

The 20th Day of December



Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ; Commemoration of our God-bearing father, Hieromartyr Ignatius of Antioch.

And the Commemoration of our Venerable Father, John of Kronstadt, whose service is provided following this.

— not translated as of 12/2015

Vespers

At “Lord, I call...,” 6 stichera:

3 stichera of the Forefeast, in Tone 1: *(The composition of Anatolius)*

Let us celebrate, O ye people, /
The forefeast of the of the nativity of Christ, /
Let us lift up our minds and hearts to Bethlēm, /
And with our spiritual eyes let us see the Virgin on her journey to the cave /
There to give birth to our God, the Lord of all. /
Joseph, beholding this miracle, first sees a human child in swaddling clothes, /
But receiving the glad tidings and understands Him to be the true God ///
Who grants to our souls great mercy.

Let us celebrate, O ye people, /
The forefeast of the of the nativity of Christ, /
Let us lift up our minds and hearts to Bethlēm. /
And let us see the great mystery in the cave; /
For Eden hath been opened and God hath come forth from the pure Virgin /
Being perfect in both humanity and divinity. /
Therefore, let us cry aloud: /
Holy God, the Father who hath no beginning! /
Holy Mighty, the Son made flesh! /
Holy Immortal, the Comforting Spirit! ///
O Holy Trinity, glory to Thee!

Hearken, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth! /
For behold, the Son and Word of God the Father /
Is coming to be born of the Virgin Maiden, /
At the goodwill of Him who begot Him without passion /
By the cooperation of the Holy Spirit. /
Prepare thyself, O Bethlēm, and open thy gates, O Eden! /
For “He who Is” becometh what He is not, /
And the Creator of all creation is born as a man ///
Granting the world great mercy!

And 3 stichera of the Hieromartyr, in Tone 4: *To the melody, "Called from on high...."*

O blessèd father Ignatius /
Rightly art thou called the Bearer of God; /
For when the Master, in His mercy, embraced thee /
And revealed to thee the wisdom of the greatest philosophy /
He illumined thee with a great flame of the most brilliant light. /
And from the very source of His divine brightness /
Thou didst absorb the streams of His splendid light. /
And thus didst thou follow in the footsteps of Christ our God, who called thee. ///
Entreat Him now to save and enlighten our souls.

Wounded by the perfect love of God /
When the zeal for salvation, like a flame, was kindled in thy soul, /
Thou wast inspired, O father, to come before the Master /
And cry out thy famous words: /
I am the wheat of the Creator! /
And I shall be ground by the teeth of wild beasts /
That I may become the purest bread for the Word, our God! ///
Entreat Him now to save and enlighten our souls.

Thou wast crucified together with Christ, O holy bishop, /
When thou didst cry out thy divinely-inspired words: /
He whom I love is now crucified /
And I must hasten to share in His suffering! /
Thus thou didst blaze forth like the sun travelling across all the earth /
Illumining all in thy transit, O blessèd Ignatius, /
And adorned with a royal crown thou didst come before Christ in heaven. ///
Entreat Him now to save and enlighten our souls.

Glory..., in Tone 8: *(The composition of Anatolius)*

O God-bearing father Ignatius, /
Having embraced thy beloved Christ, /
Thou didst receive thy reward for being a priest of His Gospel.
And thou didst finish thy life by the shedding of thy blood,
Truly becoming wheat for the immortal Maker of all /
By being ground by the teeth of wild beasts /
Thus becoming an offering of the sweetest of bread for Him. ///
Pray for us, O blessèd martyr.

Now and ever..., Theotokion of the Forefeast, in the same Tone:

Receive, O Bethlēhem, the Mother of God, /
For the never-setting Light comes to be born in thee; /
And in heaven, be astonished, O ye angels! /
Give glory, O ye men on earth! /
O ye Magi from the East bring your most precious gifts! /
And ye shepherds, sing with joy the Thrice-holy Hymn! ///
Let every breath praise the Maker of all!

***Note:** If the Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ should fall on a Saturday, then in that case, the Dogmatic Theotokion (in the Tone of the Week) is not sung on Friday Evening.*

The Aposticha of the Forefeast,¹ in Tone 2: (The composition of Cyprian)

Behold, the time of our salvation is come! /
Make thyself ready, O cave, /
For the Virgin draws near in order to give birth! /
Adorn thyself, O Bethlēhem in the land of Judah, and be glad, /
For our Lord is shining forth from thee! /
Hearken ye hills of Judæa, for Christ, is come to save those whom He hath created ///
In that He is the Lover of mankind.

***Verse:** God shall come from Teman, and the Holy One from the mountain
overshadowed by the forest.*

O Bethlēhem in the land of Judah, /
Joyfully prepare the cave divine /
For thou art to become the dwelling place of God on earth: /
He is to be born in the flesh from the holy Virgin who knew not man ///
So that He might save the race of mankind.

***Verse:** O Lord, I have heard the report of Thee and am afraid; O Lord, I have
considered Thy works and am amazed.*

(The composition of Andrew Pyrrhus:)

Come, and let us all celebrate in faith /
The forefeast of the nativity of Christ. /
Let us spiritually offer our songs like the star, /
Let us add our voices to the praise offered by the shepherds and the Magi: /

¹ Text varies from the Greek Menaion.

