

The 28th Day of December

Afterfeast of the Nativity of Christ; Commemoration of the Holy
20,000 Martyrs Burned Alive in Nicomedia.

Vespers

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

At “Lord, I call...,” 6 stichera,

The 3 stichera of the Feast, in Tone 5: *To the melody. “Rejoice...”*

Thou dost bear the form of Adam /
Yet Thou art all-perfect, being in the form of God. /
Of Thine own will Thou art held in human hands, /
Who in Thy might holdest all things in Thine hands. /
To thee the pure and undefiled Virgin spoke aloud: /
‘How shall I wrap Thee in swaddling clothes like a child, /
How shall I give Thee suck who givest nourishment to all the world? /
How shall I not wonder in amazement at Thy poverty beyond all understanding! /
How shall I, who am Thy servant, call Thee my Son? /
I sing Thy praises and bless Thee ///
Who grantest the world great mercy.’

The most pure Virgin, beholding the pre-eternal God as a child /
That had taken flesh from her, /
Held Him in her arms and kissed Him without ceasing. /
Filled with joy, she said aloud to Him: /
“O Most High God, O King unseen, how is it that I look upon Thee? /
I can’t understand the mystery of Thy boundless poverty. /
For the smallest of caves, a strange dwelling for Thee, /
Finds room for Thee within itself. /
Thou art born without destroying my virginity; /
Thou hast kept my womb as it was before my giving birth to Thee; ///
And Thou hast granted the world great mercy.”

The pure Virgin spoke aloud in wonder, /
As she heard the Magi standing together before the cave, and said to them: /
“Whom do ye seek? For I perceive that you come from a foreign land. /
Ye have the appearance, but not the thoughts, of Persians; /
Strange has your journey been, and strange is your arrival. /
Ye have come with zeal, to worship Him who, journeying as a stranger from on high, /
Has strangely, in ways known to Himself, come to dwell in me, ///
Granting the world great mercy.”

And 3 stichera of the Martyrs, in Tone 1: ¹ *To the melody, "O all-praised martyrs..."*

O twenty-thousand martyrs of Christ, /
By the grace of God, gathered together in the Spirit; /
O blessèd company, O ye brilliant stars, /
Who destroyed the night of beguilement, /
And were translated into the eternal light; ///
Intercede now that peace and great mercy may be granted to our souls.

As the great multitude was made a burnt offering in the fire, /
A sweet fragrance filled the heavens, /
And the assembly of martyrs was illumined with the Light of the Only-begotten
Son;
So it now fills the earth with joy /
As they intercede before the Lord ///
That we who celebrate their holy memory may be saved.

As the ten virgins caught the scent of thy sweet fragrance /
They followed after thy footsteps, O Lord, /
And imitated Thy life-bearing and salvific passion, /
Even to the resurrection from the dead.
So the twenty thousand were brought to Thee, O Benefactor of all, ///
Rejoicing and greatly delighting in Thy beauty.

Glory..., now and ever..., Theotokion of the Feast, in Tone 5.

Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad today /
For angels and men are truly joined into one flock! /
O great wonder, the King unseen hath become visible to all; /
The Word hath become flesh; the Son of God becometh the Son of the Virgin! /
And the Virgin who knew no man is now become the Mother of God: /
A mother after giving birth, she is found to be virgin! /
The incarnate Word of the Father now lieth in the manger, /
And His heralds, the shepherds, share in the mystery; /
The Magi bearing gifts come from the east guided by a star to worship the
newborn Savior. /
With them, let us fervently open the treasures of our hearts and offer good works
to Him; /
Come, all ye who love the feasts of the Church! /
Let us bring our faith and hope and love to Him, /

¹ Text differs in the Slav Menaion.

Let them be like gold, and frankincense and myrrh to Him; /
And let us cry aloud together with the bodiless angels: /
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men! ///
For He hath come to save us from the delusion of the enemy.

The Entrance and the Prokeimenon of the day.

