

THE 29th DAY OF THE MONTH OF DECEMBER
AFTERFEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
COMMEMORATION OF THE FOURTEEN THOUSAND INFANTS SLAIN FOR
CHRIST'S SAKE IN BETHLEHEM OF JUDEA BY HEROD
& OF OUR VENERABLE FATHER MARCELLUS,
ABBOT OF THE MONASTERY OF THE SLEEPLESS ONES
AT VESPERS

On “Lord, I have cried ...,” 6 Stichera: 3 of the holy infants, in Tone IV:

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

The iniquitous one, * seeking the hidden Treasure, * slew the innocent babes on this day; * and Rachel was inconsolable, * beholding their unjust slaughter * and untimely death, * and wept for them, her womb wracked with pain. * But she is gladdened now, ** seeing them in the bosom of Abraham.

The all-iniquitous king * searched for the timeless King * Who had come under time, * and, unable to find and slay Him, * he cut down a multitude of innocent babes. * Thereby making them martyrs * and citizens of heaven on high, * though he knew it not; ** and they reprove his madness throughout all ages.

When Thou wast born of the Virgin, * O pre-eternal Lord, * and didst become a babe in Thy goodness, * a choir of babes were admitted * by virtue of the blood of their martyrdom, * their calm souls illumined, O Thou Who art most just; * and Thou hast made them to dwell in the mansions of everlasting life, * where they denounce the malice of Herod ** and His most cruel insanity.

And 3 Stichera of the venerable one, in the same melody:

A model of abstinence for monastics * hast thou shown thyself to be, * O most wise and God-bearing Marcellus, * a pillar of fire extending spiritually from earth to the heavens * through abstinence, O most wise one, * a converser of purity, * a truly genuine preserver of silence, * an animate tower of courage, ** and a most excellent rule of virtue.

The uprisings of the passions * didst thou cause to wither away, O venerable one, * through mighty vigils and instruction in the Scriptures, * by earnest supplications * and the outpouring of tears. * Wherefore, thou hast truly been revealed to be * a habitation worthy of the Master, * granting healings unto those who approach thee with faith, ** having been deemed worthy of the delight of immortality.

Delighting most directly * in the beauty of thy Master, * without the mediation of the mirror of the flesh * and most clearly being such, * O all-blessed one, * pray thou for those who in purity praise * thy most sacred memory * and honor it with psalms and hymns, ** that we may obtain mercy on the Day of Judgment.

Glory ..., of the innocents, the composition of Andrew of Crete, in Tone VIII:

The most iniquitous Herod, seeing the star which is the brightest of all creation, was troubled, and seized the suckling infants from their mothers' arms; but Elizabeth, taking up John, entreated the stone, saying: "Receive thou a mother and her child!" O Lord, Thou treasure which the manger held, Whom the star announced and to Whom the magi paid homage, glory be to Thee!

Both now ..., in the same Tone:

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

On the Aposticha, Stichera of the feast, in Tone VI:

Spec. Mel.: "On the third day ...":

An awesome mystery do I behold! For God Who holdeth all creation in the palm of His hand is surrounded in the flesh in a manger of dumb beasts, and He Who clotheth the sea in darkness is wrapped in rags.

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

Our incorporeal God hath become incarnate! He Who is without beginning hath taken on a beginning! He Who is full now emptieth Himself through the Virgin in a little cave! And He Who nurtureth every creature is nurtured on milk as a babe.

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

Shepherds dance at Thy nativity and offer up glory with the angels; the star offereth a gift, and magi pay homage; and mankind, saved, magnifies the Theotokos.

Glory ..., of the innocents, the composition of Andrew of Crete, in Tone VIII:

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, the dominion of the Jews was abolished. Let the infants slaughtered for Christ leap up, and let Judea lament; for a voice was heard in Rama: Rachel, weeping, bewailing her children, as it is written, for the all-iniquitous Herod in slaying the babes fulfilled the Scriptures, filling Judea with innocent blood and staining the earth red with it, but the Church of the nations is mystically purified thereby and arrayed in beauty. The Truth is come! God Who hath been born from the Virgin hath appeared to those who sit in shadow, that He may save us all.

Both now ..., the composition of John the Monk, in Tone VIII:

O Lord, having arrived in Bethlehem, 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 didst descend unto shepherds, that Thou mayest save our race, in that Thou art compassionate. Glory be to Thee!

