

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20
28th Sunday after Pentecost (13th of Luke)
Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ
Sunday before the Nativity

TONE 3

"Lord I Call..." Tone 3

Lord, I call upon You, hear me.
Hear me, O Lord.
Lord, I call upon You, hear me.
Receive the voice of my prayer,
when I call upon You.//
Hear me, O Lord.

Let my prayer arise
in Your sight as incense,
and let the lifting up of my hands
be an evening sacrifice.//
Hear me, O Lord.

v. (10) Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks to Your name!

Tone 3 *(for the Resurrection)*

By Your Cross, O Christ our Savior,
death's dominion has been shattered;
the devil's delusion destroyed.
The race of man, being saved by faith,//
always offers You a song.

v. (9) The righteous will surround me; for You will deal bountifully with me.

All has been enlightened by Your Resurrection, O Lord.
Paradise has been opened again.
All creation, praising You,//
always offers You a song.

v. (8) Out of the depths I cry to You, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!

I glorify the power of the Father and the Son.
I praise the authority of the Holy Spirit:
the undivided, uncreated Godhead,//
the consubstantial Trinity which reigns forever.

v. (7) Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

(Resurrection stichera by Anatolius)

We bow down in worship before Your precious Cross, O Christ,
and we glorify and praise Your Resurrection,//
for by Your wounds we have all been healed.

v. (6) If You, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You.

Tone 6 *(for the Forefeast) (Having placed all their hope)*

The never-setting Sun presses forward to rise,
enlightening all things under heaven.
Let us hasten with clean hands and pure deeds to meet Him;
let us prepare to be borne on high with Him in spirit!
Let us beseech Him in His compassion,
that, as He comes in His good pleasure to His own strange birth,
He may lead us, who have become strangers to the path of life in Eden,//
into Bethlehem where He comes to be born!

v. (5) For Your Name's sake I wait for You, O Lord. My soul has waited for Your word; my soul has hoped on the Lord.

The Word of God, upborne on the shoulders of the cherubim,
goes to dwell in a womb without blemish.
Though without passions, He is bound fast to the flesh;
He comes on earth as a man, born of the tribe of Judah.
A cave becomes the palace of the King of all;
the fiery throne is replaced by a manger,
where the Virgin Mary lays Him as a babe,
for He comes to restore the first-created man,//
as He is well-pleased so to do.

v. (4) From the morning watch until night, from the morning watch, let Israel hope on the Lord!

O Word of God without beginning,
the Virgin lays You in a manger of dumb beasts.
You choose to begin Your life in the flesh
in a manner beyond understanding.
You have come to loose me from the fetters of evil
with which the envious serpent bound me.
O Lover of man, You are wrapped in swaddling clothes,
tearing to pieces the bonds of my countless sins.
Therefore I joyfully praise and worship Your holy birth,//
for You came to set me free.

v. (3) For with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is plenteous redemption, and He will deliver Israel from all his iniquities.

Tone 6 *(for the Holy Fathers)* *(Having placed all their hope)*

The memory of the Ancestors is revealed to the ends of the world,
truly filling it with light
and making known the dawning of grace.
For Christ shone forth from afar, brighter than the sun,
the leading rank of stars shining with Him;
and the divine-human birth was revealed to take place in Bethlehem.
Therefore with faith let us all gather at this birth, //
rejoicing in chorus and singing the pre-festal praise!

v. (2) Praise the Lord, all nations! Praise Him, all peoples!

Adorned with the glory of divine communion,
Adam rejoices today,
as he is the foundation and support of the wise Ancestors.
With him Abel leaps with joy, and Enoch makes glad;
Seth dances, and Noah with him;
the all-praiseworthy Patriarch Abraham sings;
Melchizedek beholds from afar the birth that is without a father.
Therefore, as we celebrate the divine memory of the Forefathers of Christ, //
we pray for the salvation of our souls.

v. (1) For His mercy is confirmed on us, and the truth of the Lord endures forever.
The three Youths, wise in God,
who shone with joy in the furnace,
proclaimed the birth of Christ on earth;
For just as the Lord sent down a precious dew,
He preserved from the flame her who gave birth,
keeping her undefiled and enriching her with divine gifts.
Therefore Daniel, pleasing to God, rejoiced and was glad,
for having foreseen the Stone from the unquarried mountain, //
he now prays with boldness in behalf of our souls.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;

Tone 6 *(for the Holy Fathers)*

Daniel, the man of desires, beheld You, O Lord,
the Stone cut without human hands from the Mountain.
Thus, he foretold that You would take flesh without seed,
O Word of God, born of the Virgin,//
the changeless God and Savior of our souls!

now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Tone 6 *(for the Forefeast, by Byzantius)*

O cave, make ready, for the Ewe Lamb comes,
bearing Christ in her womb!
O manger, receive Him Who by a word has released the dwellers of earth
from lawlessness!
You shepherds, abiding in the fields, bear witness to the fearful wonder,
And you magi from Persia, offer to the King gold, myrrh, and frankincense,
for the Lord has appeared from a Virgin Mother!
And she, bending over Him as a handmaiden,
worshipped Him as He lay in her arms, saying to Him:
“How were You sown as seed in me?
How have You grown within me,//
O my Deliverer and my God?”

