

THE 5th DAY OF THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER
COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLY PROPHET ZACHARIAS & THE HOLY &
RIGHTEOUS ELIZABETH, THE PARENTS OF THE HONORABLE FORERUNNER
JOHN THE BAPTIST
AT VESPERS

We chant “Blessed is the man ...,” the first antiphon.

On “Lord, I have cried ...,” 8 Stichera: 4 of the holy prophet, in Tone IV:

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

With the oil of anointing and holy vesture upon thyself, * O ever-memorable Zacharias, * thou didst minister unto God like an angel, * mediating, O blessed one, * between the Creator and His creation, * and manifestly receiving the words of the divine Spirit. * Wherefore, we call thee blessed, * and celebrate today thy holy festival, ** glorifying the Savior. (Twice)

O divinely inspired Zacharias, * thou didst behold born of a maiden * a Babe Who is co-beginningless with the Father; * and unto thine own child thou dost prophecy manifestly beforehand: * “A prophet shalt thou truly be, * preparing His ways!” * With him we call thee blessed * and in a sacred manner we celebrate thine honored festival, ** O most noetically rich God-bearer.

Thou wast the living and animate temple * of the divine Spirit; * and, ministering unto God * with a pure heart, O glorious one, * in the midst of the temple thou wast unjustly slain, * finishing thy godly course in martyrdom, O right-glorious one. * Wherefore, with thine own blood * thou hast entered into the temple of heaven, ** entreating cleansing for our souls.

And 4 Stichera of the righteous Elizabeth, in Tone I:

Spec. Mel.: “Joy of the ranks of heaven ...”:

When thou didst call the Virgin who greeted thee * the Mother of thy Lord, * thou didst behold in her virginal womb * Him, incarnate, Whose goings forth are from before time began. * Pray with her, O righteous Elizabeth, ** that He save our souls. (Twice)

“Blessed is the Fruit of the Virgin’s womb, * Who filleth all things!”, * thou didst exclaim, O most blessed Elizabeth, * moved thus to speak by the Spirit of God. * Wherefore, honoring thee in hymns, ** we magnify God Who is worshiped in Trinity.

That which was said by the Lord * became reality in the Virgin, * for she gave birth to Jesus Who saveth His people from their sins. * “He shall be the fulfillment of those things which were said to her,” * thou didst exclaim, inspired by the Holy Spirit, O Elizabeth. ** Wherefore, we crown thee with wreaths of praise, as is meet.

Glory ..., the composition of John the Monk, in Tone VIII:

Truly arrayed in the vestments of the priesthood of the law, thou didst serve according to the order of Aaron; and, standing in the temple, thou didst clearly behold the countenance of the angel, O most blessed one. Wherefore, hymning thy repose as is meet, O Zacharias, we all praise with songs thee who, in thine old age, begat the glorious John. Entreat thou the merciful God for us, that we be saved.

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

In His love for mankind, the King of heaven appeared on earth * and dwelt among men; * for He Who received flesh from the pure Virgin * and cameth forth from her having received human nature, * is the only Son of God, * twofold in nature but not Hypostasis. * Therefore, proclaiming Him to be truly perfect God and perfect man, * we confess Christ our God. * Him do thou beseech, O unwedded Mother, ** that our souls find mercy!

Entrance. Prokeimenon of the day. Three Lessons:

A READING FROM GENESIS

God appeared to Abraham by the oak of Mamre, as he sat by the door of his tent at noon. And he lifted up his eyes and beheld, and lo! three men stood before him; and having seen them, he ran to meet them from the door of his tent, and did obeisance to the ground. And he said: "Lord, if indeed I have found grace in Thy sight, pass not by Thy servant. Let water now be brought, and let them wash your feet, and do ye refresh yourselves under the tree. And I will bring bread, and ye shall eat, and after this ye shall depart on your journey, on account of which refreshment ye have turned aside to your servant." And He said: "So do, as thou hast said." And Abraham hasted to the tent, to Sarah, and said to her: "Hasten, and knead three measures of fine flour, and make cakes." And Abraham ran to the cattle, and took a young calf, tender and good, and gave it to his servant, and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter and milk, and the calf which he had dressed; and he set them before them, and they did eat, and he stood by them under the tree. And He said to him: "Where is Sarah thy wife?" And he answered and said: "Behold! in the tent." And He said: "I will return and come to thee according to this period seasonably, and Sarah thy wife shall have a son." And Sarah heard at the door of the tent, being behind him. And Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in days, and the custom of women ceased with Sarah. And Sarah laughed in herself, saying: "The thing hath not yet happened to me, even until now, and my lord is old." And the Lord said to Abraham: "Why is it that Sarah hath laughed in herself, saying: 'Shall I then indeed bear? But I am grown old.' Shall anything be impossible with the Lord? At this time I will return to thee seasonably, and Sarah shall have a son."

