

## The 23<sup>rd</sup> Day of December

**Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ; Commemoration of the Ten Holy Martyrs of Crete; and the Commemoration of the Repose of Our Father among the Saints, Nahum of Ochrid, Equal-to-the-Apostles and Wonderworker, the Enlightener of Bulgaria.** — *not translated at*

*this time.*

### Vespers

**At “Lord, I call...,” 6 stichera:**

**3 stichera of the Forefeast,<sup>1</sup> in Tone 4:** *To the melody, “As one valiant among the martyrs....”*

**L**et us sing with clarity and firmness of mind /  
The hymns of the forefeast of the nativity of Christ, /  
For, being equal in honor with the Father and the Holy Spirit /  
Yet, in His loving-kindness He clothed Himself in our human flesh /  
So that He might be born in the city of Bethlēhem, ///  
And that His ineffable birth might be praised by both the shepherds and the angels.

**L**et us sound the cymbals, /  
Let us all cry out in song /  
As we celebrate the advent of Christ! /  
The predications of the prophets have been fulfilled! /  
For He whom they have foretold is now born in the flesh /  
And lies in a manger in the holy cave ///  
Wrapped in swaddling clothes of a new-born babe.

**P**repare thyself, O Bethlēhem! /  
O Eden, open now thy gates! /  
For the All-Holy one cometh now to give birth! /  
Let all the heavens rejoice! /  
Let all mankind leap for joy! /  
For He, the richness of Life, comes forth in the greatness of His mercy /  
To the manger and the cave ///  
To assume the poverty of Adam with no confusion nor division.

**And 3 stichera of the Martyrs, in the same Tone:** *To the same melody.*

**T**oday let us glorify with sacred songs of praise /  
Those ten witnesses called by God /  
With their lamps illumining the Church with divine spendor; /

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<sup>1</sup> Text differs from that in the Greek Menaion.

Those unshakeable pillars which nothing could move; /  
 Those radiant stars which make the earth resemble the heavens ///  
 By the magnificence of their heroic struggles.

**L**et us praise with sacred songs the exploits of Theodulus /  
 Together with those of Pompeius and Zoticus, /  
 Agathopus, Gelasius, and Saturninus, /  
 Basilides, Evaristus, and Eunician, /  
 And those of Euporus, the brave, /  
 For they have reached the peaceful havens amidst the storm-tossed sea /  
 By denouncing falsehood and error ///  
 And so, they have received their crowns of victory.

**T**oday let us honor today the ten passion-bearers of the Trinity, /  
 The holy offspring of the Isle of Crete, /  
 The immovable foundation-stones of the Church, /  
 The unfading adornment of the faithful, /  
 The precious and fragrant flowers of paradise, /  
 And let us remember the beautiful offering they brought to the heavenly temple ///  
 As an acceptable sacrifice that is well-pleasing to Christ.

### **Glory..., of the Martyrs, in Tone 3**

**T**he day celebrating the feast of the ten martyrs has dawned /  
 Preparing for us the day of the nativity of the Son who shines forth like the Sun /  
 And heralds for us the coming of God who appeared from the Virgin in the flesh. /  
 So, let us cry out to these ten martyrs who suffered mightily and have received  
 their crowns: /  
 O ye elect choir of the holy martyrs of Crete, ///  
 Entreat Christ on our behalf as we faithfully celebrate your most honored memory.

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

**A**dorn thyself, O Bethlehem, /  
 For Eden hath been opened; /  
 And prepare thyself, O Ephratha, /  
 For Adam hath been restored together with Eve; /  
 The curse is annulled and salvation blossoms forth /  
 And all the souls of the righteous are adorned; /  
 They offer hymns in place of myrrh as their gift /  
 For they have received incorruption and the salvation of their souls. /

For He who lies now in the manger was pleased to make them all ceaselessly  
sing: ///

Glory to Thee, O Lord!

**The Aposticha of the Forefeast, in Tone 6:** *To the melody, “On the third day....”*

**Christ**, who is the infinite Wisdom of God /  
Hath wondrously fashioned for Himself /  
An abode built from the Virgin; /  
And now she comes to the manger and cave full of dumb beasts /  
To give birth in the flesh to Him ///  
In a manner beyond all understanding.

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

**Thou** didst reveal Thyself to the prophets of old /  
And they beheld Thee as far as they were able, /  
But in these latter days, O Christ the Creator, /  
Thou didst show Thyself to all mankind ///  
By becoming man in the city of Bethlēm.

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

**The** star hath arisen in the heavens /  
Heralding Christ, the Sun of Righteousness /  
To those who worshipped the stars, /  
And in the city of Bethlēm the angels now announce the glad tidings to the  
shepherds. ///  
Let us now hasten there together with them inspired by the wisdom of God.

**Glory..., of the Martyrs, in Tone 2:**

**Today** the Isle of Crete /  
Celebrates the forefeast of the nativity of Christ /  
At the memorial of the ten passion-bearing martyrs. ///  
Through their intercessions, O Lord, save our souls.

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

**The Troparion of the Martyrs, in Tone 4:**

Thy holy martyrs, O Lord, /  
Through their sufferings received their incorruptible crowns from Thee, our God /  
For having Thy strength they laid low their enemies /  
And shattered the powerless boldness of demons ///  
Through their intercessions, O Christ God, save our souls.

