

The 24th Day of December

Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ; Commemoration of the Venerable Nun-Martyr Eugenia of Rome.

Note: If the Sunday before the Nativity of Christ, the Commemoration of the Holy Fathers, and the 24th of December coincide, then see the Service for that Sunday given immediately preceding this.

Vespers

At “Lord, I call...,” 6 stichera:

3 stichera of the Forefeast,¹ in Tone 5: *To the melody, “Rejoice...”*

Thou dost bear the form of Adram /
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 upholdest all things with Thine hand. /
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 understanding! /
How shall I, who am Thy servant, call Thee my Son? ///
I sing Thy praises and I bless Thee, who dost grant the world great mercy.”

The immaculate Virgin, beholding the pre-eternal God as a child /
That had taken flesh from her, /
Holds Him in her arms and without ceasing, she kisses Him. /
Filled with joy, she whispers to Him: /
“O God Most High, O King unseen, how is it that I gaze on Thee? /
I cannot understand the mystery of Thy boundless poverty. /
For behold, the least and the smallest of caves, /
Contains Thee within itself as a newborn babe /
Who didst not violate my virginity, /
But preserved my womb as it was before giving birth to Thee, ///
Who grants the world great mercy.

The pure Virgin spoke in wonder, /
As she heard the Magi standing together before the cave, /
And she said to them: /
“Whom do ye seek? For I see that ye are from a distant land. /
Ye have the appearance, but not the thoughts of Persians; /

¹ Text differs from that in the Greek Menaion.

Strange has your journey been, and strange 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 Saint, in Tone 8: *To the melody, “O most glorious wonder....”*

Forsaking all the beauty of this world, /
 O invincible martyr Eugenia, /
 Thou didst illumine the dignity of thy soul /
 With noble splendor from on high. /
 And thou didst preserve the grace of the image of God /
 Untarnished through the course of thy life, ///
 O thou blessed blossom of nature and epitome of virginity.

Having adorned thy life and soul with patience, words of wisdom, and grace; /
 Thou didst lead an assembly of virgins and an army of martyrs to Christ,
 Who Himself shone forth from the closed doors of the Virgin, /
 O most-wise martyr Eugenia. ///
 Together with them, entreat Him now to save the sheep of thy fold.

The Author of righteousness Christ our God, /
 Hath magnificently adorned thee, Eugenia, /
 With a double crown, O pure virgin and glorious martyr, /
 And hath prepared for thee a bright and beautiful bridal chamber /
 Where is now thine abode, O bride of Christ, ///
 Who art enriched with eternal blessedness!

Glory..., now and ever..., of the Forefeast, in Tone 2: *(the composition of Cyprian)*

Now cometh the hour of our salvation! /
 Make ready, O cave, /
 Behold, the Virgin approaches thee to give birth. /
 Rejoice and be glad, O Bethlēm in the land of Judah, /
 For the Lord shall arise like the Sun at dawn and shine forth from thee. /
Hearken, ye mountains and hills, and all ye lands of Judaea, /
 For Christ cometh to save His creation, the human race, ///
 For He is the only Lover of mankind.

The Aposticha, these stichera of the Forefeast, in Tone 1: *To the melody, “O*

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all-praised martyrs....”

“**K**ings from the east, having learnt that Thou wast to be born as King /
Are come, bringing Thee gifts, O my Son, /
Frankincense and myrrh and gold; and lo, they stand before the doors. /
Bid them enter and behold Thee, held in my arms as a child, ///
Who art older than ancient Adam.”

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

“**C**ome ye and make haste to enter,” /
Said the Virgin to the Magi, /
“And behold Him who is invisible, now visibly manifest and become a child.” /
And they came eagerly and worshipped Him, ///
Bringing gifts in fulfilment of the divine prophecy.

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

“**I** hold Thee in my arms as a child /
Who dost uphold all, and I am filled with amazement,” /
Said she who had not known wedlock. /
“How shall I feed with milk Thee who givest food to all, O my Son and my
Creator? /
I glorify Thy measureless condescension towards mankind, ///
Whereby Thou dost save the world that perishes.

Glory..., now and ever..., Theotokion of the Forefeast, in Tone 6:

Rejoice, O Sion, /
Make glad, O Jerusalem, city of Christ our God, /
Receive the Creator who is contained in a manger in the cave. /
Open to me thy gates /
That I may enter and see the child wrapped in swaddling clothes, /
Him, who holds all creation in the hollow of His hand /
Whose praises the angels sing unceasingly ///
The Lord and Giver of life who saves mankind.

