

(at Vespers)

SUNDAY, JANUARY 5, 2024

TONE 3

28th Sunday after Pentecost / Sunday before the Nativity / Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ

"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!

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 *(Holy Fathers)*

Genesis 14:14-20

Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained *servants* who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which *is* north of Damascus. So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people. And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that *is*, the King’s Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who *were* with him. Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he *was* the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said:
“Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.”

Deuteronomy 1:8-11, 15-17

See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to your fathers – to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – to give to them and their descendants after them.’

“And I spoke to you at that time, saying: ‘I alone am not able to bear you. The Lord your God has multiplied you, and here you *are* today, as the stars of heaven in multitude. May the Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times more numerous than you are, and bless you as He has promised you!

So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and knowledgeable men, and made them heads over you, leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, leaders of tens, and officers for your tribes.

“Then I commanded your judges at that time, saying, ‘Hear *the cases* between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the stranger who is with him. You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man’s presence, for the judgment *is* God’s. The case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it.’

Deuteronomy 10:14-21

Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God, *also* the earth with all that *is* in it. The Lord delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as *it is* this day. Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer. For the Lord your God *is* God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name. He *is* your praise, and He *is* your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen.

Litya

Tone 2 *(for the Forefeast) (O House of Ephratha)*

Christ is born on earth
to crush the power of evil,
to enlighten those in darkness,
and to free the captives.//
Let us go forth to meet Him.
Dance, O Zion!
Adorn yourself, O cavern!

Prepare, O Bethlehem!
For the Virgin comes//
to give birth to Christ.

The families of nations
offer glory and praise.
The Magi come with gifts;
the shepherds watch in the fields, //
joyfully preparing the way.

Tone 1 *(for the Holy Fathers)*

Enlightened by the rays of divine utterance,
the Prophets, distinguished in name, are called blessed forever.
With the words of the Spirit, they proclaimed to all the birth of Christ our God,
which in words is inexpressible.//
And having lawfully completed their end, they live the life that is most wondrous.

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

Tone 3 *(for the Holy Fathers, by Germanus)*

Come all who love the feast,
let us praise in psalms the assembly of the Forefathers:
Adam, our first Father,
Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek,
Abraham, Isaac and Jacob;
and those who came after the Law:
Moses, Aaron, Joshua,
Samuel and David,
Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel,
and with them the Twelve Prophets:
Elijah, Elisha, and all the rest,
Zachariah and John the Baptist:
all those who proclaimed Christ, //
the Life and Resurrection of the human race!

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

Tone 3 *(for the Forefeast)*

Make ready, O Bethlehem, for Eden is opened!
Prepare, Ephratha, for Adam and Eve are renewed!
Salvation enters the world and the curse is destroyed;
make ready, O hearts of righteous men!
Instead of myrrh, bring hymns as an offering of wisdom;
receive salvation and immortality of your souls and bodies!
Behold, the Master lying in the manger
urges us to complete our spiritual songs.
Let us cry out to Him unceasingly, //
“O Lord, glory to You!”

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 man!

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 thee!
Hearken, O mountains and hills, you lands around Judea,//
for Christ, the Lover of man, is coming to save those whom He created!

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 is born to raise up again what fell in former times, His image.