At the Aposticha, the stichera of the Feast, in Tone 2: To the melody, “O House of Ephratah...”

Thou didst come forth from a Virgin, O Christ, /
And wast born in a cave and laid in a manger; /
Thou wast wrapped in swaddling clothes, ///
As God fully clothed in Adam, the first-born man.

Verse: **O**ut of the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee: the Lord
 hath sworn and will not change His mind.

Strike the lyre, O David, /
And sing aloud prophetically,
For Christ is born today ///
Of the Mother of God, who came forth from thee.

Verse: **T**he Lord said to my Lord: “Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine
 enemies Thy footstool.”

Let us, the faithful, /
Together with the Magi, shepherds, and the angels, /
Offer to God, who was born of the Virgin, ///
Hymns of praise and glory well pleasing to Him!

Glory..., now and ever..., in Tone 1:

“Glory to God in the highest!” /
I hear the angels sing today in Bethlēm, /
Glory to Him whose good pleasure it was that there be peace on earth; /
The Virgin is now more spacious than the heavens. /
Light has shone upon those in darkness, /
And has exalted the lowly who sing with the angels: ///
Glory to God in the highest!

The Troparion of the Martyrs, in Tone 2:

O passion-bearers of the Lord, /
Blessèd is the earth that has received your blood, /
And holy are the habitations wherein you now dwell. /

For in your struggles, you defeated the enemy /
And with boldness you proclaimed Christ. ///
Since He is good, we pray you beseech Him to save our souls.

And the Troparion of the Feast, in Tone 4:

Thy nativity, O Christ our God /
Hath risen upon the world as the light of understanding, /
For through it those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star /
To worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, /
And to know Thee, /
The Orient from on high; ///
O Lord, glory to Thee!

Matins

At God is the Lord, the Troparia: that of the Feast, “Thy Nativity, O Christ our God...” (*twice*); **Glory...**, **that of the Martyrs**, “O passion-bearers of the Lord...”;
Now and ever..., **and that of the Feast: (once)**.

After the 1st Kathisma, the Sessional Hymn, in Tone 1: To the melody “When the stone had been sealed...”

Sitting on Thy radiant throne in heaven, O Jesus, /
Together with Thine unoriginate Father and Thy Divine Spirit, /
Thou wast pleased to be born in the flesh of the most pure Virgin, /
And to guide the Magi from Persia by the radiance of the star to come to Thee. /
Glory to Thy great counsel! /
Glory to Thy glorious appearance! ///
Glory to Thy supreme love for mankind!

Glory..., now and ever..., Repeat: “Sitting on Thy radiant throne...”

After the 2nd Kathisma, the Sessional Hymn, in Tone 3: To the melody, “The beauty of virginity...”

Thou didst bear in thy womb, O Mother of God, /
The pre-eternal and unapproachable One /
Who with the Father and the Spirit is One in the undivided Trinity! /
Thy grace hath shone forth unto all the earth, O most praised Lady. /
Therefore we all cry out to thee: ///
Rejoice, pure Virgin Mother of God!

Glory..., now and ever..., Repeat: “Thou didst bear in thy womb...”

The Canon

The Second Canon of the Feast, with 8 Troparia including the Irmos; and that of the Martyrs, with 4 Troparia

Ode 1

The Second Canon of the Feast,² in Tone 1,

the composition of St. John of Damascus.

Irmos: Of old the Master that works wonders saved His people, making the watery waves of the sea into dry land; and now of His own will has He been born from a Maiden, and so He establishes a path for us whereby we may mount to heaven. We glorify Him who in essence is equal to the Father and to mortal men.

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

Plainly foreshadowed by the burning bush that was not consumed, a hallowed womb has borne the Word. God is mingled with the form of mortal men, and so He looses the unhappy womb of Eve from the bitter curse of old. We men give Him glory!

A star showed plainly to the Magi the Word that was before the sun, who has come to make transgressions cease, they saw Thee wrapped in swaddling clothes, within a poor and lowly cave, who sharest all our sufferings, and in joy they gazed upon Thee, who art at once both man and Lord!

