

DECEMBER 25

**The Nativity according to the Flesh of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ
Matins**

"God is the Lord..." Tone 4

Tone 4 Troparion

Your Nativity, O Christ our God,
has shone to the world the light of wisdom!
For by it, those who worshipped the stars,
were taught by a star to adore You,
the Sun of Righteousness,
and to know You, the Orient from on high.//
O Lord, glory to You! (*thrice*)

Kathisma Hymns (*following the first reading of the Psalter*)

Tone 4 (*Troparion melody*)

Come, O faithful,
let us go to see where Christ was born!
We shall follow the Wise Men, kings from the East,
and be led by the guiding star
to the place where Angels sing unceasing praise.
Shepherds in the fields offer fitting hymns:
"Glory in the highest to Him Who today was born
of the Virgin Theotokos//
in a cave in Bethlehem of Judah!"

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

Tone 4 (*Troparion melody*)

Why do you marvel, O Mary?
Why are you amazed at what has come to pass?
"I have given birth in time to a timeless Son;
I cannot explain how He was conceived in me.
I have known no man; how then shall I bear a child?
Who has ever seen a birth without seed?
When God so wills, as it is written:
'The order of nature is overcome.'"//
Christ is born of the Virgin in Bethlehem of Judah.

The Polyeleion

Magnification

We magnify You,
O Christ, the Giver of life:
Who for our sake now is born in the flesh of the Virgin Mary,
unwedded and most pure.

*V. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth; sing the glory of His name;
proclaim His glorious praise! (Ps. 65:1)*

V. Our God is in heaven and on earth; He does whatever He pleases. (Ps. 113:11)

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

Tone 8 Kathisma Hymn (*Troparion melody*)

How can a womb contain Him Whom nothing can contain?
How can He remain in His Father's bosom, yet rest in His Mother's arms?
It is His good pleasure to accomplish this.
Having no flesh, He purposely assumes it for our sake.
HE WHO IS becomes what He never was.
He shares our substance without forsaking His own nature.
Desiring to make us citizens of the world on high, //
Christ, the Only-begotten of the Father, is born on earth as a man.

Then follows the Little Litany and the First Antiphon of Tone 4 ("From my youth...").

Tone 4 Prokeimenon

"Out of the womb before the morning star have I begotten You." / The Lord has
sworn and will not change His mind. (*Ps. 109:4a-b*)

*V. The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies
Your footstool." (Ps. 109:1)*

Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!

V. Praise God in His sanctuary! Praise Him in His mighty firmament! (Ps. 150:1)

Gospel

(2) Matthew 1:18-25

Tone 2 Post-Gospel Stichera

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

Today all things are filled with joy, //
for Christ is born of the Virgin.

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

Today all things are filled with joy, //
for Christ is born of the Virgin.

Tone 6

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to Your great mercy;
according to Your abundant mercy, //
blot out my transgression!

Tone 6

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace!
Today Bethlehem receives Him Who reigns forever with the Father.
Today Angels glorify the newborn Babe in hymns worthy of God:
“Glory to God in the highest, //
and on earth, peace, good will to men!”

The Canon

(Two canons are prescribed. The two heirmoi are repeated as the katavasia at the end of each ode. The refrain “Glory to You, our God, glory to You!” precedes the troparia with the exception of the last troparion of each ode, which is preceded by “Glory...now and ever...”. We give here the text of the first canon.)

First Canon Tone 1 *(by Cosmas of Maiuma)*

Ode 1 - Heirmos

Christ is born, glorify Him!
Christ comes from heaven, go to meet Him!
Christ is on earth, be exalted!
Sing to the Lord, all the earth,
and praise Him in gladness, O people,
for He has been glorified!

Glory to You, our God, glory to You!

Man was made in the image of God,
but he sinned, and lost immortality.
He fell from the divine and better life,
enslaved completely by corruption.
Now the wise Creator fashions him again,
for He has been glorified.

Glory to You, our God, glory to You!

The Creator shaped man with His own hands,
but when He saw us perishing eternally,
He bowed the heavens and came down to earth,
and clothed Himself completely in our nature,
truly incarnate from a pure and holy Virgin,
for He has been glorified.

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

Wisdom, and Word, and Power,
Christ our God is the Father's Son, His Radiance.
He was made man,
a mystery concealed from every spirit above or on the earth.
He has won us for Himself,
for He has been glorified.

(Katavasia: "Christ is born, glorify Him!...")

