the peaceful coming of the Redeemer upon thee, crieth out to thee: Rejoice, deliverance of all! Rejoice, thou who alone art the salvation of mankind!

Fear not the voice, neither marvel at him who speaketh; for he is the servant of God. He hath come to reveal a mystery to thee which is ineffable even to the angels, O blessed Virgin who knowest not wedlock.

Thou beholdest all creation enslaved by the enemy, O Virgin; but He Whose good pleasure it was, desireth through thee to have mercy upon it, in the tender compassion of His mercy. Wherefore, ignore not the words of the angel.

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.

Prepare thyself, O thou who knowest not wedlock, thou light cloud of the Light! For the never-setting Sun shineth forth upon thee from on high, which, hidden within thee for a time, shall be revealed to the world, dispelling the darkness of evil.

The first minister among the angels cried out to thee sounds of joy, O pure one, announcing to thee, that the Angel of great counsel Who, in His goodness was to become incarnate from thee. To Him do we cry: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

The Transcendent One Who sitteth at the right hand of the Father desireth to make His habitation within thee, O pure one, that He may set thee, the beloved and comely one, at His own right hand as Queen, and extend His right hand to all the fallen, and save us.

The Lord our Creator, recognizing thee as a pure rose of the valley, as a fragrant lily, hath now desired thy beauty, O pure one, and willeth to become incarnate from thy blood, that He may dispel the stench of deception with goodness.

ODE IX

Irmos: **E**ve dwelt under the curse of sin * because of the infirmity of disobedience; * but thou, O Virgin Theotokos, * hast through the Offspring of thy pregnancy * blossomed forth blessing upon the world. * Wherefore, we all magnify thee.

Eve laid hold of the fruit, which resulted in all-destroying death; but in the midst of thee, O Sovereign Lady, the mediating Fruit of immortality groweth: Christ our sweetness. And chanting to Him, we glorify thee.

Bowing down Thy heavens, O Word, Thou hast come down to us, and the womb of the Virgin hath already been prepared for Thee as a throne; and seated thereon as a most mighty King, Thou dost lift up the creation of Thy right hand from its fallen state.

O pure one, thou unsown field, receive at the angel's word the Word of heaven, Who springeth forth from thee like fruitful wheat, nourishing the ends of the earth with the grain of understanding, and worshiping Him, we glorify thee.

Christ desired thy beauty, O all-immaculate one, and made His abode within thy womb, that He might deliver the human race from the malice of the passions and bestow upon it its ancient comeliness. Worshipping Him, we glorify thee.

If the forefeast fall on a Saturday, this Exapostilarion:

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

Flying down from on high, Gabriel cried out: "Rejoice!", O Theotokos; for He Who sprang forth from thee blessed the children of Adam, annulling the whole curse of our first mother.

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

On the Aposticha, Stichera of the Triodion: the Automelon of the day (Twice), and the Martyricon; then:

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

The Theotokos heard speech which she kneweth not; for the archangel spake unto her the words of the annunciation. And accepting his salutation with faith, she conceived Thee, the pre-eternal God. Wherefore, rejoicing, we cry out to Thee: O God Who wast immutably incarnate of her, grant peace to the world and great mercy to our souls!

First Hour, with its Kathisma and prostrations, as usual.

AT LITURGY

Troparion of the forefeast, in Tone IV:

Today the first-fruits of universal joy * command us to chant hymnody of the forefeast; * for, lo! Gabriel cometh, bearing an announcement to the Virgin, * and he crieth out to her: ** “Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace! The Lord is with thee!”

Kontakion of the forefeast, in Tone VIII:

Thou art the beginning of the salvation of all of us mortals, O Virgin Theotokos; * for Gabriel, the great supreme commander, the servant of God, * sent from heaven to stand before thee, offered thee gladsome joy. ** Wherefore, we all cry out to thee: Rejoice, O Bride unwedded!