For the salvation of mortal men has come forth from the Virgin's womb ///
Recalling to Himself all the faithful.

Glory..., of the Hieromartyr, in Tone 1: *(The composition of Byzantius)*

O, thy firm and adamant mind, O rightly-bless't father Ignatius! /
Being filled with earnest love for Him who loved thee, thou didst say: /
There is no fire of yearning in me for material things, /
Rather, the living water speaks deeply within me, /
Saying: "Come to the Father." /
Therefore being enflamed by the Holy Spirit /
Thou didst permit the wild beasts to separate thee quickly from this world /
And send thee to thy beloved Christ. ///
Beseech Him now to save our souls!

Now and ever..., of the Forefeast, in the same Tone: *(As at "Lord, I call...", the composition of Anatolius)*

Let us celebrate, O ye people, /
The forefeast of the of the nativity of Christ, /
Let us lift up our minds and hearts to Bethlĕhem /
And with our spiritual eyes let us see the Virgin on her journey to the cave /
There to give birth to our God, the Lord of all. /
Joseph, beholding this miracle, first sees a human child in swaddling clothes, /
But receiving the glad tidings and understands Him to be the true God ///
Who grants to our souls great mercy.

The Troparion of the Hieromartyr, in Tone 4:

Like the apostles in character, /
A successor on their throne, O divinely-inspired one /
Through visions thou didst find thy work /
Rightly dividing the word of truth. /
Thou didst suffer for the sake of the faith /
Even to the shedding of thy blood ///
O hieromartyr Ignatius, pray to Christ God that our souls may be saved.

Glory..., now and ever..., the Troparion of the Forefeast, in the same Tone:

Prepare thyself, O Bethlĕhem, /
For Eden hath been opened to all. /
Adorn thyself, O Ephratha, /
For the Tree of Life hath blossomed forth in the cave from the Virgin. /
Her womb appeared as a spiritual paradise /

In which is planted the garden divine. /
Eating of it we shall live and not die as did Adam: /
Christ is born, ///
That He may raise up again the image that before was fallen.

Compline

Note: We sing the Three-Ode and the Two-Ode Canons of the Forefeast, repeating the Irmos and the Troparia, as needed, for a total of 6 Troparia.

The Three-Ode Canon of the Forefeast, in Tone 2

Having the acrostic: "Today I sing the praise of Holy Monday."

Ode 1

Irmos: *Let us sing to the Lord, who by His divine command dried up the billowing sea where none may walk, and through it let the people of Israel on foot, for He hath been greatly glorified!*

Refrain: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

Ineffable is the condescension of the Word of God. Christ is Himself both God and man; yet He counted not His Godhead a thing to be seized and held fast, and this He showed to His disciples taking the form of a servant: for gloriously hath He been glorified!

Christ is come voluntarily to minister to Adam who is grown poor, enriching him with divinity, and granting him, in that He is compassionate, an awesome regeneration and restoration.

Lord, have mercy. (*thrice*) Glory.., now and ever....

Katavasia: Let us sing to the Lord [*prostration*]

The Kontakion of the Forefeast, in Tone 3: *To the melody: "Today the Virgin...."*

Today the Vírgin comes to the cave /
To give birth ineffably to the pre-eternal Word. /
Hearing this, be of good cheer, O inhabited earth, /
And with the angels and the shepherds, ///
Glorify Him whose will it was to be made manifest a young Child the pre-eternal God.

Ode 8

Irmos: *The unwearied fire, fed with endless fuel, drew back in fear before the pure bodies and souls of the holy children, and as the undying flames*

decreased in strength the young men sang an everlasting song: O all ye works, praise the Lord and exalt Him above all throughout all ages!

‘Then shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye keep my commandments’, said the Savior to mankind as He came forth from the Virgin’s womb, granting them peace. ‘Think humbly of yourselves and ye shall be exalted; acknowledge Me as Lord and praise and exalt Me above all forever!’

Contrary to all the laws of nature was Thy nativity, O Word of God, for flesh and blood did not bring forth Thy holy body, but rather the coming of the Holy Spirit and the shadow of the Most High. Thus we know Thee to be Lord and we praise and exalt Thee above all forever!

And this Two-Ode Canon of the Forefeast, in Tone 2

Having the acrostic: “Today I sing the praise of Holy Tuesday.”

Ode 8

Irmos: *The three holy children were not obedient to the decree of the tyrant, but when cast into the furnace they confessed God singing: Bless the Lord, O ye works of the Lord!*

Let us put aside every thought of slothfulness, and with vigilance of soul let us go to greet Christ who is born of the pure Virgin, and let us cry: Bless the Lord, O ye works of the Lord!

Let good works be the sufficient treasure of our soul, that with bright and cheerful faces way sing to the newborn Christ: Bless the Lord, O ye works of the Lord!

Having caused our talent to increase through doing good works let us bring them as gifts instead of gold, frankincense and myrrh to Christ, who now comes to be born of the divine Virgin Maiden.

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

Katavasia: The three holy children.... *(prostration)*

Ode 9

From the First Canon

Irmos: *Thou hast magnified, O Christ, the Theotokos who bore Thee; from her, O our Creator, thou hast taken a body of like passion to our own, and so hast set us free from all our ignorance; therefore with all generations we call her blessèd and we magnify Thee.*

Let us cast away all the impurity of the passions, and with wise understanding, let us worthily receive the advent of Christ, for He comes to assume our flesh without

corruption, and through the Spirit, to restore us to divinity.

