

The 24th Day of March



**The Forefeast of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos,
also the commemoration of our Venerable Father Zachariah
the Recluse and Artemius, Bp. of Seleucia.¹**

Vespers

Note: The distribution of the stichera at “Lord, I call...,” is dependent upon which day of Lent it should fall. The stichera from the Triodion (including the sticheron for the martyrs) will be sung first and then those of the Forefeast, unless the Forefeast should fall on a Sunday. The Typicon must be consulted.

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

At “Lord, I call...,” 10 stichera, including those from the Triodion, and:

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

The mystery hidden and unknown to angels /
Is confirmed by the archangel Gabriel, /
And now he comes to thee, the only-incorrupt, unblemished turtledove, /
For the deliverance of our race /
And he cries out to thee, O Most Holy Lady: ///
Rejoice, and prepare, by a word, to receive the Word of God in thy womb! (*twice*)

The womb of the most pure maiden of God, /
Has been prepared as a light-bearing palace for Thee, O Master. /
Come, and descend upon her and be bountiful to Thy creation /
Which had been abused because of the primal envy /
And through the slavery of the Deceiver, had been deprived of its former goodness ///
Yet awaiting Thy saving visitation.

The archangel Gabriel will manifest his presence to thee, /
O most-pure Lady, /
And will cry out to thee: Rejoice, O thou annulment of the curse /
Rejoice, thou the lifting up of the fallen! /
Rejoice, thou who alone art become the chosen of God! /
Rejoice, thou chariot of the Son of glory ///
Receive the Bodiless One who comes to dwell in thy womb!

¹ Note: Neither the Greek nor the Slav Menaion provide a specific hymnography for either Saint Zachariah or St. Artemon on this day because of the coincidence of the Forefeast.

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Glory..., now and ever..., of the Forefeast, in Tone 2:

Today Gabriel announces to her who is full of grace /
Rejoice, O unwedded Mother who has not known wedlock! /
Do not be astonished at my strange appearance, nor be frightened, /
For I am an archangel. /
For once the serpent tempted Eve, /
But now I come to bring glad tidings to thee. ///
Thou shalt remain incorrupt and give birth to the Lord, O most-pure Maiden!

Entrance. Prokeimenon, Readings for the Day, and the rest of the Presanctified Liturgy if appointed.

However, if there is no Presanctified, then at “Lord, I call...,” we sing 3 stichera from the Triodion; 3 for the Forefeast; and the “Glory..., now and ever...” of the Forefeast: “Today Gabriel...” (*see above*)

The Apostikha is from the Triodion (including the verses for the martyrs), and:

Glory..., now and ever..., of the Forefeast, in Tone 2:

Today is revealed the mystery from all eternity, /
And the Son of God becomes the Son of Man, /
That, sharing in what is lower He may grant me to share in what is higher. /
In ancient times Adam was once deceived: /
He sought to become God but received not his desire. /
Now God becomes man, that He may make Adam God.
Let creation rejoice, let nature exult: /
For the archangel stands in fear before the Virgin /
And saying to her: “Rejoice,” he brings the joyful greeting /
Whereby our sorrow is comforted. ///
O Thou, who in thy merciful compassion wast made man, O our God, glory to Thee!

Matins

“Alleluia” and the usual Triadica Hymns in the Tone of the Week. But if it be a Saturday or Sunday, at “God is the Lord...,” we sing:

The Troparion of the Forefeast, in Tone 4:

Today the beginning of universal joy /
Commands all to sing pre-festive praises, /

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For behold, Gabriel comes, bearing an announcement to the Virgin /
And he cries out to her: ///
Rejoice, thou who art full of grace, the Lord is with thee!

The customary Kathisma Hymns, and the rest, as usual.

The Canon

The Canon of the Forefeast, with 6 Troparia, including the Irmos,
and then, those of the Triodion, in their order.

Ode 1

The Canon of the Forefeast, in Tone 4,
the composition of Theophanes

Irmos: In days of old Israel, crossed the depths of the Red Sea with dry-shod feet,
and vanquished the power of Amalek in the wilderness by Moses' arms
upraised in the form of the Cross.

Refrain: Most Holy Theotokos, save us!

The whole world rejoices today foreseeing the descent of the Lord upon thee; for He cometh to make His abode within thy womb, O Virgin, in the tender compassion of His mercy.

Behold! the divine archangel is sent to thee, O Queen, to proclaim the arrival of God the King of all, and to exclaim to thee: "Rejoice, O restoration of the first father!"