Note: No Troparion of the Martyr is given in the Menaion.

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

Mary once, with agèd Joseph /
Went to be taxed in Bethlēm, /
For they were of the lineage of David; /
And she bore in her womb the fruit that had not been sown. /
The time of her birth was at hand and there was no room at the inn; /
But the cave provided a fair palace for the Queen. ///
Christ is born, that He may raise up again the image that before was fallen.

Compline

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

Three-Ode Canon of the Forefeast, in Tone 6

Having the acrostic: "Today I sing the praise of Great and Holy Saturday."

Ode 1

Irmos: *The One who in ancient times covered the pursuing tyrant with the waves of the sea, is hidden in a manger and Herod seeks to kill Him. But let us like the Magi sing to the Lord, for He has been greatly glorified.*

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

O Lord my God, I will sing a birthday hymn, a song on the Forefeast, to Thee who by Thy Nativity givest me a divine rebirth and leadest me up to mankind's first excellence.

The things above the earth and on the earth were amazed at Thy power, as they beheld Thee, O my Savior, upon Thy throne on high and in the manger below. For beyond our understanding Thou hast appeared in two natures, God and man.

That Thou mightiest fill all things with Thy glory, Thou hast come and bowed the heavens till they touched the earth. For as rain upon the fleece hast Thou descended into a virgin womb, from which Thou now comest forth to be born in two natures, O God and man.

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

Katavasia: The One who in ancient times.... (*prostration*)

Ode 3

Irmos: *When creation beheld Thee born in a cave, who didst suspend the whole earth immovably upon the waters, it quaked with great amazement and cried aloud: There is none holy save Thee, O Lord!*

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O merciful Lord, making manifest the figures of Thine ineffable Incarnation, Thou hast unfolded the vision and breathed forth prophecies; and now Thou art come and hast fulfilled them, being born in the flesh from a pure Maid in the city of David.

Earth has spread out its wide spaces and receives the Creator, as He receives from angels glory, from heaven the star, from shepherds praise, from the Magi gifts, and acknowledgement from the whole world.

The riddles of Balaam, the soothsayer and diviner, are now fulfilled. For a star has dawned from Jacob and led the Magi, kings from Persia bringing gifts, toward the Sun of Glory.

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

Katavasia: When creation beheld Thee.... (*prostration*)

Ode 4

***Irmos:** When Habákkuk foresaw Thy coming from the Virgin, he cried in amazement: Thou art come incarnate from Teman, O Good One, to call back Adam from his exile.*

The Lord now draws nigh and comes, expectation of the nations and salvation of the world. O city of Bethlĕhem, prepare the cave: and ye shepherds with the Magi, make haste.

In the strength of Thy Godhead Thou hast been joined with mortal men, through a union without confusion, O Savior, in the likeness of the flesh of Adam; and in thus assuming human nature Thou dost bestow upon it immortality and salvation.

The Word is made manifest and assumes the material substance of our flesh; and in His ineffable providence He takes up His dwelling among us. Come ye, O faithful, and let us look upon His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten Son from God the Father.

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

Katavasia: When Habákkuk foresaw.... (*prostration*)

Ode 5

***Irmos:** When Isaiah beheld the light that knows no evening, the Light of Thy divine appearance coming to us graciously; His soul, O Christ, longed for Thee in the night, and he cried aloud: Behold a Virgin shall conceive and shall bear the incarnate Word, and all those born on earth shall*

rejoice exceedingly.

O Creator, Thou makest new those born on earth by Thyself becoming clay. A manger and swaddling clothes and a cave are the marks of Thy lowliness. The betrothed of Thy Mother is thought by men to be Thy father according to the flesh, and so he takes the place of the Father who begat Thee by His counsel.

The three kings, first fruits of the Gentiles, bring Thee gifts at Thy birth in a cave in Bethlēhem, from a Mother who suffered no pangs of travail; by myrrh they point to Thy death, by gold to Thy royal power, and by frankincense to the pre-eminence of Thy divinity.

Coming forth in the flesh, O Word coeternal with the Father, from a Mother who suffered not the pain of birth, Thou hast made Thy dwelling in the cave, using the manger as Thy throne. Through Thy fearful dispensation Thou dost amaze the Magi and the shepherds, and Thou fillest the angels with awe as they cry: Glory to Thy Power, O Lord.