Canon of the Holy Martyrs, in Tone 1:

Having the acrostic: "O great assembly of martyred monastics, save me!" 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: Holy martyrs of Christ, pray to God for us!

O great assembly of honored martyrs, wash away my countless sins by your prayers, and grant me the words with which I may sing the praises of your feast.

O radiant beacons of the Church, you victorious martyrs who have glorified Christ with your bodies and have now been glorified by your radiant memorial.

The divine love of the passion-bearing martyrs has abolished the godless tyranny of the unbelievers and destroyed the opposition of the demons with divine grace.

For confessing the omnipotent God, who assumed our flesh and destroyed death by death, the holy martyrs were slain and received life everlasting.

Theotokion: O all-praised and blessed Lady, I praise thee who hast given birth to the Most Holy God in the flesh, who hath magnified the holy martyrs who have vanquished the foe.

² Cf. *The Festal Menaion*, by Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware. STS Press, 1990, pp. 270-284.

Katavasia: from the Second Canon of the Nativity of Christ, “Of old the Master...”.

Ode 3

Second Canon of the Feast

Irmos: Graciously accept, O Benefactor, the praises of Thy servants, and bring down the despiteful and haughty looks of the enemy. O blessed Lord who seest all, raise us up far above sin and establish Thy singers firm and unshaken upon the foundation of the faith.

The choir of shepherds abiding in the fields was overwhelmed by the strange sight they were counted worthy to behold for they looked upon the all-blessed Offspring of the all-pure Bride; And they saw also the ranks of bodiless angels, who sang in praise of Christ the King, incarnate without seed.

He who rules the heights of heaven, in His compassion, has become such as we are, born of a Maiden who has not known man. The Word who before was wholly outside matter, in these last times has assumed the material substance of the flesh that so He might draw to Himself fallen Adam, the first-formed man.

Canon of the Holy Martyrs

Irmos: Let my heart be established according to Thy will, O Christ our God, who hast established the second heaven above the waters, and hast founded the earth upon the floods, O Thou All-powerful.

Burning with the beautiful love of Christ, O all-praised ones, you showed no fear when the fire was kindled in which you met your death, and in which you were together glorified.

Proclaiming God with loud voices, O all-praised warriors of Christ, you were undaunted by the threats of your ungodly tormentors and ye met your death crying out with one voice as did the children in the furnace.

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

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

Katavasia. “Graciously accept, O Benefactor...”

The Kontakion of the Martyrs, in Tone 2: *To the melody, “The steadfast....”*

Being made steadfast in soul by faith, /

The twenty-thousand holy martyrs accepted their agony in the flames, /

And cried out to the pre-eternal God born of the Virgin: /

Accept us as we offer our whole-burnt sacrifice to Thee ///
As Thou didst accept the myrrh and frankincense and gold of the Persian kings.

The Sessional Hymn of the Martyrs, in Tone 1: *To the melody, “Thy tomb, O Savior...”*

We celebrate the army of the twenty thousand martyrs /
Who shone forth for us today, /
Illumining the hearts and minds of the pious /
For the sake of their love for the Faith; /
And being aflame with divine love of the Master, ///
The valiant ones accepted a holy death by fire.

Glory..., now and ever..., the Sessional Hymn of the Feast, in the same Tone: *(and melody)*

Having become a babe in the flesh of Thine own will /
O long-suffering Savior, /
Thou wast laid for our sake in a manger of dumb beasts /
And the shepherds praised Thee with the angels, /
Crying aloud: “Glory and praise to Christ our God, ///
Who hath been born on earth and deified our mortal nature!”