Ode 3 - Heirmos (First Canon)

To the Son, begotten of the Father before all ages,
and incarnate of the Virgin
without seed in these latter days —
to Christ our God, let us cry out:
"You have raised up our horn.
Holy are You, O Lord!"

Glory to You, our God, glory to You!

Adam was made from dust,
yet he shared God's life-giving breath.
He was deceived by woman and fell,
but from the dead, he saw Christ born of woman.
He shouted: "For my sake You have become like me.
Holy are You, O Lord!"

Glory to You, our God, glory to You!

You have assumed a body of lowly clay, O Christ.
By sharing our humble flesh,
You have made our race partakers of divinity.
By becoming mortal man yet remaining God,
You have raised us from death to life.
Holy are You, O Lord!

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

Make merry, O Bethlehem!
You are the king of Judah's princes.
Christ, the Shepherd of Israel,
Who rides on the shoulders of the Cherubim,
has come forth from you for all to see.
He has raised us from death to life, and reigns over all.

(Katavasia: "To the Son...")

The Little Litany, then the Hypakoe:

Tone 8 Hypakoe *(Troparion melody)*

Heaven brought the first-fruits of the Gentiles as a gift for You;
a star summoned the Wise Men to the babe in the manger.
They were amazed to see neither throne nor scepter, but only abject poverty.
What is more humble than a cave?
What is more lowly than swaddling clothes?
Yet the riches of Your Divinity shone through all these.//
O Lord, glory to You!

Tone 8 Kathisma Hymn *(Troparion melody)*

Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad!
The Lamb of God has been born on earth, granting redemption to the world.
The Word, Who rests in the bosom of the Father, has come forth without seed
from the Virgin.
The Wise Men were struck with amazement, seeing Him born as an infant in
Bethlehem.//
Let all creation glorify Him!

Ode 4 - Heirmos (First Canon)

Stem and flower of the root of Jesse,
You have blossomed from the Virgin, O Christ.
From the mountain overshadowed by the forest, You are come,
made flesh from her than knew no man.
O God, not formed from matter —
glory to Your power, O Lord!

Glory to You, our God, glory to You!

You are the Expectation of the nations, O Christ,
foretold by Jacob in days of old.
You have sprung from Judah's tribe,
to plunder the might of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria,
replacing error with faith acceptable to God.
Glory to Your power, O Lord!

Glory to You, our God, glory to You!

You have filled the stargazers with joy, O Lord.
They knew the hidden meaning of the Prophet Balaam's words.
You have made the star of Jacob to rise.
As the first fruits of the Gentiles it led them unto You.
You openly received their precious gifts.
Glory to Your power, O Lord!

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

You descended into the Virgin's womb, O Christ,
like rain on the fleece and raindrops watering the earth.
All earth's rulers fall down before You:
Ethiopia and the islands of Arabia,
the kings of Tarshish, of Sheba, and the Medes.
Glory to Your power, O Lord!

(Katavasia: "Stem and flower...")

Ode 5 - Heirmos (First Canon)

O God of Peace, Father of Mercies,
You have sent Your Angel of Great Counsel to grant us peace.
We are guided by the light of the knowledge of God,
and keeping watch by night,
we glorify You, O Lover of Man.

Glory to You, our God, glory to You!

You were registered as Caesar's subject, O Christ,
in obedience to his decree.
We were slaves of sin, and subject to the hateful enemy;
by Your poverty You have set us free.
You were united to our nature in every way.
Though we were formed from dust,
by this communion we are made divine.

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

Behold, the Virgin, as foretold of old,
has conceived and given birth to God made man!
She remains a virgin still.
Through her we are reconciled to God.
Let us sinners faithfully sing her praise!
She is truly Theotokos!

(Katavasia: "O God of Peace...")

Ode 6 - Heirmos (First Canon)

The sea monster cast forth Jonah as it had received him,
like a babe from the womb.
And when the Word came to dwell in the Virgin and was made flesh,
He came forth preserving her uncorrupt,
for as He Himself was not subject to decay,
He kept His mother free from harm.

Glory to You, our God, glory to You!

Christ our God has come in the flesh.
The Father begot Him from the womb before the Morning Star.
He rules the heavenly hosts,
yet now He lies in a manger of dumb beasts.
He Who looses the tangled knots of sin
now is wrapped in swaddling clothes.

