

25 DECEMBER
§ Nativity of the Saviour

VESPERS

This is normally in the morning of Christmas Eve after the Hours and is followed by the Liturgy of St Basil. In the Typikon of the Great Church only three Old Testament readings are used from the Menaion.

Lord I have cried

Tone 2

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.

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.

Come and greatly rejoice in the Lord as we speak about this present mystery. The dividing wall has been destroyed *and* the flaming sword turns back. The Cherubim withdraw from the Tree of Life and I partake of the delight of Paradise from which I was thrown out through disobedience. For the express image of the Father, the imprint of his Eternity, takes the form of a servant, and, without undergoing change, he comes from an unwedded mother. For what he was, he has remained, true God. He has taken on himself what he was not; he became man in his love for the human race. Let us cry aloud to him, "O God born from a virgin, have mercy on us." X2

S4: Let Israel hope in the Lord

from morning watch until night,

from morning watch.

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

When the Lord Jesus was born from the holy Virgin, all the world was enlightened. The shepherds watched in the fields, the Wise Men adored and the angels praised in song, but Herod was troubled, for God has appeared in the flesh; *he is* the Saviour of our souls. X2

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

O Christ our God, your kingdom is a kingdom of all the ages and your rule is from generation to generation. You were incarnate by the Holy Spirit and made man from the ever-Virgin Mary. You have enlightened us by your coming. O Light from Light, Brightness of the Father, you have made the whole creation shine with joy. Everything with breath praises you, for you are the image of the Father's glory. O God, you are and have always been. You have shone from a virgin; have mercy on us.

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

O Christ, what can we offer you, for you have appeared on earth as a man for us? Every creature made by you offers you thanks. The angels offer you a hymn; the heavens a star. The Wise Men offer gifts; the shepherds, their wonder. The earth offers its cave; the wilderness, the manger. And we offer you a virgin mother. O pre-eternal God, have mercy on us.

Glory: Both now: Tone 2

When Augustus reigned alone on earth, the many kingdoms of the human race came to end. When you were made man from the pure Virgin, the many gods of idolatry were destroyed. The cities of the world passed under one single rule and the nations came to believe in one sovereign Divinity. The peoples were enrolled by the decree of Caesar and we, the faithful, were enrolled in the name of the Divinity, when you, our God, were made man. Great is your mercy: glory to you.

Entrance

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.

No Prokeimenon

Prophecy 1

From the Book of Genesis (1:1-13)

In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth. ² But the earth was unsightly and unfurnished, and darkness was over the deep, and the Spirit of God moved over the water. ³ And God said: Let there be light, and there was light. ⁴ And God saw the light that it was good, and God divided between the light and the darkness. ⁵ And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night, and there was evening and there was morning, the first day. ⁶ And God said: Let there be a firmament in the midst of the water, and let it be a division between water and water, and it was so. ⁷ And God made the firmament, and God divided between the water which was under the firmament and the water which was above the firmament. ⁸ And God called the firmament Heaven, and God saw that it was good, and there was evening and there was morning, the second day. ⁹ And God said: Let the water which is under the heaven be collected into one place, and let the dry land appear, and it was so. And the water which was under the heaven was collected into its places, and the dry land appeared. ¹⁰ And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering of the waters he called Seas, and God saw that it was good. ¹¹ And God said: Let the earth produce the vegetation of grass bearing seed according to its kind and according to its likeness, and the fruit-tree bearing fruit whose seed is in it, according to its kind on the earth, and it was so. ¹² And the earth brought out the vegetation of grass bearing seed according to its kind and according to its likeness, and the fruit tree bearing fruit whose seed is in it, according to its kind on the earth, and God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

Tropárium 1

Tone 6

You were born in a cave and hidden from the eyes of men, but the heavens revealed you to everyone through a star. It offered you the Wise Men to worship you with the zeal of their faith. Have mercy on them and us.

S1: His foundations are on the holy mountains;
the Lord loves the gates of Zion
more than all the homes of Jacob. Ps 86

R: It offered you the Wise Men to worship you with the zeal of their faith.
Have mercy on them and us.

S2: O City of God,
glorious things are spoken about you.