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF JUDGES

And there was a man of Zorah, of the tribe of Dan, and his name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bore not. And an angel of the Lord appeared to the woman, and said to her: "Behold, thou art barren and hast not borne; yet thou shalt conceive a son. And now be very cautious, and drink no wine nor strong drink, and eat no unclean thing; for behold! thou art with child, and shalt bring forth a son; and there shall come no razor upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines." And the woman went in and spoke to her husband, saying: "A man of God came to me, and his appearance was as of an angel of God, very awesome; and I did not ask him whence he was, and he did not tell me his name. And he said to me, 'Behold! thou art with child, and shalt bring forth a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, and eat no unclean thing; for the child shall be holy to God from the womb until the day of his death'. And Manoah prayed to the Lord and said: "I pray Thee, O Lord my Lord, concerning the man of God whom Thou sentest. Let him now come to us once more, and teach us what we shall do to the child about to be born." And the Lord heard the voice of Manoah, and the angel of God came yet again to the woman; and she sat in the field, and Manoah her husband was not with her. And the woman hasted, and ran, and brought word to her husband, and said to him: "Behold! the man who came in the other day to me hath appeared to me." And Manoah arose and followed his wife, and came to the man, and said to him: "Art thou the man that spoke to the woman?" And the angel said: "I am." And Manoah said: "Now shall thy word come to pass. What shall be the ordering of the child, and our dealings with him?" And the angel of the Lord said to Manoah: "Of all things concerning which I spoke to the woman, she shall beware. She shall eat of nothing that cometh of the vine yielding wine, and let her not drink wine or strong liquor, and let her not eat anything unclean; all things that I have charged her she shall observe." And Manoah said to the angel of the Lord: "Let us detain thee here, and prepare before thee a kid of the goats." And the angel of the Lord said to Manoah: "If thou shouldest detain me, I will not eat of thy bread; and if thou wouldst offer a whole-burnt offering to the Lord, thou shalt offer it." For Manoah knew not that it was an angel of the Lord. And Manoah said to the angel of the Lord: "What is thy name, that when thy word shall come to pass, we may glorify thee?" And the angel of the Lord said to him: "Why dost thou thus ask after my name, whereas it is wonderful?" And Manoah took a kid of the goats and its meat offering, and offered it on the rock to the Lord; and the angel wrought a miracle; and Manoah and his wife were looking on. And it came to pass when the flame went up above the altar toward heaven, that the angel of the Lord went up in the flame; and Manoah and his wife were looking, and they fell upon their faces to the earth.

A READING FROM THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

And Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and stood before the Lord; and Eli the priest was on a seat by the threshold of the temple of the Lord. And she was very much grieved in spirit, and prayed to the Lord, and wept abundantly. And she vowed a vow to the Lord, saying: “O Lord God of Sabaoth, if Thou wilt indeed look upon the humiliation of Thy handmaid, and remember me, and give to Thy handmaid a man-child, then will I indeed dedicate him to Thee till the day of his death; and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink, and no razor shall come upon his head.” And it came to pass, while she was long praying before the Lord, that Eli the priest noticed her mouth. And she was speaking in her heart, and her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; and Eli accounted her a drunken woman. And the servant of Eli said to her: “How long wilt thou be drunken? Take away thy wine from thee, and go out from the presence of the Lord!” But Hannah answered and said: “Nay, my lord. I live in a hard day, and I have not drunk wine or strong drink, and I pour out my soul before the Lord. Count not thy handmaid for a pestilent woman, for by reason of the abundance of my importunity I have continued my prayer until now.” And Eli answered and said to her: “Go in peace: the God of Israel give thee all thy petition, which thou hast asked of Him.” And she said: “Thy handmaid hath found favor in thine eyes.” And the woman went her way, and entered into her lodging, and ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was no more sad. And they rose early in the morning, and worshiped the Lord, and went their way. And Elkanah went into his house at Ramah, and knew his wife Hannah; and the Lord remembered her, and she conceived. And it came to pass when the time was come, that she brought forth a son, and called his name Samuel, and said: “Because I asked him of the Lord God of Sabaoth.”

At Litiya, the Sticheron of the temple, followed by these Stichera, in Tone VI:

Seeing Jesus, John cried aloud: “Behold the Lamb of God!” fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah. Thy son was the last of the prophets, O Elizabeth. Wherefore, the people call thee blessed, as is meet.