Troparion of the holy innocents, in Tone I:

Through the pangs of Thy saints, * wherewith they suffered for Thee, O Lord, * be thou entreated; and heal all our pains, ** we pray Thee, O Lover of mankind.

Glory ..., that of the venerable one, in Tone VIII:

In thee, O father, the image of God was preserved, * for taking up thy cross, thou didst follow after Christ; * by activity thou didst learn to disdain the flesh, as something transient, * but to care for thy soul as something immortal. ** Wherefore, with the angels thy spirit doth rejoice, O venerable Marcellus.

Both now ..., that 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 MATINS

On “God is the Lord ...,” the 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. (Once)

That of the holy innocents, in Tone I:

Through the pangs of Thy saints, * wherewith they suffered for Thee, O Lord, * be thou entreated; ** and heal all our pains, we pray Thee, O Lover of mankind.

Glory ..., that of the venerable one, in Tone VIII:

In thee, O father, the image of God was preserved, * for taking up thy cross, thou didst follow after Christ; * by activity thou didst learn to disdain the flesh, as something transient, * but to care for thy soul as something immortal. ** Wherefore, with the angels thy spirit doth rejoice, O venerable Marcellus.

Both now ..., that of the feast (Once).

After the 1st chanting of the Psalter, the Sessional Hymn, in tone V:

Spec. Mel.: “The co-beginningless Word ...”:

Accompanying the star shining with brilliance, the magi arrived from Persia at the cave of Bethlehem, thankfully offering fitting gifts to the newborn King and the Virgin Mother, being directed to worship Him from among the nations.

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

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

Spec. Mel.: “Thou hast risen from the dead ...”:

As the music of the shepherds' pipes fall silent, the angelic choir exclaimed aloud, saying: “Chant ye divine praise, O ye who watch over sheep! Cry ye aloud, singing, for Christ the Lord hath been born, Whose good pleasure it is, as God, to save the race of mankind!”

Glory ..., Both now ..., in the same tone and melody:

Most glorious is this mystery, O ye faithful: God is born of the Virgin, as is known. The ranks of angels, marveling at His condescension, cry aloud, chanting, for Christ the Lord is born, Whose good pleasure it is, as God, to save the human race!

Canon of the feast, with 6 Troparia; and two canons of the saints, with a total of 8 Troparia.

ODE I

Canon of the feast, 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 of the holy innocents, in Tone IV:

Irmos: Parting the abyss of the Red Sea, * God drowned Pharaoh therein, * but led Moses dryshod over to the wilderness, * and rained manna as food upon the people of Israel, * for He is mighty.

The star shone in Bethlehem and abolished the dark curse of Eden; and a day of salvation is given to the predecessors of our race, for from the Virgin's cloud Jesus shineth forth, Who is the enlightenment of those in darkness.

The contest openeth today for the babes who are faithful to Christ and God, and they denounce the princes and authorities of the enemy and with sense manfully reproved the infantile rage of Herod.

Theotokion: **O** pure one, thou art ever truly a divine fortress and impregnable rampart, a noetic bridge and undefeatable tower, a foundation and protection, for whose sake we are all saved from misfortunes.

Canon of the venerable one, in Tone VI:

Irmos: When Israel walked on foot in the sea as on dry land, * on seeing their pursuer Pharaoh drowned, * they cried: * Let us sing to God * a song of victory.

Creation is restored and the nature of mortals is renewed through the flesh of Christ, the Creator of all, Who, in a manner past understanding, is born of a pure and most holy Mother.

Receiving understanding from the God of truth, and seeking. Him unceasingly throughout thy pure life, O Marcellus, thou didst please Him with divine virtues.

Theotokion: **T**he land of our forefather's curse, which is in Eden, received deliverance when the Redeemer was born therein through thee, O pure one, renewing and sanctifying it.

ODE III

Canon of the feast

Irmos: **T**o 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 of the holy innocents

Irmos: **H**aving established the thunder * and fashioned the wind: * do Thou make me steadfast O Lord, * that I may hymn Thee in truth and do Thy will; * for there is none holy like unto Thee, O our God.

Our God and Creator, issuing forth through the Virgin's portal, hath ineffably fashioned an abode of flesh for Himself, becoming a babe and is laid in a manger.

The infant spiritual athletes born at the time of Christ's incarnation, have blinded the insane fury of Herod and shown themselves to be the most splendid eyes of the Church.