R: It offered you the Wise Men to worship you with the zeal of their faith.
Have mercy on them and us

S3: I will mention Rahab and Babylon to those who know me;
see, the Philistines, Tyrians
and people of Ethiopia were born there.

R: It offered you the Wise Men to worship you with the zeal of their faith.
Have mercy on them and us.

S4: A man who was born in her will say, "Mother Zion,"
and, "The Most High himself has founded her."

R: It offered you the Wise Men to worship you with the zeal of their faith.
Have mercy on them and us.

S5: The Lord will describe *this* in the records of the people
and of the princes who were born in her.

How joyful are all those
whose home is in you.

R: It offered you the Wise Men to worship you with the zeal of their faith.
Have mercy on them and us.

Glory: Both now:

You were born in a cave and hidden from the eyes of men, but the heavens revealed you to everyone through a star. It offered you the Wise Men to worship you with the zeal of their faith. Have mercy on them and us.

Prophecy 7

From the Prophecy of Isaiah (9:6-7)

A child is born to us, and a son is given to us, whose government is on his shoulder. And his name is called the Angel of Great Counsel, Mighty God, Ruler, Prince of Peace, Father of age to come. For I will bring peace on the princes, and health to him. ⁷ His government will be great, and of his peace there is no end. It will be on the throne of David, and on his kingdom, to establish it, and to support it with judgment and with justice, from now onwards and for ever. The seal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Tropárium 2

Tone 6

O Christ, Sun of justice, you have been revealed from the Virgin. A star discovered you, whom nothing can contain, *when you were* made known in the cave. It guided the Wise Men to worship you. Together with them we worship you. Glory to you, O Giver of life!

S1: The Lord reigns *and* is clothed with beauty;
the Lord is covered and cloaked with power.

R: The star guided the Wise Men to worship you. Together with them we worship you. Glory to you, O Giver of life!

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

Your throne *was* made ready in the past;
you are from eternity.

R: The star guided the Wise Men to worship you. Together with them we worship you. Glory to you, O Giver of life!

S3: O Lord, the rivers have risen;
the watercourses have raised their voices.

The rivers will lift up their waves
at the sounding of many waters.

R: The star guided the Wise Men to worship you. Together with them we worship you. Glory to you, O Giver of life!

S4: The surging of the sea is wonderful;
the Lord is marvellous in the heights.

R: The star guided the Wise Men to worship you. Together with them we worship you. Glory to you, O Giver of life!

S5: Your testimonies are very sure;

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

Glory: Both now:

O Christ, Sun of justice, you have been revealed from the Virgin. A star discovered you, whom nothing can contain, *when you were* made known in the cave. It guided the Wise Men to worship you. Together with them we worship you. Glory to you, O Giver of life!

Prophecy 8

From the Prophecy of Isaiah (7:10-16, 8:1-4, 9-10)

The Lord again spoke to Ahaz, saying: ¹¹ Ask for yourself a sign from the Lord your God, in the depth or in the height. ¹² And Ahaz said: I will not ask, neither will I test the Lord. ¹³ And he said: Listen now, O house of David; is it a small matter for you to contend against men? And how do you contend against the Lord? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; see, a virgin will conceive in the womb, and will give birth to a son, and you must call his name Emmanuel. ¹⁵ He will eat butter and honey, before he knows either to prefer evil or choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the child will know good or evil, he refuses evil to choose the good. ¹ Then the Lord said to me: Take for yourself a volume of a great new book, and write in it with a man's pen about making a rapid plunder of spoils; for it is near at hand. ² And make me witnesses of faithful men, Uriah the priest, and Zachariah the son of Barachias. ³ And I went in to the prophetess; and she conceived, and bore a son. And the Lord said to me: Call his name, Spoil Quickly, Plunder Speedily. ⁴ For before the child knows how to call his father or his mother, someone will take the power of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria before the king of the Assyrians. ⁹ Recognise, O nations, and be conquered; listen, even to the end of the earth. Be conquered, after you strengthened yourselves. For even if you should again strengthen yourselves, you will again be conquered. ¹⁰ And whatever advice you will take, the Lord will bring it to nothing; and whatever word you speak, it will not stand among you, for God is with us.

Acclamation

D/P: Let us pray to the Lord.