Gazing upon the humility of Christ, let us elevate ourselves above the passions which drag us down; and having been instructed in the faith, let us earnestly humble ourselves in spirit and thinking not about pretentious things, let us do the lofty deeds that we may praise and exalt Him who is come to be born.

Ode 9 **From the Second Canon**

***Irmos:** Thou didst enclose within thy womb the God whom nothing can enclose, and Thou hast brought joy into the world. We sing thy praise, O most holy Virgin.*

Christ commands all the right believers to attend to His advent, for behold, now He cometh to be born of the Virgin!

Grant, O Christ, that I may be counted among the sheep at Thy right hand at Thy second coming, as now I honor this, Thy coming in the flesh.

***Katavasia:** Thou didst enclose within thy womb.... (prostration)*

Matins

At God is the Lord, the Troparion for the Forefeast, in Tone 4::

Prepare thyself, O Bethlēm, /
For Eden hath been opened to all. /
Adorn thyself, O Ephratha, /
For the Tree of Life hath blossomed forth in the cave from the Virgin. /
Her womb appeared as a spiritual paradise /
In which is planted the garden divine. /
Eating of it we shall live and not die as did Adam: /
Christ is born, ///
That He may raise up again the image that before was fallen. (twice)

Glory....,

The Troparion of the Hieromartyr, in Tone 4:

Like the apostles in character, /
A successor on their throne, O divinely-inspired one /
Through visions thou didst find thy work /
Rightly dividing the word of truth. /
Thou didst suffer for the sake of the faith /
Even to the shedding of thy blood ///

O Hieromartyr Ignatius, pray to Christ God that our souls may be saved.

Now and ever....,

The Troparion of the Forefeast, in the same Tone: *(as above)*

Prepare thyself, O Bethlēm, /
For Eden hath been opened to all....

After the 1st Kathisma, the Sessional Hymn, in in Tone 1: *To the melody, “Thy tomb, O Savior....”*

Rejoice, O Bethlēm, make ready, O Ephratha, /
For behold, the ewe-lamb comes to give birth /
To the Shepherd she is bearing in her womb, /
And the Magi together with the shepherds ///
Faithfully rejoice in their hearts having seen His star.

Glory..., now and ever..., in Tone 1: *To the melody, “Quickly go before....”*

He who bowed the heavens and took His abode in the Virgin /
Comes now to the cave in Bethlēm /
To be born in the flesh, as it is written; /
He who gives life to babes in the womb, appears now as a babe. ///
Therefore, let us run to greet Him with upright and faithful hearts.

After the 2nd Kathisma, the Sessional Hymn, in in Tone 4: *To the melody, “Quickly go before....”*

Anticipate the joy of the Virgin, O ye virgin maidens, /
Together with the Magi and the angels, praise ye the journey of the Mother of
Christ our God. O ye mothers; /
For the Virgin doth come to the city of Bethlēm to give birth to the Son, ///
The pre-eternal God, who saveth the world from corruption.

Glory..., now and ever..., in Tone 4:

Rejoice, O Sion, /
Adorn thyself, O Bethlēm, /
For the Sustainer of all hat sent forth a star /
To announcing His infinite condescension, /
Before which all the hosts of heaven tremble. ///
Truly He who alone loveth mankind is born without change of the Virgin.

The Canon

The Canon of the Forefeast, including the Irmos, in Tone 1; and that of the Hieromartyr, with 4 Troparia, in the same Tone.

Ode 1

The Canon of the Forefeast, in Tone 1,

having the acrostic: "Sung now are the hymns of the forefeast," the composition of Joseph.

Irmos: Let us all sing a song of victory to God, who by His mighty arm has done marvelous wonders and saved Israel for He has been glorified.

Refrain: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

Let us begin today to celebrate the forefeast of the nativity of Christ who, in His surpassing love for mankind, was born in the flesh from the Virgin Mary in a cave in Bethlēm.

The pre-eternal God, who is come as a babe, is wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, releasing me from the bonds of sin. Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Theotokion: Eden has been opened, O Thou who in the flesh was born in Bethlēm from the holy Virgin Maiden, and we praise Thine awesome dispensation, O Master.

The Canon of the Hieromartyr, in the same Tone,

the composition of Andrew of Crete.

Irmos: Let us all sing a song of victory to God.... (as above)

Refrain: Holy hieromartyr Ignatius, pray to God for us!

Let us form a choir, for in this solemn manner doth the martyr Ignatius summon the Church of Christ to honor his most glorious suffering.

O father Ignatius, having arisen in the East as a most-radiant star of the Church, thou hast shone upon the lands of the West, thus enlightening all the ends of the earth.

Emulating the trials of the apostle Paul in the cities and towns while thou wast held prisoner, thou didst give strength to the Churches of Christ by thine eloquent exhortations.

O all-blessèd father Ignatius, we all praise thy glorious memory, and with hymns, we honor Him who placed a crown upon thy precious head.

Thou, O martyr, didst cry aloud: "Let my flesh be cut, and let my blood flow forth! Prepare the fire, the sword and the wild beasts ready to devour me, for I hasten to meet my Lord."