Ode 4

Second Canon of the Feast

***Irmos:** Of old Habakkuk the prophet was counted worthy to behold ineffably the figure and symbol of Christ’s birth. And he foretold in song the renewal of mankind. For a young babe, even the Word, has now come forth from the Mountain that is the Virgin, unto the renewal of the peoples.*

Of Thine own will, O Most High, Thou hast come forth equal to mortal men, taking flesh from the Virgin, to purge the poison of the serpent’s head. God by nature, Thou ledest all from the gates that know no sun to the life-giving light.

O ye people that before were sunk in corruption but now have escaped wholly from the perdition of the adversary, lift up your hands and clap them in songs of praise, honoring Christ alone, our Benefactor, who in His compassion is come in our midst.

O Virgin, sprung from the root of Jesse, Thou hast passed beyond the boundaries of human nature, for thou hast borne the pre-eternal Word of the Father. According to His good pleasure, by a strange self-emptying, He passed through thy womb yet kept it sealed.

Canon of the Holy Martyrs

***Irmos** I have heard the mystery of Thy dispensation, O Lord; I have considered Thy works and glorify Thy Godhead.*

Having bound their hearts with love for Thee, O Word, Thy glorious witnesses were slain like innocent lambs for Thy sake and revealed themselves to be partakers of Thy suffering.

By the Spirit, your souls set sail for the haven of salvation, O blessed and holy ones, and you escaped the storm of the madness of idolatry.

You revealed yourselves in the contest of martyrdom to be steadfast and undaunted, overcoming the oppression of the persecutors with faith divine.

Theotokion: **B**eing delivered from the ancient curse by thy birthgiving, O blessed one, we who glorify thee as the Theotokos have received the blessings of life and deliverance from our transgression.

Ode 5

Second Canon of the Feast

Irmos: *From the night of deeds of dark error we watch valiantly, and sing to Thee, O Christ, as to our Benefactor. Come to us and grant us cleansing, make the path easy for us, whereby we may ascend and so attain to glory.*

The Master, by His coming in the flesh, has cut clean through the harsh enmity of the flesh against Him, and has destroyed the might of the murderer of our souls. Uniting the world to the immaterial essences, He has made the Father merciful to His creation.

The people that before walked in darkness on this day have seen a light from the beacon on high. The Son offers to God the nations as His inheritance, bestowing grace past telling where sin once flourished more abundantly.

Canon of the Holy Martyrs

Irmos *O Master Christ our God who lovest mankind, shine forth Thy light, that no one can approach, upon us who at break of day meditate on the judgments of Thy commandments.*

O Christ our God, the memorial of Thy martyrs hath illumined the ends of the universe with light and hath distributed countless miracles upon all the world.

The holy ministers who offered Thee sacrifice were themselves offered as perfect whole burnt offerings, magnifying Christ together with the thousands of martyrs who were offered with them.

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: **G**od made His abode within thy womb and became a man, O all-immaculate Lady, that He might unite those, who through disobedience, had fallen headlong into the great pit, with those on high.

Ode 6

Second Canon of the Feast

Irmos: Enclosed in the uttermost depths of the sea, Jonah entreated Thee to come and still the storm, and I, O Christ, pricked to the heart by the dart of the tyrant, call upon Thee, the Slayer of evil, beseeching Thee to come quickly and deliver me from my slothfulness.

God the Word, who was in the beginning with God, seeing our nature powerless to guard unharmed its ancient fellowship with Him, now grants it new strength; abasing Himself, in a second act of fellowship he makes it once again free from the passions.

For our sakes He has come forth from the loins of Abraham, to raise up as His sons those who were sadly fallen into the darkness of sin that bowed them down to the earth; and He that dwells in light has now been pleased, despite His high dignity, to dwell in a manger for the salvation of mankind.

Canon of the Holy Martyrs

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!

Thou wast the leader of the holy people of God, O hieromartyr Anthimus, inspiring those who suffered before thee to seek the joys of heaven.

Like pure gold tested by the fire, your martyric piety, O holy martyrs, was recognized by Jesus, far outshining the brilliance of the sun.

Having died in the flesh, you inherited true life with Christ, who hath shown you to be more powerful than those who tortured you.