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

Katavasia: When Isaiah beheld the light.... *(prostration)*

Ode 6

***Irmos:** Jonah was caught but not held in the belly of the whale, revealing a sign of Thy birth and Thine appearance in the flesh; He came forth from the monster as from a chamber. For, born now in the flesh, Thou shalt in the flesh undergo burial and death, and Thou shalt rise again on the third day.*

The middle wall of partition and the ancient enmity is now laid low and destroyed by Thy coming in the flesh, O Christ, and the flaming sword now gives way before all who approach. And I partake in faith of the life-giving tree in Eden, becoming once again a husbandman in the gardens of immortality.

Hell reigned with sin from Adam even down to Thee; but their shameless tyranny is brought to naught, now that Thou art born according to the flesh from the tribe of David, O Deliverer. Thou hast set a light upon the throne of his kingdom and Thou reignest unto all ages.

Herod the wicked became a slayer of children but not of Christ. For though he reaped a bitter harvest of children he failed to seize and slay the Bread of Life. For being the Giver of life, as God He escaped from the pursuer by His divine power.

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

Katavasia: Jonah was caught.... *(prostration)*

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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.

Ode 7

***Irmos:** O wonder beyond speech: He who saved the holy children from the fire of the furnace is laid as a babe in a poor manger for the salvation of us who sing: Blessèd art Thou, O God our Redeemer.*

The enemy and deceiver was wounded when he saw God laid in a poor and narrow manger as a babe, and by the hand of God was he cast down, for the salvation of us who sing: Blessèd art Thou, O God our Redeemer.

O happy manger! Receiving the Creator as a babe, it is made the throne of the Cherubīm, for the salvation of us who sing: Blessèd art Thou, O God our Redeemer.

According to the law of mortal men, appearing as a babe Thou dost accept to be wrapped in swaddling bands; and thereby Thou didst loose the bands of my offences, bestowing freedom upon those who sing: Blessèd art Thou, O God our Redeemer.

In Thy Birth without beginning and in Thy Nativity after the flesh, Thou hast remained, O Christ, One in the Godhead with the Father and the Spirit, for the salvation of us who sing: Blessèd art Thou, O God our Redeemer.

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

***Katavasia:** O wonder beyond speech.... (prostration)*

Ode 8

***Irmos:** Be amazed and afraid, O heaven, and let the foundations of the earth be shaken, for lo, He who bears the whole world in the hollow of His hand, is wrapped in swaddling clothes and is guest for a while in a narrow manger. You children, bless Him; you priest, sing praises; you people exalt Him throughout all ages.*

Adam the prisoner has been loosed and freedom has been given to all the faithful, now that Thou art wrapped in swaddling bands, O Savior, and laid in a small cave

in a manger for dumb beasts. Therefore, rejoicing, we offer Thee in faith a hymn on this the Forefeast of Thy Nativity.

The error of Persia has ceased: for the stargazers, the kings of the east, bring gifts to Christ the King of all at His birth, gold and myrrh and frankincense. You children, bless Him; you priest, sing praises; you people exalt Him throughout all ages.

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

O strange wonders! O goodness and infinite forbearance! Behold, He who dwells on high is counted as a babe, and He who is God flees of His own will from Herod. You children, bless Him; you priest, sing praises; you people exalt Him throughout all ages.

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

Katavasia: Be amazed and afraid.... *(prostration)*

Ode 9

Irmos: “Be not amazed, O Mother, seeing Me now as a babe, whom the Father begat from the womb before the morning star, for I have come openly to restore and glorify with Myself the fallen nature of mortal man, that magnifies thee with faith and love.”

“O Son without beginning, I am blessed beyond words in Thy strange birth, wherein I have been spared all travail. And as I behold Thee fleeing from Herod with his sword of sorrow, I am torn in soul. But do Thou live and save those who honor Thee.”

“I have gone down into the land of Egypt but, O Mother, I have laid low with an earthquake the idols of Egypt made by the hand of man. And sending into hell the enemies that seek My life in vain, with the power that I alone possess, I shall lift up and save those that honor thee.”