Theotokion: Adorn thyself, O Eden, for Ephratha hath been made ready for the

Creator, who, in His surpassing loving-kindness, is to be born of the Virgin Mother in the cave in Bethlēm.

Katavasia: Christ is born, glorify Him....

Ode 3

The Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: The stone which the builders had rejected, the same hath become the cornerstone: This is the rock upon which Christ hath established the Church, which He hath redeemed from among the nations.

Let all creation sing the hymns of the forefeast to Him who was begotten of the Father before the morning-star, and hath now, in His surpassing loving-kindness, shone forth ineffably from the Virgin and is born in the flesh in Bethlēm.

A star hath shone forth from the tribe of Judah which the kings of the East have seen and understood. They now hasten on a journey from their distant lands that they might gaze upon Christ, who is born in the flesh in Bethlēm.

Theotokion: Foreseeing the incarnation of Christ, Isaiah prophesied in the Holy Spirit, saying: “The Lord is born from the Virgin as a babe for our regeneration, and the government is upon His shoulders.”

The Canon of the Hieromartyr

Irmos: The stone which the builders had rejected...

O holy father Ignatius, thou art revealed as a tower of endurance, a rule of courage, a model of suffering, a pillar of the Church, the confirmation of the Faith, and an example of the virtues, being crowned for thine honored sufferings for Christ.

Truly wast thou called the “God-bearer, O father Ignatius, for being held in the arms of the Lord while thou wast yet a babe, thou wast sent forth by Him who said: “Be ye for Me like unto this child.”

Thou didst cry aloud, O father: “I am like a pure harvest of wheat, and I hasten to be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts; that my body may be crushed; that my members may be devoured as food for the beasts, so that I may be shown to be a pure bread offering to God.”

Thou didst complete thy wondrous course of martyrdom with endurance, and didst show steadfast courage surpassing all who suffered before thee, being consumed with love and unremitting zeal which, like a fire, set thy soul aflame.

Burning in the spirit, the hieromartyr Ignatius cried out in the midst of his

afflictions: “I press on toward Christ, rejoicing! I am crucified together with Christ! No longer do I live myself, but Christ alone liveth within me!

Theotokion: **Rejoice, O Isaiah, and cry aloud: “Behold, a Virgin will conceive in her womb the Redeemer of the world, and will give birth to Him in a cave! His name will be Jesus, God with us, Emmanuel, Sabaoth!**

The Kontakion of the Forefeast, in Tone 3: To the melody: “Today the Virgin....”

Today the Virgin comes to the cave /
To give birth ineffably to the pre-eternal Word. /
Hearing this, be of good cheer, O inhabited earth, /
And with the angels and the shepherds, ///
Glorify Him whose will it was to be made manifest a young Child the pre-eternal God.

Ikos: O truly awesome wonder that is past all understanding! He who gave existence to all, has, in His goodness, entered into the womb of the holy Virgin, and cometh to be born in a cave, there to be laid in a manger. His star is a herald from on high calling the Magi to come and worship Him and bring Him gifts, following the prophecy of Balaam, who said: “A star will proclaim Him beforehand, the little babe, the pre-eternal God!”

The Sessional Hymn, in Tone 3: To the melody, “The beauty of virginity....”

Guided by Christ our God /
Thou didst make bright thy sacred vestments /
By truly witnessing to Him, /
O our God-bearing father, Ignatius! /
For, emulating the wondrous apostle Paul, /
Thou didst come to Rome, there to complete thy martyrdom /
By provoking the wild beasts in the arena ///
To separate thee from this world. /

Glory..., another Sessional Hymn of the Hieromartyr, in Tone 8: To the melody, “Of Wisdom....”

Shining forth like a star from the East /
Thou didst illumine the world with the rays of thy teachings, /
And like Paul, thou didst valiantly complete thy course /
Enduring great tribulations in many places and cities. /
And like the wheat of the Creator, /
Thou wast ground by the teeth of wild beasts /

Becoming a pure bread offering to thy Lord. /
O blessed father Ignatius, /
Entreat Christ God that He may grant the remission of sins ///
To those who honor with love thy holy memory.

Now and ever..., the Sessional Hymn of the Forefeast, in the same Tone: (and melody)

The timeless Word of God, /
Who shone forth without change from the bosom of the Father, /
Came forth seedlessly, in time, from thy womb, O pure Lady, /
And lifted up Adam who once had fallen into sin, /
And He raised him to his former beauty. /
The hosts of heaven now behold His nativity /
And sing a song of victory to those born on earth: /
Glory to God who, in His pleasure, ///
Hath given us peace by breaking down the wall of enmity.

Ode 4

The Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: *Foreseeing the incarnation of the Word, O prophet Habbákuk, thou didst cry aloud, proclaiming: "Thou shalt be known when the years draw nigh; when the season cometh, Thou shalt be shown forth!" Glory to Thy power, O Lord!*

Dance for joy, O ye mountains and ye hills, O ye woodlands and ye field, O ye rivers and ye seas! Let every living creature also dance for joy; for the Lord Jesus cometh to be born for our salvation from the Virgin in the city of Bethlēm.

Take up thy psaltery, O prophet David, and sing a psalm inspired by the Holy Spirit; for Christ, the Lord of glory, who shone forth without change from the bosom of the Father before the birth of the morning star, is to be born of the Virgin Mary.