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

**P**repare 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.

**Compline**

We sing the Three-Ode Canon, repeating the Irmos and the Troparia for a total of  
6 Troparia. Each Irmos is repeated as the Katavasia.

**The Three-Ode Canon of the Forefeast, in Tone 6**

*having the acrostic: "Today I sing the praise of Holy Friday."*

**Ode 5**

***Irmos:** Early will I seek Thee, O Word of God, who in Thy tenderness of heart  
emptied Thyself, and didst assume the form of a servant: Grant peace  
unto me who hath fallen, O Lover of mankind.*

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

**H**aving cleansed our thoughts and purified ourselves in advance of partaking of the  
Mysteries of Thy awesome dispensation, let us go up into the city of Bethlēhem in  
body and in soul to behold there Thee, the Master, who hath come to be born.

**B**ehold, and fear not my friends, for Herod rages in vain seeking to slay the new-born Creator, but He, who hath dominion of life and death shall live and save the world in that He loveth mankind.

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

*Katavasia:* Early do I seek Thee.... (*prostration*)

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

**T**oday 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.

### Ode 8

***Irmos:** The divine children put to shame the champion of wickedness, and Herod, roaring against Christ conspired falsely, seeking to kill Him who holds life in the palm of His hand. Let all creation bless and magnify Him throughout all ages.*

**O** ye faithful, let us shake the sleep of slothfulness from our eyelids and, fending off the temptations of the evil one, let us keep vigil in prayer; and with the shepherds, let us show ourselves to be beholders of the glory of the newborn Christ, whom all creation doth bless and magnify throughout all ages.

**W**ho among men can ever plumb the extent of the wisdom and understanding of the Creator? What wise man can ever delve into the depth of the judgments of God, by which, having bowed down the heavens He hath come to dwell as a mortal among men? Let all creation bless and magnify Him throughout all ages.

**L**et no impure word ever pass our lips, O ye faithful, but let us now offer words of praise to Christ who hath released us from the silence of ignorance as He now lays in a manger of dumb beasts. Him doth all creation bless and magnify Him throughout all ages.

**L**et us make haste and renounce the carnal passions and beauties of this world and concern ourselves with spiritual matters, and being imbued with the wisdom of God, let us present ourselves as being worthy by our works before the Master whom all creation doth bless and magnify Him throughout all ages.

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

*Katavasia:* The divine children.... (*prostration*)

### Ode 9

*Irmos:* More hon'orable than the Cherubim and more glorious, beyond compare, than the Seraphim, thou who without corruption gavest birth to God the Word, true Theotokos, we magnify thee.

The deadly command of the tyrant troubled by the nativity of Jesus, is carried out in the slaughter of the innocent babes. But we the faithful honor the birth of the Lord!

Flouting the laws of nature and casting aside the commandments of God, Herod the cruel snatches infants from their mothers' breasts and slaughters innocent babes in place of the Life of all.

The gates of Eden were opened to the nations when the Deliverer was born in the cave; and the fountain of immortality now flows to those who thirst from the King of glory, whom we magnify.

**Glory..., now and ever....**

The angels surround the manger as though it is the throne of the Cherubim, and they behold the cave as though it is heaven, for there the Master sleeps, and they sing: Glory to God in the highest!

*Katavasia:* More hon'orable than the Cherubim.... (*prostration*)

### Matins

—incomplete as of 11/28/18

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

Prepare thyself, O Bethlhem, /  
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 Martyrs, in Tone 4:**

Thy holy martyrs, O Lord, /  
Through their sufferings received their incorruptible crowns from Thee, our God /  
For having Thy strength they laid low their enemies /  
And shattered the powerless boldness of demons ///  
Through their intercessions, O Christ God, save our souls.

**Now and ever...,**

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

**P**repare thyself, O Bethlĕhem, /  
For Eden hath been opened to all....

**After the 1<sup>st</sup> Kathisma, the Sessional Hymn, in Tone 3: To the melody, “The faith divine....”**

**T**oday the Church rejoices and sings /  
And she is adorned as she celebrates the forefeast of the nativity of Christ; /  
She arrays herself in beauty for the coming of the Lord of glory, /  
And we all cry out to Christ God: ///  
Have mercy on us who praise Thee, O Thou who lovest mankind!

**Glory..., now and ever..., in the same Tone: Repeat: “Today the Church rejoices....”**

**After the 2<sup>nd</sup> Kathisma, the Sessional Hymn, in Tone 8: To the melody, “Of Wisdom....”**

**T**hou didst descend from the bosom of the Father /  
And in Thine ineffable forbearance /  
Partook, beyond nature, of our poverty, /  
O Lover of mankind, /  
Thou didst condescend to dwell in the cave, O Lord, /  
And as an infant thou wast nourished at Thy Mother’s breast, /  
O Creator and Lord. /  
Therefore, the Magi, guided by star, /  
Brought Thee gifts as the Sovereign Creator. /  
Shepherds and angels were astonished, crying out: /  
Glory to God in the highest! ///  
Who is coming to be born on earth as a man.

**Glory..., now and ever..., in the same Tone: Repeat: “Thou didst descend....”**

**After the Third Ode, 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.

**After the Sixth Ode, the Kontakion of the Martyrs, in Tone 4:**

**T**he struggles of the martyrs shine forth like the morning star /  
Illumining for us the predawn Light of Him who comes to be born in a cave, ///  
From the Virgin without seed.

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