Theotokion: **F**rom thee, O Virgin who knew not wedlock, the Lord was born on earth without father and begotten without mother before all ages, appearing and forming Himself supra-naturally; and He granteth the restoration of deification to those born of Adam.

Canon of the venerable one

Irmos: **T**here is none as holy as Thou, * O Lord my God, * who hast exalted the horn of Thy faithful O good One, * and strengthened us upon the rock * of Thy confession.

Ye clouds, drop forth the sweetness of gladness upon the earth! For Christ, born in the flesh in a cave transcending all understanding, hath shone forth from the cloud of light.

Armed with steadfastness of spirit against the noetic foe, O God-bearer, thou didst mightily cut down the hordes thereof and hast been crowned with a wreath of victory.

Theotokion: **T**he Word of God, ineffably incarnate from thy most pure and precious blood, O pure one, hath, as God, shown thee to be the Lady of all creatures.

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 of the holy innocents, in Tone III:

Spec. Mel.: “Thou hast appeared ...”:

The army of infants is offered up as pleasing immolations, sacrificed for faith to Christ Who, as Creator and King, is born today from the Virgin.

Glory ..., that of the venerable one, in Tone IV:

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

Having cleansed thy soul first with the burning embers of purity, thou didst curb thy body for the sake of incorruptible strength, O all-praised Marcellus; wherefore, thou hast been revealed to be a divine habitation, dispelling infirmities and ever enlightening with faith those who have recourse to thee and praise thee.

Both now ..., in the same tone:

Spec. Mel.: “Joseph marveled ...”:

The cruel King Herod marveled when He learned of the young Messiah, and he sought furiously for the King Who was born on earth, as if for a foe. Consumed with fear and great terror, he sent an army to furiously slaughter the babes born in Bethlehem, attempting to slay thereby the Creator Who, in His compassion, had abased Himself, having issued forth from the Virgin's womb, seeking to save our race.

ODE IV

Canon of the feast

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

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 of the holy innocents

Irmos: I have heard report of Thee, and I am afraid; * said the prophet; * Having understood Thy works, * I am in awe of Thee O Lord, * Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

The Virgin, the means by which the Lord was born, in a manner past understanding hath reconciled heaven and its inhabitants with those of earth; breaking down the middle wall of enmity.

The multitude of infants who suffered martyrdom for the God of all, received the reward of their suffering from Him. For their sake Herod hath been grievously put to shame.

Theotokion: O all-immaculate one, having conceived the divine Word in thy womb at the Angel's awesome word, thou hast given birth to Him in the flesh in a manner past all telling. Wherefore, we glorify thee as the Theotokos.

Canon of the venerable one

Irmos: Christ is my power, * my God and my Lord, * the holy Church divinely singeth, * crying with a pure mind, * keeping festival in the Lord.

Seeing Thy descent into the cave, O Lord Christ, the noetic ranks were stricken with awe and hymned Thine inconceivable mercy.

Thy pangs and sweat are mingled with the streams of the infants' blood, O venerable Marcellus, and are offered as precious gifts to Him Who hath been born in the flesh.

Theotokion: The gentiles bearing gifts, seeing in thee one comely with lustrous beauty, shining with the splendor of thy Son, O pure one, hymned this new and most glorious sight.

ODE V

Canon of the feast

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

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 of the holy innocents

Irmos: Shine upon me, O Lord, * the light of Thy commandments, * for my soul riseth early to Thee and hymneth Thee: * For Thou art our God, * and unto Thee do I flee, O King of peace.

The material Sun is covered with clouds, and the noetic and all-immaterial One, in His infinite compassion, is clad in the flesh; and today He is wrapped in swaddling-clothes in a cave for our sake.

Herod is stained with the blood of foul murder; for, seeking to slay God, the Master and King of all, he cruelly rageth in fury against the infants.

Theotokion: With the splendor of thy supplication, O pure Birthgiver of God, enlighten the blindness of my heart, for thou alone hast shone forth the Lord, the Lamp and Sun of glory.

Canon of the venerable one

Irmos: Illumine with Thy divine light, I pray, O Good One, * the souls of those who with love rise early to pray to Thee, * that they may know Thee, O Word of God, * as the true God, * Who recalleth us from the darkness of sin.

The cup of Thy compassion overflowed upon all Thy creations, O Christ, and filled all with mercy in abundance when Thou didst appear and wast born in the flesh.

