THE 25th DAY OF THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

THE NATIVITY, ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, OF OUR LORD GOD & SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST

At the seventh hour of the day (1 o'clock in the afternoon), all the bells are solemnly tolled; and having gathered in church we begin Vespers as usual.

Deacon: Bless, master!

Priest: Blessed is the kingdom ...,

And after Amen the superior saith: O heavenly King ..., Trisagion through Our Father ..., Lord have mercy! (Twelve) Glory ..., Both now ..., O come, let us worship ..., (Thrice), And he readeth Psalm 103: Bless the Lord, O my soul ..., then the deacon intones the Great Litany.

If it be Saturday, we chant: Blessed is the man ..., but if it be Sunday, we chant only the first antiphon. On any other day the Kathisma is omitted, and after the litany we proceed immediately to chant:

On "Lord I have cried ...," 8 Stichera, in Tone II:

The priest performeth proskomedia, and the deacon censeth the church as usual, while the choirs chant the 8 Stichera of the feast.

Come, let us rejoice in the Lord, telling of this present mystery: The middle wall of partition hath been demolished, the fiery sword is removed, the cherub doth withdraw from the gate of life, and I partake of the food of paradise, from whence I was driven away because of disobedience; for the immutable Image of the Father, the Image of His eternity, doth assume the guise of a servant, issuing forth from the Mother who knew not wedlock, without undergoing change, yet He remained what He was before - our true God; and He hath received what He was not, becoming a man in His love for mankind. To Him let us cry aloud: O God Who wast born of the Virgin, have mercy on us! (Twice)

The composition of Anatolius: **W**hen the Lord Jesus was born from the holy Virgin, all things were enlightened; for when the shepherds piped, the magi offered homage and the angels sang, Herod was troubled, for God, the Savior of our souls, appeared in the flesh. (Twice)

Thy kingdom, O Christ God, is a kingdom of all the ages, and thy dominion is for all generations. O Christ God Who wast incarnate by the Holy Spirit and became a man through the Ever-virgin Mary, Thou hast shone forth Thine advent upon us as light. O Light from Light, Effulgence of the Father, Thou hast illumined all creation. Every creature that hath breath praiseth Thee, the Image of the glory of the Father. O Thou Who art and ever shall be, O God Who hast shone forth from the Virgin: Have mercy upon us! (Twice)

What shall we offer Thee, O Christ, in that Thou hast appeared on earth as a man for our sake? For every creature fashioned by Thee offereth Thee thanksgiving: the angels, hymnody; the heavens, a star; the magi, gifts; the shepherds, their wonder; the earth, a cave; the wilderness, a manger; and we, the Virgin Mother. O God Who hast existed from before time, have mercy upon us! (Twice)

Glory ..., Both now ..., the composition or Cassia the Nun, in Tone II:

When Augustus reigned alone upon the earth, the rule of many came to an end; and when Thou didst become a man through the pure one, the polytheism of idolatry was abolished. All cities came under a single universal empire, and the nations came to believe in a single dominion of the Godhead. The people were registered according to the edict of Caesar, and we, the faithful, have enrolled ourselves under the name of the divinity of Thee our God, Who hast become a man. Great is Thy mercy! O Lord, glory be to Thee!

Entrance with the Gospel. "O joyous light ...," Prokeimenon of the day.

Note: If the Eve of the Nativity of Christ falls on a Friday, we replace the Prokeimenon of the day with the Great Prokeimenon:

Prokeimenon, in Tone VII: What God is as great as our God? * Thou art God Who worketh wonders.

Verse I: Thou hast made Thy power known among the peoples; with Thine arm hast Thou redeemed Thy people.

Verse II: And I said: Now have I made a beginning; this change hath been wrought by the right hand of the Most High.

Verse III: I remembered the works of the Lord; for I will remember Thy wonders from the beginning.

And the following readings, in order, with their Troparia and verses.

A READING FROM GENESIS

In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth. But the earth was unsightly and unfurnished, and darkness was over the deep, and the Spirit of God moved over the water. And God said: "Let there be light!", and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good, and God divided between the light and the darkness. And God called the light day, and the darkness He called night; and there was evening and there was morning, the first day. 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. And God made the firmament, and God divided between the water which was under the firmament and the water which was above the firmament. And God called the firmament heaven; and God saw that it was good: and there was evening and there was morning, the second day. 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. And God called the dry land earth, and the gatherings of the waters he called seas; and God saw that it was good. And God said: "Let the earth bring forth the herb of grass bearing seed, according to its kind and according to its likeness, and the fruit-trees bearing fruit, whose seed is in it, according to its kind on the earth!"; and it was so. And the earth brought forth the herb 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. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

