

20 DECEMBER
Forefeast of the Nativity
± Great-Martyr and God-bearer Ignátios of Antioch C2

Lord I have cried

Tone 1

O Lord, I have cried to you, listen to me;

O Lord, listen to me.

O Lord, I have cried to you, listen to me;

Note the voice of my plea when I cry to you.

O Lord, listen to me.

² Let my prayer be directed before you like incense,
the raising of my hands be an evening sacrifice.

O Lord, listen to me.

S6: O Lord, if you mark offences, who will stand?

But there is forgiveness with you.

O people, let us celebrate the Forefeast of Christ's nativity. Let us raise our minds on high and go up to Bethlehem in Spirit. Let us see the Virgin with the eyes of our soul as she hurries to the cave to give birth to the Lord and God of all. When Joseph first saw the great wonder, he thought that he saw only a human child wrapped in swaddling clothes, but from all that came to pass he discovered the child to be the true God who grants the world great mercy.

S5: O Lord, I have waited for you for your name's sake;

my soul has waited for your word,

my soul has hoped in the Lord.

O people, let us celebrate the Forefeast of Christ's nativity. Let us raise our minds on high and go up to Bethlehem in Spirit. Let us see the great mystery in the cave, for Eden is opened once again, when God comes from a pure Virgin, yet remains the same perfect God and perfect man.

Therefore, let us cry aloud to him, "Holy God, Father without beginning, holy mighty, incarnate Son, holy immortal, the Spirit and Advocate, O Holy Trinity, glory to you.

S4: Let Israel hope in the Lord

from morning watch until night,

from morning watch.

Listen, O heaven! Be attentive, O earth! See the Son and Word of the Father as he comes to be born from a maiden who has not known man, through the good pleasure of the Father who fathered him before all ages. He is conceived by the co-operation of the Holy Spirit. O Bethlehem, be prepared! O Eden, open your gates, for the one who is comes to be what he was not. The *Lord* who formed all creation takes the form of a man and grants the world great mercy.

Tone 4

S3: For there is mercy with the Lord
and abundant redemption with *him*.

He will redeem Israel from all his offences.

O blessed Ignátios, you are rightly called the God-bearer, for when the Lord in his goodness took you into his arms to show you the wisdom of the greatest philosophy, you received the light of innumerable fires. You absorbed the streams of light like a sponge in the profound depth of his divine brilliance. Therefore you followed the footsteps of Christ who called you. So ask him to save and enlighten our souls.

S2: Every nation, praise the Lord;
every people, acclaim him!

O holy father, you were wounded by the love of God which burnt within your heart like a passionate flame, and were eager to press on to the Lord. Then you spoke with your well-known words, "I am the wheat of my Creator and will be ground by the teeth of wild animals in order to become the pure bread of our God who is the Word." Ask him to enlighten and save our souls.

S1: For his mercy is strengthened over us
and the truth of the Lord remains for ever.

O holy bishop, you ascended the cross with Christ and spoke in divinely inspired words, "The *Lord* whom I love has been crucified; allow me to have the privilege of sharing in the passion of my God." Therefore you imitated the sun by travelling from east to west. O blessed father, you shed light along your final journey and were given the heavenly crown in the kingdom of Christ. So ask him to enlighten and save our souls.

Glory: Tone 8:

O God-bearer Ignátios, you received a reward by embracing Christ as your love. You sealed the priestly work of the Gospel of Christ with your blood and became the wheat of the immortal Sower. While you were ground by the teeth of wild animals, you offered yourself as a loaf of sweet bread to Christ. O blessed passion-bearer, continually pray for us.

Both now:

O Bethlehem, receive the living City of God; the unfading Light comes to be born in you. Rejoice, angels in heaven! Send up glory, O men on earth! Bring your glorious gifts from Persia, O Wise Men! Begin the thrice-holy hymn with sweet melody, O shepherds! Let every breath praise the Creator of all.

Phos Ilarón

P/D: Wisdom! Stand upright!