P: For holy are you our God, and to you we send up glory, to the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. *Amen*

Triságion

Prokeímenon Ps 2 Tone 4

R: The Lord said to me, “You are my Son,
today I have begotten you.

S: Ask me and I will give you the nations for your inheritance.

Apóstolos

From the Letter of Paul to the Hebrews (1:1-12)

Brothers, God, having in the past spoken to the fathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² has at the end of these days spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds. ³ His Son is the radiance of his glory, the very image of his substance, and upholds all things by the word of his power. When he had by himself made purification for our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; ⁴ having become so much better than the angels, as he has inherited a more excellent name than they have. ⁵ For to which of the angels did he say at any time, “You are my Son, today have I become your father?” And again, “I will be to him a Father, and he will be to me a Son?” ⁶ Again, when he brings in the firstborn into the world he says, “Let all the angels of God worship him.” ⁷ Of the angels he says, “Who makes his angels winds, and his servants a flame of fire.” ⁸ But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; the sceptre of justice is the sceptre of your kingdom. ⁹ You have loved justice, and hated iniquity; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows.” ¹⁰ And, “You, Lord, in the beginning, laid the foundation of the earth. The heavens are the works of your hands. ¹¹ They will perish, but you continue; they all will grow old like a garment. ¹² As a mantle you will roll them up and they will be changed; but you are the same. Your years will not fail.”

Alleluia Ps 109 Tone 4

S1: The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies a stool for your feet.”

S2: The Lord will send you a sceptre of power from Zion.

Gospel

From the Holy Gospel according to Luke (2:1-20)

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. ² This was the first enrolment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. ⁷ And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. ⁸ And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; ¹¹ for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a crowd of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!" ¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; ¹⁸ and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

And the rest of the Liturgy of Basil

Communion Ps 148

Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise him in the heights. Alleluia!

The Apósticha are used in Compline, but when Christmas Eve is a Saturday or Sunday, Vespers continues as follows.

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.

Lití

Tone 5

The Wise Men, *who were* kings of Persia, know that you, the heavenly King, were truly born on earth. They came to Bethlehem, guided by the light of a star, and offered their chosen gifts of gold, incense and myrrh. They fell before you and worshipped you, for they saw you, O timeless *Lord*, when you lay as a baby in the cave.

Apósticha

Tone 2

A great and marvellous wonder has come to pass today. A Virgin bears a child and her womb suffers no corruption. The Word is made flesh, yet does not cease to live with the Father. Angels and shepherds give glory

and, together with them, we cry aloud, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of goodwill!”

Tone 3

S1: The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit on my right
until I make your enemies a stool for your feet." Ps 109

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Maker of all. Eden offers a cave *and* a star discloses Christ the Sun to those in darkness. Wise Men, enlightened by faith, worship with gifts *and* shepherds see the wonder. Angels sing praises and say, “Glory to God in the highest!

S2: I have fathered you from the womb before the Morning Star. 109
When the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judah, Wise Men came from the east *and* worshipped the God who was made man. They eagerly opened their treasures *and* offered him precious gifts, refined gold, as though to the King of the ages, incense, as though to the God of all, myrrh which they offered to the Immortal, as to though to *Lord* who was three days dead. All nations, come and worship the one who was born to save our souls.

Glory: Tone 4

O Jerusalem, rejoice! All who love Zion, celebrate! Today the ancient bond of Adam’s condemnation is loosed. Paradise is opened to us and the serpent is laid low. In time past he deceived the woman in Paradise, but now he sees a woman become Mother of the Creator. O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! The sinful vessel which brought death on all flesh has become the first fruits of salvation for all the world through the Theotokos. For from her the all-perfect God is born a Child and sets the seal on her virginity through his birth. He looses the bonds of sin through his swaddling clothes. He heals Eve’s pangs in travail through becoming a Child. Therefore let all creation sing and dance for joy, for Christ has come to restore it and to save our souls.

Both now: Tone 4

O Christ, you have come to live in a cave and the manger received you; the shepherds and Wise Men worshipped you. Then the preaching of the prophets was fulfilled and the angelic powers were amazed. They cried aloud and said, “Glory to your condescension, only Lover of the human race!”