A READING FROM NUMBERS

The Spirit of God came upon Balaam, and he took up his parable, and said: "Balaam, the son of Boor saith: How goodly are thy habitations, O Jacob, and thy tents, O Israel! They are as shady groves, and as gardens by a river, and as tents which God hath pitched, and as cedars by the waters. There shall come a Man out of his seed, and He shall rule over many nations; and His kingdom shall be increased. God led Him out of Egypt; He hath as it were the glory of a unicorn: He shall consume the nations of his enemies, and He shall claim their marrow, and with His darts He shall shoot through the enemy. He lay down, and He rested as a lion, yea, even as a young lion. Who shall stir Him up? Blessed are they that bless Thee, and accursed are they that curse Thee! A Star shall rise out of Jacob; a Man shall spring forth from Israel, and shall crush the princes of Moab, and shall despoil the sons of Seth. And Edom shall be an inheritance, and Esau, His enemy, shall be an inheritance for Israel, and Israel wrought valiantly."

A READING FROM THE PROPHECY OF MICAH

In those days, the Lord said: "I will gather her that is bruised, and will receive her that is cast out and those whom I rejected. And I will make her that was bruised a remnant, and her that was rejected a mighty nation: and the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Sion from henceforth, even forever. And thou, O Bethlehem, house of Ephratha, art few in number to be reckoned among the thousands of Judah; yet out of thee shall One come forth to Me, to be a ruler of Israel; and His goings forth were from the beginning, even from eternity." Wherefore, He shall appoint them to wait till the time of her that travaileth: she shall bring forth, and then the remnant of their brethren shall return to the children of Israel. And the Lord shall stand, and see, and feed His flock with power, and they shall dwell in the glory of the name of the Lord their God: for now shall they be magnified to the ends of the earth.

Then, when we have stood on our feet, the reader lifteth up his voice, and chanteth this Troparion, in Tone VI:

Thou wast born secretly in the cave, but heaven proclaimed Thee to all, O Savior, using the star as its mouth, and led to Thee the magi, who worshipped Thee with faith. Have mercy upon them and upon us!

Verse: His foundations are in the holy mountains; the Lord loveth the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. I will make mention of Raab and Babylon to them that know me.

Heaven led to Thee the magi, who worshipped Thee with faith. Have mercy upon them and upon us!

Verse: And lo, the foreigners and Tyre and the people of the Ethiopians, these were born there. A man will say: Mother Sion; and, that man was born in her; and the Most High Himself hath founded her.

Heaven led to Thee the magi, who worshipped Thee with faith. Have mercy upon them and upon us!

Verse: The Lord shall tell it in the writ of the peoples and the princes, even these that were born in her. How joyous are all they that have their habitation in Thee.

Heaven led to Thee the magi, who worshipped Thee with faith. Have mercy upon them and upon us!

Glory ..., heaven led to Thee the magi, who worshipped Thee with faith. Have mercy upon them and upon us!

Both now ..., heaven led to Thee the magi, who worshipped Thee with faith. Have mercy upon them and upon us!

Then the reader chanteth the Troparion in its entirety:

Thou wast born secretly in the cave, but heaven proclaimed Thee to all, O Savior, using the star as its mouth, and led to Thee the magi, who worshipped Thee with faith. Have mercy upon them and upon us!

And we resume the readings:

A READING FROM THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH

Thus saith the Lord: "There shall come forth a Rod out of the root of Jesse, and a blossom shall come up from his root: and the Spirit of God shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and strength; the Spirit of knowledge and godliness shall fill Him, the Spirit of the fear of God. He shall not judge according to appearance, nor reprove according to report: but He shall judge the cause of the lowly, and shall reprove the lowly of the earth: and He will smite the earth with the word of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He destroy the ungodly one. And He shall have His loins girt with righteousness, and His sides clothed with truth. And the wolf shall feed with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie

down with the kid; and the young calf and bull and the lion shall feed together; and a little Child shall lead them. And the ox and the bear shall feed together; and their young shall be together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And an Infant shall put His hand on the holes of asps, and on the nest of young asps. And they shall not hurt, nor shall they at all be able to destroy anyone on My holy mountain: for the whole world is filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as much water covereth the seas. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall arise to rule over the nations; in Him shall the nations trust; and His rest shall be glorious.