How can this poor and humble cave receive Thee who art born in the flesh, O Word? How art Thou now wrapped in swaddling clothes, Thou who dost garb the sky in clouds? How dost Thou lie in a manger of dumb beasts a little babe?

The Canon of the Hieromartyr

Irmos: *Foreseeing the incarnation of the Word....*

As a prisoner thou didst illumine the whole earth with the brilliant light of thy sufferings, O Saint Ignatius; for making thy transit like the sun from the East, thou

didst enlighten the whole world with the brilliant light of thy martyrdom.

Bound like Paul between two irrational beasts, thou didst hasten to the city of Rome, O wise father Ignatius; and though thou wast shackled in chains, thou didst not cease to strengthen the Church by writing letters to every city, that all the hierarchs of the Church not fall into despair.

Thou didst cry out, O spiritual champion: “I hasten on to Christ, for I desire Him alone! I belong to Him alone! I press onward toward Him, I strive that I may reach Him! For this I endure the fire, the sword, and the wild beasts, that I may attain true life!

“Sweet are my afflictions and lovely are the chains that I bear for Him, who I desire,” thou didst cry; “the torments that I bear are sweeter to me than my homeland, and my body that is being broken is sweeter than any gladness; my pain is dearer to me than the soundness of my body.”

Thou didst cry out, O spiritual champion: “Let the mouths of the wild beasts become my death, and let their bellies be my tomb; let no man hinder me, let no one break my resolve, for I hasten to be ground like meat by the teeth of the wild beasts, that God may find me to be pure bread.

Theotokion: **A**s God, O good Lord, Thou wast pleased to be born for our sakes in a cave of the earth, abasing Thyself, in Thy loving-kindness, by embracing our low estate, coming forth incarnate from the Virgin yet remaining the only begotten Son of the Father and Thy Virgin Mother.

Ode 5

The Canon of the Forefeast

***Irmos:** Grant us Thy peace, O Son of God, for we know no other God than Thee and we call on Thy name as the God of both the living and the dead.*

Let the clouds rejoice and shower us with sweetness, for the Lord draweth nigh to be born as a babe of the pure Virgin in cavern of the earth. Dance for joy, O ye holy prophets, for Christ the truth cometh to fulfil your divine words, by being born an infant in the flesh.

Theotokion: **O**pen wide thy gates, O Eden, which of old were locked against me, and behold Christ, who is come as a babe in the flesh, in His good pleasure, of the Virgin Maiden in the city of Bethlēm.

The Canon of the Hieromartyr

***Irmos:** Grant us Thy peace....*

“It was fitting that we should have such a High Priest, holy, innocent, and undefiled,” cried the apostle Paul, describing beforehand the hallowed image of thy sacred character, O holy hierarch Ignatius.

Bound in chains and led as hierarch and prisoner of Christ, O Ignatius, thou didst write to the churches and the cities, confirming all in the confession of the Faith.

Piously following the instructions of Paul, thou didst endure all trials and tribulations, O wondrous hierarch, thou radiant star of the East, and shining evening star.

Moved to contend in the arena by the instructions of Paul, thou didst travel the world with thy hands bound in chains, O holy hieromartyr, that the world might behold the valor of thy holy sufferings.

With psalms and hymns we praise thy struggles, we honor thy chains, and we venerate the dust of thy holy relics, which are perfumed by the myrrh of thy holy sufferings.

Theotokion: **B**ecoming like a mortal man through thee, O Bride of God, He was born for our sakes, yet He remained without change: God, having become man, is seen the flesh!

Ode 6

The Canon of the Forefeast

***Irmos:** I cry aloud, as did the Prophet Jonah: do Thou, who art good, set my life free from corruption, and save me, Thou Savior of the world, as I cry aloud: Glory to Thee!*

Those who worship the stars now behold how the heavens shine down upon the earth, upon the city of David, and upon the King of heaven who is born there for our sake.

Truly doth the prophet eloquently proclaim: “Leap and dance for joy, O Bethlēhem, thou house of Ephratha, for God appeared in thee from the Virgin!

Behold, the Virgin giveth birth to the Lord and Creator of all in a cave in Bethlēhem, and having wrapped Him like a babe in swaddling clothes, she now layeth Him in a manger.

The Canon of the Hieromartyr

***Irmos:** I cry aloud, as did Jonah....*

Truly loving Him as the object of thy desire, thou didst kindle a spiritual fire for

Him in thy heart, O eloquent Ignatius, filled with the waters of life.

Fulfilling the needs of thy conscience, thou wast not afraid at beholding the sight of wild beasts, nor wast thou afraid, for thou didst desire to be ground like wheat by the power of their jaws.

O hieromartyr Ignatius, thou didst render for naught the fearsome torments, bondage, torture, and dismemberment which thou didst endure in Rome for the sake of thy creator, Christ.

Burning with thy great love for Christ, O champion, thou didst tread upon the flames of thy trials as upon the morning dew, so that thou mightest attain to Him who loveth thee.

In thy thirst, thou didst drain the cup of Christ, preferring to suffer for Him rather than to live without Him, and thou didst cry aloud: "These things are to me nothing more than the means by which I may attain to Life."