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

Apolytíkion

Tone 4

O Christ our God, your nativity has illuminated the world with the light of wisdom. For by it, O Sun of Justice, those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star to worship you and to know you as the Dawn from above. O Lord, glory to you! X3

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.

Apolytíkion

Tone 4

O Christ our God, your nativity has illuminated the world with the light of wisdom. For by it, O Sun of Justice, those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star to worship you and to know you as the Dawn from above. O Lord, glory to you! X3

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*

Kathisma 1

Tone 4

O faithful, come and see where Christ is born. Let us join the Wise Men, kings from the east, and follow the guiding star. Angels continually sing praises there and the shepherds who live in the fields offer an appropriate hymn and say, “Glory in the highest to the one who is born today from the Virgin and Theotokos in the cave of Bethlehem in Judah. X2

Kathisma 2

Tone 4

“O Mary, why are you filled with wonder? Why are you amazed at what has come to pass in you?” “I have given birth in time to the timeless Son, yet I do not understand how I conceived him. I have not known a man; how then could I bear a child? Who has ever seen a birth without seed?” But, as it is written, “When God so wills, the order of nature is overturned.” Christ is born from the Virgin in Bethlehem of Judah. X2

(Polyeleos)

Kathisma 3

Tone 4

How was *the Lord* enclosed in a womb whom the inhabited earth cannot contain? How can the one who is in the bosom of the Father be carried in the arms of a mother? All this occurred as he himself had commanded, determined and pleased. The *Lord* who was not limited by a human body chose to become incarnate for us; he became what he was not before. He shared our nature without losing his own. Christ is born with two natures to perfect the world. 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, now and always and to the ages of ages. *Amen*

Anaváthmi Ps 128 Tone 4

- ¹ Many passions have fought against me from my youth,
but help me and save me, O my Saviour. X2
- ² Those who hate Zion will be shamed by the Lord;
they will be withered like grass by the fire. X2
- Glory:
- ³ Every soul lives through the Holy Spirit, is exalted in purity
and illuminated by the Triune Unity in a sacred mystery.
Both now:
- ⁴ The streams of grace pour out through the Holy Spirit;
they water all creation and produce life.

Prokeímenon Ps 109 Tone 4

- R: I have begotten you from the womb before the Morning Star;
The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind.
“You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.”
- S: The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand.”

Gospel Dialogue

- P/D: Let us pray to the Lord. *Lord have mercy*
- P: For you, O God, are holy *and* rest in the Holy Place. We send up glory to you, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. *Amen.*
- R: Let everything with breath praise the Lord. X3
- Praise God in his saints;
praise him in the firmament of his power. Ps 50
- P/D: And that we may be counted worthy to listen to the Holy Gospel, let us pray to the Lord our God. *Lord have mercy X3*
- P/D: Wisdom. Stand up. Let us listen to the Holy Gospel.
- P: Peace be with you all. *And with your spirit*
- P: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew.
- P/D: Let us attend
- R: Glory to you, O Lord, glory to you.

Gospel

From the Holy Gospel according to Matthew (1:18-25)
Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; ¹⁹ and her husband Joseph, being

a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; ²¹ she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel” (which means, God with us). ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

R: Glory to you, O Lord, glory to you.

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.

Glory: Tone 2

Today the whole creation is filled with joy, for Christ is born from the Virgin in Bethlehem.

Both now:

Today the whole creation is filled with joy, for Christ is born from the Virgin in Bethlehem.

Tone 6

O God, have mercy on me in your abundant mercy
and wipe out my offence through your great compassion.
Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth! Today Bethlehem
receives the *Lord* who always sits with the Father. Today angels glorify
with holy hymns the baby who is born. “Glory to God in the highest, and
on earth peace, good will towards men!”

Intercession

Short Form

P/D: O God, save your people and bless your inheritance.

Visit your world with mercy and compassion; exalt the horn of Orthodox Christians and send down on them your rich mercy, through the prayers of our all-pure Lady, Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary, by the power of the honourable and life-giving cross, through the protection of the honourable bodiless powers of heaven, through the prayers of the honourable, glorious, prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John, of the holy, glorious, all-praised apostles, of the holy, all-praised and victorious martyrs, of our holy and God-bearing fathers, and of all the saints. We ask you, only merciful Lord, “Listen to us sinners as we pray to you, and have mercy on us.”