Theotokion: **O** true and glorious wonder! 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 giving birth to Him.

Katavasia: “Enclosed in the uttermost depths of the sea...”

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

Today the Virgin gives birth to the transcendent One, /
And the earth offers a cave to the unapproachable One! /
Angels with shepherds glorify Him! /
The wise men journey with the star; ///
Since for our sake the eternal God is born as a little child!

Ikos of the Feast, in the same Tone: (and melody)

Bethlēm has opened Eden, O come let us see! /
Let us receive the things of paradise within the cave; /

We have found nourishment in a secret place; /
There the unwatered root hath appeared blossoming with forgiveness; /
There is found the undug well from which David longed to drink; /
There the Virgin hath brought forth the Child, /
Quenching both Adam's and David's thirst. ///
Therefore, let us go to Him where He is born a little Child yet is God before the ages.

Ode 7

Second Canon of the Feast

***Irmos:** Caught and held fast by the love for the King of all, the children despised the impious threats of the tyrant in his boundless fury; and as the terrible fire withdrew before them, they said to the Master: "Blessèd art Thou unto all ages!"*

The seething and roaring furnace, heated sevenfold, in its fury burnt up the servants of the king, but spared the Children: for as the flame encircled them, the Lord, rewarding their godliness, she upon them abundant dew.

O Christ our Defender, Thou hast put to shame the adversary of man, using as shield Thine ineffable Incarnation. Taking man's form, Thou hast now bestowed upon him the joy of becoming godlike: for it was in hope of this that of old we fell from on high into the dark depths of the earth.

Thou hast overthrown by Thine almighty power the fierce sin that raised its head in wanton pride and raged with blasphemy throughout the world gone mad. Those whom in times past it dragged down, today Thou hast delivered from its snares, O Benefactor, who of Thine own will hast taken flesh.

Canon of the Holy Martyrs

***Irmos** Unharmèd by the unbearable flames in the fiery furnace, with one voice the three youths sang the divine hymn: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord, praise and exalt Him throughout all ages.*

Looking to attain those things which are abiding, O blessèd martyrs, by divine power you were shown to be greater than the fire, and like the three godly children in Babylon, you were illumined with divine light.

Reviling the irrational edict of the tyrant, O wise martyrs, you offered yourselves together with the holy women and their godly children, to the King of all as a sacred sacrifice.

Placing the light of the knowledge of Christ in your souls, you passed through the dark cloud of ungodliness and arrived in the place of everlasting light, O ye holy martyrs of the Lord.

Theotokion: **T**hou hast been revealed to be greater than the heavens, O Lady who hast given birth to the Master and God of all! Him do thou earnestly beseech without ceasing, O all-holy and most pure Theotokos, that He may save those who praise thee with ardent faith.

Ode 8

Second Canon of the Feast

Irmos: *The children of the Old Covenant who walked in the fire, yet were not burnt, prefigured the womb of the Maiden that remained sealed, when she gave birth in a manner beyond nature. It was the same grace of God that brought both these wonders to pass as a miracle and rouses the people to sing in praise.*

Shunning the guilt of its vain attempts to become as God, the whole creation sings, like the three Children, in praise of the eternal Word, who now empties Himself: yet sings with trembling, afraid to bring a prayer unacceptable to God, for it is subject to decay, even though the divine wisdom maintains it ever in being.

Thou hast come, O Resurrection of the nations, to bring back the nature of man from its wanderings, leading it from the hills of the wilderness to a pasture rich in flowers. Do Thou destroy the violent strength of the murderer of man, O Thou who in Thy providence hast appeared as man and God.

Canon of the Holy Martyrs

Irmos *Christ who showered the raging furnace with dew and saved the children who sang His praises, let us praise and exalt throughout all ages.*

The relics of the holy martyrs pour streams of divinely-fragrant, healing myrrh and remove the stench of the passions from those who with faith praise Thee as Christ throughout all ages.