Jesus, Who is the Lord of lords and Master of masters, bowed His head beneath the right hand of thy son. Great is thy glory, O right-laudable Elizabeth!

The voice of one crying in the wilderness denounced the boastful Pharisees, saying unto them: “O generation of vipers, bring forth fruits worthy of repentance!” And he worshiped the Master. Of such a son art thou the mother, O holy Elizabeth!

Glory ..., in Tone VI:

Keeping the commandments of God, thou didst bring forth the fruit of living faith which dwelt within thee, O divinely wise Elizabeth. With what worthy hymns, with what worthy praises can we, the faithful, crown thee?

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

Christ the Lord, my Creator and Redeemer, * Who came forth from thy womb, O most pure one, * and clothed Himself in my nature, * hath freed Adam from the primal curse. * Wherefore, like the angel * we unceasingly cry out to thee, * O all-pure one, * who art truly the Mother of God and Virgin: * Rejoice!, O Sovereign Lady, ** the intercession, protection and salvation of our souls!

On the Aposticha, these Stichera of the righteous one, in Tone I:

Thou art worthy of many praises, O divinely wise Elizabeth, who art called righteous by the word of God, thou didst walk blamelessly in the commandments of the Lord, moved so by the mercy of God.

Verse: Precious in the sight of the Lord * is the death of His saints.

Walking in the commandments of the Lord, O abundantly glorious Elizabeth, thou didst have unfeigned love for God and unfeigned love for thy neighbor. And, lo! the fruit of thy faith was made reality. Wherefore, holding festival, we call thee blessed.

Verse: Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord; * in His commandments shall he greatly delight.

A most glorious fruit of the womb was given by the most compassionate God to thee, a woman barren and past childbearing: the preacher of repentance. Wherefore, calling thee blessed, we magnify the almighty mercy of God.

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

As a pure priest thou didst enter into the holy of holies and, clad in sacred vesture, blamelessly ministered unto God, observing the law like Aaron and leading the tribes of Israel like Moses, in the pure signaling of the little bells. Wherefore, thou wast slain. But thy righteous blood hath become for us a salvific healing, like fragrant myrrh opening the ears of the deaf leading them to the way of everlasting life. O thrice blessed Zacharias, father of John the Baptist and husband of Elizabeth: pray thou earnestly on behalf of our souls.

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

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

Troparion of the righteous ones, in Tone II:

Celebrating the memory of Thy righteous ones, * Zacharias and Elizabeth, O Lord, * through them do we entreat Thee: ** Save Thou our souls!

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

All of thy most glorious mysteries are beyond comprehension, * O Theotokos; *
for, thy purity sealed and thy virginity intact, * thou art known to be a true Mother,
having given birth unto God. ** Him do thou entreat, that our souls be saved.

AT MATINS

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

Spec. Mel.: “Joseph marveled ...”:

Great is the love for mankind which the supremely good God hath toward mortals, and which He showed thee, O Elizabeth, in that it was His will, in His ineffable goodness, that thou be with Zacharias. What thanksgiving is due to Thee, O Merciful One! What hymns can we, Thy sinful servants, offer to Thee, O Master? (Twice)

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

Through the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, Who cometh from on high, O all-immaculate one, thou didst conceive and bear Him Who existed from before all ages. Let creation hold festival, praising thee and magnifying thy most glorious birthgiving; and let her who hath borne the Redeemer of our souls, the only blessed one, chant, made glad by spiritual joy.

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

Spec. Mel.: “Joseph marveled ...”:

Samuel was a most welcome gift to the barren Hannah, and unto thee, O righteous Elizabeth, was the namesake of grace bestowed most joyously. Wondrous is Thy mercy unto mankind, O God! Glory to Thy many compassions! Glory to Thy loving-kindness! (Twice)

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

O Mother who hast not known wedlock, thy womb hath been shown to be the cherubic throne of the unapproachable God; for thou alone art the dwelling-place of God, having given birth unto God incarnate Who delivereth His servants from all sins. Wherefore, meet it is to call thee blessed with heart and lips.

Polyeleos, and this Megalynarion: We magnify you, O holy and righteous Zacharias and Elizabeth, and we honor your holy memory; for ye entreat Christ our God on our behalf.

Selected Psalm Verse:

A: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and wrought redemption for His people.