Lord have mercy. X12

Through the mercy, compassion and love for the human race of your only-begotten Son, with whom you are blessed, together with the all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. *Amen.*

Kontákion

Tone 3

Today the Virgin gives birth to the transcendent Being and the earth offers a cave to the unapproachable *Lord*. Angels with shepherds glorify him. The wise men travel with the star, because for our sake the eternal God was born as a little Child.

Íkos

Bethlehem has opened Eden. Come *and* see! We have found the hidden Joy. Come *and* take possession of the Paradise within the cave. There the unwatered Stem has appeared, from which forgiveness blooms. There the undug Well is found from which David longed to drink in the past. There the Virgin has given birth to a child and at once the thirst of Adam and David is made to cease. Therefore let us hurry to this place where for our sake the eternal God was born as a little Child.

Synaxáron

Today we celebrate the earthly birthday in the flesh of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ. God himself is born and his mother is a virgin. Creation has never observed a greater wonder. On the Twenty Fifth God became the Son of the Virgin Mary and a cave became his home.

On the same day we commemorate the wise men. The princes of the nations foreshadow the adoration of the Gentiles.

On the same day we commemorate the shepherds who saw the Lord. They left their flocks and hurried to see Christ, the Good Shepherd.

To him be glory throughout all ages. 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!

In times past the Master who accomplishes wonders saved his people and made the watery wave of the sea into dry land. Now he has been willingly born from a maiden and so establishes a path for us by which we can ascend to heaven. We glorify him the *Lord* who is equal in being with the Father and also with mortal men.

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.”

O Benefactor, graciously accept, the praises of your servants and bring down the spiteful, haughty looks of the enemy. O blessed Lord, you see everything, so raise us far above sin and establish your singers firm and unshaken on the foundation of the faith.

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 her who did not know marriage. O God not formed from matter, O Lord, glory to your might!

In past time Habakkuk the prophet was counted worthy to see ineffably the figure and symbol of Christ’s birth; he foretold in song the renewal of the human race. For a young Baby, even the Word, has now come from the mountain, which is the Virgin, for the renewal of the peoples.

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.

O Christ, we watch in vigil during the night of the deeds of dark error and sing to you as our Benefactor. “Come to us and grant us cleansing. Ease the path for us by which we may ascend and so attain glory.”

6: The sea-monster threw out 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 he kept his mother free from harm.

Jonah was enclosed in the remotest depths of the sea; he implored you to come and still the storm. O Christ, I am pricked by the dart of the tyrant and call out to you, the Slayer of evil; I implore you to come quickly and rescue me from my slothfulness.

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!”

The children were captured and held fast by love for the King of all. They did not despise the ungodly threats of the tyrant in his boundless fury. As the terrible fire withdrew before them, they said to the Master, “Blessed are you throughout all the ages!”

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 tthe one whole creation bless the Lord and exalt him above all for ever!”

The children of the Old Covenant who walked in the fire without being burnt, prefigured the womb of the Maiden which remained sealed when she gave birth in a manner beyond nature. The same grace of God brought

both these wonders to pass in a miracle and raised the nations to sing in praise.

Canticle 9

The Magnificat is not sung.

Tone 1

O my soul, glorify the most pure virgin Theotokos who is more honourable and glorious than the heavenly hosts. 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.

O my soul glorify God who is born in the flesh from the Virgin. When they saw the strange course of an unknown and newly shining star which exceeded the brightness of all heavenly light, the Wise Men learnt that Christ the King had been born on earth in Bethlehem for our salvation.

O my soul, glorify God who is worshipped by the Wise Men. “Where is the new-born Child and King whose star we have seen,” asked the Wise Men, “for we have come to worship him?” Herod, the enemy of God, in his wild madness was troubled and plotted how to kill Christ.

O my soul, glorify the pure Virgin who has given birth to Christ the King. Herod inquired what time the guiding star had appeared which brought the Wise Men to Bethlehem to worship Christ with gifts. They were guided back to their own land by that same star, did not return to Herod, but mocked the evil killer of children.