Theotokion: **A**dorn thyself, O Bethlēhem! Prepare thyself, O Ephratha! For He who as begotten of the Father without mother is carried in the womb by a Mother without a human father, and is about to born for our salvation.

The Kontakion of St. Ignatius, in Tone 3: To the melody: "Today the Virgin...."

The radiant day of thy struggles doth proclaim to all /
Him who hath been born in the cave; /
For thirsting to delight in His love /
Thou didst hasten to be devoured by wild beasts. ///
Therefore, O wise Ignatius, thou art truly called a bearer of God.

Ikos: Once Abraham of old drew the knife to sacrifice his son, thus prefiguring the slaying of Him who sustaineth all things; and now, O divinely-wise father Ignatius, thou hast offered thy whole self to Christ as a sacrifice by becoming food for the wild beasts, and showing thyself to be pure wheat for thy Creator. For this thou dost truly abide forever in the granaries of heaven, delighting Him by thy zeal. Having thus forsaken the whole world for His sake, thou are rightly called the God-bearer, O all-wise father Ignatius.

Ode 7

The Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: *The fire neither touched nor burned Thy children who were in the furnace, O Savior. So with one voice, the three youths sang and blessed Thee saying: Blessèd art Thou O God of our fathers.*

Foretelling the advent of Christ in the flesh, Jeremiah cried aloud: “God hath appeared on earth, incarnate, and he knoweth every path therein, being born of His Mother in Bethlēhem!

Behold, the root from the rod of Jesse hath sprung forth producing as its flower, Christ, on whom the Spirit of understanding, great counsel, and the divine vision doth rest.

Let us listen to the sacred words: For unto us a Child is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called: Messenger of the Divine Will, wonderful Counselor, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace!

The Canon of the Hieromartyr

***Irmos:** The fire neither touched nor burned Thy children...*

Thou didst not burn with the fire that consumes fuel, O Ignatius, but rather with the living water that doth speak and crieth aloud: “Come thou to the father!”, that is the water which transcendeth life itself.

Thou, O Ignatius, didst say: “Let the teeth of the wild beasts be like swords for me, and weapons of my slaughter; and let the bellies of the lions be for me a tomb. Let the fire devour my flesh before corruption can devour my remains.”

“To me, death is sweet,” he said, “and all the pain of my labors are also sweet! The wild beasts give me pleasure, and the fire is like dew to me, if these do not prevent me from attaining to Life. Therefore, I hasten to die, that I may live with Christ!”

“I prefer not to live in the body, but desire to live in spirit. Divine love it is for me to live in Christ, and to Him to I hasten to go. Him do I love, and Him do I hope to receive.”

***Theotokion:** He who was foretold by the prophets of old doth now approach me as a babe born of the Virgin! Adam exults, and our first mother, Eve, is released from her travail; and David, the forefather of the Mother of God, rejoices together with her!*

Ode 8

The Canon of the Forefeast

***Irmos:** Him, whom the angels and all the hosts of heaven fear as Creator and Lord, you priests praise, you children glorify and you people bless and exalt above all forever.*

The Lord approaches His own birth in a mysterious way. Let us all receive Him who cometh to be born in a cave with joy, that He may reclaim us as His own, who once were exiled from the sweetness of paradise.

Lo! Our restoration is at hand! Let us zealously raise our voices and sing hymns of joy, celebrating the forefeast of the nativity of Him who comes to be born in a humble cave.

All that which the Lord hath promised, He hath already fulfilled, having given us His Virgin Mother from the seed of David. She gave birth to Him as a babe, born in the flesh in the city of Bethlēhem in a manner past all human understanding.

The Canon of the Hieromartyr

***Irmos:** Him, whom the angels...*

Let us hymn and praise Ignatius, the godly hierarch, twice crowned, as both a pastor and a martyr; for having suffered for the love of God and desiring to be desired by Him, he was not dissuaded from suffering for Him.

Like the sun that traverses the heavens, didst thou, O faithful martyr, journey valiantly over all the ends of the earth; and, without ever waning, thou didst travel from the earth to Christ, illumining the whole world with the light of incorruption.

Thirsting to partake of the cup of the suffering of Christ, thou didst hasten, bound, to reach the arena, O Ignatius, most-wise, where thou didst not pause, but cried aloud: “I thirst for Christ with an eternal thirst!”

O, the love and the ardor of divine zeal! The holy martyr is crucified to the desires so that he might live for Him who loveth him; he thirsts for Him who thirsted and who loved him, and he doth prefer to die, that He might live forever and be with Him.

Putting aside the flesh, the hieromartyr Ignatius ascended on immaterial wings and soared aloft to Him Who Is, desiring only to be with Him who loveth him; for He is truly the eternal Desire, the true Wisdom, and the Life of all who have ever existed.

***Theotokion:** Christ, the Daystar from the East, hath shone forth out of Jacob, and the Magi hasten to the city of Bethlēhem to praise, worship and honor Him who was born from the womb of the most pure Theotokos.*

Ode 9

The Canon of the Forefeast

***Irmos:** We the faithful magnify the ever-flowing fount, receiver of Life, candlestick of pure gold and bearing light, the living Temple, the undefiled tabernacle, the Theotokos more spacious than heaven and earth.*

With the patriarchs, the prophets, and all the righteous, let us dance with joy, for the Lord Jesus, our deliverance, enlightenment, our life, and our salvation, is now

born from the Virgin in the city of David.