O Jesus Christ, joyful light of the holy glory
of the immortal, heavenly, holy, blessed Father,
when we come to the setting of the sun
and see the light of evening,
we praise God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

For it is right at all times to worship you
with voices of praise,
O Son of God *and* Giver of life.
Therefore the world glorifies you.

Prokeímenon

Of the Day

Ektení

Prayer

O Lord, allow us this night to be guarded from sin. Blessed are you, O Lord, God of our fathers! Praised and glorified be your name for ever. Amen. O Lord, let your mercy be on us, for we have hoped in you. Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes. Blessed are you, O Master; make me understand your statutes. Blessed are you, O Holy *One*; enlighten me with your statutes. O Lord, your mercy lasts for ever; do not overlook the work of your hands. To you belongs worship, to you belongs

praise, to you belongs glory, to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and to ages of ages. Amen.

Plirotiká

Prayer

P: Peace be with you all. R: And with your spirit

D: Bow down your heads to the Lord. R: To you, O Lord.

P: For blessed and glorified is the power of your Kingdom, of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages.

Amen.

Apósticha

Tone 2

O Bethlehem of Judah, prepare the divine cave as a home for God to be born in the flesh from a Virgin who did not know a man in order to save the human race.

S1: God will come from Timan

and the Holy *One* from the shadowy wooded mountain. Hab 3

All you faithful, come and begin the celebration. Sing with the Wise Men and shepherds, “Salvation comes from the Virgin's womb, and recalls the faithful to life.”

S2: Lord, I have heard your report and was afraid;

O Lord, I have thought about your works and was amazed. Hab 3

O House of Ephratha, holy city, glory of the prophets, beautify the house in which God will be born.

Glory: Tone 8

O blessed Ignátios, your soul was as strong and hard as stone. You cried to your dear Christ with great longing, “It is not a material fire which burns within me, but the voice of the living Water which lives within my heart. It continually cries, “Come to the Father. “ Therefore in your desire to be with Christ and because you were inflamed with the Holy Spirit, you urged the animals to take you quickly from this world. Continually pray for the salvation of our souls.

Both now:

See, the time of our salvation is at hand. O cave, prepare yourself, for the Virgin approaches to give birth to her Son. O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, be glad and rejoice, for from you our Lord shines out like the dawn. O mountains and all districts around Judah, be attentive, for Christ is coming to save the human race which he created and loves.

Song of Simeon

B/P: O Master, now let your servant depart in peace
according to your word,
² for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared before all peoples,
³ a light of revelation for *the* nations
and *the* glory of your people Israel.

Triságion Prayers

Apolytikia

Tone 4

O saint inspired by God, you became a partner of the apostles in their way of life and a successor to their thrones; you found the means for approaching divine vision. Therefore you have truly taught the word of truth and fought for the faith even to death. O hieromartyr Ignátios, pray to Christ God to save our souls.

Tone 4

O Bethlehem, prepare, for Eden has been opened to all. O Ephratha, adorn yourself, for the Tree of Life blossoms from the Virgin in the cave. Her womb is a spiritual Paradise which has been planted with the divine Fruit. If we eat from it, we will live for ever and not die like Adam. Christ comes to restore the image which he made in the beginning.

Dismissal

ORTHROS

God is the Lord Ps 117

R: God is the Lord and has appeared to us.

Blessed is the one who comes in the Lord's name. *Ps 117*

S1: Thank the Lord, for he is good,
for his mercy lasts for ever.

S2: All the nations surrounded me,
but I opposed them in the Lord's name.

S3: This *is* the Lord's doing
and it is wonderful in our eyes.

Apolytikia

Tone 4

O saint inspired by God, you became a partner of the apostles in their way of life and a successor to their thrones; you found the means for approaching divine vision. Therefore you have truly taught the word of truth and fought for the faith even to death. O hieromartyr Ignátios, pray to Christ God to save our souls.

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O Bethlehem, prepare, for Eden has been opened to all. O Ephratha, adorn yourself, for the Tree of Life blossoms from the Virgin in the cave. Her womb is a spiritual Paradise which has been planted with the divine Fruit. If we eat from it, we will live for ever and not die like Adam. Christ comes to restore the image which he made in the beginning.

Small Litany

P: For yours is the might, and yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. *Amen*

Kathísma 1

Tone 1

The *Lord* has bowed the heavens and taken up his home in the Virgin. As it is written, he comes to be born in our flesh in the cave of Bethlehem. The *Lord* who gives life to children in the womb himself becomes a Child! Let us all joyfully go to meet him in the integrity of our hearts. *X2*

Kathísma 2

Rejoice, O Zion! Be prepared, O Bethlehem! The *Lord* who holds the whole creation in his hands announces his boundless condescension by sending a star. The *Lord* before whom the heavenly powers stand in awe

is coming into the world. He will be born from a Virgin without undergoing change. He is the Lover of the human race! X2

Small Litany

P: For blessed is your name, and glorified is your kingdom, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. *Amen*

Psalm 50

O God, have mercy on me in your abundant mercy
and wipe out my offence through your great compassion.
⁴ Wash me thoroughly from my lawless act
and cleanse me from my sin.
⁵ For I know my lawlessness
and my sin is always before me.
⁶ I have sinned against you alone
and done this evil before you
^{6b} so that you might be justified in your words
and overcome when you are judged.
⁷ For see, I was conceived in lawlessness
and my mother gave birth to me in sin.
⁸ For see, you have loved truth
and revealed to me the hidden and secret *things* of your wisdom.
⁹ You will sprinkle me with hyssop and I will be clean;
you will wash me and I will become whiter than snow.
¹⁰ You will make me hear about joy and gladness;
the humbled bones will rejoice.
¹¹ Turn your face from my sins
and wipe out all my lawlessness.
¹² O God, create a pure heart within me
and renew an upright spirit within me.
¹³ Do not banish me from your presence
or remove your Holy Spirit from me.
¹⁴ Restore the joy of your salvation to me
and make me firm with your directing Spirit.
¹⁵ I will teach the lawless your ways
and the ungodly will return to you.
¹⁶ O God, set me free from the guilt of blood;
O God of my salvation,

- my tongue will rejoice in your justice.
- ¹⁷ O Lord, you will open my lips
and my mouth will proclaim your praise.
- ¹⁸ For if you had wanted sacrifice, I would have given it;
you will not be pleased with burnt offerings.
- ¹⁹ Sacrifice for God is a broken spirit;
God will not despise a broken and humbled heart.
- ²⁰ O Lord, be good to Zion in your pleasure
and let the walls of Jerusalem be built.
- ²¹ Then you will be pleased with a sacrifice of justice,
with an offering and burnt sacrifices;
then they will offer calves on your altar.

Kontákia

Tone 3

Today the Virgin proceeds to the cave where she will give birth past understanding to the Word from all eternity. Rejoice, O inhabited earth when the news is proclaimed. Glorify with the angels and shepherds the *Lord* who chose to be revealed as a new-born child yet was God from all eternity.

Tone 3

The stirring celebration of your victorious fight is an announcement of the *Lord* who is to be born from the Virgin. In your eagerness to possess him for all time, you hurried to be devoured by the wild animals. Therefore, O glorious Ignátios, you were called the Bearer of God.

Synaxáron

Today we remember the holy hieromartyr Ignátios, the God-bearer, of Antioch who lived in the Second Century. He was arrested and taken to Rome via the cities of Asia Minor. As he passed through them he wrote letters to their churches. He spoke to Polycarp of Smyrna on the way. On the Twentieth he was mangled by the jaws of lions in Rome. Later his bones were returned to Antioch.

Together with him we remember:

Archbishop Philogonios of Antioch C4

Archbishop Daniel II of Serbia C14

New Martyr John of Thasos C17

Presbyter John of Kronstadt C19

O God, have mercy on us through their holy prayers. Amen.