Canon 2 Tone 1

Today the Virgin bears the Master within the cave. It would be easier, as a refuge from danger, for us to keep silence in fear. O Virgin, it is hard indeed to compose songs in love which are put together in harmony. O Mother, give us strength to fulfil our good intention.

Today the untouchable Master is wrapped as a baby in swaddling bands. O pure Mother, we have seen the dim figures and past shadows of the Word. Now that he has newly appeared from the closed Gate, we who are counted worthy to see the Light of Truth, call your womb blessed, as is right and correct.

O my soul, glorify the power of the undivided Divinity in three persons. The people who delight in Christ have attained their desire and are counted worthy of the coming of God. Now they humbly pray for the regeneration which gives life. O undefiled Virgin, grant them the grace to worship Christ in his glory.

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.

It would be easier, as a refuge from danger, for us to keep silence in fear. O Virgin, it is hard indeed to compose songs in love which are put together in harmony. O Mother, give us strength to fulfil our good intention.

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*

Exaposteiláron

Our Saviour, the Dawn from the east, has visited us from above. We who were in darkness and shadow have found the truth, for the Lord is born from the Virgin. *X3*

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 just, celebrate! O heavens, rejoice greatly! O mountains, dance for joy, for Christ is born. The Virgin is enthroned like the Cherubim and carries on her bosom God the Word *who was* made flesh. Shepherds glorify the new-born child and Wise Men offer the Master gifts. Angels sing praises and say, “O Lord, *you are* beyond understanding, glory to you!”

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

Let everything with breath praise the Lord.

It was through the good pleasure of the Father that the Word became flesh and the Virgin gave birth to the God *who was* made man. A star spreads abroad the news *and* the Wise Men worship. The shepherds stand amazed and creation is filled with great joy.

S2: The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit on my right
until I make your enemies a stool for your feet." Ps 109

O virgin Theotokos, you have given birth to the Saviour and have overthrown the curse of Eve. For you have become the Mother of him in whom the Father was well pleased and have carried God the incarnate Word on your bosom. We cannot fathom the mystery, but we all glorify it by faith alone. We cry out with you and say, “O Lord beyond all understanding, glory to you!”

S1: I have fathered you from the womb before the Morning Star. 109

Come and sing the praises of the Saviour’s Mother. After she had given birth to the Child she still remained a virgin. Rejoice, O living City of the King in which Christ has lived and brought to pass our salvation! Together with Gabriel, we sing your praises. Together with the shepherds, we glorify you and cry, “O Theotokos, intercede for our salvation with the one who took flesh from you!”

Glory: Tone 6

O Lord, when it was time for your appearance on earth, the first taxation of the world was held. Then you prepared to enrol the names of all those who believed in your birth. For this reason Caesar published such a decree, since your timeless and eternal Kingdom was newly revealed. Therefore, O God and Saviour of our souls, as we pay our earthly tribute money, we offer you also the wealth of our Orthodox faith.

Both now: Tone 2

Today Christ is born from the Virgin in Bethlehem. Today the *Lord* who knows no beginning, begins to be. Today the Word is made flesh. The powers of heaven greatly rejoice and the earth with the human race is glad. The Wise Men offer gifts, the shepherds proclaim the wonder and we continually cry aloud, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will towards men!"

Great Doxology

Glory to you who have shown us the light!

Glory to God in the highest!

Let peace *come* to earth and goodwill to men!

² We praise you, we bless you, we worship you,
we glorify you *and* 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 hand 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 constantly praise your name for ever and ever. Ps 144.2

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

⁹ Blessed are you, O Lord God of our fathers!
Your name is praised and glorified for ever. Amen Dan 3

¹⁰ O Lord, let your mercy be on us,
for we have hoped in you. Ps 32.22

¹⁶ Blessed are you, O Lord!
Teach me your statutes. X3 Ps 118.12

¹² O Lord, you have been our refuge
from generation to generation. Ps 89.1

I said, "Lord, have mercy on me;

- heal my soul, for I have sinned against you." Ps 40.5
- ¹⁴ O Lord, I have fled to you;
teach me to do your will,
for you are my God. Ps 142:10
- ¹⁵ For with you is the source of life
and in your light we will see light. Ps 35.10
- ¹⁶ Extend your mercy
to those who know you. Ps 35.11

Triságion

Apolytíkion

Tone 4

O Christ our God, your nativity has illuminated the world with the light of wisdom. For by it, O Sun of Justice, those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star to worship you and to know you as the Dawn from above. O Lord, glory to you!