Having rid thy soul of material darkness and all earthly and corrupt beauty by the pangs of thine asceticism, O venerable Marcellus, thou wast shown forth in the world as a peer of the angels.

Theotokion: He Who was born of thee in the flesh in the cave, O pure one, hath poured forth noetic streams of immortality and watered human nature with incorruption, enriching it, in that He is compassionate.

ODE VI

Canon of the feast

Irmos: The 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 of the holy innocents

Irmos: **The tempest of my many sins doth engulf me, * and my soul is thereby weakened. * But do Thou O Lord Who art merciful, * descend to me and lead up my life.**

Today the divine mystery of the incarnation of the Word hath been accomplished, O Theotokos. For through thee the pre-eternal God hath appeared in the flesh, to deify that which He hath taken upon Himself.

Rachel, weeping over her children, foretold of old the infants who would receive untimely slaughter for Christ. Wherefore, she turned away, and could not be comforted.

Theotokion: **T**hy divine birth giving, O all-holy one, cut down the curse which blossomed forth in paradise, and, throwing open the way to the tree of life for mankind, it hath poured forth blessing.

Canon of the venerable one

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

The earth hath exuded a most fragrant myrrh from within itself: Him Who, transcending understanding, was poured forth as myrrh, poured forth in the flesh from the Virgin, filling hearts with a divine fragrance.

Wisely looking past that which is transitory and unstable in life, O Marcellus, thou didst elevate the desire for things spiritual, which abide eternally, and which thou hast obtained by the pangs of asceticism.

Theotokion: **G**od, the timeless Word, hath been born in the flesh from thee, O most pure virgin, that He may impart unto all the everlasting life, an eternal inheritance and glory incorruptible.

Kontakion of the holy innocents, in Tone IV:

Spec. Mel.: “Thou hast appeared ...”:

The star sent the magi to Him Who was born, * and Herod cruelly sent an unjust army, ** seeking to slay Him Who lay as a babe in the manger.

Ikos: **A**s those in heaven and those below rejoice now together in the appearance of the King of all, only Herod himself and the Jews, the slayers of the prophets, are grieved; for it is fitting that they alone lament, since they shall henceforth reign no longer. But the kingdom of the Lord shall have dominion, putting down the audacity of the enemy and assembling multitudes of the faithful, together with the honored infants, to gaze upon Him Who lieth as a babe in the manger.

ODE VII

Canon of the feast

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 of the holy innocents

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.

Bethlehem rejoiceth with us today; for she receiveth the Infinite One in her cave, crying: Blessed art Thou, the only God of our fathers!

O Word of God, the innocent and undefiled victims who were slaughtered for Thee beforehand cry out: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers!

Theotokion: Rejoice, tranquil haven of repentance, wherein finding refuge we say: O Theotokos, blessed art thou, who alone hast given birth to the God of our fathers!

Canon of the venerable one

Irmos: An Angel made the furnace bedew the holy Children. * But the command of God consumed the Chaldeans * and prevailed upon the tyrant to cry: * O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou.

He Who was born in the cave hath by His knowledge made steadfast all creation, which had been whirled about by ungodliness, but now crieth unceasingly to Him: O God of our fathers, Blessed art Thou!

With the fire of asceticism thou didst consume the pleasures of the flesh, O Marcellus; and with the dew of dispassion thou didst water thy soul, crying out to Christ with splendor: O God of our fathers, Blessed art Thou!

Theotokion: All of creation beheld thy divine majesty O bride of God, seeing the Lord of all assuming flesh from thee, and as God being born in the town of Bethlehem, and with the shepherds, and magi they all hymn thee.

ODE VIII

Canon of the feast

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 of the holy innocents

Irmos: In wisdom hast Thou fashioned all things, O Master, * Thou didst establish the earth firmly upon the fathomless depths of the waters, * in accordance with Thy knowledge, * wherefore we hymn Thee chanting: * Unceasingly bless ye the Lord all ye works of the Lord.

The angels glorify the power of Him Who hath been born; the shepherds marvel, the magi offer homage, and the heavens declare the Creator with a star. And with them we all cry aloud, chanting: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

When Thou wast born, O Christ, a multitude of innocents with their blood joined battle today, arming themselves mightily against Herod. Wherefore, we all cry aloud, chanting: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Theotokion: The prophets of God proclaimed thee, O pure one, to be the Virgin, the temple, the portal and cloud, the unburnt bush, the jar of manna, the rod which sprouted forth, the ark and lamp-stand, the tablets of the law, the holy mountain, from whence the Stone was quarried.