A lustrous, golden jar is prepared to receive the Manna of life; for at the voice of the archangel He cometh upon thee, making His wondrous abode in thee.

The Lord who dwelleth ever in heaven doth desire to make His abode in thy pure womb; for He cometh to make heavenly the nature of mortal man, wisely clothing Himself on it.

And now the troparia from the Triodion.

Ode 3

Irmos: We glory not in wisdom nor in power, nor yet in riches, but in Thee, the hypostatic Wisdom of the Father, O Christ, for there is none more holy than Thee, O lover of mankind.

Rejoice, O earth, so sadly overgrown with the thorns of the passions; be glad, for behold, the immortal Husbandman cometh now to remove the curse from thee.

Prepare thyself, O undefiled Virgin, thou divine fleece; for upon thee will God

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descend like the rain, to dry up the torrents of transgression.

Adorn thyself, O divine scroll; for by the finger of the Father will the divine Word incarnate be written upon thee, annulling the transgression of our race.

O golden lamp, bear aloft the fire of the Godhead which shineth forth through thee, bestowing light upon the world; for through it, the darkness of our transgressions is dispelled.

And now the troparia from the Triodion.

Sessional Hymn, in Tone 4: To the melody, “Thou hast appeared...”

At the cry of the archangel, /
And the descent of the all-holy Spirit /
Thou didst conceive Him who is co-enthroned with the Father /
And is of one Essence with Him, /
O Theotokos, ///
Thou restoration of fallen Adam.

Glory..., now and ever..., Another Sessional Hymn, in Tone 3: To the melody, “Awed by the beauty of virginity...”

Today all creation rejoiceth, /
For the archangel hath cried out to thee: /
“Rejoice!”, O blessed Mary, thou most pure Mother of Christ our God! /
Today the arrogance of the serpent hath been cast into darkness; /
For the curse of the forefather Adam hath been broken. /
Therefore, we all cry out to thee: ///
Rejoice, O divinely joyous Lady!”

Ode 4

Irmos: Beholding Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, lifted up upon the Cross, the Church stood rooted in place, and rightly it cried aloud: Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

The mystery appointed from before all ages hath been made manifest; and the earth and the heavens together cry aloud with joy.

O thou palace of the great King, hearken to the glad tidings that Christ the Truth hath already come to thee, and hath made His abode in thee.

The Redeemer of all hath appeared, setting aright the error of our first mother, making His abode within the womb of her who kneweth not wedlock; to Him let us cry aloud: Glory be to Thy power, O Lord!

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Habbákuk of old called thee the mountain overshadowed by the virtues, from which our God desireth to reveal Himself, O all-immaculate Virgin, thou restoration of mankind.

And now the troparia from the Triodion.

Ode 5

Irmos: Thou hast come, O Lord, as a light into the world: a holy light turning from the darkness of ignorance those who sing to Thee with faith.

O unblemished Ewe-lamb! Christ, the Lamb, hath hastened to enter thy womb, taking away our sins.

As it is written, the mystic rod doth blossom forth in time with a divine Flower, manifesting it to us from the root of Jesse.

Ripening like a vineyard at the cry of the archangel, O Virgin, prepare thyself to put forth the ripe and incorrupt cluster of the Fruit of thy womb.

Rejoice, O Isaiah, thou greatest of the prophets of old, for the Virgin whom thou didst foresee, hath conceived the Messenger of great counsel within her womb.

And now the troparia from the Triodion.

Ode 6

Irmos: I will sacrifice to Thee with a voice of praise, O Lord! The Church cries out to Thee, having been cleansed of the blood of demons by the blood which, for mercy's sake, flowed from Thy side.

The Archangel Gabriel proclaimeth to thee, "Rejoice!" for thou hast ineffably received in thy womb the joy which Eve lost through her transgression, O Lady.

The divine fire of the Godhead did not consumed thy womb, O Maiden, for the bush of old which burned yet was not consumed, prefigured thee, O all pure Lady.

Rejoice, O Virgin, thou mountain which Daniel foresaw in the Spirit! For from thee was the noetic Stone cut, which shall demolish the lifeless temples of the demons.

The King of peace hath come unto thee, and through thee He shall reconcile all who have been assailed and deceived by the wicked counsel of the serpent, O Mother of God.

And now the troparia from the Triodion.

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The Kontakion of the Forefeast, in Tone 8: *To the melody, "O victorious leader..."*

O Virgin Theotokos, thou art the beginning of salvation for us born on the earth, /
For the prince of the heavenly legions, the divine minister, Gabriel, was sent down
from heaven to present himself to thee; /
And he brought thee news of joyful gladness. ///
Therefore all cry to thee: Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!