LITURGY

Antíphon 1 Ps 110 Tone 2

S1: O Lord, I will thank you with my whole heart;
I will proclaim all your wonders.

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

S2: In *the* council of the upright and in an assembly,
great are the Lord's works!

S3: They are studied for all his purposes!

S4: His work is honour and splendour;
his justice remains from age to age.

S5: Glory: Both now:

Antíphon 2 Ps 111 Own Tone

S1: Blessed is the man who fears the Lord;
there is great desire in his commandments.

R: Save us, O Son of God.
You were born from the Virgin.

We sing to you, “Alleluia!”

S2: His seed will be mighty on the earth;
an upright generation will be blessed.

S3: Glory and wealth are in his house
and his justice remains from age to age.

S4: Light has risen in the darkness for the upright;
he is merciful, compassionate and just.

S5: Glory: Both now:
Monogenes

Antíphon 3 Ps 109 Tone 4

S1: The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit on my right
until I make your enemies a stool for your feet.”

R: O Christ our God, your nativity has illuminated the world with the light of wisdom. For by it, O Sun of Justice, those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star to worship you and to know you as the Dawn from above. O Lord, glory to you!

S2: The Lord will send you a mighty sceptre from Zion.

S3: Sovereignty is yours on the day of your power
and in the splendour of your saints.

Entrance Ps 109

I have begotten you from the womb before the Morning Star.

The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind,

“You are a priest for ever in the order of Melchizedek.”

Save us, O Son of God.

You were born from the Virgin.

We sing to you, “Alleluia!”

Apolytíkion

Tone 4

O Christ our God, your nativity has illuminated the world with the light of wisdom. For by it, O Sun of Justice, those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star to worship you and to know you as the Dawn from above. O Lord, glory to you!

Kontákion

Tone 3

Today the Virgin gives birth to the transcendent Being and the earth offers a cave to the unapproachable *Lord*. Angels with shepherds glorify him. The wise men travel with the star, because for our sake the eternal God was born as a little Child.

Triságion Substitute

For as many as have been baptised into Christ,
Have put on Christ. Alleluia!

Prokeímenon Ps 65 Tone 8

R: Let all the earth worship you and sing to you.

S: All the earth, shout with joy to the Lord.

Apóstolos

From the Letter of Paul to the Galatians (4:4-6)

Brothers, when the fullness of the time came, God sent out his Son, born to a woman, born under the law, ⁵ that he might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of children. ⁶ And because you are children, God sent out the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, “Abba, Father!” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Alleluia Ps 18 Tone 1

S1: The heavens declare God’s glory
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

S2: Day to day pours out speech
and night to night proclaims knowledge.

Gospel

From the Holy Gospel according to Matthew (2:1-12)

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, see, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, ² “Where is he who is born King of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east, and have come to worship him.” ³ When Herod the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he asked them where the Christ would be born. ⁵ They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written through the

prophet, ⁶ ‘You Bethlehem, land of Judah, are in no way least among the princes of Judah. For out of you will come forth a governor, who shall shepherd my people, Israel.’” ⁷ Then Herod secretly called the wise men, and learned from them exactly what time the star appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem, and said, “Go and search diligently for the young child. When you have found him, bring me word, so that I also may come and worship him.” ⁹ They, having heard the king, went their way; and see, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, until it came and stood over where the young child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. ¹¹ They came into the house and saw the young child with Mary, his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Opening their treasures, they offered to him gifts: gold, incense, and myrrh. ¹² Being warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they went back to their own country another way.

Especially

Tone 1

O my soul, glorify the most pure virgin Theotokos who is more honourable and glorious than the heavenly hosts. 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.

Communion Ps 42

Send out your light and your truth,
for they have guided me. Alleluia!

Post Communion

Tone 4

O Christ our God, your nativity has illuminated the world with the light of wisdom. For by it, O Sun of Justice, those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star to worship you and to know you as the Dawn from above. O Lord, glory to you!