

THE 28th DAY OF THE MONTH OF DECEMBER
AFTERFEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST
COMMEMORATION OF THE TWENTY THOUSAND MARTYRS BURNED ALIVE IN
NICOMEDIA
AT VESPERS

On “Lord, I have cried ...,” 6 Stichera: 3 of the feast, in Tone V:
Spec. Mel.: “Rejoice ...”:

As One most perfect in the image of God, Thou didst bear the guise of Adam, and desirest to be held in mine arms, O Thou Who in Thy power holdest all things in Thy hand. And the pure and all-immaculate one declared, saying: “How is it that I have wrapped Thee in swaddling bands as a babe? How is it that I nurture Thee with milk, Who feedest all? How is it that I marvel at Thy poverty, which surpasseth understanding? How can I call Thee my Son, if I am now Thy handmaiden? I hymn and bless Thee, Who grantest the world great mercy!”

Seeing the pre-eternal God incarnate from her as a babe, holding Him in her arms and kissing Him often, full of joy, the all-immaculate one declared to Him: “O God Most High, invisible King, how is it that I see Thee, but cannot understand the mystery of Thy boundless poverty? For this least and strangest of caves containeth Thee Who wast born therein without violating my virginity, but preserving my womb as it was before birth giving, and granting great mercy unto all.”

Declaring these things in awe as a servant, the pure one heard the magi standing together before the cave, and said unto them: “Whom seek ye? For I see that ye have come from a faraway land: having Persian dress and wisdom, ye have made a strange departure and journey. With haste ye have come to worship Him Who hath journeyed from the highest and hath strangely made His abode within me, granting the world great mercy.”

And 3 Stichera of the holy martyrs, in Tone IV:
Spec. Mel.: “As one valiant among the martyrs ...”:

Enlivened by strength, * fortified mightily * and endowed with the power of Christ the Master, * in the weakness of your nature * ye were shown to be invincible, O spiritual athletes, * vanquishing the enemy amid your struggles. * Pray ye for those who celebrate * your holy and luminous memory, ** O glorious great martyrs.

Theophilus, Dorotheus and Mygdonius, * together with Gorgonius and Secundus, * Peter and Indes, * who were valorous in word and deed, * rejoicing, have vanquished * the hordes of the enemy; * and they pray that those who faithfully celebrate * their most honored memory ** be delivered from all misfortunes.

Youths and virgins, * elders and children, * together showed forth the same valor. * Wherefore, as peers * they have received their rewards through grace, * abiding with God, the King of all. * Let us honor them with sacred hymns * as radiant beacons of the whole world, ** twenty thousand in number.

Glory ..., Both now ..., in Tone V:

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice! For today angels and mortals have truly become a single flock. O the wonder! The Invisible One becometh visible; the Word becometh flesh; the Son of God become the Son of the Virgin! And the Virgin who kneweth not a man is seen to be the Mother of God, and, a Mother after giving birth, she is found to be a virgin! The incarnate Word of the Father lieth in a manger, and shepherds are become his heralds, sharing in the mystery. Magi from the East have brought gifts, guided by the star, and have worshiped the newborn Savior. And, fervently opening the treasures of our hearts, with them we who love the feasts of the Church also offer Him good works - faith, hope and love - like gold, frankincense and myrrh, crying out to Him with the words of the incorporeal ones: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill among all mankind! For He hath come to save our whole race from deception!

On the Aposticha, Stichera of the feast, in Tone II:

Spec. Mel.: "O house of Ephratha ...":

Divinely assuming * all of the first Adam * from the Virgin, O Christ, * Thou wast born in the cave ** and laid, swaddled, in the manger.

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

Sing out prophetically, O David, * striking thy harp, * for from thy loins, * from whence the Theotokos hath sprung, ** is Christ born today.

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

O ye faithful, let us offer * praise fit for God * with the shepherds and magi, * and glory with the angels, ** to God Who hath sprung forth from the Virgin.

Glory ..., Both now ..., in Tone I:

"Glory 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!