Let the creation rejoice exceedingly: for the Creator now makes Himself to be created, and He who was before all things now makes Himself known as God newly revealed. Let the Magi with their gifts go out to meet Him, let the shepherds clap their hands in faith at the wonder, and let mortal men join the angels and make glad.

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

Katavasia: Be not amazed, O Mother *(prostration)*

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Matins

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

Mary once, with agèd Joseph /
Went to be taxed in Bethlēm, /
For they were of the lineage of David; /
And she bore in her womb the fruit that had not been sown. /
The time of her birth was at hand and there was no room at the inn; /
But the cave provided a fair palace for the Queen. ///
Christ is born, that He may raise up again the image that before was fallen. (*thrice*)

Note: No Troparion of the Martyr is given in the Menaion.

After the 1st Kathisma, the Sessional Hymn, in Tone 6: To the melody, “Go on before, ye angelic powers....”

The sayings of the prophets are nów fulfilled: /
For our God shall be born tomorrow of the Virgin Máry /
In a manner past words and understáding, /
And shall remain such as He was befóre His birth. /
The Magi come together beáring gifts, /
The shepherds abide in the fields, and we álso sing: ///
O Lord born of a Virgin, glóry to Thee.

Glory..., now and ever..., Repeat: The sayings of the prophets....

After the 2nd Kathisma, the Sessional Hymn, in Tone 8:

As the shépherds were píping songs /
A host of angels stopped them and called out, sáying: /
“Cease now, ye who abide in the fields at the heád óf your flocks; /
Cry out and sing that Christ the Lórd is born, ///
Whose pleasure it is as God to sáve mankind!

Glory..., now and ever..., Repeat: As the shepherds were piping

The Canon

The Canon of the Forefeast with eight Troparia including the Irmos; and
that of the Martyr, with four Troparia.

Ode 1

The Canon of the Forefeast, in Tone 2

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*having as the acrostic the letters of the Greek alphabet,
the composition of Joseph.*

Irmos: *In days of old a mighty force sent the armies of Pharaoh into the deep sea; the Word Incarnate hath destroyed pernicious sin, the Most-glorious Lord has been greatly glorified.*

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

Thou wast registered according to the edict of Cæsar in Thy desire to enter mankind into the book of life, O King of all; and in a wondrous manner Thou didst summon back to paradise him who had once been exiled from it.

Receive Christ, O Bethlêhem, for He cometh to thee having made Himself flesh, opening Eden unto me! Prepare thyself, O cave, for thou shalt behold the infinite One gloriously contained within thee, having humbled Himself in the richness of His compassion.

In that He is God, Christ hath come to be born on earth to bestow a wondrous regeneration upon the children of Adam. Be glad, O mortal human nature, thou barren desert, for the Master hath come to make thee fruitful.

The Canon of the Martyr, in the same Tone,

*Having the acrostic: "I praise is song the great glory of Eugenia,"
the composition of Theophanes.*

Irmos: *In days of old a mighty force.... (same as above)*

Refrain: Holy martyr Eugenia, pray to God for us!

O Eugenia, thou immaculate virgin martyr, who, having received thy crown from Christ, dost now rejoice together with the angelic hosts in heaven, entreat thou Him that He may bestow His grace upon those who with faith and love sing thy praises.

Inspired by the divine hymnody of the Church, O bride of Christ, thou didst soar aloft upon enlightened wings; for the inspiration of the Spirit shone like a great light within thy heart, driving away from thee all ungodliness and error.

Disregarding the weakness of thy physical nature, thy mind strove to accomplish courageous deeds having found boldness through grace, and being providently guided toward God, O martyr Eugenia, thou namesake of divine nobility.

Illumined with noetic light, O Eugenia wise in God, thou didst bring a multitude of souls to partake of divine glory, delivering from their sins those who praise thee, by thy fervent prayers.

Theotokion: **W**e the faithful, who had once been slain by the knowledge of the tree, have been called back to life by Christ God—the Tree of Life, who ineffably

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sprang forth from thee, O Theotokos. Entreat thou Him with boldness, that He may save our souls.

Katavasia: Christ is born....

Ode 3

The Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: *The Church of the Gentiles was like a desert, barren in its pagan ways, but now it hath blossomed by Thy coming, O Lord; in that same coming is my heart confirmed.*

Thou comest to be wrapped as a Babe in swaddling-clothes to deliver me from the bonds of evil, O Lord who lovest mankind; and in worship, I bow down before this, Thy divine condescension!