Canon of the venerable one

Irmos: Thou didst make flame bedew the holy children, * and didst burn the sacrifice of a righteous man with water. * For Thou alone, O Christ, dost do all as Thou willest, * Thee do we supremely exalt throughout all ages.

Creation arrayed itself in radiant vesture and cast off all its former grief when the Renewer and Master was born on earth. Him do we supremely exalt throughout the ages!

Armed with the virtues, O venerable Marcellus, thou didst do battle with hordes of demons victorious over them, thou didst win the trophies of victory, receiving the grace of miracles from God.

Theotokion: He Who was born of thee in a cave, O all-immaculate Theotokos, hath prepared everlasting mansions for those who sincerely hymn thee and supremely exalt thine ineffable birthgiving.

ODE IX

Canon of the feast

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.

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.

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.

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.

Canon of the holy innocents

Irmos: For the Mighty One hath done great things to me, * and holy is His name; * and His mercy is upon them that fear Him * unto generation and generation

He Who is in the bosom of the Father is wholly within thee, and the Fashioner of heaven is Himself fashioned and abaseth Himself for my sake; and, wrapped in swaddling bands, He looseth the bonds of my transgressions.

In Rama the bitter lamentation of Rachel is heard, her weeping, contrition and cries of Alas! For Herod, the vile murderous foe, hath assailed the children of Bethlehem.

Theotokion: By thy birthgiving mortals have been deified, O Virgin; for thou hast given birth to God, the Nurturer of all, Who is equally glorified with the Father, and feeds Him with milk. O what a strange wonder!

Canon of the venerable one

Irmos: It is impossible for mankind to see God * upon Whom the orders of Angels dare not gaze; * but through thee, O all-pure one, * did the Word Incarnate become a man * and with the Heavenly Hosts * Him we magnify and thee we call blessed.

The mercy of Thy love for the nations which surpasseth understanding is now shown forth, O Christ; for Thou didst impoverish Thyself by assuming flesh, O Master, that Thou mayest cause us to share in higher riches, in that Thou art good and greatly merciful, O Lord.

Taking the cross of Christ upon thy shoulder, O blessed father Marcellus, and emulating His sufferings, thou didst crucify thyself wholly to the world; for thou didst become a participant in the resurrection and higher glory, wherein be thou mindful of us.

Theotokion: **G**od Who was born in the flesh through thee, O all-pure one, hath made us children of God and imparted pristine dignity to those who accept Him, and who earnestly glorify thee, the Mother of God, magnifying thee.

Exapostilarion of the holy innocents:

Spec. Mel.: “The Cross is the preserver ...”:

Waging war against God, the accursed Herod, sending forth his soldiers, reaped the yet un-ripened green meadow of the infants; but he was unable to slay the newborn Lord and is filled with all manner of shame.

Glory ..., Both now ..., that 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.

On the Praises, 4 Stichera of the holy innocents, by Cyprian, in Tone I:

The first sacrifice to Thy most pure nativity was that of the infants, O Christ God; for Herod, desiring to lay hold of Thee Whom none can hold, did not recognize Thee, bringing before Thee instead a choir of martyrs. Wherefore, we entreat Thee Who hast become a man, that Thou save our souls. **(Twice)**

In Tone II: **Y**our slaughter hath come unto the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, O honored martyrs; for ye shed your blood for His sake, and rest in the bosom of Abraham, and have cast aside the vile malice of Herod forever, through the power of the newborn Christ.

In Tone III: **A**bominable is Herod's slaughter of the infants because of his vile murder, and pure is the sacrifice of the children, for they were of the same age as Christ, our salvation, and were sacrificed as a new immolation sent up in advance. Weep not for thy children, O Rachel, being mindful of the bosom of Abraham, which is the abode of all who rejoice.

Glory ..., of the venerable one, in Tone V:

O venerable father, thou gavest neither sleep to thine eyes nor slumber to thine eyelids until thou didst free soul and body from the passions and prepare thyself as a habitation for the Spirit; for Christ, coming with the Father, hath made His abode within thee, and thou art a favorite of the consubstantial Trinity. O Marcellus our father, great preacher, pray thou that we be saved.