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

A Son is born and given to the faithful,
a newborn Child of Adam's race,
yet He is Father and Ruler of the world to come.
He is called the Angel of Great Counsel.
He is the mighty God,
Who rules all creation by His might.

(Katavasia: "The sea monster...")

The Little Litany, then the Kontakion:

Tone 3 Kontakion

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One,
and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One.
Angels with shepherds glorify Him;
The Wise Men journey with the star, //
since for our sake the eternal God was born as a little Child.

Ikos

Bethlehem has opened Eden. Come, let us see!
We have found joy in a secret place.
Come, let us seize Paradise hidden in the cave!
There the unwatered Root has appeared,
 blossoming with forgiveness.
There is found the undug Well,
 from which David longed to drink of old.
There the Virgin has borne a child,
 quenching Adam's and David's thirst.
Let us hurry to this place,
 (Oikos ending:)
 where the eternal God was born as a little Child!

Ode 7 - Heirmos (First Canon)

The children, brought up together in godliness,
scorned the impious decree of the tyrant.
They were not afraid of the threat of fire,
but standing in the midst of the flames, they sang:
"Blessed are You, O God of our fathers!"

Glory to You, our God, glory to You!

The shepherds, abiding in the fields,
were terrified by a dazzling sight.
Around them shone the glory of the Lord.
An Angel shouted to them: "Sing praises!
The Messiah is born!"
Blessed are You, O God of our fathers!

Glory to You, our God, glory to You!

After the Angel spoke,
the hosts of heaven suddenly cried out:
"Glory to God in the highest!
Peace on earth, good will to men!
Christ has shone forth."
Blessed are You, O God of our fathers!

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

"What news is this?" asked the shepherds.
"Has God's Messiah truly come?
Let us go to Bethlehem!"
They saw You there, and worshipped You.
With Your mother, they sang;
"Blessed are You, O God of our fathers!"

(Katavasia: "The children...")

Ode 8 - Heirmos (First Canon)

The furnace, moist with dew,
was an image prefiguring a wonder beyond nature,
for it did not burn the children whom it had received,
nor did the Fire of Divinity consume the Virgin's womb when it entered it.
So let us raise the song:
"Let all creation bless the Lord, and exalt Him throughout all ages!"

Glory to You, our God, glory to You!

The daughter of Babylon
drove David's children from Zion with sword and spear.
Now she sends her sons, the Wise Men,
bearing gifts, to worship in David's city, where God has come to dwell.
So let us raise the song:
"Let all creation bless the Lord and exalt Him throughout all ages!"

Glory to You, our God, glory to You!

Grief had silenced the harps.
Zion's children would not sing in a foreign land.
But now Christ has shone forth in Bethlehem,
destroying the din of Babylon's idolatries.
So let us raise the song:
"Let all creation bless the Lord and exalt Him throughout all ages!"

*Let us bless the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

Babylon plundered Zion,
and captured all her royal wealth.
But now, with a guiding star,
Christ lures her treasure-laden Wise Men back to Zion.
So let us raise the song:
"Let all creation bless the Lord and exalt Him throughout all ages!"

We praise, bless, and worship the Lord, singing and exalting Him
throughout all ages.

(Katavasia: "The furnace moist with dew...")

Ode 9 - Megalynaria and Heirmos (First Canon)

Magnify, O my soul, the most pure Virgin Theotokos,
more honorable and more glorious than the heavenly hosts!

I behold a strange, most glorious mystery:
heaven – the cave;
the cherubic throne – the Virgin;
the manger – the place where Christ lay:
the uncontainable God, Whom we magnify in song.

Magnify, O my soul, God, born in the flesh from the Virgin!

The Wise Men saw a new, uncharted star,
following an unexpected course.
Its brightness surpassed every star in heaven.
It foretold the Messiah's birth: Christ, the King,
born on earth in Bethlehem, for our salvation.

Magnify, O my soul, the King born in the cave!

(Repeat: "The Wise Men saw a new...")

Magnify, O my soul, God, worshipped by the Wise Men!

"Where is the newborn Infant-King?
We have seen His star," the Wise Men said.
"We have come to worship Him."
Godless Herod trembled with fury.
In his raging madness he plotted to kill Christ.

Magnify, O my soul, the Lord Who revealed Himself to the Wise Men by a star!

(Repeat: "Where is the newborn Infant-King?...")

Magnify, O my soul, the pure Virgin who gave birth to Christ the King!