Walking in the midst of the flames, O holy martyrs, ye showed yourselves to be like roses, as you fervently cried aloud: Let us praise and exalt Christ throughout all ages!

Having suffered together, youths and virgins, old and young, holy infants and blessed women, you have all been received in the choirs of martyrs in paradise.

Let us bless the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Lord!

Theotokion: **E**zekiel the Prophet beheld thee, O Virgin, as the closed portal through which Christ passed, making His abode within thy womb, and assuming flesh from thy blood without undergoing any change or commingling.

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

Katavasia. *“The children of the Old Covenant...”*

Ode 9

Second Canon of the Feast

Irmos: Speech is our natural gift, O Virgin, but it would be easier, free from all danger, to keep silence in fear; so difficult it is to compose songs of love for thee. But do thou, O Mother, give us strength that so we may fulfil our good intent.

We have seen, O pure Mother, the dim figures of the Word and the shades that are past; and now that He has newly appeared from the closed gate, we who are counted worthy to behold the Light of truth, as is meet and right, bless thy womb.

The people that delights in Christ has attained its desire, being counted worthy of the coming of God, and now they humbly pray for the regeneration that gives life. O undefiled Virgin, grant them the grace to worship Christ in His glory.

Canon of the Holy Martyrs

Irmos The eternal Lord and light-bearing Cloud came down like the dew from heaven falling upon the fleece, and became incarnate for our sake, becoming a man through thee. Him do we magnify as we honor thee, O most pure Mother of our God.

Like sheep willingly led to the slaughter, you were burned to death together and were brought to the Master, who was slain for us mortals, as pure whole burnt offerings, O right victorious martyrs; and together you have received your crowns of victory from Him in heaven.

Standing now before the Lord together with the holy prophets, apostles and the choirs of all the angels, O multitude of holy martyrs, pray that He may save those who faithfully bless your memory from every peril and misfortune.

Your sacred memory far outshines the rays of the sun, O all-praised martyrs, dispelling the darkness of the demons and enlightening all who rightfully bless you with faith and love.

Theotokion: O immaculate and most pure Lady, 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 the light of thy saving grace, it may find repentance.

Katavasia: “Speech is our natural gift...”

Exapostilarion of the Feast:

Our Savior, the Dayspring from the East, has visited us from on high, and we who were in darkness and shadow have found the truth: for the Lord is born of the Virgin. (*thrice*)

The Aposticha, in Tone 6: *To the melody, “Go on before, ye angelic powers...”*

O house of Ephratah, /
 Thou holy city of Sion, /
 Joyfully, receive the Master of all /
 Who is ineffably born in thee from the Virgin, /
 Desiring to record those who had fallen away. /
 In the census of paradise /
 To Him do we cry aloud: ///
 Blessèd art Thou who hast come, Glory to Thee, O God!

Verse: **O**ut of the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee: the Lord hath sworn and will not change His mind.

The choir of the shepherds, beholding Thee, O Word, /
 Cried aloud: Thou hast revealed Thyself to be like unto us, /
 wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in the manger. /
 Praising Thee joyfully, they sang with the angels: /
 Glory to God in the highest! /
 And with them we cry aloud: /
 Blessèd art Thou who hast been born, Glory to Thee, O God!

Verse: **T**he Lord said to my Lord: “Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.”

He whose voice is great among all the prophets /
 Cried aloud: “The Master hath desired to be born as a babe /
 From the womb of the Virgin Mother in a manner past all understanding, /
 For He is truly the Messenger of great counsel, /
 And the Life of the living! /
 And with them we also cry aloud: ///
 Blessèd art Thou who hast been born, Glory to Thee, O God!

Glory..., now and ever..., in Tone 1:

Let heaven and earth today make glad prophetically; /
 Angels and men, let us keep spiritual feast, /
 For God, born of a woman /
 Hath appeared in the flesh to those that sit in darkness and shadow. /
 A cave and a manger have received Him; /
 Shepherds announce the wonder; /
Magi from the East offer gifts in Bethlēm. /
 Let us from our unworthy lips offer praise like the angels: /
Glory to God in the highest /
 And on earth peace, /

For the expectation of the nations hath come. ///
He hath come and saved us from the bondage of the enemy.