Old Testament Readings

Genesis 14:14-20

Deuteronomy 1:8-11, 15-17

Deuteronomy 10:14-21

Aposticha

Tone 3 *(for the Resurrection)*

The sun was darkened by Your Passion, O Christ,
but all creation was enlightened by the light of Your Resurrection.//
Accept our evening song, O Lover of mankind!

V. The Lord is King; He is robed in majesty!

Your life-bearing Resurrection, O Lord,
enlightened the whole universe, recalling Your creation.
Delivered from Adam's curse, we sing://
O Almighty Lord, glory to You!

V. For He has established the world, so that it shall never be moved.

You are the changeless God,
Who, suffering in the flesh, were changed.
Creation could not endure seeing You on the Cross.
It was filled with fear while praising Your patience.
By descending to hell and rising on the third day, //
You have granted to the world life and great mercy.

V. Holiness befits Your house, O Lord, forevermore!

You endured death, O Christ,
to deliver the race of men from death.
You rose from the dead on the third day,
raising with yourself those who knew You as God //
and enlightening the world. Glory to You!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;

Tone 2 *(for the Holy Fathers, by Cyprian)*

Rejoice, O honored Prophets,
who laid well the foundation of the Law of the Lord,
and were revealed as firm and unshaken pillars of faith!
You became indeed the mediators of Christ's new covenant.
Since, therefore, you have been taken up into heaven, //
intercede with Him to grant peace to the world and salvation to our souls!

now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Tone 2 *(for the Forefeast, by Cyprian)*

The time of our salvation draws near.
Make ready, O cave!
The Virgin draws near to bear the Christ.
Be glad and rejoice, O Bethlehem, land of Judah,
for our Lord has come from you!
Hearken, O mountains and hills, you lands around Judea, //
for Christ, the Lover of man, is coming to save those whom He created!

(at Great Vespers)

Tone 3 Troparion *(Resurrection)*

Let the heavens rejoice!
Let the earth be glad!
For the Lord has shown strength with His arm.
He has trampled down death by death.
He has become the first born of the dead.
He has delivered us from the depths of hell,
and has granted to the world//
great mercy.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

Tone 2 Troparion *(Holy Fathers)*

Great are the accomplishments of faith,
for the three Holy Youths rejoice in the fountain of flames as though
in the waters of rest;
and the Prophet Daniel appeared
a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep.//
So by their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls!

now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Tone 4 Troparion *(Forefeast)*

Prepare, O Bethlehem, for Eden has been opened to all!
Adorn yourself, O Ephratha, for the Tree of Life blossoms forth from the
Virgin in the cave!
Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the Divine Fruit;
if we eat of it, we shall live forever and not die like Adam.//
Christ comes to restore the image which He made in the beginning.

(at the Divine Liturgy)

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Tone 1 Kontakion *(Fathers)*

Rejoice, O Bethlehem! Prepare yourself, O Ephratha!
The Lamb is on her way to give birth to the Chief Shepherd she carries in
her womb.
The God-bearing Forefathers will rejoice, beholding Him,
and with the shepherds, they will glorify the Virgin nursing Him.

Tone 3 Kontakion (*Forefeast*)

Today the Virgin comes to the cave
to give birth to the Eternal Word.
Hear the glad tidings and rejoice, O universe!
Glorify with the angels and the shepherds
the Eternal God, Who is willing to appear as a little child!

Tone 4 Prokeimenon (*Holy Fathers*)

Blessed are You, O Lord God of our fathers, / and praised and glorified is
Your Name forever! (*Song of the Three Holy Children, v. 3*)

V. For You are just in all that You have done for us! (v. 4)

Epistle

(328) Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40 (*Sunday Before*)

Tone 4

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

V. We have heard with our ears, O God, for our fathers have told us. (Ps. 43:1a)

*V. For You have saved us from them that oppose us, and hast put to shame them
that hate us. (Ps. 43:8)*

Gospel

(1) Matthew 1:1-25 (*Sunday Before*)

Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! (*Ps. 148:1*)
Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous; praise befits the just! (*Ps. 32:1*)
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

In addition to translations from the Department of Liturgical Music and Translations, liturgical texts for this service represent modified versions of translations provided by Holy Myrrhbearers Monastery, Otego, New York and St. Tikhon's Monastery, South Canaan, Pa. The Department of Liturgical Music and Translations of the Orthodox Church in America expresses its gratitude to Holy Myrrhbearers Monastery and St. Tikhon's Monastery and to those translators whose work has been consulted at times in the course of reviewing and modifying these texts to their present form: Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware), Archimandrite Ephrem (Lash), Father Benedict Churchill, Isaac Lambertson, St. Vladimir's Seminary, and Holy Transfiguration Monastery, among others.