Troparion of the holy martyrs, in Tone II:

O spiritual athletes of the Lord, * blessed is the ground which hath been watered by your blood, * and holy the habitations which have received your bodies; * for in your contest ye vanquished the enemy * and preached Christ with boldness. * Entreat Him, we pray, in that He is good, ** that our souls be saved.

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

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. (Twice)

Glory ..., that of the holy martyrs, in Tone II:

O spiritual athletes of the Lord, * blessed is the ground which hath been watered by your blood, * and holy the habitations which have received your bodies; * for in your contest ye vanquished the enemy * and preached Christ with boldness. * Entreat Him, we pray, in that He is good, ** that our souls be saved.

Both now ..., that of the feast (Once).

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

Spec. Mel.: “When the stone had been sealed by the Jews ...”:

O Jesus Who sittest in the highest on the fiery throne with the beginningless Father and Thy divine Spirit, Thou wast pleased to be born in the flesh from the Virgin who knew not a man; wherefore, the star revealed Thee to the magi from Persia. Glory be to Thy most good counsel! Glory be to Thine appearance! Glory be to Thine utter condescension toward mankind!

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 and 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.

Canon of the feast, with 8 Troparia, including the Irmos; and that of the holy martyrs, with 4 Troparia.

ODE I

Canon of the feast, the composition of John the monk, 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.

Canon of the holy martyrs, the acrostic whereof is: “The multitude of right victorious martyrs saveth me”, the composition of Joseph, in Tone I:

Irmos: Let us all chant a triumphant hymn unto God * Who wrought wondrous miracles * with His upraised arm, * and saved Israel, * for He hath been glorified.

O vast multitude of honored martyrs, wash away the multitude of my many transgressions by your mediation, and grant me discourse, that I may hymn your feast.

O most radiant beacons of the Church, right victorious martyrs who have glorified Christ with your members, ye have now been glorified in your radiant memorial.

The divine love of the passion-bearers abolished the godless tyranny of the unbelievers and destroyed the evil opposition of the demons with grace.

Confessing the omnipotent God, Who assumed flesh and destroyed death by death, the martyrs were slain, and have received life everlasting.

Theotokion: O all-hymned and blessed one, I hymn thee who hast given birth to the supremely hymned God in the flesh, Who hath magnified the spiritual athletes who have vanquished the foe.

ODE III

Canon of the feast

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.

Canon of the holy martyrs

Irmos: Let my heart be established in Thy will O Christ God, * Who hath established a second heaven over the waters, * and founded the earth upon the waters, * O all-powerful One.

Burning most beautifully with the love of Christ, O all-praised ones, ye were in nowise afraid when the fire was kindled; and having found your end therein, ye have been glorified together.

Proclaiming God with lively voice, O all-praised warriors of Christ, ye were undaunted by the threats of the ungodly, and ye met your end, crying out with one voice as did the children.

“Let us not fear the fire which is our fellow servant!” the valiant ones cried out together, rejoicing in soul; “We are slain for Thee, O Savior, Who hast slain and abolished death!”

Theotokion: In a manner past all telling and understanding, O pure Virgin, God became man through thee, that He might deify mankind; wherefore, together we, the faithful, call thee blessed.

Kontakion of the holy martyrs, in Tone II:

Spec. Mel.: “The steadfast ...”:

Made steadfast in soul by faith, the twenty thousand holy spiritual athletes accepted suffering by fire, crying out to Him Who was born from the Virgin: “O pre-eternal God, accept us as wholeburnt offerings to Thee, as Thou didst accept the gold, myrrh and frankincense from the Persian kings!”

Sessional Hymn of the holy martyrs, in Tone I:

Spec. Mel.: “Thy tomb, O Savior ...”:

The honored army of the twenty thousand martyrs hath shone forth upon us, illumining the hearts and minds of the pious for the sake of their faith; for, aflame with the divine love of the Master, with zeal the valiant ones accepted a holy demise by fire.

Glory ..., Both now ..., Sessional Hymn of the feast, in Tone I:

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!”