A READING FROM THE PROPHECY OF BARUCH

This is our God, and there shall none other be accounted of in comparison with Him. He hath found out all the way of knowledge, and hath given it unto Jacob His servant, and to Israel His beloved. Afterward did He show Himself upon earth) and dwelt with men. This is the book of the commandments of God, and the law that endureth forever: all they that keep it shall come to life; but such as leave it shall die. Turn thee, O Jacob, and take hold of it, walk in the presence of the light thereof, that thou mayest be illumined. Give not thine honor to another, nor the things that are profitable unto thee to a strange nation. O Israel, blessed are we: for things that are pleasing to God are made known unto us.

A READING FROM THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL

Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar: "Thou, O king, hast seen. Behold, an image: and that image was great, and the appearance of it excellent, standing before thy face; and the form of it was awesome. It was an image, the head of which was of fine gold, and its hands and breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of brass, its legs of iron, its feet, part of iron and part of earthenware. And thou didst see when a Stone was cut out of a mountain without the aid of men's hands, and It smote the image upon its feet of iron and earthenware, and utterly reduced them to powder. Then once for all the earthenware, the iron, the brass, the silver, the gold, were ground to powder, and became as chaff from the summer threshing-floor; and the violence of the wind carried them away, and no place was found for them: and the Stone which had smitten the image became a great Mountain, and filled all the earth. This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and His kingdom shall not be left to another people, but it shall beat to pieces and grind to powder all other kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Whereas thou sawest that a Stone was cut out of a mountain without the aid of men's hands, and It beat to pieces the earthenware, the iron, the brass, the silver, the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what must happen hereafter: and the dream is true, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Then the reader chanteth this Troparion, in Tone VI:

Thou hast shone forth from the Virgin, O Christ, Thou noetic Sun of righteousness, and the star showed Thee, the Uncontainable One, contained within

the cave. Thou didst lead the magi to worship Thee. And with them we magnify Thee: O Bestower of life, glory be to Thee!

Verse: The Lord is King, He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength and He hath girt Himself. For He established the world which shall not be shaken. Thy throne is prepared of old; Thou art from everlasting.

Thou didst lead the magi to worship Thee. And with them we magnify Thee: O Bestower of life, glory be to Thee!

Verse: The rivers have lifted up, O Lord, the rivers have lifted up their voices. The rivers will lift up their waves, at the voices of many waters.

Thou didst lead the magi to worship Thee. And with them we magnify Thee: O Bestower of life, glory be to Thee!

Verse: Wonderful are the surgings of the sea, wonderful on high is the Lord. Thy testimonies are made very sure. Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, unto length of days.

Thou didst lead the magi to worship Thee. And with them we magnify Thee: O Bestower of life, glory be to Thee!

Glory ..., Thou didst lead the magi to worship Thee. And with them we magnify Thee: O Bestower of life, glory be to Thee!

Both now ..., Thou didst lead the magi to worship Thee. And with them we magnify Thee: O Bestower of life, glory be to Thee!

And the reader chanteth the Troparion again, in its entirety:

Thou hast shone forth from the Virgin, O Christ, Thou noetic Sun of righteousness, and the star showed Thee, the Uncontainable One, contained within the cave. Thou didst lead the magi to worship Thee. And with them we magnify Thee: O Bestower of life, glory be to Thee!

A READING FROM THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH

A Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us, Whose government is upon His shoulder: and His name is called the angel of great Counsel: for I will bring peace upon the princes, and health to Him. His government shall be great, and of His peace there is no end: it shall be upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to support it with judgment and with righteousness, from henceforth and forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this.

A READING FROM THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH

The Lord again spake to Ahaz, saying: "Ask for thyself a sign of the Lord thy God, in the depth or in the height." And Ahaz said: "I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord." And Isaiah said: "Hear now, O house of David: Is it a little thing for you to contend with men? And how do ye contend against the Lord? Therefore the Lord

Himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a Virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel. Butter and honey shall He eat, before He knoweth either to prefer evil, or choose the good. For before the Child shall know good or evil, He refuseth evil, to choose the good. And the Lord said to me: "Take to thyself a volume of a great new scroll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning the making of a rapid plunder of spoils; for it is near at hand. And make Me witnesses of faithful men: Uriah the priest and Zachariah the son of Barachiah." 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. For before the child shall know how to call his father or his mother. One shall take the power of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria before the king of the Assyrians." God is with us! Know, ye nations, and be conquered; hearken ye, even to the ends of the earth: He conquered, after ye have strengthened yourselves; for even if ye should again strengthen yourselves, ye shall again be conquered. And whatsoever counsel ye take, the Lord shall bring it to naught; and whatsoever word ye shall speak, it shall not stand among you: for God is with us!

Then, the Little Litany; and after the exclamation, the Trisagion.

Prokeimenon, in Tone I: The Lord said unto Me: * Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.

Verse: Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession.