Glory ..., Both now ..., Alleluia ..., Glory to Thee, O God! (Thrice)

After the Polyeleos, the Sessional Hymn, in Tone IV:

Spec. Mel.: “Joseph marveled ...”:

Blossoming forth in the statutes of God with the most blessed Zacharias, O all-praised Elizabeth, offshoot of the daughters of Aaron, thou wast moved by the hand of God. Entreat the supremely good Master that we sinners may also offer the good fruit of living faith. (Twice)

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

Thou alone art the Mother of God, thou alone art ever-virgin. O most pure Bride of God, in that thou hast given birth as a virgin, and remainest incorrupt. Wherefore, the ranks of angels and men magnify thee.

Prokeimenon, in Tone IV: In the saints that are in His earth hath the Lord been wondrous; * He hath wrought all His desires in them.

Verse: Wondrous is God in His saints, the God of Israel.

Let every breath praise the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. § 2 (LK. 1: 5-25)

In those days: When Herod was the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zechariah, of the course of Abijah: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elizabeth was barren; and they both were now well stricken in years. And it came to pass that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office. his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zechariah saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zechariah: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. And Zechariah said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not in my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. And the people waited for Zechariah, and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple; for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying: Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein He looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

After Psalm 50, this Sticheron, in Tone I:

That which was said by the Lord became reality in the Virgin, for she gave birth to Jesus Who saveth His people from their sins. “He shall be the fulfillment of those things which were said to her,” thou didst exclaim, inspired by the Holy Spirit, O Elizabeth. Wherefore, we crown thee with wreaths of praise, as is meet.

Canon of supplication to the Theotokos (the Paraklisis), with 6 Troparia, including its
Irmos; canon of the holy prophet, with 4 Troparia; and canon of the righteous one,
with 4 Troparia.

ODE I

Canon of the Prophet Zacharias, the composition of Theophanes, in Tone VIII:

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

By thy mediation, O prophet, impart unto me the grace of the Spirit, to help me praise thy memory, crying out: Let us chant unto our Redeemer and God!

Thy life was found to be blameless, and thou wast arrayed in the vesture of the priesthood and the luminous splendors of prophecy, O divinely eloquent and blessed one.

Having thy head adorned with the crown of the law, O Zacharias, thou wast shown to be sacred, crying aloud: Let us chant unto our Redeemer and God!

Theotokion: **C**lad in the vestment of the full-length tunic like Aaron, thou didst receive the Maiden who sprouted forth from the root of Jesse and bore the Redeemer in her womb.

Canon of the righteous one, in Tone VIII:

Irmos: **T**o Him who crushed the enemy with His arm * and led Israel through the Red Sea, * to our Redeemer and our God let us sing, * for He hath been glorified.

Thou didst have true love for God, O right loving Elizabeth, preserving His commandments; for those who keepeth His commandments truly love God. Wherefore, we magnify thee, beloved of God, with praises.

We who are saved by grace must please God with virtues, just as Elizabeth walked in the commandments of the Lord blamelessly, whom let us bless with hymns, as is meet.

O God Who dost accomplish all things, Thou didst manifest Thine almighty mercy in the blessed Elizabeth. We offer thee thanks for all Thy works.

Theotokion: **G**iving birth to Isaac, Sarah rejoiced; and when thou, O Virgin, didst give birth to the Lord Jesus, it was fitting that thou rejoice yet more, O most pure one.

Katavasia: **T**racing an upright line with his staff ...,

ODE III

Canon of the holy prophet

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

When thou didst offer the incense of the covenant, O high priest, then didst thou receive the prophetic proclamation of the Forerunner.

The priesthood anointed thee with oil to serve as a priest, like Aaron. Wherefore, thou wast deemed worthy to behold the angel.

Zacharias begat John, the dawn which announced to the whole world Thee, the noetic Sun, O Savior.

Theotokion: Set my life aright, O all-pure Birthgiver of God, thou life which filled with light the house of Zacharias.

Canon of the righteous one

Irmos: My heart is established in the Lord, * my horn is exalted in my God, * my mouth is enlarged against mine enemies, * and I rejoice in Thy salvation.

In the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit called thee and Zacharias righteous, O blessed Elizabeth, saying that ye were righteous in the sight of God. The Messiah is the truth for us from God, and therefore, by the Messiah wast thou justified. Who will not magnify thee with hymns of praise?

Not everyone who liveth is justified in God's sight; but in that thou wast righteous, O ever-memorable Elizabeth, the Lord Jesus sanctified thee. Let each of us praise thee as holy.

O God Who art wondrous in Thy saints, Thou wast wondrous also in the blessed Elizabeth. We offer unto Thee, the most Compassionate One, a hymn of thanksgiving.