Katavasías

1: Christ is born, glorify him! Christ is from heaven, receive him! Christ is on earth, be raised! All the earth, sing to the Lord! All you people, praise him with joy, for he has been glorified!

3: Let us cry out to Christ our God, to the Son begotten of the Father before all ages and incarnate from the Virgin without seed in these latter days, “O Lord, you have raised our horn and are holy.”

4: O Rod of the stem of Jesse and Flower which bloomed from a virgin, O all-praised Christ, you have come from the mountain covered with darkness. You have been made flesh from the one who did not know marriage. O God not formed from matter, O Lord, glory to your might!

5: God of peace and Father of mercies, you have sent us the Angel of great council who grants us peace. So we are guided to the light of the knowledge of God. O Lover of the human race, we wake early from the night and praise you.

6: The sea-monster spewed Jonah unharmed as it had received him, like a baby from the womb. When the Word came to live in the Virgin and was made flesh, he came out, yet preserved her incorrupt, for he himself was not subject to decay and kept his mother free from harm.

7: The children brought up together in godliness, despised the unjust command, and were not afraid of the threat of fire, but as they stood in the midst of the flames, they sang, “Blessed are you, O God of our fathers!”

8: Let us praise, bless and worship the Lord.

The furnace which was moist with dew, was the image of a wonder beyond nature, for it did not burn the children whom it had received, just as the Fire of Divinity did not consume the Virgin's womb when it entered. So let us raise the song, “Let the entire creation bless the Lord and exalt him above all for ever!”

My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour. R:

R: *You are* more honourable than the Cherubim
and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim.
You gave birth to God the Word without defilement;
O true Theotokos, we glorify you.

² For he has regarded his servant's humility;
see, from now all generations will call me blessed. R:

³ For the Almighty has accomplished great *things* for me
and his name is holy.

His mercy is from generation to generation
on those who fear him. R:

⁴ He has accomplished strength with his arm
and scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. R:

⁵ He has put down the mighty from *their* thrones
and exalted the humble.

He has satisfied the hungry with good *things*
and dismissed the rich with nothing. R:

⁶ He has helped his servant Israel
in remembering his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and his seed for ever. R:

9: I see a strange and most glorious mystery. Heaven is the cave and the
cherubic throne is the Virgin. The manger is the place where Christ lay.
He is the God who cannot be contained and whom we glorify in song.

Small Litany

P: For all the powers of heaven praise you, and to you we send up glory, to
the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the
ages of ages. *Amen*

Exaposteilária

Tone 3

O cave of Bethlehem, be prepared! O manger, be ready to receive the
infinite God bounded by the flesh, for he is coming to be born in
accordance with his goodwill.

Tone 2

O Ignátios the Godbearer, you said, “I am the wheat of God my Saviour. He will now allow me to be ground by the teeth of wild animals in order to become pure bread acceptable to the Holy Trinity.” O holy hieromartyr, as you stand in his presence, remember us who celebrate your light-filled feast.”

Tone 3

Because you were wounded by the love of your Lord, you said, “My dear Christ was willingly crucified. I am thirsty for his love and want to love him in return. I desire to share both in his passion and heavenly kingdom.”

Tone 3

O faithful, let us now resound with festal hymns in preparation for the birth of Christ, for he is coming to be born in Bethlehem as a human child from the Virgin. The *Lord* who existed from all time will be seen wrapped in swaddling clothes.

Praises

Tone 4

Let everything with breath
praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise him in the heights.
To you, O God, is due a song.

Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his powers.
To you, O God, is due a song.

S4: Praise him with cymbal and dance;
praise him with strings and flute.

O Bethlehem, be vigilant! O city of Zion, sing aloud! O desert, bloom with joy! The star advances to be revealed in the city of David. Christ is about to be born. O cave, receive the one whom the heavens cannot contain. O manger, prepare to receive the Life of the ages. Let us cry out with praise to him, “O Jesus our God, save our souls, for you became incarnate for us.