ODE IV

Canon of the feast

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.

Canon of the holy martyrs

Irmos: I have heard report of Thee, O Lord * and I am afraid. * Having understood Thy works, * I have glorified Thy might, * thus said the prophet.

Having bound their hearts with Thy love, O Word, the spiritual athletes who were slain like innocent lambs for Thy sake revealed themselves to be emulators of Thy suffering.

Sailing your souls to the haven of salvation by the Spirit, O blessed and holy ones, ye escaped the storm of the madness of idolatry.

In the contest of martyrdom ye showed yourselves to be steadfast, unshaken and undaunted, overcoming the opposition of the persecutors with divine faith.

Theotokion: Delivered from the ancient curse by thy birth giving, O blessed one, we who glorify thee as the Theotokos have received blessing, life and deliverance.

ODE V

Canon of the feast

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.

Canon of the holy martyrs

Irmos: Shine forth thy radiant and everlasting light * upon us who rise early at dawn, * unto the judgments of Thy commandments, * O Master, Lover of mankind, * Christ our God.

The memorial of Thy spiritual athletes, which is manifest in light, hath shone forth and illumined the ends of the earth with divine distributions of miracles, O Christ our God.

The sacred ministers offering sacrifice were themselves offered as perfect whole burnt offerings, magnifying Christ with all the many other martyrs.

Made temples of God through baptism, the saints received a holy end together in the house of God, and have been taken up to the temple of heaven.

Theotokion: That He might unite to those on high those who through disobedience had fallen headlong into the great pit, God made His abode within thy womb and became a man, O all-immaculate one.

ODE VI

Canon of the feast

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.

Canon of the holy martyrs

Irmos: Emulating the Prophet Jonah, I cry aloud: * Free Thou my life from corruption, O Good One; * and save me who crieth out: * O Savior of the world, Glory be to Thee!

Thou wast the leader of the sacred people, O glorious hieromartyr Anthimus, and didst send those who suffered before thee into the joy of heaven.

Like pure gold in the midst of the fire your martyric piety was recognized by Jesus, far outshining the brilliance of the sun.

Having died in the flesh, ye have inherited true life with Christ, Who hath shown you to be more powerful than your tortures.

Theotokion: By the power of Jesus Who was born of Thee, O Mary, thou didst truly remain a virgin after giving birth, as thou wast before birth giving: a truly and most glorious wonder!

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: Bethlehem 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 of the feast

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.

Canon of the holy martyrs

Irmos: Thy children who were in the furnace O Savior, * were neither touched nor troubled by The fire. * Whereupon the three sang, as with a single mouth * Thy praises and blessed Thee, saying: * 'O God of our fathers, Blessed art Thou.'

Looking toward those things alone which are abiding, O blessed ones, by divine power ye were shown to be greater than the fire like the three godly children in Babylon, and are illumined with divine light.

Reviling the irrational edict of the tyrants, O wise ones, with the sacred women and the godly children ye truly offered yourselves wholly to the King of all as a sacrifice.

Reverently placing the enlightenment of the knowledge of Christ within your souls, ye truly passed through the dark cloud of ungodliness, O spiritual athletes, and have arrived in everlasting light.

Theotokion: Thou hast been revealed to be greater than the heavens, O thou who hast given birth to the Master and God of all, Him do thou earnestly beseech without ceasing, O all-holy and pure one, that He save those who hymn thee with ardent faith.

ODE VIII

Canon of the feast

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 supernaturally 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.

Canon of the holy martyrs

Irmos: Unto Christ who saved the children * that sang His praises * and who bedewed the raging furnace, * let us hymn and supremely exalt throughout all ages.

The relics of the martyrs pour forth a healing myrrh of divine fragrance and remove the stench of the passions from those who with faith hymn Thee as Christ throughout the ages.

Walking in the midst of the fire, O most comely spiritual athletes, ye showed yourselves to be like roses, crying out with fervor: Hymn and supremely exalt Christ throughout the ages!