Theotokion: The barren Sarah, giving birth in her old age, was blessed to be a mother. We are at a loss, O most pure one, how to praise thee, Mother and Virgin, as is meet.

Kontakion of the holy prophet, in Tone III:

Spec. Mel.: "Today the Virgin ...":

Today Zacharias, the prophet and high priest of the Most High, * the father of the Forerunner, * setteth the table of his memorial, * feeding the faithful; * for he hath distributed the food of righteousness unto all. * Wherefore, he hath reposed * as a divine initiate ** of the mysteries of the grace of God.

Ikos: The high priest of the law was bound to silence by the voice of an angel, for within the barren and chaste Elizabeth, the angel of the coming of Christ, the prophet and initiate of the mysteries was to come forth. By his nativity, the grace, deliverance, universal reconciliation and renewal of our nature was to be revealed. By Him Who

giveth fruit from the barren womb, the Son Who hath appeared from the Virgin, the divine initiate of the mysteries of the grace of God and his preaching of the Lamb was to be made manifest.

Sessional Hymn of the holy prophet, in Tone VIII:

Spec. Mel.: “That which hath been commanded ...”:

Having ministered to God as a priest according to the law, O Zacharias, thou wast shown to the whole world as a pillar of light, prophesying that Christ would come forth from the Virgin, incarnate of the Holy Spirit, the Orient from the heights of righteousness, Who doth illumine all the world, direct our feet to the ways of peace, and save our race, thou didst say.

Glory ..., Sessional Hymn of the righteous one, in Tone IV:

When the Messiah was already incarnate, we listened to thee, His first herald, when, with awe, thou didst say unto the divinely chosen Maiden who embraced thee: “Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?” Wherefore, praising thee, we cry aloud: Rejoice, thou mirror revealing the mysteries of God to us!

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

We, thy sinful servants, saved by thee through the Son Who was born of thee, confess thee to be our Sovereign Lady, O Theotokos; for having given birth inaccessibly unto God Who cleanseth us of every sin by His own blood and bringeth us into the joy of paradise, in gladness we praise thee and Him.

ODE IV

Canon of the holy prophet

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

Thy prophet, O Master, faithfully ministered unto Thee with the symbols of the law and was deemed worthy of the grace to perceive Thy truth.

Thou, the most brilliant and most blessed one, didst receive light through darkest light; for through the law grace hath now been added unto thee.

The divine Gabriel, who standeth before God, announced and revealed to thee the manifestation of the voice and Forerunner of the Word, O blessed one.

Theotokion: The Fashioner of creation, Who loosed the barrenness of Elizabeth, found thee, O Virgin, to be a pure habitation, and dwelt therein.

Canon of the righteous one

Irmos: With noetic eyes the Prophet Habbakuk * foresaw Thy coming, O Lord; * wherefore he cried aloud: * ‘God shall come out of Theman!’ Glory to Thy power! * Glory to Thy condescension!

As the wife of Zacharias, thou didst walk blamelessly in all the commandments; but there were others, virgins, who possessed not the oil of the virtues. Better is thy dignity than their virginity. Let people of every age glorify thee!

Paul, betrothing the faithful to Christ, referred to the betrothed as pure virgins saying: I have betrothed you a pure virgin to one Husband. How much more hath God joined to the wise virgins thee who hast walked in all His commandments, O divinely wise Elizabeth. Wherefore, we praise thee as is meet.

Thou, O God, hast shown the blessed Zacharias and Elizabeth, who walked in the commandments of the Lord, to be a model of how to please Thee, like unto the pillar of fire and the cloud when Israel was journeying to the promised land. Ineffable is Thy love for mankind, O almighty Master!

Theotokion: **T**he birth of Isaac removed the reproach of childlessness from his mother and magnified her with glory; and when the Holy One was born of thee, O most pure Virgin and Mother, He brought thee pristine glory. Let every mortal glorify thee!

ODE V

Canon of the holy prophet

Irmos: **Rising early we cry to Thee, O Lord; * save us, for Thou art our God, * and we know none other besides Thee.**

Upon thy head, O prophet, was the mitre placed which bore the impress of the true and divine priesthood.

Creation rejoiceth in thine offspring, O high priest; for thou didst beget the preacher of repentance.

Thou didst lead a life adorned, for with Elizabeth thou didst keep all the commandments of the Lord.

Theotokion: **T**hy tongue is directed toward hymnody, O divinely eloquent one; for thou didst behold her who knoweth not wedlock bearing a Child within her womb.