S3: Praise him with tuneful cymbals;
praise him with joyful cymbals.

Let everything with breath praise the Lord.

O Bethlehem, be vigilant! O city of Zion, sing aloud! O desert, bloom with joy! The star advances to be revealed in the city of David. Christ is about to be born. O cave, receive the one whom the heavens cannot contain. O manger, prepare to receive the Life of the ages. Let us cry out with praise to him, “O Jesus our God, save our souls, for you became incarnate for us.

S2: God will come from Timan

and the Holy *One* from the shadowy wooded mountain. Hab 3

Christ our God will be revealed; he will not delay. He appears and is born from a blameless virgin. He will be laid in a cave and wrapped in swaddling bands. O manger of senseless animals, receive the One whom the heavens cannot contain. He releases us from our lack of reason. O star, shine! O Wise Men, worship when you see the fearful wonder! O angels, celebrate with song. God is coming to earth. He will dissolve our innumerable sins with a single word.

S1: Lord, I have heard your report and was afraid;

O Lord, I have thought about your works and was amazed. Hab 3

O Isaiah, dance and show us the Word of God; prophesy about Mary the Virgin; she is the bush which burns with fire, but is not consumed. O Bethlehem, adorn yourself in the radiant splendour of God. O Eden, open your gates. O Wise Men, set out on your journey and see the Saviour in the crib wrapped in swaddling clothes. The star shines over the cave and reveals him to you as the Lord and Giver of life, the Saviour of the human race.

Glory: Tone 1

O God-bearing Ignátios, O living pillar and animated image, your annual feast has come; it reveals your teaching, sublime deeds, perseverance in the faith to the shedding of your blood and your blessed words of everlasting fame. You said, “I am the wheat of our God and will be ground by the teeth of wild animal.” You emulated the passion of Christ, so pray now that our souls may be saved.

Both now: Tone 6

O cave, get ready, for the Ewe Lamb comes and carries Christ in her womb. O manger, receive the *Lord* who has released the inhabitants of earth from lawlessness by a word. O shepherds who live in the fields, witness to the fearful wonder. O Wise Men from Persia, offer the King gold, myrrh and incense, for the Lord has appeared from a virgin Mother. She bends over him like a maid, worshipped him as he lay in her arms and said to him, “How were you sown as seed in me? My Saviour and God, how have you grown within me?”

Great Doxology

Glory to you who have shown us the light!

glory to God in the highest!

Peace on earth and goodwill to men!

² We praise you, we bless you, we worship you,
we glorify you, we thank you for your great glory,

³ O Lord King, heavenly God, almighty Father,
O Lord, only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ,
and you, O Holy Spirit!

⁴ O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sin of the world;

have mercy on us,

for you take away the sin of the world.

⁵ Receive our prayer,

for you sit on the right of the Father,
and have mercy on us.

⁶ For only you are holy, only you are Lord,

O Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

⁷ I will bless you every day

and always praise your name for ever and ever. Ps 144

⁸ O Lord, allow us this day
to be guarded from sin.

⁹ Blessed are you, O Lord God of our fathers!

Praised and glorified be your name for ever. Amen. Daniel 3

¹⁰ O Lord, let your mercy *be* on us,
for we have hoped in you. Ps 32.

¹⁶ Blessed are you, O Lord!

Teach me your statutes. X3 Ps 118

¹² O Lord, you have been our refuge

from generation to generation. Ps 89

I said, "O Lord, have mercy on me;

heal my soul, for I have sinned against you." Ps 40

¹⁴ O Lord, I have fled to you;

teach me to do your will, for you are my God. Ps 142

¹⁵ For with you is the source of life

and in your light we will see light. Ps 35

¹⁶ Stretch out your mercy

to those who know you. Ps 35

Triságion

Apolytícion

Tone 4

O saint inspired by God, you became a partner of the apostles in their way of life and a successor to their thrones; you found the means for approaching divine vision. Therefore you have truly taught the word of truth and fought for the faith even to death. O hieromartyr Ignátios, pray to Christ God to save our souls.