Already have the gates of the incarnation of the divine Word been opened to all! Rejoice, O ye heavens! Exult, O ye angels! Be glad in the Spirit together with the shepherds and the Magi, O Earth!

The Virgin doth hold in her embrace Christ, the noetic savor of redemption as He prepares with the Spirit to emerge from the cave, to fill our souls with the sweetness of His fragrance.

The Canon of the Hieromartyr

***Irmos:** We the faithful magnify....*

Like a prophet beholding things that afar off, Ignatius, the minister of the highest mysteries, performed a most mystical ceremony where, as priest, he offered himself as a sacrifice through martyrdom, preparing himself for the wild beasts and the holocaust of fire.

Desiring to clothe thyself in the image of God, thou didst remove the image of the old man, and having received the pristine beauty of man's first image, thou didst come to dwell together with Christ.

By thy suffering thou didst make thy sacred vestments even more sacred, O most holy martyr, for, having received a double crown, thou dost now praise CHrist our God in heaven together with all the martyrs and righteous pastors, O hieromartyr Ignatius.

"I am the pure wheat of God," thou didst say, "and I am ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that in holiness, I may be made into pure bread for God who loveth mankind; and, loving Him, I do not refuse to die that I may live with Him."

Illumined with the unapproachable light, and dwelling in the mansions on high, O holy father Ignatius, we beseech thee: never cease to pray to God thy Creator on behalf of us, thy flock.

Theotokion: **R**ejoice, O most pure Lady, thou living city of God in which He was well-pleased to make His abode! For, without leaving the highest, He descended, like the rain upon the earth to dwell within thee, and He willed to be born of thee as a babe in Bethlēm, O Most Holy Birthgiver of God.

The Exapostilarion of the Hieromartyr:

The Word without beginning, the Wisdom of God, who, by His communion with us in His ineffable goodness, hath taught the people of old, hath held thee in His

embrace, O God-bearer Ignatius, who liveth now with Him having passed through thy trials, rejoicing.

Glory..., now and ever.... of the Forefeast:

Adorn thyself, O Bethlēhem, as the new dwelling-place of God! O manger and the cave, ye company of shepherds, and ye Magi from the East: come ye early unto Him guided by the radiance of the star, for the Virgin hath already given birth to Him, who is the perfect God, as a little child.

At the Praises, 4 stichera of the Forefeast, having the acrostic of the Greek alphabet, in Tone 6: *(the composition of St. Roman the Melodist)*

Go forth, O ye angels of heaven, /
And prepare the manger in Bethlēhem /
For the Word is coming to be born; the Wisdom of God is approaching, /
And the Church prepares to receive His salutation. /
O ye people, sing with joy to the Mother of God: /
Blessèd is Thy coming, O our God, ///
O Lord, glory to Thee!

O ye mountains, drop down your sweet nectar! /
For behold, God cometh from Teman; /
Submit yourselves, O ye nations! /
Rejoice, O ye prophets and patriarchs! /
Clap your hands, O ye people! /
For Christ, the great and mighty Prince of peace is coming to be born; ///
The King of heaven cometh now to appear on earth.

The Creator is coming down from heaven /
To earth to lift up the human race /
And to renew the image of the King, /
Sing for joy, O ye powers on high! /
For the wall of enmity hath been destroyed. /
God has become man, Christ our God; ///
Behold the coming of the King of Israel!

Come, O ye hard-hearted children of God, /
Dispel the cloud hanging over thy soul, /
And recognize the Creator who is born in a cave. /
He is the expectation of the nations /
And He is come to fulfill the Law. /
Come together and let us cry aloud: ///

Christ is come, the King of Israel!

Glory...,

Behold, Christ is drawing near, /
Make ready O Bethlēm, /
The salvation of the nations is already shining forth! /
Adorn the manger and assemble the shepherds, /
Call forth the Magi from Persia, /
And summon the armies of the angelic hosts! ///
The King of heaven cometh now to appear on earth.

Now and ever...,

Be thou consumed with jealousy
And devoured by fire, /
O foolish father of lies, thou accursèd of the Law; /
For behold, the Virgin, as Isaiah foretold, hath conceived within her womb /
And gives birth in the manger /
To Him before whom the tribe of Judah shall bend their knee ///
The mighty King of Israel.

At the Aposticha, these stichera, in Tone 4:

Adorn thyself, O Bethlēm! /
Sing aloud, O city of Sion! /
Rejoice, O wilderness, in anticipation of the coming joy! /
For the star approaches Bethlēm, heralding the birth of Christ, /
The cave receives Him whom nothing can contain, /
And the manger makes ready to accept eternal Life! /
To Him let us all sing and cry aloud: ///
Save our souls, O Jesus our God, who was born incarnate for our sakes.

Verse: God shall come from Teman, and the Holy One from the mountain
overshadowed by the forest.

Christ our God is coming; /
He shall arrive and shall not delay. /
He shall make His way through her who knew no wedlock /
And He shall rest in a humble cave. /
He whom heaven cannot contain shall lie in a manger of dumb beasts, /
Receive Him, O cave, and hold Him wrapped in swaddling clothes: /
The Word Himself, who shall deliver us from our senselessness. /

The star doth proclaim Him, the Magi worship Him, the shepherds praise Him, /
And the angels, beholding this strange wonder glorify Him, ///
Seeing on earth the deliverance of the human race!