Canon of the righteous one

Irmos: **O Lord our God, bestow Thy peace upon us; * O Lord our God, take us for Thy possession; * O Lord, besides Thee we know none other: * and we call upon Thy Name.**

To him whom God, through His angel, spake in the prophecy of Malachi, saying: “Behold, I will send Mine angel before Thy face”, didst thou, a barren woman, give birth, O Elizabeth. We crown thee with worthy praises.

The voice of God crying in the wilderness is born of thee, O most honored Elizabeth. Wherefore, who will not praise thee as the mouth of God?

As once from a barren rock Thou didst pour forth water for Thy people, O God, so from the barren Elizabeth Thou hast given the preacher of repentance. O almighty Master, most glorious are all Thy works!

Theotokion: **T**wo sons, Joseph and Benjamin, did the barren Rachel bring forth as fruit; and she is honored for her goodly offspring. And thou, a Virgin, hast given birth to Him Who is one in Hypostasis but dual in essence. Ineffable is thy glory, O Mother of Emmanuel.

ODE VI

Canon of the holy prophet

Irmos: **O** Thou that putteth on light as a garment * grant me also a robe of light, * O All-merciful Christ, our God.

He who served the shadow of the law was shown to be a preacher of grace, O our Savior; for he was deemed worthy to behold Thine incarnation.

Adorned with words of judgment, O sacred Zacharias, thou didst receive the ever-existing Word bearing flesh.

Thou wast shown to serve God in the temple as a right wondrous priest, O divinely inspired initiate of the mysteries of God.

Theotokion: **T**hou wast recognized by the prophetess Elizabeth, O Virgin Mother of God, bearing the beginningless Word and Savior in thy womb.

Canon of the righteous one

Irmos: **T**he billows of life trouble me like the waters of the sea, * O Lover of Mankind. * Wherefore, like Jonah I cry unto Thee, O Word: * Raise up my life from corruption, O compassionate Lord.

When John was in thy womb, O holy Elizabeth, seeing His Savior he, the babe, did leap. Blessed is thy womb which made manifest the babe who recognized Jesus as his salvation.

Strengthened by the Holy Spirit against the will of others, O most blessed Elizabeth, thou didst name thy son John. Let everyone praise thee, the instrument of the Holy Spirit.

O God, Thou didst show forth Elizabeth's conceiving as an image of Thine own inconceivable birthgiving from the Virgin. Glory to Thy mighty wisdom!

Theotokion: **W**hen he was born of Rachel, Benjamin caused his own mother's death; but the Word Who was born of thee is the true life of all. Him do thou beseech, that we who place our trust in Him may have everlasting life.

Kontakion of the righteous one, in Tone IV:

Like the full moon, * thou didst receive the light of righteousness from the Messiah, * the noetic Sun, * O Elizabeth beloved of God, * and with Zacharias didst walk in all the commandments of the Lord. * Wherefore, blessing thee with worthy hymns, * we magnify the Lord, ** the most compassionate Light, Who illumineth all.

Ikos: As God once inscribed His commandments upon two tablets of stone, so hath He illumined you with His grace, O blessed Zacharias and Elizabeth; for ye walked blamelessly in His commandments. Therefore, worthily praising you, we magnify the Lord of all, the most compassionate Light Who illumineth all.

ODE VII

Canon of the holy prophet

Irmos: The Hebrew children in the furnace * boldly trampled upon the flames, * changing the fire into dew, they cried aloud: * ‘Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, throughout the ages’.

When the voice of one crying in the wilderness came forth from the barren woman supra-naturally, he loosed the bonds of thy tongue that thou couldst cry: Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, throughout the ages!

The Forerunner, the beloved friend of the Bridegroom, was born of a barren woman, manifestly proclaiming the birthgiving of the Virgin unto those who cry out with faith: Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, throughout the ages!

O thrice-blessed Zacharias, thou wast wholly a divine instrument of the Spirit, and didst proclaim thy son to be a prophet, who crieth: Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, throughout the ages!

Theotokion: Zacharias, beholding thee, recognized thee as the fulfillment of the law, the chief object of all prophecy, O Maiden, and he cried aloud: Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, O most pure one!

Canon of the righteous one

Irmos: Having quenched the all-consuming power of the Chaldean furnace * with the form of the Angel, that had descended therein, * the children cried out to the Creator: * Blessed and praised art Thou, O God of our fathers!

O divinely wise Elizabeth, thou teachest us to give thanks unto God, saying of thy birthgiving: “Thus hath the Lord dealt with me!” And therein thou wast a teacher instructed by God.