Ode 7

Irmos: Blessèd art Thou, O all-praised God of our fathers, who saved the children of Abraham in the fire, and slew the Chaldeans, whom justice rightly pursued.

O noetic tabernacle, which the Bestower of the law doth love and doth desire to make His habitation, thou hast been filled with a sweet fragrance; for through thee He hath come to renew those who have fallen into corruption.

The divine choir of the prophets, perceiving the awaited coming of the Redeemer upon thee, hath cried out to thee: Rejoice, O thou deliverance of all! Rejoice, O thou who alone art the salvation of mankind!

Fear not the voice, neither marvel at the archangel who speaketh to thee; for he is the servant of God, come to reveal the great mystery to thee, which is ineffable even to the angels, O blessèd Virgin who knowest not wedlock.

Thou dost behold all creation enslaved by the enemy, O Virgin; but He whose good pleasure it was, hath through thee, and in the tender compassion of His mercy, taken pity upon it. Therefore, ignore not the words of the angel!

And now the troparia from the Triodion.

Ode 8

Irmos: Stretching forth his hands, Daniel the prophet closed the mouths of the lions in the pit; and the young lovers of piety, girded with strength, quenched the power of the fire, crying out: Bless ye the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Prepare thyself, O thou who knowest not wedlock, thou light cloud of the Light! For the never-setting Sun hath shined forth upon thee from on high, and after being hidden for a time within thee, shall be revealed to the world, dispelling all the darkness of evil.

The first among all the angels cries out to thee with joy, O pure Lady, announcing to thee, that the Messenger of great counsel who, in His goodness is to be made flesh from thee, and to Him do we cry aloud and say: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the

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Lord!

The Transcendent Lord who sitteth at the right hand of the Father hath desired to make His habitation in thee, O most pure Lady, that He may set thee, the most beloved and most beautiful Maiden, at Queen at His own right hand, as He extends it to all the fallen, thus saving us.

The Lord, our Creator, hath recognized thee as a pure rose of the valley and as a fragrant lily, and hath now desired of thy beauty, O pure Lady, to become incarnate from thy blood, that He may dispel the stench of deception of evil with thy blameless goodness.

And now the troparia from the Triodion.

Ode 9

Irmos: Through weakness, Eve brought about the curse of disobedience, but thou, O Virgin Theotokos, hast budded forth blessing unto the world in the Fruit of thy pregnancy. Therefore, we all magnify thee.

Eve took hold of the forbidden fruit, which resulted in empowering the destructive nature of death; but in thee, O Sovereign Lady, the mediating Fruit of immortality has been sown: Christ our sweet Savior, and glorifying Him, we glorify thee.

Bowing down the heavens, O Word, Thou hast come down to us, and the womb of the Virgin hath already been prepared for Thee to be the throne of Thy most mighty Majesty. By Thy coming Thou dost lift up all creation with Thy right hand from its fallen state.

O pure Lady, thou unsown field, receive at the archangel's salutation and the coming of the Word, who doth spring forth from thee like fruitful wheat, nourishing the ends of the earth with the grain of understanding, and worshiping Him, we glorify thee.

Christ desired thy beauty, O all-immaculate Lady, and made His abode within thy womb, that He might deliver the human race from the malice of the passions and bestow upon it its ancient beauty, and worshipping Him, we glorify thee.

And now the troparia from the Triodion.

Note: If the Forefeast should fall on a Saturday,

This Exapostilarion: Flying down from on high, Gabriel cried out: "Rejoice!," O Theotokos; for He Who sprang forth from thee blessed the children of Adam, annulling the whole curse of our first mother.

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Glory..., now and ever... Repeat above.

At the Aposticha, the stichera of the Day from the Triodion, (including the sticheron of the martyrs), and:

Glory..., now and ever..., in Tone 4:

Now the Theotokos has heard language she has never heard before, /
For the archangel spoke to her the words of the Annunciation. /
And accepting his salutation with faith, /
She conceived Thee the pre-eternal God /
Therefore we who are rejoicing cry aloud to thee: /
O God, Who immutably took on flesh from the Virgin ///
Grant peace to the world and great mercy to our souls.

At the First Hour, the Kathismas and prostrations, as usual.

Liturgy

The Troparion of the Forefeast, in Tone 4:

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Commands all to sing pre-festive praises, /
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