Herod inquired when the star appeared
that had led the Wise Men to Bethlehem,
but after they worshipped Christ with gifts,
that same star led them back to their own land,
confounding their pursuer, that godless murderer of children.

Wise Men and shepherds came to worship Christ, born in the city of Bethlehem.

(Repeat: "Herod inquired when the star...")

Katavasia:

Magnify, O my soul, the most pure Virgin Theotokos,
more honorable and more glorious than the heavenly hosts.

I behold a strange, most glorious mystery:
heaven – the cave;
the cherubic throne – the Virgin;
the manger – the place where Christ lay:
the uncontainable God, Whom we magnify in song.

(or, the ninth heirmos of the second canon)

Out of fear, we should choose to love silence,
for that is a safer course;
so difficult it is lovingly to compose intricately woven songs
to you, O Virgin.
But grant us strength, O Mother,
equal to our natural calling.

The Little Litany, then the Exaposteilarion:

Exaposteilarion

Our Savior, the Dayspring from the East,
has visited us from on high,
and we, who were in darkness and shadow,
have found the Truth,
for the Lord is born of the Virgin. *(thrice)*

The Praises Tone 4

Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord from the heavens!
Praise Him in the highest!//
To You, O God, is due a song!

Praise Him, all you Angels of His!
Praise Him, all His hosts!//
To You, O God, is due a song!

V. Praise Him for His mighty deeds; praise Him according to His exceeding greatness! (Ps. 150:2)

Tone 4 Stichera idiomela (by Andrew of Jerusalem)

Make glad, O you righteous!
Greatly rejoice, O heavens!
Dance for joy, O mountains, for Christ is born!
The Virgin has become like the cherubic throne.
She carries at her bosom God the Word, made flesh.
Shepherds glorify the newborn Child.
Wise Men offer the Master gifts.
Angels praise Him and sing://
“O Lord, past understanding, glory to You!”

V. Praise Him with trumpet sound; praise Him with lute and harp! (Ps. 150:3)

It was the good pleasure of the Father:
the Word is made flesh.
The Virgin gives birth to God made man.
A star announces the glad tidings.
Shepherds are amazed, and Wise Men worship,//
and creation is filled with mighty joy.

V. Praise Him with timbrel and dance; praise Him with strings and pipe! (Ps. 150:4)

You have borne the Savior, O Virgin Theotokos.
You have overthrown Eve's ancient curse.
You became the mother of the Son of God.
The Father is well-pleased in Him.
You carry at your bosom God, the Word, made flesh.
We cannot fathom this mystery.
We can only believe, and give glory with you://
“O Lord, beyond all explanation, glory to You!”

*V. Praise Him with sounding cymbals; praise Him with loud clashing cymbals!
Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! (Ps. 150:5)*

Come, let us sing to the mother of the Savior,
who after childbearing remained a virgin:
“Hail, O spiritual city of God the King!
Christ came to dwell in you.
He has accomplished salvation.”
With Gabriel, let us sing her praise,
and with the shepherds, let us glorify her, crying out://
“O Theotokos, pray to Him Who took flesh from you to save us!”

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

Tone 6 *(by Germanos)*

When it was time for Your coming of earth,
the first imperial taxation was held,
but You also took a census, O Lord,
recording the names of all men who believed in Your birth.
You used the decree of Caesar for Your own end:
to make manifest Your timeless and eternal Kingdom.
Therefore we pay You our taxes, not with golden coins,
but with the riches of Orthodox theology,//
O God and Savior of our souls.

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

Tone 2 *(by John the Monk)*

Today Christ is born of the Virgin in Bethlehem.
Today He Who knows no beginning, begins.
Today the Word is made flesh.
The powers of heaven greatly rejoice.
The earth makes merry with men.
The Wise Men offer gifts; the shepherds announce the wonder,
and without ceasing we cry aloud:
“Glory to God in the highest,//
peace on earth, good will to men!”

The Great Doxology

Tone 4 **Troparion**

Your Nativity, O Christ our God,
has shone to the world the light of wisdom!
For by it, those who worshipped the stars,
were taught by a star to adore You,
the Sun of Righteousness,
and to know You, the Orient from on high.//
O Lord, glory to You!

Then the Augmented Litany, the Litany of Fervent Supplication, the Prayer of Inclination, and the Great Dismissal.

Liturgical texts for this service represent modified versions of translations provided by the Department of Religious Education, Orthodox Church in America, (“The Services of Christmas”, 1981).