He whom the angel, within the sanctuary, told Zacharias to call John, thou didst thus name, instructed by God, when he was born of thee for all people. Thy tongue is like unto the angels’, O ever-memorable Elizabeth.

As when God, making the heavens heavy with manna, let it fall upon His people in the wilderness, so hath He given us John, the herald of grace, through the blessed Elizabeth. Great is Thy mercy toward mankind, O God!

Theotokion: Giving birth to Isaac, a prefiguring of Christ, Sarah said: “The Lord hath made me to laugh!” But do thou, O all-praised Mother and Virgin, who hast given birth to Him Whom Isaac prefigured and yet hast remained a Virgin, rejoice yet more.

ODE VIII

Canon of the holy prophet

Irmos: Glorified in the holy mountain, * the Lord revealed the mystery of the Ever-Virgin unto Moses * in the flames of the burning bush: * praise ye and supremely exalt Him throughout all ages.

Thou wast shown to be a prophet of the truth, for thou didst prepare John the Forerunner to tread first the paths of Christ, O blessed high priest. Him do we supremely exalt throughout all ages.

Giving voice in speech, thou didst bless the Master, the Lord of glory Who hath bestowed salvation upon us, Who shone forth upon us in the flesh from David. Him do we supremely exalt throughout all ages.

Thou was deemed worthy of great gifts, O divinely revealed one, begetting the Forerunner, the greatest of all the prophets, who hymneth and supremely exalteth the Lord throughout all ages.

Theotokion: Rejoicing, Zacharias, the high priest and preacher of God, paid homage to the Virgin and Mother who beareth the Lord of creation. Her do we supremely exalt throughout all ages.

Canon of the righteous one

Irmos: O Thou who dost cover Thy chambers on high with waters, * Thou Who hast set the sands to bound the sea * and Who upholdest all things: * the sun doth sing Thy praises, * the moon giveth Thee glory, * every creature offereth a hymn unto Thee, * as their Fashioner, throughout the ages.

As God said of His Church: “Thou art most comely, my beloved, and there is no blemish in thee”, so art thou also blameless, O righteous Elizabeth. In that the Lord Jesus is the sanctification of His faithful, we magnify thee as most comely.

The people saw thee, who didst walk in all the commandments of the Lord, freely justified by the grace of God, O right blessed Elizabeth. Wherefore, it is meet to glorify the mercy of God in thee.

Elizabeth was the first to proclaim the mystery wrought in Thee, O Jesus, when she said: “Blessed is the Fruit of the Virgin’s womb, Who is our Lord and God!” Behold the working of Thy wisdom! Glory to Thy love for mankind!

Theotokion: The birth of Samuel from his barren mother did away with the tears of her eyes and brought her joy; and the Lord born of thee is the cause of joy for the whole world. Wherefore we unceasingly magnify thee with hymns, O Virgin Mother.

ODE IX

Canon of the holy prophet

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

Thou wast filled with the inspiration of the Comforter and wast the beginning of the blessing of the Lord, O divinely wise initiate of the sacred mysteries, divinely blessed one.

Perceiving the fulfillment of the archangel's words, O all-famed and divinely eloquent one, thou didst straightway move thy tongue to blessing.

Thou wast adorned with crowns of suffering and the priesthood and with the enlightenment of prophecy, O most blessed Zacharias, divinely eloquent one.

Theotokion: As thou art the dwelling-place of the Light, O Virgin, illumine my soul which hath been darkened by the passions, and by thy supplications deliver me from the outermost darkness.

Canon of the righteous one

Irmos: Virginity is alien to motherhood, * and childbearing is a thing strange to virgins: * yet in thee, O Theotokos, both have come to pass. * Therefore we, and all the nations of the earth, * without ceasing call thee blessed.

Believing the Messiah Who had come to be thy Lord, and keeping the commandments of the Lord, thou didst well please Him, O Elizabeth. Wherefore, entreat the supremely good Master on behalf of those who bear thy name and all who praise thee, that their souls may be saved.

He who keepeth the commandments of God hath God promised to love and appear to him; wherefore, thou art loved by God, O Elizabeth, who didst walk in His commandments. Entreat the Supremely good One on behalf of those who bear thy name, that they may love God and be loved through His tender compassion.

Elizabeth, the kinswoman of Mary, hath given birth, though barren and bereft of children. Thou didst magnify Thy mercy with her, O God, for every good work cometh from Thee. Glory to Thine ineffable compassion!

Theotokion: Sampson, was revealed to be strong from his youth, and was the glory of his barren mother. And in Jesus Who was born of thee hath all the fullness of the Godhead been embodied. We magnify thee, who art more glorious than all the saints, O most pure Virgin.

