

The 27th Day of December

⊗ **Third Day of the Feast of the Nativity of Christ; the commemoration of the Holy Apostle, Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen; and the commemoration of our Venerable Father and Confessor Theodore Graptus (the Branded), brother of St. Theophanes the Hymnographer.**

Vespers

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

At “**Lord, I call...**,” 6 stichera,

The 3 stichera of the Apostle, in Tone 4: *To the melody, “As one valiant among the martyrs...”*

Thy mind was enlightened by spiritual grace /
And thou didst appear as an angel: /
Thy body shone with inner radiance, O Stephen, /
And thy face was aglow with a spiritual splendor that all could see,
For thou didst receive the Light when the heavens were gloriously opened to thee, ///
O first and great boast among all the martyrs.

Like the steps on the stairway leading to heaven /
Were the stones that were cast at thee /
And having ascended upon them thou didst behold the Lord /
Standing at the right hand of the Father, /
Stretching forth His Life-creating hand to thee /
Awarding thee the crown worthy of thy name. /
Now thou standest before Him as a victorious champion, ///
The very first among all them that have suffered.

Radiant with signs and wonders /
Thou didst destroy the assembly of the ungodly with thy teachings, /
And they put thee to death by stoning; /
Yet thou didst pray for their forgiveness, /
Thus emulating the Savior’s cry when He was hanged upon the Tree ///
Into whose hands thou didst commit thy spirit, O blessèd Stephen.

And 3 stichera of St. Theodore, in the same Tone: *(and melody)*

To the bitterness of thine exile /
Was added the grievous misery of imprisonment, /
O venerable father Theodore, /

When the treacherous usurper of the lawful throne /
Perverted the laws of the Faith. /
And when he cast down the all-pure image of the Savior, /
Then by the grace of God, O favorite of Christ, ///
Thou didst utterly put him to shame.

Neither prison nor confinement, /
Neither dreadful wounds nor savage beatings, /
Neither hunger nor unbearable afflictions, /
Nor lightless internment /
Could separate thee from thy love of God, /
O divinely eloquent father Theodore; /
For steadfastly didst thou endure thy sufferings ///
Foreseeing at their end the reward of thy labors.

In place of sorrow, thou didst find refuge, /
In place of darkness, radiance, /
In place of sickness, thou didst find happiness, /
And in place of the branding of thy face, /
Thy name was written in the Book of Life, /
And thou art numbered among the firstborn of the Church in heaven ///
Which thou didst attain to the joyous celebration of the angels!

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

Thou didst offer to our King and Master who was born on this earth, /
A crown not fashioned of precious stones, but one resplendent with the drops of
thy blood, O Stephen. /
Come, therefore, all ye faithful who love the martyrs, /
And let us honor him as we weave the flowers of our song into a crown and cry aloud: /
O first martyr, as thou didst illumine thy soul with wisdom and grace, ///
Pray Christ God to grant us peace and great mercy.

Now and ever..., Theotokion, in the same Tone: (and melody; the composition of Germanos)

A great and marvelous wonder is come to pass this day. /
A Virgin bears child, yet her womb suffers no corruption.
The Word is made flesh, yet ceases not to dwell with the Father. /
Angels and shepherds give glory, /
And with them we cry aloud: ///
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men.

The Entrance and the Prokeimenon of the day.

At the Aposticha, the stichera of the Feast, in Tone 1: *To the melody, "Joy of the ranks of heaven...."*

Let us come together with the angels and the shepherds and the Magi /
And let us sing to the eternal Son /
Who shone forth from the bosom of the Father before the ages, /
And in the fullness of time, now rests on the throne of His Mother's arms. /
Come let us worship Him!

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

Let us, the faithful, assemble in Bethlēm /
And behold the Creator of all lying in the manger /
And with the three Magi of Persia offer to Him precious gifts ///
For as our King and God He is to dwell three days in the tomb.

Verse: The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool."

Thou was born in the cave from the Virgin /
And the host of angels, surrounding Thee, cried aloud: / /
Glory to Thee, O God, in the highest! /
Glory to Thee, who hast taken the form of a servant! /
Born from the innocent womb of a Virgin Mother ///
Thou hast remade the world anew!

Glory..., of the Apostle, in Tone 6: *(the composition of Anatolius)*

O holy apostle Stephen, /
First among deacons and the first among the martyrs, /
The glory of the righteous, the confirmation of the faithful, /
And the adornment of all who suffer for the Lord, /
As thou standest now before the throne of Christ the King of all /
Entreat the remission of sins for all the faithful who celebrate thy holy memory, ///
And that we may be counted worthy of the heavenly kingdom.

Now and ever..., of the Feast, in the same Tone: *(the composition of Germanus)*

All the angels in heaven are of good cheer /
And greatly rejoice today, /
The whole creation leaps with joy, /

For the Savior and Lord /
Is born in Bethlēm. /
Every error of idolatry has ceased, ///
And Christ reigns unto all ages.

The Troparion of the Apostle, in Tone 4:

O protomartyr of Christ and apostle, /
Thou didst endure a great struggle /
And wast slain by stoning at the hands of the impious /
For revealing their ungodliness.
Thou didst cry out to God, exclaiming: /
‘Do not lay this sin to their charge!’ ///
And didst receive a crown from on high.

The Troparion of St. Theodore, in Tone 8:

As an instructor of Orthodoxy, a teacher of piety and purity, /
A lamp of the universe, and divinely-inspired adornment of monastics, /
O most-wise Theodore, by thy teachings thou didst enlighten all ///
O spirit-filled voice, beseech Christ God 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

—*incomplete as of 12/3/2015*

At God is the Lord, the Troparia: that of the Feast, “Thy nativity, O Christ our God....
(*once*); and that of the apostle, “O protomartyr of Christ...;” Glory..., that of the
venerable one, “As an instructor of Orthodoxy...;” Now and ever..., and that of the
Feast: (*once*).

