

The 29th Day of December

Afterfeast of the Nativity of Christ; the Commemoration of the 14,000 Holy Infants Slain by Herod; and of our Venerable Father Marcellus, Abbot of the Monastery of the Sleepless Ones.

Vespers

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

At “Lord, I call...,” 6 stichera,

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

Seeking after the hidden Treasure, /
The wicked Herod slaughtered the innocent children today; /
And Rachel would not be comforted /
Beholding their unjust and untimely death. /
She wept for them and her womb was wracked with pain; /
But now she rejoices in them ///
For she sees them now in the bosom of Abraham.

The lawless king sought to kill the timeless King /
Who willingly became subject to time. /
And since Herod was unable to find and destroy Him /
He cut down a multitude of innocent children /
Thereby making them martyrs and citizens of the kingdom on high ///
Where they forever prove the enormity of his madness.

When Thou wast born of the Virgin /
As a babe, O pre-eternal Lord, /
A choir of infants were brought before Thee /
By virtue of their martys’ blood; /
And their innocent souls were illumined, O most-righteous One. /
And now Thou hast brought them to dwell in the mansions of everlasting life ///
Where they convict the wickedness and the savage madness of Herod.

And 3 stichera of the St. Marcellus,¹ in same Tone: *(and melody)*

O divinely-wise father Marcellus /
Thou didst reveal thyself as model of chastity, /
A model of abstinence, /
A manifestation of piety, /

¹ Greek text differs.

A pillar of fire rising from the earth to heaven, /
A constant companion of purity, /
A true preserver of silence, /
A living monument of courage, ///
And a most excellent rule of the virtues.

O ven'erable father Marcellus, /
Thou didst cause the passions of the flesh to wither away /
Through thy night-long vigils in earnest supplications and tears, /
And taking delight in the Holy Scriptures. /
Thou wast, thereby, revealed as a habitation worthy of the Master's love /
Who granted thee the delights of immortality ///
And the grace to heal all who approached thee with faith.

Directly beholding the beauty of the Master, /
Gazing no longer through a dark mirror of the flesh, /
Remember us who faithfully celebrate thy memory, /
O blessèd Marcellus, /
And earnestly beseech the Lord /
That we may obtain mercy ///
On the Day of Judgment.

Glory..., of the Holy Infants, in Tone 8: *(the composition of St. Andrew of Crete)*

Herod the transgressor was troubled /
As he beheld the most brilliant star in all creation in the sky, /
And he tore from their mothers' arms the infants being nurtured with milk. /
Then Elizabeth took John and entreated the rocky cliff before the manger, saying: /
"Receive a mother and her child!" /
And the Forerunner was welcomed by the mountain, /
And the manger guarded the Treasure, whom the star revealed to the Magi, ///
Who worshiped Him saying: "O Lord, glory to Thee!"

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

An awesome mystery has come to pass this day: /
Nature is renewed and God becomes man. /
That which He was, He has remained; /
And that which He was not, He has taken upon Himself ///
While suffering neither confusion nor division.

The Entrance and the Prokeimenon of the day.

At the Aposticha, the stichera of the Feast, in Tone 6: *To the melody, “On the third day....”*

I behold a fearful mystery, /
For God, who holdeth all creation in the hollow of His hand, /
Is contained in our flesh and laid in a manger of dumb beasts; ///
And He who clothed the sea in mist is wrapped in swaddling clothes.

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

God who is without flesh hath become incarnate! /
He who is without beginning now begins to be! /
He who fillest all things now empties Himself through the Virgin in a humble cave! ///
And He who nourishest all creation is nourished with milk as a babe.

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

The shepherds rejoice in the birth of Christ, /
And give glory together with the angels; /
The star offers its praise, and the Magi, their worship; ///
And mankind is saved and magnifies the Theotokos!

Glory..., of the Holy Infants, in Tone 8: *(the composition of St. Andrew of Crete)*

When Jesus was born in Bethlēm, /
The authority of Judæa was overthrown, /
And the holy infants all leapt for joy; /
For, as Christ they were slaughtered as lambs. /
Let Judæa mourn, for a voice in Ramah is heard: /
Rachel, weeping, mourns her children as it is written. /
For as the wicked Herod kills the newborn babes, /
He fulfills the Scripture /
Staining the earth red, filling Judæa with innocent blood. /
The Church of the Gentiles is mystically purified and robed in splendor! /
Behold now, Truth is come! /
For God hath appeared to those sitting in darkness. ///
Being born of the Virgin, He hath come to save mankind!

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

Thou, O Lord, art come to Bethlēm, /
And hast Thy dwelling in a cave; /
Thou who hast heaven as Thy throne art laid in a manger. /
Thou whom the hosts of angels attend on every side /
Hast come down among shepherds, /
That in Thy compassion, Thou mightest save mankind. ///
O Lord, glory to Thee!

The Troparion of the Holy Infants, in Tone 1:

We beseech Thee, O Lord and Lover of mankind, /
By the sufferings Thy saints endured for Thee, /
To heal all our afflictions, ///
And deliver us from our transgressions.

Glory..., the Troparion of the Venerable Saint, in Tone 8:

The image of God was truly preserved in thee, O Father, /
For thou didst take up thy cross and follow Christ /
By so doing thou didst teach us to disregard the flesh, for it passes away /
But to care instead for the soul, since it is immortal ///
Therefore thy spirit, O holy Marcellus, rejoices with the angels.

Now and ever..., 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 12/2022

At God is the Lord, the Troparia: that of the Feast, “Thy Nativity, O Christ our God...” (*once*); that of the Holy Infants, “We beseech Thee, O Lord...; **Glory..., that of the Venerable Father**, “The image of God...”; **Now and ever..., and that of the Feast:** (*once*).

After the 1st Kathisma, the Sessional Hymn, in Tone 5:

The Magi of Persia arrived at the cave in Bethlēm /

Following the brilliant star as they were directed, /
There to thankfully offer gifts to the newborn King and His Virgin Mother, ///
And to worship Him as the first from among the Gentiles.

Glory..., now and ever..., Repeat: “The Magi of Persia...”

After the 2nd Kathisma, the Sessional Hymn, in Tone 8: *To the melody “Thou hast arisen...”*

As the music of the shepherd’s pipes now begins to fall silent, /
The angelic choir once again sings aloud: /
“Sing your divine praises, O ye, who watch the sheep! /
Cry aloud and sing: ‘Christ is born! /
Whose good pleasure it is as God to come and save the race of mankind!’”

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

Most glorious is this mystery, O ye faithful: /
God is born of the Virgin, /
And the angelic ranks marvel at His condescension and cry aloud: /
“Christ the Lord is born! /
Whose good pleasure it is as God to come and save the race of mankind!”

The Canon

The First Canon of the Feast, with 6 Troparia including the Irmos; and two of the Saints, with a total of 8 Troparia — incomplete as of 12/2022

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 Holy Infants, in Tone 4: *To the melody, “Thou hast appeared”*

A star led the Magi to Him who was born /
And Herod, in his rage, sent an army of cruel soldiers ///
To slay Him who lay as an infant in the manger.