The Virgin cometh forth to give birth to Thee who shone forth timelessly from the Father, and hast come in the realm of time to release our souls from our ancient passions.

Seeking me as one lost through mine own disobedience, Thou hast made for Thyself the cave as a dwelling-place, like unto heaven; thus preparing a dwelling-place for me there, O greatly merciful and compassionate Lord!

The Canon of the Martyr

Irmos: *On the rock of faith Thou hast preserved me, against mine enemies Thou hast opened my mouth; my spirit hath rejoiced in singing: None is holy as our God, none is righteous save Thee, O Lord.*

Thou didst offer thyself to the Master as an unblemished sacrifice with perfect resolve, O Eugenia most wise, spurning the corruption of wealth, crying aloud: “Thou art our God, and there is none more holy than Thee, O Lord!”

O all-pure virgin martyr, thy purity was recognized by all when the power of thy sufferings blazed forth; for thou didst turn thy struggles into an ascent of vision, crying aloud: “Thou art our God, and there is none more holy than Thee, O Lord!”

Holding fast to thy desire for chastity, thou didst preserve the beauty of purity and the majesty of wisdom, crying aloud to Christ: “Thou art our God, and there is none more holy than Thee, O Lord!”

Theotokion: **C**ome, O ye faithful wise in God, let us praise in song Mary, the most-pure Theotokos, who hath been revealed to be the mediatrix of our salvation, and let us cry aloud to her: “There is none as pure as thee, O most pure one, and none higher than thee, O Lady!”

Katavasia.

Note: No Kontakion of the Martyr is given in the Menaion.

The Sessional Hymn, of the Martyr, in Tone 8: *To the melody, “Of Wisdom....”*

Engaged in accomplishing thy courageous deeds, O glorious Eugenia. /
Thou didst win glory through the struggles of thy martyrdom /
And by thine example, led many of the saved to the Creator. /
By having forsaken the fleeting things of this world /
Thou didst achieve thy great victory through love; /
And after thy course thou didst attain eternal life /
Where thou ever abide with thy Bridegroom, Christ. /
Entreat Him now, O angelic Eugenia, /
That He may grant the remission of sins ///
To those who lovingly honor thy precious memory.

Glory..., now and ever..., the Sessional Hymn of the Forefeast. In Tone 8:

Today the earth is revealed as heaven to me /
For, in the city of Bethlēhem in Judah, /
The Creator is born and laid in a manger. /
Shepherds sing unceasing praise together with the angels: /
“Glory in the highest, and peace on earth!”
Beholding the Wise men journey with the star, /
As they hasten to bring gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh /
To the eternal King, the Creator and God of all, ///
Who in His tender compassion is born this day in a cave.

Ode 4

The Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: *Thou hast come from a Virgin, not as a minister nor an angel, but as the Lord Himself incarnate; to me a human, Thou hast brought salvation; so I cry to Thee: Glory to Thy power, O Lord!*

Creation is now born anew beholding Thee, the Creator, taking our form and in newness, becoming a Babe, thus leading it back to its original beauty.

Marveling at His most glorious nativity, the Magi who had been led by the divine star, stood and beheld the Sun shining from the cloud of the Virgin, as they offered their gifts to Him.

Behold, the Virgin cometh to the manger bearing in her womb the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world, so that all creation may rejoice beholding Him.

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The predictions of the prophets proclaiming the manifestation of Christ have now received their salvific fulfillment; for He hath come in the flesh to enlighten those sitting in darkness.

The Canon of the Martyr

Irmos: Thou hast come from a Virgin....

Thou hast come taking flesh from the Virgin, O Most High, betrothing companies of virgins to Thyself, who love Thee alone as their chaste and eternal Bridegroom.

Thou didst shed the carnal raiment of thy birth, O all-glorious Eugenia, and through baptism didst robe thyself in the splendid and incorrupt garment of regeneration.

Thy pure heart shone with the luminous radiance of divine grace that dispelled the gloominess of delusion, O Eugenia, martyr of Christ.

Thou didst illumine thy life with beauty and splendor, having caused the carnal passions to wither away through abstinence, O virgin martyr Eugenia, and then thou didst shine forth with the magnificence of thy sufferings,.

Theotokion: **T**hou art more exalted than the angels for thou hast given birth to the Angel of great Counsel and the Lover of mankind, who, in His exceeding loving-kindness, became a man, O all-praised Lady.