Exapostilarion of the prophet:

Spec. Mel.: “O Light immutable ...”:

At first, thou wast struck mute in the holy of holies, by the voice of the angel, for the springing forth from thee of the voice of one crying in the wilderness; and now thou art silent for his sake, slain, O Zacharias, before the holy of holies.

Glory ..., Exapostilarion of the righteous one:

Spec. Mel.: “The heaven with stars ...”:

Thou wast the glory of barren mothers, the model of virtues for sinners, O blessed Elizabeth, keeping the commandments of the Lord. We glorify the goodness of God which hath been made manifest in thee.

Both now ..., Theotokion:

Having shone forth eternally, Light from Light, before the morning star, O Word, Thou didst come forth as Light, immutably, under time, from Thy Mother, illumining the ends of the world with radiant effulgence, as Thou art the Light of the world.

On the Praises, 4 Stichera of the righteous one, in Tone I:

The barren and childless Elizabeth didst Thou bless with fertility, O God, that Thou mayest reveal Thine almighty goodness. By Thy grace, have compassion upon us, who every day are withered by sins, that we may be aright fruitful tree, O Omnipotent One. (Twice)

The ever-memorable couple walked blamelessly in Thy commandments and through Thy grace were righteous in Thy sight, O Compassionate One. All this was Thy mercy, O Master. Glory to Thy compassionate tender compassion!

God Who worketh within you that which He willed to accomplish, O right blessed couple, made you heirs to the Kingdom in His great mercy. Glory to Thee, O all-merciful Master!

Glory ..., in Tone VI:

The greatest born of women is named by eternal Wisdom and hath come forth from thee, a barren woman, O God-loving Elizabeth. Let the faithful rejoice in the ever-memorable one, magnifying our Benefactor!

Both now ..., in Tone IV:

He Who is hymned by the seraphim and borne up by the cherubim chose the womb of the pure divine Maiden as a most beautiful throne. Wherefore, we send up to Thee this hymn of thanksgiving: Glory to Thee, O Thou Who alone lovest mankind! Glory to Thee, O Jesus all-sweet! Glory to Thee, O all our hope! Glory to Thee, salvation of the faithful! Glory to Thy compassionate dispensation!

Great Doxology, and the dismissal.

AT LITURGY

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

When thou didst offer the incense of the covenant, O high priest, then didst thou receive the prophetic proclamation of the Forerunner. (Twice)

The priesthood anointed thee with oil to serve as a priest, like Aaron. Wherefore, thou wast deemed worthy to behold the angel.

Zacharias begat John, the dawn which announced to the whole world Thee, the noetic Sun, O Savior.

When John was in thy womb, O holy Elizabeth, seeing His Savior he, the babe, did leap. Blessed is thy womb which made manifest the babe who recognized Jesus as his salvation.

Strengthened by the Holy Spirit against the will of others, O most blessed Elizabeth, thou didst name thy son John. Let everyone praise thee, the instrument of the Holy Spirit.

O God, Thou didst show forth Elizabeth's conceiving as an image of Thine own inconceivable birthgiving from the Virgin. Glory to Thy mighty wisdom!

Theotokion: **W**hen he was born of Rachel, Benjamin caused his own mother's death; but the Word Who was born of thee is the true life of all. Him do thou beseech, that we who place our trust in Him may have everlasting life.

Troparion of the righteous ones, in Tone II:

Celebrating the memory of Thy righteous ones, * Zacharias and Elizabeth, O Lord, * through them do we entreat Thee: ** Save Thou our souls!

Kontakion of the holy prophet, in Tone III:

Today Zacharias, the prophet and high priest of the Most High, * the father of the Forerunner, * setteth the table of his memorial, * feeding the faithful; * for he hath distributed the food of righteousness unto all. * Wherefore, he hath reposed * as a divine initiate ** of the mysteries of the grace of God.

Kontakion of the righteous one, in Tone IV:

Like the full moon, * thou didst receive the light of righteousness from the Messiah, * the noetic Sun, * O Elizabeth beloved of God, * and with Zacharias didst walk in all the commandments of the Lord. * Wherefore, blessing thee with worthy hymns, * we magnify the Lord, ** the most compassionate Light, Who illumineth all.

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

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

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS, §314 (HEB.6: 13-20)

Brethren, when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Alleluia, in Tone VII: A light hath dawned for the righteous man, and gladness for the upright of heart.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW, § 96 (MT. 23: 29-39)

Jesus said unto the Jews who came unto Him: Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnessed unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zechariah son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.

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