Having suffered together, the youths and virgins, the old and the young, holy infants and a countless multitude of women have received a place in the choirs on high.

Theotokion: Ezekiel beheld thee, O Virgin, as the closed portal through which Jesus passed, making His abode within thy womb, and assuming flesh from thy blood without undergoing commingling.

ODE IX

Canon of the feast

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.

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.

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.

Canon of the holy martyrs

Irmos: **The light-bearing cloud upon whom * the beginningless Master of all descended from heaven, * like the dew upon the fleece, * and of whom He was incarnate, * becoming a man for our sake, * let us all magnify as the pure Mother of God.**

Like willingly slaughtered sheep ye were immolated together, and as pure sacrifices ye brought yourselves to the Master Who was slain for us mortals, O right victorious martyrs; and together ye have received crowns of triumph as is meet.

Standing before the Lord with the holy prophets, the honored apostles and the choirs of chosen angels, O ye multitude of sacred martyrs, pray that He save from perils and misfortunes, those who bless you with faith.

Your sacred memory far outshineth the rays of the sun, O all-praised spiritual athletes, ever dispelling the darkness of the demons, and enlightening all who bless you with faith and love as is meet.

Theotokion: **O** all-immaculate and pure one, who hast given birth to the divine Light Who shone forth from the Father, take pity on my soul, which hath been darkened by the deceptions of life and hath become the plaything of the demons, and grant that through light it may find saving repentance.

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 Aposticha, Stichera of the feast, in Tone VI:

Spec. Mel.: “Go on before us, O angelic hosts ...”:

O house of Ephratha, * holy city of Sion, * with joy receive the Master of all * Who within thee is ineffably born from the Virgin, * desiring to record in the census of paradise * those who had fallen away. * To Him do we cry aloud: * Blessed art Thou Who hast come! ** Glory be to Thee, O our God!

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

The choir of those who piped, * beholding Thee, O Word, cried: Thou hast revealed Thyself to be like us, * wrapped in swaddling bands in the cave, * lying in the manger; * hymning Thee openly with the angels, they sang: * Glory to God in the highest! * And with them we cry aloud: * Blessed art Thou Who hast been born! ** Glory be to Thee, O our God!

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

He among the prophets whose voice is great crieth out: * The Master desireth to be born as a babe * from the womb of the Virgin, * in a manner transcending all telling and understanding, * for He is truly the Angel of great counsel, * the Life of the living! * And with them we also cry aloud: * Blessed art Thou Who hast been born! ** Glory be to Thee, O our God!

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

AT LITURGY

On the Beatitudes, 6 Troparia: 3 from ODE IV, and 3 from ODE V of the canon of the feast.

Receiving flesh from the Virgin of His own will, the Most High hath issued forth, equal to men, to purge away 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 grown 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.

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. (Twice)

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.

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.

Troparion of the holy martyrs, in Tone II:

O spiritual athletes of the Lord, * blessed is the ground which hath been watered by your blood, * and holy the habitations which have received your bodies; * for in your contest ye vanquished the enemy * and preached Christ with boldness. * Entreat Him, we pray, in that He is good, ** that our souls be saved.

Kontakion of the holy martyrs, in Tone II:

Made steadfast in soul by faith, the twenty thousand holy spiritual athletes accepted suffering by fire, crying out to Him Who was born from the Virgin: "O pre-eternal God, accept us as wholeburnt offerings to Thee, as Thou didst accept the gold, myrrh and frankincense from the Persian kings!"

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.

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.

Prokeimenon of the saints, in Tone V: Thou, O Lord, shalt keep us and shalt preserve us * from this generation, and for evermore.

Verse: Save me, O Lord, for a righteous man there is no more; for truths have diminished from the sons of men.

EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, § 96, (ROM. 8: 3-9)

Brethren: What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.

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

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

Verse: For Thou hast proved us, O God, and by fire hast Thou tried us even as silver is tried by fire.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE, §51, (LK 10:19-21)

The Lord said to His disciples: “Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.” In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said: “I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight.”

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.

Communion Verse: Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous; praise is due the righteous