Ode 5

The Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: Thou didst come as a mediator between God and man, O Christ our God, for through Thee, O Master, we have found the way from the darkness of ignorance to Thy Father, the source of light.

Let the people, who once sat in darkness, behold the never-waning Light which hath now shone forth, whom the star announced to the Persian kings, the worshippers of fire.

The great King maketh haste to enter into the little cave, so that He, the Most-blessèd Lord of all, might magnify me, of little stature, and with boundless wealth may enrich me is exceedingly poor.

Christ now is born of Jacob, as Balaam once had said, having dominion over all the nations, and His kingdom, which immutably abideth forever, is exalted by divine grace.

The Canon of the Martyr

Irmos: O Christ my Savior, the enlightenment of those who lie in darkness and the salvation of those

in despair: O King of peace, I rise early and cry out to Thee, illumine me with the light of Thy radiance, for I know no other God than Thee.

O passion-bearing martyr, when the soul-destroying serpent beheld thee on thy journey leading to salvation, he raised up a mountain of temptations against thee, striving to weaken thy resolve. But thou didst trample him underfoot, O pure Eugenia, divinely wise in God.

Thou didst come beautifully adorned in the ascetic virtues of abstinence, and resplendent with the splendor of thy sufferings, before Christ, the Accomplisher of all good things, the Benefactor and Bridegroom of souls, O good virgin martyr Eugenia.

A crown of blessings was set upon thy brow, for thou didst cherish divine wisdom, disdaining the riches and glory of thy father; and with great strength, followed after thy beloved Bridegroom, O all-honored Eugenia.

Theotokion: **T**he Life of the world shone forth from thee, O Birthgiver of God, and by this communion, He calleth those who before were held captive by death, to partake in everlasting life, as they cry aloud with faith: “We know none other God than Thee!”

Ode 6

The Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: *Compassed about in the depths of sin, I entreat the unfathomable depth of Thy compassion; bring me out of corruption, O Lord.*

Christ cometh to His own in a most wondrous manner. Let us, therefore, estrange ourselves from sin and receive Him Who hath made His abode in the souls of the humble and the meek.

No longer art thou the least among cities, O Bethlēhem; for in thee is born the King and Lord of all, that He might shepherd His richly-blessed people.

How doth a lowly cave receive Thee, O eternal Lord, whom the whole world cannot contain? How dost the humble manger hold as an infant, the timeless One without beginning, who shareth one mind and essence together with the Father and the Spirit?

The Canon of the Martyr

Irmos: *Compassed about in the depths of sin....*

Thou gavest neither sleep nor slumber to thine eyelids until thou didst extinguish all passionate attachments, and made of thyself a pure dwelling-place for thy Creator, O virgin martyr Eugenia.

Emulating the morals of the scandalous wife of Potiphar of old, she who was

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wicked in both name and deed violently slandered thine honorable life, O all-honored Eugenia.

Revealing thy radiance and enriched with the grace of healings and an abundance of wealth in faith, thou didst become the teacher of a company of monastic women.

Theotokion: All the prophets of the ages mystically learned of thine ineffable childbearing, O all-pure Lady, and in the Spirit they described and foretold to all those things which are now come.

Katavasia:

The Kontakion of the Forefeast in Tone 3:

Today the Virgin comes tó 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: The sacred sayings of the prophets have received their fulfillment. For, Behold! The Virgin giveth birth in a cave to the Most perfect One in the city of Bethlēhem, thus refashioning all creation. Rejoice therefore, and be glad! The Master of all hath come to dwell with His servants, delivering from the dominion of the enemy, us, who were cast down by corruption, and He is now seen as an infant, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in the manger, the pre-eternal God, the new-born Babe.

Ode 7

The Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: *The profane command of the lawless tyrant made the flames to rise exceedingly, but Christ sent the dew of the Spirit to the godly youths; blessèd is He and most glorious!*

Let the clouds shower water down from on high! He who doth appoint the clouds for His coming ascent is now borne by a cloud that is the Virgin, and cometh to shine with His never-waning light upon those who before were afflicted and darkened by sin.

Prepare yourselves well, O ye army of divine angels, to sing the praises of the ineffable condescension of the Lord! Come, O ye Magi, and make haste, O ye shepherds! For Christ hath come as He should, for He is the Expectation and Deliverance of the nations.