Liturgy

At the Beatitudes, 6 troparia; 3 from Ode 4, and three from Ode 5 of the Second Canon of the Feast.

1. Of Thine own will, O Most High, Thou hast come forth equal to mortal men, taking flesh from the Virgin, to purge the poison of the serpent's head. God by nature, Thou leadeest all from the gates that know no sun to the life-giving light.

2. O ye people that before were sunk in corruption but now have escaped wholly from the perdition of the adversary, lift up your hands and clap them in songs of praise, honoring Christ alone, our Benefactor, who in His compassion is come in our midst.

3. O Virgin, sprung from the root of Jesse, Thou hast passed beyond the boundaries of human nature, for thou hast borne the pre-eternal Word of the Father. According to His good pleasure, by a strange self-emptying, He passed through thy womb yet kept it sealed.

4-5. The Master, by His coming in the flesh, has cut clean through the harsh enmity of the flesh against Him, and has destroyed the might of the murderer of our souls. Uniting the world to the immaterial essences, He has made the Father merciful to His creation. *(twice)*

6. The people that before walked in darkness on this day have seen a light from the beacon on high. The Son offers to God the nations as His inheritance, bestowing grace past telling where sin once flourished more abundantly.

Troparion of the Feast, in Tone 4:

Thy nativity, O Christ our God /
Hath risen upon the world as the light of understanding, /
For through it those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star /
To worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, /
And to know Thee, /
The Orient from on high; ///
O Lord, glory to Thee!

The Troparion of the Holy Martyrs, in Tone 2:

O passion-bearers of the Lord, /
Blessèd is the earth that has received your blood, /
And holy are the habitations wherein you now dwell. /
For in your struggles, you defeated the enemy /

And with boldness you proclaimed Christ. ///
Since He is good, we pray you beseech Him to save our souls.

The Kontakion of the Martyrs, in Tone 2: *To the melody, “The steadfast...”*

Being made steadfast in soul by faith, /
The twenty-thousand holy martyrs accepted their agony in the flames, /
And cried out to the pre-eternal God born of the Virgin: /
Accept us as we offer our whole-burnt sacrifice to Thee ///
As Thou didst accept the myrrh and frankincense and gold of the Persian kings.

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

Today the Virgin gives birth to the transcendent One, /
And the earth offers a cave to the unapproachable One! /
Angels with shepherds glorify Him! /
The wise men journey with the star; ///
Since for our sake the eternal God is born as a little child!

The Prokeimenon of the Feast, in Tone 8:³ Let all the earth worship Thee and praise Thee; let it praise Thy name, O Most High!

Another Prokeimenon of the Feast, in Tone 5: Thou, O Lord, shalt protect us / and preserve us from this generation forever! *Verse:* Save me, O Lord, for there is no longer any that is godly.

The Epistle: (96) Romans 8:3-9

The Alleluia, in Tone 1: The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork!

Another Alleluia, in Tone 4: Make a joyful noise to the Lord all the earth! Sing of His name, give to Him glorious praise! *Verse:* Thou hast tried us with fire as silver is tried.

The Gospel: (51) Luke 10:19-21

In place of “It is truly meet...” we sing Ode 9 of the First Canon :

Refrain: **M**agnify, O my soul, the most pure Virgin Theotokos, more honorable and more glorious than the heavenly hosts!

³ The order of the prokeimena and alleluia verses are given as they appear in the Menaion.

28th DAY OF DECEMBER

I behold a strange and most glorious mystery: heaven, the cave; the cherubic throne; the Virgin; the manger, the place where Christ lay, the uncontainable God whom we magnify in song!

Communion Verses: The Lord hath sent redemption to His people; Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous! Praise befits the just!

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