After the 1st Kathisma, the Sessional Hymn, in Tone 3: *To the melody, “Today the
Virgin”*

She that seedlessly conceived giveth birth to the Deliverer; /

The Magi come to worship Life; /
And angels and men give glory; /
The manger and the cave bring forth their gifts ///
And raise a hymn of praise to the newborn Babe, the pre-eternal God..

Glory..., now and ever..., Repeat: “She that seedlessly conceived....”

After the 2nd Kathisma, the Sessional Hymn, in Tone 4: *To the melody, “Joseph was amazed....”*

How can the uncontainable One be contained in a womb? //
How can He that is in the bosom of the Father rest in the arms of a Mother? /
He that knoweth all things hath so willed; /
For being incorporeal, He willingly became incarnate /
And for our sakes became that which He had not been, /
And without ever departing from His essence /
He partook of our human nature. ///
Christ is born with two natures wishing on high to perfect the world.

Glory..., now and ever..., Repeat: “How can the uncontainable One....”

The Canon

The First Canon of the Feast, with six Troparia, including the Irmos;
and two Canons, to the Saints, with four Troparia, each.

—incomplete as of 12/3/2015

After the Third Ode: The Kontakion of the Feast, in Tone 3:

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!

After the Sixth Ode, the Kontakion of the Apostle, in Tone 3:

Yesterday the Lord came in the flesh; /
Today His servant has departed in the flesh. /
Yesterday the King was born as a man;
Today the servant is stoned for His sake: ///
For His sake Saint Stephen was killed, the first of the martyrs.

At the Praises, 6 stichera, in Tone 1: *(the composition of Cyprian)*

Let us, the faithful, weave a crown for the champion, /

Fashioned from the flowers of our words, /
For he is the first to lead the host of martyrs /
On their journey to the Lord. /
For he saw the destination and cried ot in joy: /
Behold, I see the heavens opened ///
And the Son of God standing at the right hand of the Father!

In Tone 2: *(the composition of Anatolius)*

First among deacons and first among the martyrs /
O most-holy Stephen, /
Thou didst show the way to be followed by the saints, /
Leading a countless number of martyrs to the Lord. /
The heavens opened and God Himself appeared to thee. ///
Intercede with Him for the salvation of our souls.

Clothing thyself in holiness, /
O blessèd companion of the angels,
Protodeacon and protomartyr Stephen, /
Intercede with the only sinless One, our Savior and Lord, ///
For the salvation of our souls

Let us worthily honor the first martyr and noble favorite of Christ, /
Stephen the protodeacon and protomartyr, /
For standing in the midst of the impious ///
He beheld the Son of God standing at the right hand of the Father.

In Tone 4: *(the composition of the monk, John of Damascus)*

O glorious Stephen /
Citizen of heaven and favorite of Christ, ///
Pray that our souls may be saved!

Stephen, the splendid first-fruit of all the martyrs, /
Filled with grace and power of God, /
Working wondrous miracles and signs among the people, /
Was slain at the hands of the impious; /
And his face shone like that of an angel, /
And he beheld Thy glory, O Christ God, /
Who was crucified for our sake, standing at the right hand of Power, /
And he was taken up into heaven by the Spirit of Grace. ///
Therefore, together with the choir of angels, he prays that our souls may be saved.

Glory..., in Tone 5: (the composition of Cyprian)

O protomartyr, protodeacon and apostle, /
Standing before thy tormentors thou didst see the heavens open, /
And the Son of God standing at the right hand of the Father. /
Thy face shone like that of an angel, /
And thou didst joyfully pray for those who stoned thee, saying: /
'Do not lay this sin to their charge,' ///
Now ask forgiveness of sins and great mercy for those who lovingly praise thee.

Now and ever..., in the same Tone: (the composition of the monk, John)

An awesome mystery has come to pass in Bethlēm today, /
The invisible One is seen, the incorporeal One takes on the body; /
The Word of God assumes flesh becoming that which He had not been before; /
The Virgin gives birth to a Babe who is the Creator of nature; /
The manger becomes a heavenly throne; /
The beasts keep vigil with the ranks of the Cherubīm; /
Shepherds marvel, the Magi offer gifts; /
And the angels sing: Glory to God in the highest /
And on earth peace, good will toward men, /
O eternal Emmanuel!

Liturgy

At the Beatitudes, 8 Troparia from the Octoechos, and 4 from the First Ode of the Canon of the Feast, and 4 from the Third Ode of the Canon of St. Stephen.

The Troparion of the Feast, in Tone 4:

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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!

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Thou didst cry out to God, exclaiming: /
'Do not lay this sin to their charge!' ///
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And the Troparion of St. Theodore, in Tone 8:

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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: Let all the earth worship Thee and praise Thee; let it praise Thy name, O Most High! *Verse:* Make a joyful noise to the Lord all the earth! Sing of His name! Give to Him glorious praise!

And this of the Apostle, in the same Tone: Their proclamation is gone out into all the earth and their words to the ends of the universe!

The Epistle: (17) Acts 6:8-7:5,47-60

The Alleluia of the Feast, in Tone 1: The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork. *Verse:* Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

And this of the Apostle, in the same Tone: The heavens shall confess Thy wonders, O Lord, and Thy truth in the congregation of the saints!

The Gospel: (87) Matthew 21:33-42

THIRD DAY OF THE NATIVITY; PROTOMARTYR STEPHEN; ST. THEODORE GRAPTUS

The Communion Hymn of the Feast: The Lord has sent redemption to His people!
And this of the Apostle: Their proclamation is gone out into all the earth and their words to the ends of the universe!

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