Theotokion: “What is this strange, most glorious wonder? How can I bear Thee who bearest up all things by Thy word? Ineffable is Thy nativity, O my timeless Son without beginning!” said the all-pure Lady with awe, holding Christ in her arms.

The Canon of the Martyr

Irmos: *The profane command of the lawless tyrant....*

Thou hast revealed to all the truth of the divinely inspired scriptures, having exhibited manly courage in thy feminine nature, and didst astonish those whom thou didst lead to Christ when they had believed in Him, O most richly and spiritually endowed martyr Eugenia.

Thou didst clearly denounce the madness of idolatry by thy divine teachings, O all-praised Eugenia, and by the blood of thy martyrdom, thou didst betroth a radiant multitude of virgins to Christ, who reigneth over all.

Beholding the radiance of thy life, the great Lady Basilla, was moved by divine zeal and betrothed herself to Christ, forsaking all the passionate attachments of the flesh, and too, hath been deemed worthy to partake of the martyrs’ joy.

Theotokion: **H**aving seedlessly given birth to the Life, One of hypostatic Trinity, O all-immaculate Virgin and pure Birthgiver of God, thou hast destroyed the dominion of death. Therefore, we rejoice and proclaim thee the well-spring of immortality.

Ode 8

The Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: *In Babylon of old by the command of God, the fiery furnace worked in a double way: it burned the Chaldeans while it refreshed the faithful who sang: Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord!*

Beholding the greatness of the truly ineffable mystery which had risen upon the world with the light of understanding, the immaculate Lady marveled and said: “O my Son, how can I bear Thee who sitteth upon the fiery throne of heaven?”

“**T**hou bearest the likeness of the Father, but how hast Thou humbled Thyself and assumed the likeness of a servant? How can I lay Thee, who deliverest all from ignorance, in a manger of dumb beasts? I praise Thy tender compassion, O my Son!”

Rejoice now, all the earth! Behold! Christ draweth nigh to Bethlēhem to be born! Be glad, O ye seas! Leap for joy, O ye assembly of prophets, beholding today the fulfillment of your words, and rejoice, all ye righteous!

The Canon of the Martyr

Irmos: *God came down upon the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace and changed the flames*

FOREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY;
THE VENERABLE NUN-MARTYR EUGENIA OF ROME

into dew. Praise the works of the Lord and exalt Him throughout all ages.

Thine endurance was tested by both the river and by fire, O martyr of Christ; and, transcending nature, thou didst pass through them all, crying out: Praise the Lord, O ye works of the Lord, and exalt Him throughout all ages!

Christ, Who appeared in a strange and glorious manner unto thee as thou wast held in prison, and He richly nourished thee; and by His own nativity He hath united thee to the armies on high, to glorify Him throughout all ages.

Thy heavenly Bridegroom hath magnificently adorned thee with a twofold crown, O divinely wise Eugenia, and in His righteousness, He hath granted thee a splendid chamber in the mansion of heaven. Him do we exalt throughout all ages!

The grace of God, having radiantly illumined thee, now shineth in the mansions of heaven: Pray thou unceasingly, that by thy supplications, those who celebrate thy memory may likewise be filled with His grace, O virgin martyr Eugenia wise in God.

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

Theotokion: **W**e know thee to be a wellspring of the radiance of immortality, O Theotokos, for thou hast given birth to the Word of the immortal father, Who delivereth from death all who exalt Him throughout all ages.

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

Katavasia:

The Magnificat is sung.

Ode 9

The Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: *The Son of the eternal Father, God the Lord incarnate of the Virgin, hath appeared to us to give light to those in darkness and to gather those who had gone astray; so we magnify thee, O Theotokos.*

Let all the kingdoms of the earth raise their voice in song, rejoicing, and let all the nations of the gentiles be glad; Let the mountains, valleys and hills, the rivers, all the seas, and all creation, magnify the Lord who is now born.

The Thou wast seen in ages past by the prophets who beheld Thee as far as they were able; and, becoming a man in these latter times, Thou hast revealed Thyself to all mankind in the city of Bethlĕhem in Judah, the star having shone upon Thee

for the astrologers to see, O Ineffable Lord.

“O my most-sweet Child, how can I feed Thee who nourishest all things? How can I hold Thee Who holdest all things in Thy hand? How can I wrap in swaddling clothes Thou Who dost wrap the whole world in the shadows of the night?” cried the all-pure Lady, whom we ceaselessly magnify in song.