Dismissal

LITURGY

Antiphon 1 Ps 91 Tone 5

S1: It is good to thank the Lord
and make melody to your name, O Most High.

R: At the prayers of the Theotokos, Saviour, save us!

S2: To announce your mercy in the morning
and your truth by night,

S3: For the Lord our God is upright
and there is no injustice in him.

S4: Glory: Both now:

Antiphon 2 Ps 92 Tone 2

S1: The Lord reigns *and* is clothed with majesty;
the Lord has put on power and clothed himself.

R: Save us, O Son of God. You are wonderful in your saints.
We sing to you, “Alleluia!”

S2: For he founded the world which will not be moved.

S3: O Lord, holiness is right for your house
to length of days.

S4: Glory: Both now:

Monogenes

Antíphon 3 Ps 94 Tone 4

S1: Come, let us rejoice in the Lord,
and shout with joy to God our Saviour.

Tone 4

R: O saint inspired by God, you became a partner of the apostles in their way of life and a successor to their thrones; you found the means for approaching divine vision. Therefore you have truly taught the word of truth and fought for the faith even to death. O hieromartyr Ignátios, pray to Christ God to save our souls.

S2: Let us enter his presence with thanksgiving
and gladly cry to him with psalms,
For the Lord is a great God
and a high king over all the earth.

Entrance Ps 94

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ.

Save us, O Son of God

You are wonderful in your saints.

We sing to you, “Alleluia!”

Apolytíkia

Tone 4

O Bethlehem, prepare, for Eden has been opened to all. O Ephratha, adorn yourself, for the Tree of Life blossoms from the Virgin in the cave. Her womb is a spiritual Paradise which has been planted with the divine Fruit. If we eat from it, we will live for ever and not die like Adam. Christ comes to restore the image which he made in the beginning.

Tone 4

O saint inspired by God, you became a partner of the apostles in their way of life and a successor to their thrones; you found the means for approaching divine vision. Therefore you have truly taught the word of truth and fought for the faith even to death. O hieromartyr Ignátios, pray to Christ God to save our souls.

Of the Church

Kontákion

Tone 3

Today the Virgin comes to the cave where she will ineffably give birth to the pre-eternal Word. O inhabited earth, rejoice when you hear the news! Glorify with the angels and shepherds the one who chose to be revealed as a new born Child, *yet was* God before the ages.

Triságion

Prokeímenon Ps 115 Tone 7

R: The death of his saints is precious in the sight of the Lord.

S: What shall we give back to the Lord
for everything which he has given us?

Apostolos

From the Letter to the Hebrews (10:32-38)

Brothers, recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings. ³³Sometimes you were publicly exposed to abuse and affliction and sometimes you were partners with those treated in this way. ³⁴For you had compassion on the prisoners and joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an enduring one. ³⁵Therefore do not throw away your confidence which has a great reward. ³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised. ³⁷"For yet a little while, and the one who approaches will arrive and not linger; ³⁸but my just one will live by faith."

Alleluia Ps 131 Tone 1

S1: O Lord, your priests will be clothed with justice

and your holy ones will rejoice.
S2: For the Lord has chosen Zion.

Gospel

From the Holy Gospel according to Mark (9:33-41)

At that time Jesus and his disciples came to Caper'na-um; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?"
³⁴ But they were silent; for on the way they had discussed with one another who was the greatest. ³⁵ And he sat down and called the twelve; and he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." ³⁶ And he took a child, and put him in the midst of them; and taking him in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me." ³⁸ John said to him, "Teacher, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he was not following us." ³⁹ But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him; for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me. ⁴⁰ For he that is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ, will by no means lose his reward.

Communion Ps 111

The just will be in everlasting remembrance. Alleluia!