

**The Sunday which occurs on the 18th or 19th of December,
The Sunday before the Nativity of Christ; Commemoration of
the Holy Fathers.**

Note: The Canon and stichera of the Commemoration in the Menaion are transferred to the Small Compline.

Note: See below for the Services for Sundays falling on the 20th through the 24th of December.

Small Vespers

At “Lord, I call...,” the stichera of the Resurrection and of the Theotokos, as usual.

Great Vespers

After the Introductory Psalm, “Blessèd is the man...,” the first Kathisma.

When this Sunday is the 18th or 19th of December, at “Lord, I call...,”

10 stichera,

6 of the Resurrection,

and 4 of the Fathers, in Tone 6: *to the melody, “Having set all aside....”*

The memory of the Forefathers is revealed to the ends of the world /

Truly filled with light and radiating with the rays of grace /

For Christ, the brilliant Sun shining from above, /

Leads them forth as an assembly of stars /

Shining together with them, /

And the Nativity of the God-Man is revealed in Bethlēm /

Therefore, we all piously clap our hands with faith ///

And rejoice with pre-festal praises. (*twice*)

Adam rejoices today /

As the foundation and confirmation of the wise fathers of old /

Being adorned with the glory of divine communion: /

Abel also leaps for joy, /

And Enoch is glad, /

Seth rejoices and Noah together with them; /

Abraham sings with the all-praised patriarchs, /

And Melchizedek beholds the Nativity without a human father, from above . /

Therefore, we who are celebrating the divine memory of the Forefathers of Christ ///

Beseech Him to save our souls.

The assembly of the divinely-wise children, /

Danced with joy amidst the flames in the furnace /

Proclaiming the Nativity of Christ on earth. /
For the Lord descended as a precious dew /
Upon her that gave Him birth /
And she, like the bush, remained unburnt by the fire, /
Maintaining her chastity and enriching all with divine gifts. /
Therefore, the God-pleasing Daniel rejoices /
And clearly foreseeing the Stone from the unhewn mountain, he makes glad ///
And now with boldness he ever prays for our souls.

Glory..., of the Fathers, in Tone 6:

Daniel, known as the man of desires, /
When he saw Thee, O Lord, /
The Stone not cut by human hands
Prophesied Thee an infant born without seed, /
The Word Incarnate from the Virgin, ///
The Eternal God and Savior of our souls.

Now and ever..., the Dogmatic Theotokion, in the Tone of the Week.

The Entrance and the Prokeimenon of the day.

Three Readings:

The Reading from Genesis (Chapter 14: 14-20):

^{14:14} **A**nd when Abram heard that his nephew Lot was taken captive, he numbered his own homeborn servants, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan. ¹⁵And he came upon them by night, he and his servants, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hoba, which is on the left hand of Damascus. ¹⁶And he brought back all the horse of Sodom, and brought back again his nephew Lot, and all his goods, and the women, and the people. ¹⁷And the king of Sodom went out to meet him

after he returned from the slaughter of Chodollo-gomór, and of the kings that were with him, in the valley of Shaveh: this was the plain of the kings. ¹⁸And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth loaves of bread and wine: and he was a priest of the Most High God. ¹⁹And he blessed Abram, and said, “Blessèd be Abram of the Most High God, Which made the heaven and the earth, ²⁰and blessèd be the Most High God, Which hath delivered up thine enemies under thy hands unto thee”.

The Reading from Deuteronomy (Chapter 1: 8-11, 15-17):

^{1:8-11} **I**n those days, thus saith Moses to the sons of Israel: Behold, God hath

delivered the land before you: go in, and inherit the land, which I swore unto your

fathers, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, to give it to them, and to their seed after them.' ⁹And I spake unto you at that time, saying, I shall not be able to bear you myself alone. ¹⁰The Lord your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for number. ¹¹The Lord God of your fathers increase you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you, as He hath spoken unto you! ¹⁵So I took of you wise men and understanding and prudent, and made them to be rulers over you, captains of thousands, and captains of

hundreds, and captains of fifties, and captains of tens, and officers unto your judges. ¹⁶And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. ¹⁷Thou shalt not have respect unto the person in judgment; thou shalt judge according to small and great; thou shalt not shrink before the face of man; for the judgment is God's.

The Reading from Deuteronomy (Chapter 10: 14-21):

^{10:14-21} **I**n those days, thus saith Moses to the sons of Israel: ¹⁴Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heaven is the Lord thy God's, the earth also, with all that therein is. ¹⁵Only the Lord chose thy fathers, to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. ¹⁶Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stiff-necked. ¹⁷For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and terrible, which accepteth not persons, nor taketh

reward. ¹⁸He doth execute the judgement of the stranger, and the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, giving him food and raiment. ¹⁹Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. ²⁰Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; Him shalt thou serve, and to Him thou shalt cleave, and swear by His name. ²¹He is thy praise, and He is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and wondrous things, which thine eyes have seen.

At the Litya, the sticheron of the temple, and the following of the Fathers, in Tone 1:

The illustrious and God-pleasing prophets /
Now rest in eternal rays of Light /
Having lived wondrous lives and attained a blessed repose, /
As their words spoken by the Spirit continue bearing fruit ///
Proclaiming the message of the ineffable Birth of Christ to all!