The Canon of the Martyr

Irmos: The Son of the eternal Father....

Thou makest thine abode in the mansions of heaven as a true and all-pure virgin among the martyrs, for thou hast been truly deemed worthy of the sweetness of paradise, O all-blessed Eugenia.

Thou hast attained to the object of thy Desire which transcends all thought and understanding, and thou beholdest now the splendor of the Ultimate Desire shining with the brilliant rays of the Sovereign Trinity, O virgin martyr Eugenia wise in God.

Keeping the lamp of virginity burning, thou wast adorned with the crown of martyrdom. Never cease to pray for those who with piety and love honor thee that we may be saved by thy fervent supplications, O all-glorious martyr Eugenia.

Having passed through the unbearable flames of torture and the surging waters of temptations, thou hast now arrived at the cool waters of rest, O most beautiful martyr Eugenia. Therefore, entreat Christ our God that He may save our souls.

Theotokion: **H**aving conceived in thy womb the dew of heaven which had descended upon thee as on the fleece, O all-immaculate Lady, thou hast given birth to Him who granteth immortality to all who piously praise Him and magnify thee, O immaculate Lady, as the Theotokos.

Katavasia:

The Exapostilarion of the Forefeast:

He who dwelleth in the unapproachable light and sustaineth all things is born of the Virgin in His ineffable tender compassion. He is wrapped in swaddling clothes as a babe, and is laid in a manger of dumb beasts in a cave. Let us all make haste to come to Bethlĕhem to worship Him together with the Magi, bringing as our gifts the fruits of our virtuous deeds.

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

FOREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY;
THE VENERABLE NUN-MARTYR EUGENIA OF ROME

Come, O ye faithful, and let us offer a hymn of praise to the Virgin Mary: For, Behold! She is now draweth nigh to give birth to Christ the Savior in the city of Bethlēhem! Following the star, the Magi too, draw near to bow in worship before Him with their gifts! The shepherds, too, lift up their voices with the angels and sing aloud to Him who is born: Glory to Thee who art born in the manger in the cave!

At the Praises, 4 stichera of the Forefeast,² in Tone 4: *To the melody, “Go forth, ye angels....”*

The star out of Jacob has risen within the cave: /
Let us come and celebrate the Forefeast of the Nativity, /
Let us hasten with the Magi and go quickly with the shepherds. /
Let us see God in swaddling clothes; /
Let us see the Virgin feeding Him with her milk. /
Oh, the awesome sight! ///
Christ, the King of Israel is come!

The choir of angels honors thee with hymns, O Virgin, /
As the radiant Mother, who knew not man, /
And rejoicing it makes glad at thy giving birth /
Crying: Rejoice, O pure one! /
Rejoice, thou hope of the Orthodox! /
Rejoice, thou intercession of those who honor thee! ///
Therefore, let us cry to thy Son: Blesséd art Thou who art come, O our God, glory to Thee!

A flower shall spring forth from the root of Jesse /
As was foretold by the glorious prophet, /
For we see the Virgin giving birth /
In ways past nature and understanding, /
To the lovely Rose within the cave: /
He who sits co-enthroned with the Father on high! /
Come, O ye people, and let us say: Blesséd art Thou who art come, O our God, glory to Thee!

Today Adam is recalled from error /
And from the dark captivity of the deceiving enemy, /
For Christ is made flesh as a man from the Virgin; /

² Text differs from that in the Greek Menaion.

And by restoring Adam through her, /
He hath annulled the curse of Eve ///
Come, O ye people, and let us say: Blessèd art Thou who art come, O our God, glory to
Thee!

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

Come, O Bethlêhem, and prepare for the birth! /
Come, O Joseph, and register thyself with Mary! /
And prepare yourselves, O sacred manger, and ye swaddling clothes, to carry God! /
For Christ, the Life of all, is coming to tear apart the bands of death ///
And place mortal man into the embrace of incorruption,

Now and ever...,

O most-blessèd womb of the Maiden of God, /
Thou art mystically revealed as being greater than the heavens! /
For thou bearest, holding within thyself /
Him whom the heavens cannot contain! /
O the blessèd breasts of the Virgin, that give milk to Christ, /
Who feeds every living and breathing thing! ///
He has created flesh for Himself in the womb of the Maiden that knew not man!