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS, § 303 (HEB. 1: 1-12)

Brethren: God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, Whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by Whom also He made the worlds; Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son? And again, when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him. And of the angels He saith, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands:

They shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.

Alleluia, in Tone V: The Lord said unto my Lord: Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet.

Verse: A scepter of power shall the Lord send unto Thee out of Sion.

Verse: From the womb before the morning-star have I begotten Thee.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE, § 5 (LK. 2: 1-20)

In those days, there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David). To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

Then, the rest of the Liturgy of Saint Basil. Instead of "It is truly meet ...," we chant "In thee doth all creation rejoice ..."

Communion Verse: Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest.

After the dismissal of the Liturgy, the paraecclesiarch lighteth a candle and setteth it in the middle of the church. And the members of both choirs, standing together, chant aloud the Troparion & Kontakion of the feast:

Troparion of the feast, in Tone IV:

Thy nativity, O Christ our God, * hath shone forth the light of knowledge upon the world; * for thereby they who worshiped the stars, * were instructed by a star, * to worship Thee the Son of righteousness, * and to know Thee the Dayspring from on high. ** O Lord, glory be to Thee!

Glory ..., Both now ..., the 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; * with a star the Magi do journey; * for our sake a young Child is born, Who is pre-eternal God.

When the chanting of the Kontakion is concluded, the Many Years is intoned for the civil, ecclesiastical and monastic authorities. The faithful then procede to eat a meal of food cooked with oil. Fish is not eaten, but we drink wine, giving thanks to God.

AT GREAT COMPLINE

When the Eve of the Nativity falleth on any day other than Saturday or Sunday, at the tenth hour of the night (i.e., 4 o'clock in the morning), a bell is tolled to announce the service, and then all the bells are rung. When the priest and deacon have vested, they begin the service as they do all the feasts of the Lord.

The deacon saith: Bless, master!

Priest: Blessed is our God ...,

And while the priest censeth, we recite Great Compline from the beginning: Glory to Thee, O God, glory to Thee. O heavenly King ..., Trisagion through Our Father ..., and the rest. In due course we chant "God is with us! ..." with hymnody. In place of the usual Troparia ("Enlighten mine eyes ..." and the rest), we chant the Troparion of the feast.

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.

And instead of the Troparia "Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us ...," we chant the Kontakion of the feast:

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.

After the Doxology "Glory to God in the highest ...," we go forth to the exo-narthex, chanting the Stichera of the Litiya, the composition of John the Monk, in Tone I:

Heaven and earth are glad today, as the prophets said, and angels and mortals keep spiritual festival, for God hath appeared in the flesh, born of the Virgin, to those who sit in darkness and shadow: the cave and the manger have received Him; the shepherds proclaim the wonder; the magi from the East bring gifts to Bethlehem; and with our unworthy lips we offer Him the praise of the angels: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace! For the expectation of the nations hath come, and coming hath saved us from slavery to the enemy.

Heaven and earth have now joined together today since Christ hath been born. Today God hath come to earth and man hath ascended to the heavens. Today He Who is invisible by nature is seen in the flesh for mankind's sake. Wherefore, exclaiming in glorification, let us cry out to Him: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace: for Thou hast given us Thine advent! O our Savior, glory be to Thee!

"**G**lory to God in the highest!" is heard from the incorporeal ones in Bethlehem today, addressed to Him Who was well pleased to become Peace on earth. Now the Virgin hath become more spacious than the heavens, for Light hath shone forth upon the darkened and lifted up the lowly who chant with the angels: Glory to God in the highest!

Beholding that which He had created according to His image and likeness corrupted by disobedience, Jesus descended, bowing down the heavens, and made His abode in the Virgin's womb without undergoing change, that in her He might restore Adam Who had become corrupt, yet crieth: Glory to Thine appearance, O my Redeemer and God!

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

The magi, kings of Persia, manifestly recognizing the King of heaven Who was born on earth, arrived in Bethlehem, led by the radiant star, bearing choice gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh; and falling down, they offered worship, for they beheld the Timeless One lying in the cave as a babe.

Both now ..., the composition of Germanus, in Tone VI:

Today all the angels hold chorus in heaven, and mankind rejoices, and all creation leapeth for joy because of the Lord and Savior born in Bethlehem. For all the delusion of idolatry hath ceased, and Christ reigneth forever.

On the Aposticha, these Stichera, in Tone II:

A great and most glorious wonder is wrought today: A Virgin giveth birth, yet her womb suffereth no corruption! The Word is incarnate, yet is not separated from the Father! angels give glory in company with shepherds; and with them we cry aloud: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward mankind!