Glory..., in Tone 3: (the composition of Germanus)

Come all ye who love the feast /

And let us praise the assembly of the fathers of old, /
Adam, the forefather of us all, /
Enoch, Noah and Melchizedek, /
Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; /
And those who came after the Law: /
Moses, Aaron and Joshua, /
Samuel and David /
Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel, /
And with them the twelve prophets: /
Elijah, Elisha, and the rest; /
Zachariah and the Baptist, John; ///
Who all preached Christ, the Life and Resurrection of mankind.

Now and ever... Theotokion, in Tone 3: (from the Resurrection Aposticha)

By the will of the Father, /
Thou hast conceived of the Holy Spirit without seed the Son of God, /
Who, begotten of the Father /
Had His being without mother before the world began. /
He was born for our sakes in the flesh of thee without a father /
And thou hast fed Him as an infant with thy milk.
Do not cease entreating Him ///
To deliver our souls from danger.

The Aposticha is from the Octoechos.

Glory..., in the Tone 2: (the composition of Cyprian)

Rejoice, O honorable prophets /
Who firmly established the Law of the Lord, /
Who were revealed as unshakeable and invincible pillars by faith, /
And as the mediators of the New Covenant of Christ. /
Having been translated to heaven ///
Entreat Him to grant peace to the world and to save our souls.

Now and ever..., in the same Tone: (from the Resurrection Aposticha)

Behold a new wonder greater than all the miracles of old: /
Who has ever known a mother to bear a child without a man, /
And hold in her arms Him who encompasses the whole creation?
It was the will of God to be born /
And thou, O all-pure Virgin, hast carried Him, an infant in thine arms. /
The boldness of a mother is therefore thine. /

Do thou pray to Him without ceasing for us who honor thee, ///
Entreat Him to save our souls and to have mercy on us.

At the blessing of the loaves, the Troparion: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos..., *(twice)*
and,

The Troparion of the Fathers, in Tone 2:

Great are the accomplishments of faith, /
For the three holy youths rejoiced in fountain of flames as though at 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.

Matins

At God is the Lord, the Troparion for the Resurrection *(twice)*, Glory..., of the
Fathers; Now and ever..., **Theotokion**, Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos... *(once)*

The usual Sessional Hymns and Theotokia are from the Octoechos.

The Polyeley and the rest, as usual. Ypakoe of the Resurrection.

After the Polyeley, the Sessional Hymn of the Forefathers, in Tone 8: *To the melody, "Of Wisdom..."*

Come and let us sing a song of praise /
To Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, /
The meek David and Joshua, /
And to the twelve patriarchs /
And together with them the three holy youths /
Who quenched the flames through the power of the Spirit. /
And let us cry out to them all: /
Rejoice, all ye who bravely rebuked the wisdom of kings /
And pray to Christ that He remits the sins ///
Of them that lovingly celebrate your memory. *(twice)*

Glory..., now and ever..., in the same Tone: *(and melody)*

Like the widow I offer my meager offering of thanks to thee /
As is due, O Lady, /
For all thy precious gifts; /
For thou hast ever been my protection and my aide /
Rescuing me from trials and sorrows. /

Therefore from the midst of the furnace I earnestly cry to thee: /
Deliver me from all things that assail me, /
Help me, O Mother of God, by thy prayers to Christ God /
That He grant the remission of my sins ///
For I, thy servant have placed my hope in thee.

The 1st Antiphon (Song of Ascents), the Prokeimenon, and the rest, as usual.

The Canon

The Canon of the Resurrection from the Octoechos, with 4 Troparia including the Irmos; that of the Cross and Resurrection, with 2 Troparia; that of the Theotokos, with 2 Troparia; and the Canon of the Fathers, with 6 Troparia (omitting those of the Resurrection). The Katavasia from the Canon of the Nativity.

—incomplete as of 11/2013

After the Third Ode, the Ypakoe, in Tone 8:

The angel which bedewed the furnace for the three children, /
Dried the tears of the women, saying: /
Why do you bring myrrh? Whom do you seek in the tomb? ///
Christ God is Risen, for He is truly the Life and the Salvation of the human race.

After the Sixth Ode:

The Kontakion of the Fathers, in Tone 2: (Tone 6 in some books)

O thrice-blessèd ones, you did not worship the image made by man /
But armed with the invisible power of God /
You were glorified in a trial by fire; /
From the midst of unbearable flames you called on God /
Crying: Hasten, O Compassionate One! /
Speedily come to our defense ///
For Thou art merciful and able to accomplish all that Thou dost will.

Ikos: Stretch out Thine arms, through which in ancient times both the Egyptians and the Hebrews underwent trials, and leave us not, so that neither death, thirsting after us, nor Satan, hating us, may devour us. Rather, draw near to us and pardon our souls, as once Thou didst pardon the children who were in Babylon ceaselessly glorifying Thee, and who, being cast in the furnace for Thy sake, from the furnace cried out to Thee: “Speedily come to our defense, for Thou art merciful and able to accomplish all that Thou dost will.”