Both now ..., in Tone V:

All creation, beholding Thee, the Creator and Fashioner of all, born in the flesh in Bethlehem, is restored and renewed. The light of the sun hath spread abroad, and the earth rejoiceth; the magi from Persia offer gifts to the King of all; the shepherds, marveling, are amazed, and with her who gave birth to God in the flesh bow down before Him. O the wonder! The Nurturer is nourished by the all-pure Mother for the salvation and restoration of the world.

On the Aposticha, these Stichera of the feast, in Tone VI:

Spec. Mel.: “Ye hosts of angels ...”:

The mountains and hills, * the valleys and fields, hymned Christ Who was born from the Virgin; * and from heaven the star showed to the magi * Him Who lieth in the cave as a babe, * clad in the body of a servant. * To Him let us cry aloud: * Blessed art Thou Who hast been born! ** O our God, glory be to Thee!

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

“What is this great and incomprehensible poverty * wherewith Adam hath been enriched with divine gifts?” * cried the Virgin, * holding in her arms Emmanuel, * our God and Creator, * Who received flesh from her. * To Him let us cry: * Blessed art Thou Who hast been born! ** O our God, glory be to Thee!

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

O Virgin, thou didst shine forth Christ, * the Sun, the noetic dawn, * holding Him in thine embrace, * by Whom all rational nature hath been enlightened * with the effulgence of perfect knowledge, * and is now deemed worthy of incorruption, * crying out with faith: * Blessed art Thou Who hast been born! ** O our God, glory be to Thee!

Glory ..., in the same melody:

A Babe hath now appeared on earth, * Who was begotten of the Father before all ages. * Rejoice, all creation! * Let the heavens be glad, * beholding those who before were rejected * now reconciled with God once more, * and who cry out to Him: * Blessed art Thou Who hast been born! ** O our God, glory be to Thee!

Both now ..., in the same melody:

With mouths of eternal flame * the heavenly hosts above hymn * the One Who was born in a cave * in His ineffable mercy. * May we also be deemed worthy * to chant to Him with our tongues of clay, * unceasingly crying unto Him: * Blessed art Thou Who hast been born! ** O our God, glory be to Thee!

AT LITURGY

On the Beatitudes, 8 Troparia: 4 from ODE VII of the canon of the feast, and 4 from ODE VI of the canon of the holy innocents.

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

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 taken place, the blessed Christ!” And hastening to Bethlehem, they bowed down in worship with the Theotokos, chanting: “O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou!”

Today is the divine mystery of the incarnation of the Word accomplished, O Theotokos. For through thee hath the pre-eternal God appeared in the flesh, to deify that which He hath taken upon Him. (Twice)

Rachel, weeping over her children, foretold of old the infants who received untimely slaughter for Christ. Wherefore, she turned away and would not be comforted.

Theotokion: Thy divine birth giving, O all-holy one, cut down the curse which blossomed forth in paradise, and, throwing open the way to the tree of life for men, it hath poured forth blessing.

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.

Troparion of the holy innocents, in Tone I:

Through the pangs of Thy saints, * wherewith they suffered for Thee, O Lord, * be thou entreated; ** and heal all our pains, we pray Thee, O Lover of mankind.

Troparion of the venerable one, in Tone VIII:

In thee, O father, the image of God was preserved, * for taking up thy cross, thou didst follow after Christ; * by activity thou didst learn to disdain the flesh, as something transient, * but to care for thy soul as something immortal. ** Wherefore, with the angels thy spirit doth rejoice, O venerable Marcellus.

Kontakion of the holy innocents, in Tone IV:

The star sent the magi to Him Who was born, * and Herod cruelly sent an unjust army, ** seeking to slay Him Who lay as a babe in the manger.

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.

The Prokeimenon, in the VIII Tone: Let all the earth worship Thee and chant unto Thee; * let them chant unto Thy name, O Most High.

Prokeimenon, in Tone VI: Praise the Lord, O ye servants, * praise ye the name of the Lord.

Verse: Who maketh the barren woman to dwell in a house and be a mother rejoicing over children.

EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS, § 180 (II COR. 5: 15-21)

Brethren: Christ died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Alleluia, in Tone I: The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaimeth the work of His hands.

Alleluia, in Tone V: They have poured out their blood like water round about Jerusalem, and there was none to bury them.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW, § 4 (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 Hymn: The Lord hath sent redemption unto His people.

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