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

In Tone III: **T**oday the Virgin giveth birth to the Creator of all. Eden offereth a cave, and the star showeth forth Christ the Sun to those in darkness. The magi, illumined by faith, have offered homage with gifts, and the shepherds have beheld a wonder as the angels chant and say: Glory to God in the highest!

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

The composition of Anatolius: **W**hen the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi, arriving from the East, worshipped God Who had become a man, and eagerly disclosing their treasures, they offered Him precious gifts: pure gold, as to the King of the ages; frankincense, as to the God of all; and myrrh to Him Who is immortal, as to one three days dead. Come, all ye nations, let us worship Him Who hath been born, that He may save our souls!

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

Rejoice, O Jerusalem! Hold festival, all ye who love Sion! Today the ancient bonds of Adam's condemnation have been loosed! Paradise hath been opened unto us! The serpent hath been destroyed! He who deceived our first mother of old hath now seen a woman become the Mother of the Creator! O the depths of the richness, wisdom and understanding of God! The vessel of sin which brought death upon all flesh hath become the beginning of salvation for the whole world because of the Theotokos! For the most perfect God hath been born of her as a babe, and He sealeth her virginity by His nativity. And loosing the bonds of sin by His swaddling-bands, He healeth Eve's pangs of labor through His becoming an infant! Let all creation then join chorus and leap up, for Christ hath come to restore it and to save our souls.

Both now ..., in Tone IV:

Thou didst make Thine abode within a cave, O Christ God. The manger received Thee, and shepherds and magi offered Thee homage. Then was the preaching of the prophets fulfilled, and the angelic hosts marveled, crying out and saying: Glory to Thy condescension, O Thou Who alone lovest mankind!

Then: "Now lettest Thou Thy servant..., Trisagion through Our Father ...,

And 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. (Thrice)

Then, Blessed be the name of the Lord ..., (Thrice), and Psalm 33:

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. (Thrice)

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

Spec. Mel.: "Thy tomb, O Savior ...":

For our sake Thou wast laid in a manger of dumb beasts, O long-suffering Savior, having become a babe of Thine own will; and the shepherds hymned Thee with the angels, crying aloud: "Glory and praise to Christ our God, Who hath been born on earth and deified the nature of mortals!"

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

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

Spec. Mel.: "Awed by the beauty of thy virginity ...":

O Theotokos, thou didst bear in thy womb, in the flesh, the one uncommingled Godhead of the Trinity, the pre-eternal and unapproachable One, Who is equally everlasting with the invisible Father. Thy grace hath shone forth in the world, O all-hymned one. Wherefore, we cry out unceasingly: Rejoice, O pure Virgin Mother!

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

Polyeleos, and this magnification: We magnify Thee, O Christ, Bestower of life, Who for our sake hast now been born in the flesh of the most pure Virgin Mary who knew not wedlock.

Selected Psalm verse:

A: Shout with jubilation unto the Lord all the earth.

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

Spec. Mel.: "Joseph marveled ...":

Come, ye faithful, let us behold where Christ was born, and let us follow whither the star goeth with the magi, the kings of the East. There the angels unceasingly hymn Him, and the shepherds play a fitting song on the pipes, singing: Glory in the highest to Him Who hath been born of the Virgin Theotokos in a cave in Bethlehem of Judea!

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

Song of Ascents, the first antiphon of Tone IV.

Prokeimenon, in Tone IV: From the womb before the morning-star have I begotten Thee. * The Lord hath sworn and will not repent.

Verse: The Lord said to my Lord: Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet.

Let every breath praise the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW, § 2 (MT 1: 18-25)

The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When, as His Mother, Mary, was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying: «Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the Virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, (which, being interpreted, is: God is with us.) Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife, and knew her not until she had brought forth her first-born Son; and he called His name Jesus.

After Psalm 50, instead of "Through the prayers ...," we chant:

Glory ..., **A**ll things are filled with joy today! Christ hath been born of the Virgin!

Both now ..., **A**ll things are filled with joy today! Christ hath been born in Bethlehem!

Then the Sticheron: "Have mercy on me, O God ...":

Then this Sticheron, in Tone VI:

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace! Today Bethlehem receiveth Him Who is ever seated with the Father. Today the angels glorify as God the Babe Who was born. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men!

Two canons, the Irmos of each being chanted twice, and the Troparia repeated to make up the number 12.

ODE I

Canon I, the acrostic whereof is: "Having become man, Christ remaineth God as He was before", 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 II, the composition of John of Damascus, in Tone I:

Irmos: The Master saved His people by working a wonder, * making solid the watery waves of the sea of old; * and having willingly been born of the Virgin, * He hath set before us a path leading to heaven. * Let us glorify Him Who is by nature equal to both the Father and mankind.

Thy sacred womb, which was clearly depicted by the bush which burned without being consumed, bore the Word, mingling God with the form of a mortal man and loosing the wretched womb of Eve from the ancient bitter curse. Let us glorify Him, O ye mortals!

The star plainly showed to the magi, Thee the merciful Word, existent before the sun, Who came to bring an end to sin, and wast wrapped in swaddling bands in a meager cave, and rejoicing, they beheld the very Lord Himself, as a man.

Katavasia: The first choir chanteth the Irmos of Canon I, whereupon the second choir chanteth the Irmos of Canon II:

ODE III

Canon I

Irmos: To 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 II.

Irmos: Look upon the hymns of Thy servants, O Benefactor, * and humble the vaunted pride of the enemy; * bearing far above sin those who hymn Thee * making them unshakably firm by the foundation of faith, * O Thou good One Who seest all.

Having been deemed worthy to behold the supremely rich Offspring of the most pure Bride, which passeth understanding, the chorus of shepherds bowed down in awe-filled homage; and the ranks of incorporeal beings hymned Christ the King, Who became incarnate without seed.

In His tender compassion, He Who reigneth over the heights of heaven became like us through the unwedded maiden; the Word Who before was immaterial, was later clothed in material flesh, that He might draw to Himself the first-formed man, who had fallen.

Sessional Hymn of the feast, in Tone VIII:

The first-fruits of the nations hath heaven brought to Thee Who liest as a babe in the manger, summoning the magi by the star; and they were in awe to see, not scepters or thrones, but utter poverty. For what is more lowly than a cave? What is more humble than the swaddling bands, wherein the richness of Thy divinity hath shone forth? O Lord, glory be to Thee!

ODE IV

Canon I

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 II

Irmos: The renewal of the human race was hymned of old * and proclaimed beforehand by the prophet Habbakuk, * who having ineffably been deemed worthy to behold in image; * the Word coming forth from the mountain, * the Virgin, as a little Babe, * for the restoration of the people.

Willingly receiving flesh from the Virgin, the Most High hath issued forth as equal to men, to cleanse us of the venom of the serpent's head, leading all from the sunless gates of Hades to life-bearing light, in that He is God.

The nations who of old were overwhelmed by corruption, having escaped the greatest enemy, lift up their hands with hymns of praise, honoring the one Christ as Benefactor, Who hath come to us in His mercy.

Having sprouted forth from the root of Jesse, O Virgin, thou didst transcend the laws of human nature, giving birth to the pre-eternal Word of the Father, in that He Himself was well pleased to pass through thy sealed womb in His strange abasement.

ODE V

Canon I

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 II

Irmos: O Christ Who art our cleansing, come unto us, * who out of the night of the deeds of gloomy delusion, * valiantly hymn Thee as a Benefactor, * granting us an expeditious path, * ascending upon which we find glory.

By His coming in the flesh the Master hath again cut down the cruel enmity directed against us, that He might destroy the soul-destroying ruler, uniting the world with the immaterial beings, making the Begetter accessible to creation.

The people who of old were darkened have finally seen the light of the radiance of the Most High; and the Son bringeth the nations to the Father as an inheritance, bestowing ineffable grace where sin once flourished exceedingly.

ODE VI

Canon I

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 II

Irmos: Dwelling in the uttermost depths of the sea, * Jonah besought Thee to come and still the tempest; * and I, pierced by the arrow of the tyrant, * chant unto Thee, O Christ * Thou Destroyer of evil, * do Thou come quickly unto my slothfulness!

God the Word, Who from the beginning was with God, now strengtheneth that which of old was seen to be weakened, that he may preserve that which He Himself shares with us, straightway showing it to be free from the passions.

He Who dwelleth in light, and, contrary to His dignity, hath now been well pleased to dwell in a manger, cometh forth from the loins of Abraham for the sake of us who have fallen into the deep darkness of transgressions, that, for the salvation of mankind, He might raise up His fallen children.

Kontakion of the feast, in Tone III:

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

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!

ODE VII

Canon I

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 II

Irmos: Captured by the love of the King of all, * the children reviled the uncontrollable rage and ungodly blasphemies of the tyrant, * and the great fire submitted to them as they spake unto the Master saying: * Blessed art Thou throughout the ages

The furnace which had been raised to a sevenfold heat savagely burnt the minions, but spared the youths who were wholly consumed with the fear of God; for the flame crowned them when the Lord freely granted them dew for the sake of their piety.

O Christ our Helper, using Thine ineffable incarnation as a bulwark of defense, and having taken on our form, Thou hast put to shame the adversary of mankind, bearing the richness of Thy deification, which we hope for, having fallen from the heights into the darkness of the uttermost depths.

Thou hast most mightily cast down sin, which is exalted in evil without restraint, frenzied from the perversion of the world; and those whom it formerly attracted hast Thou saved from its snares today, having become incarnate of Thine own will, O Benefactor.

ODE VIII

Canon I

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 II

Irmos: The children who in the time of the Old Covenant * were cast into the fire, * prefigured the unconsumed womb of the maiden, * which hath supra-naturally given birth yet remaineth sealed; * and both wondrously working as a single miracle * moveth the people to hymn the Grace of each.

Mankind, having fled the destructive delusion of becoming divine, unceasingly hymneth the Word Who hath abased Himself, and like the youths and all creation, with fear and trembling offereth meager praise, being corrupt, but wisely enduring.

Thou hast come, O Restoration of the nations, to bring lost human nature back from the hills of the wilderness to the flowered pastures; that Thou mightest extinguish the violent power of the manslayer, having by providence appeared as God and man.

At ODE IX, the brethren light the candles and lamps.

We do not chant the Magnificat, but chant instead the refrain of the feast:

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, the most pure Virgin Theotokos, who is more honorable and more glorious than the armies on high!

ODE IX

Canon I

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.

Then the second choir chanteth the same refrain, and the irmos. To each of the remaining 6 refrains we assign a Troparion.

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, God Who was born in the flesh of the Virgin.

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, the King Who was born in the cave.

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.

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, God Who is worshipped by the magi.

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, Him Who was proclaimed to the magi by the star.

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.

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, the only pure Virgin Theotokos, who gave birth to Christ the King.

Refrain: The magi and shepherds have come to worship Christ Who hath been born in the city of Bethlehem.

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.

Then the first choir chanteth the refrain of Canon II:

Refrain: Today the Virgin giveth birth to the Master within the cave.

Irmos: From fear it may be easier, * for us to prefer silence, * for though not fraught with danger, O Virgin, * it is difficult to fashion hymns fittingly wrought for thee. * Yet, O Mother, grant us the power to chant in such a way, * insofar as it is our will.

The second choir chanteth the refrain

Refrain: Today the Master is born as a babe of the Virgin Mother.

And it likewise chanteth the Irmos:

Irmos: From fear it may be easier ...,

Then the refrains are chanted with the Troparia, as follows:

Refrain: Today the shepherds see the Savior wrapped in swaddling-bands and lying in a manger.

Refrain: Today the Master, Who is intangible is wrapped in rags as a babe.

Refrain: Today all creation rejoiceth and is glad, for Christ is born of the Virgin maiden.

O pure Mother, having beheld the indistinct images and dim shadows of the Word Who hath newly appeared through the closed gates, but mindful now of His true radiance, we bless thy womb as is meet.

Refrain: The heavenly hosts proclaim to the world the Savior, Lord and Master Who hath been born.

Instead of Glory ..., Magnify, O my soul, the might of the indivisible Godhead in three Hypostases!

Instead of Both now ..., Magnify, O my soul, her who hath delivered us from the curse.

Having attained their desire and been deemed worthy to see the advent of God, the people who delight in Christ are now consoled by this, insofar as thou bestowest life-bearing grace to those who worship this glory, O pure Virgin.

Then both choirs, having come down together, chant the first refrain of the feast, and the Irmos of Canon I, and afterward the first refrain of Canon II, and its Irmos. And all bow down. As follows:

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.

Refrain: Today the Master is born as a babe of the Virgin Mother.

Katavasia II: From fear it may be easier, * for us to prefer silence, * for though not fraught with danger, O Virgin, * it is difficult to fashion hymns fittingly wrought for thee. * Yet, O Mother, grant us the power to chant in such a way, * insofar as it is our will.

Exapostilarion 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. (Thrice)

On the Praises, 4 Stichera, by Andrew of Jerusalem, in Tone IV:

Be glad, O ye righteous! Rejoice, O heavens! Leap up, ye mountains for Christ hath been born! The Virgin sitteth, holding the incarnate Word of God in her bosom, like unto the cherubim. Shepherds marvel at Him Who hath been born; the magi offer gifts to the Master; and the angels say, chanting: O unapproachable Lord, glory be to Thee!

O Virgin Theotokos having given birth to the Savior, thou hast abolished the ancient curse of Eve; for thou didst become the Mother of Him in Whom the Father is well pleased bearing the incarnate Word of God in thy bosom. This mystery is not subject to testing but with faith alone we all glorify it, crying out with thee and saying: O ineffable Lord, glory be to Thee!

Come let us hymn the Mother of the Savior, who even after giving birth wast revealed to be a Virgin. Rejoice O animate city of God the King, wherein Christ making His abode, hath wrought salvation! We chant with Gabriel and offer up glory with the magi saying: O Theotokos, entreat Him Who became incarnate from thee, that we be saved!

The Father was well pleased; the Word became flesh; the Virgin gave birth to God incarnate; the star proclaimeth Him; the magi offer Him worship; the shepherds marvel, and creation rejoiceth.

Glory ..., the composition of Germanus, in Tone VI:

When the time arrived for Thy coming to earth, the first census of the whole world took place, Thou didst then make ready to enroll the names of those who believed in Thy nativity. For this cause, Caesar proclaimed such a decree; for Thy timeless and eternal kingdom was restored by Thy birth. Wherefore we offer unto Thee, as that surpassing our tribute payment, the abundant wealth of Orthodox theology, as to the God and Savior of our souls.

Both now ..., by John the Monk, in Tone II:

Today Christ is born from the Virgin in Bethlehem! Today the Beginningless One beginneth to be, and the Word assumeth flesh! The hosts of heaven rejoice, and on earth mankind is gladdened! The magi offer gifts to the Master, and the shepherds marvel at Him Who hath been born! And we cry out unceasingly: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among all peoples!

Great Doxology. Trisagion through Our Father ..., Troparion of the feast. Litanies. Dismissal.

And the superior anointeth the faithful with holy oil from the holy lamp which burneth by the icon of the feast, while we chant the Sticheron of the feast. First Hour, and final dismissal.

AT LITURGY

THE FIRST ANTIPHON

Verse I: I will confess Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart, I will tell of all Thy wonders.

Refrain: Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

Verse II: In the Council of the upright and in the congregation, great are the works of the Lord.

Refrain: Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

Verse III: Sought out in all the things that He hath willed.

Refrain: Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

Verse IV: Confession and majesty are His works, and His righteousness abideth unto ages of ages.

Refrain: Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

Glory ..., Both now ..., Amen.

Refrain: Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

THE SECOND ANTIPHON

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

Refrain: O Son of God Who wast born of the Virgin, save us who sing to Thee: Alleluia.

Verse II: His seed shall be mighty upon the earth; the generation of the upright shall be blessed.

Refrain: O Son of God Who wast born of the Virgin, save us who sing to Thee: Alleluia.

Verse III: Glory and riches shall be in his house, and his righteousness abideth unto ages of ages.

Refrain: O Son of God Who wast born of the Virgin, save us who sing to Thee: Alleluia.

Verse IV: There hath risen up in darkness a light for the upright; he is merciful and compassionate and righteous.

Refrain: O Son of God Who wast born of the Virgin, save us who sing to Thee: Alleluia.

Glory ..., Both now ..., Amen.

O only-begotten Son and Word of God, Who art immortal, yet didst deign for our salvation to be incarnate of the Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and without change didst become man, and was crucified, O Christ God, trampling down death by death. Thou Who art one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, save us.

THE THIRD ANTIPHON

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

Troparion, 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.

Verse II: Until I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet.

Choir: Repeat Troparion

Verse III: A scepter of power shall the Lord send unto Thee out of Zion; rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies.

Choir: Repeat Troparion

Verse IV: With Thee is dominion in the day of Thy power, in the splendor of Thy saints.

Choir: Repeat Troparion

Instead of "O come let us worship ...," the Choir chanteth the entry verse (Introit):

Introit: From the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee. The Lord hath sworn and will not repent: Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek. Amen.

And immediately after that, the choir chanteth the Troparion of the feast again.

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.

Glory ..., Both now ..., the 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.

Instead of the Trisagion: As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia. (Thrice)

Glory ..., Both now ..., Amen. Have put on Christ. Alleluia.

As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia.

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.

Verse: Shout with jubilation unto the Lord all the earth; chant ye unto His name, give glory in praise of Him.

EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS, § 209 (GAL. 4: 4-7)

Brethren: When the fullness of time was come God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts crying: Abba, Father! Wherefore, thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son then an heir of God through Christ.

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

Verse: Day unto day poureth forth speech, and night unto night proclaimeth knowledge.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW, § 3 (MT. 2: 1-12)

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet. And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, Go and search diligently for the young Child; and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, 1O, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him: And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

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 Verse: The Lord hath sent redemption unto His people.

On this feast the faithful eat sumptuously. Even if the feast of the Nativity of Christ fall on a Wednesday or a Friday, layfolk are permitted to eat meat, and monastics are allowed to eat cheese and eggs. It is permitted to eat these foods every day: between the feast of the Nativity and the Eve of Holy Theophany.