The Exapostilarion of the Resurrection, then:

Glory..., of the Forefathers:

Truly, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the chiefs of the patriarchs and the fathers before the Law came, shone like stars with faith, for all the prophets and the righteous ones were illumined by them; and as they were shining beacons, the rays of their honored prophecy illumine all of creation, as they earnestly pray to God for the world.

Now and ever..., Theotokion:

This is truly a great wonder, the chaste and blameless Ewe-lamb giveth birth to the Lamb, the pre-eternal Word, in these latter days! He is the grandchild of Adam and the heir of David. Therefore, the multitude of the fathers celebrates the coming feast of His ineffable Nativity.

**At the Praises, 8 stichera, 4 of the Resurrection from the Octoechos,
and 4 of the Fathers, in Tone 5: *To the melody: "Rejoice"***

Raise up thy voice, O Sion, /
Thou divine city of God /
And proclaim the divine memory of the fathers, /
Honoring with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob of everlasting memory. /
For behold, with Judah and Levi we magnify Moses the great, /
And Aaron, the wonderful; /
And with David, we celebrate the memory of Joshua and Samuel, /
Inviting all with divine songs and praise to the preparation of the Nativity of Christ, /
Praying to receive His goodness; ///
For He it is who grants the world great mercy. *(twice)*

Verse: Blessèd art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers and praised and glorified is Thy name forever!

Come, O Elijah, /
Who once ascended in the divine fiery chariot, /
And thou, divinely-wise Elisha, /
And rejoice together with Ezekiel and Josiah! /
Exchange glad tidings with them, /
O venerated rank of the twelve prophets inspired by God, /
About the Nativity of the Savior. /
And all you righteous ones, sing hymns; /
And you all-blessed youths who quenched the flames in the furnace with the
dew of the Spirit. ///
Pray for us, pleading with Christ to grant our souls great mercy.

Verse: For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us.

Truly, the Virgin Mother of God, /
Who was proclaimed from the ages /
By the words of the prophets here on earth, /
And whom the wise patriarchs and the ranks of the righteous foretold, /
With whom, the glory of women: Sarah, Rebecca and Aнна, /
And Miriam, the sister of Moses, shall exchange glad tidings. /
With them the ends of the earth shall rejoice /
As well as all creature, ///
For God comes to be born in the flesh and grant the world great mercy.

Glory..., in Tone 8:

The divine Nativity of Christ /
Was clearly preached in the teachings of the Law /
And through grace, by those before the Law, /
Who, transcended the Law through faith. /
And as the Incarnation is the cause of salvation from corruption /
Thus they foretold Thy Resurrection /
To the souls imprisoned in Hades. ///
O Lord, glory to Thee!

Now and ever..., as usual: “Thou art most-blessèd...”

The Great Doxology, the Troparion of the Resurrection, usual litanies and the Dismissal.

The Gospel sticheron, as appointed, sung in the narthex and then the First Hour, followed by the final Dismissal.

Hours

At each Hour. **Troparia:** Resurrection, Glory..., Fathers. **Kontakion:** Fathers.

Liturgy

At the Beatitudes, 10 Troparia: 6 of the Resurrection; 4 from the Third Ode of the Canon to the Fathers.

1-6. From the Octoechos.

7. Faithfully preserving the glory of the image and likeness of God by the burning fire of the Spirit, the victorious children extinguished the fire of the golden image, singing: “We know that Thou, O Lord, alone art God!”

8. The captive children, clothed with the wisdom and power of the Spirit, put to shame

the wise men of Babylon and boldly cried aloud: “None is holy save Thee, O Lord, Thou Lover of mankind!”

9. The Law doth rejoice and joins chorus with the children and the prophets and doth exult today before the divine advent of the Lord. And Abraham doth also rejoice, for the Lord hath appeared incarnate from his seed.

10. *Theotokion*: Ineffable is the childbearing of a seedless conception, O Theotokos, for the Word of God, is God, as was proclaimed by the prophets, and He hath revealed Himself in a mystery beyond nature.

The Troparion of the Resurrection and:

The Troparion of the Fathers, in Tone 2:

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But armed with the invisible power of God /
You were glorified in a trial by fire; /
From the midst of unbearable flames you called on God /
Crying: Hasten, O Compassionate One! /
Speedily come to our defense ///
For Thou art merciful and able to accomplish all that Thou dost will.

The Prokeimenon, in Tone 4 (Fathers): Blessèd art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers / and praised and glorified is Thy name forever! *Verse:* For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us.

The Epistle (Sunday Before): (328) Heb. 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40

The Alleluia in, Tone 4 (Fathers): We have heard with our ears, O God, for our fathers have told us. *Verse:* For Thou hast saved us from them that oppose us, and hast put to shame them that hate us.

The Gospel (Sunday Before): (1) Matthew 1:1-25

SUNDAY ON THE 18th OR 19th OF DECEMBER

The Communion Hymn: Praise the Lord from the heavens.... Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous! Praise befits the just!

Last updated 12/19/2013 SDA
12/18/2014 SDA
12/21/14 SDA
12/3/2022 SDA