Verse: O Lord, I have heard the report of Thee and am afraid; O Lord, I have
considered Thy works and am amazed.

Rejoice, O Isaiah, /
For having received the word from God, /
Thou didst prophesy the Virgin Mary /
Who, like the burning bush was not consumed by the fire of our God! /
Adorn thyself, O Bethlēm, open wide thy gates O Eden! /
Let the Magi come and behold Salvation wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in
the manger, /
Whose star shines brightly from above: ///
The Lord, the Giver of life, and the Salvation of mankind!

Glory..., of the Hieromartyr, in Tone 1: (*The composition of the Studite*)

The time of thy annual festival hath come, O, God-bearing father Ignatius, /
Thou living pillar of the Church and an inspired example for all; /
Thou didst proclaim thy divine teachings and uphold the faith /
Even to the shedding of thy blood, /
When thou didst pronounce thine ever-mem'rable words: /
“I am the wheat of God and I shall be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts.” /
By this, thou didst emulate the Passion of Christ. ///
Intercede with Him now, that He may save our souls.

Now and ever..., of the Forefeast, in Tone 6:

Make thyself ready, O cave /
To receive the Mother who bears Christ in her womb, /
And thou, O manger, receive the Word of God who hast delivered us mortals from
our irrational deeds; /
Keep watch, O shepherds and bear witness to this awesome wonder. /
Bring your gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the King, O ye Magi of Persia /
For the Lord hath appeared from a Virgin Mother, /
Who bowed her head like a servant before Him and exclaimed to Him in her arms: /
“How wast Thou sown in me, /
And how didst Thou spring forth from me, ///
O my Redeemer and my God?”

Hours

At the Hours: **Troparia:** Forefeast: Prepare thyself, O Bethlēhem...; **Glory...** Hierarch...; **Kontakia:** Forefeast.

Liturgy

At the Beatitudes, 8 Troparia: 4 from the Third Ode and 4 from Ode 6 of the Canon of the Forefeast.

1-2. Let all creation sing the hymns of the forefeast to Him who was begotten of the Father before the morning-star, and hath now, in His surpassing loving-kindness, shone forth ineffably from the Virgin and is born in the flesh in Bethlēhem. *(twice)*

3-4. A star hath shone forth from the tribe of Judah which the kings of the East have seen and understood. They now hasten on a journey from their distant lands that they might gaze upon Christ, who is born in the flesh in Bethlēhem. *(twice)*

5. Truly loving Him as the object of thy desire, thou didst kindle a spiritual fire for Him in thy heart, O eloquent Ignatius, filled with the waters of life.

6. Fulfilling the needs of thy conscience, thou wast not afraid at beholding the sight of wild beasts, nor wast thou afraid, for thou didst desire to be ground like wheat by the power of their jaws.

7. O hieromartyr Ignatius, thou didst render for naught the fearsome torments, bondage, torture, and dismemberment which thou didst endure in Rome for the sake of thy creator, Christ.

8. Theotokion: Adorn thyself, O Bethlēhem! Prepare thyself, O Ephratha! For He who as begotten of the Father without mother is carried in the womb by a Mother without a human father, and is about to born for our salvation.

The Troparion of the Forefeast, in Tone 4:

Prepare thyself, O Bethlēhem, /
For Eden hath been opened to all. /
Adorn thyself, O Ephratha, /
For the Tree of Life hath blossomed forth in the cave from the Virgin. /
Her womb appeared as a spiritual paradise /
In which is planted the garden divine. /
Eating of it we shall live and not die as did Adam: /
Christ is born, ///
That He may raise up again the image that before was fallen.

The Troparion of the Hieromartyr, in the same Tone:

Like the apostles in character, /
A successor on their throne, O divinely-inspired one /
Through visions thou didst find thy work /
Rightly dividing the word of truth. /
Thou didst suffer for the sake of the faith /
Even to the shedding of thy blood ///
O Hieromartyr Ignatius, pray to Christ God that our souls may be saved.

The Kontakion of St. Ignatius, in Tone 3: *To the melody: "Today the Virgin...."*

The radiant day of thy struggles doth proclaim to all /
Him who hath been born in the cave; /
For thirsting to delight in His love /
Thou didst hasten to be devoured by wild beasts. ///
Therefore, O wise Ignatius, thou art truly called a bearer of God.

The Kontakion of the Forefeast, in the same Tone 3: *(and melody)*

Today the Virgin comes to the cave /
To give birth ineffably to the pre-eternal Word. /
Hearing this, be of good cheer, O inhabited earth, /
And with the angels and the shepherds, ///
Glorify Him whose will it was to be made manifest a young Child the pre-eternal God.

Prokeimenon (Hierarch), in Tone 7: The righteous one shall rejoice in the Lord /
and shall set his hope on Him. *Verse:* Hear my voice, O God, when I pray unto Thee!

The Epistle: (311) Hebrews 4:14-5:10

The Alleluia (Saint), in Tone 7: The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, and shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. *Verse:* They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.

The Gospel: (41) Mark 33-41

Communion Hymn: The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings.