

NATIVITY

Royal Hours



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ROYAL HOURS OF NATIVITY

by + Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

Goming at the end of the Fore-feast, and indeed of the entire "Advent," the **Hours** summarize all the themes of the feast and make them into a last and solemn announcement. In the special psalms, hymns and biblical readings prescribed for each hour, the joy and power of Christ's Coming are proclaimed. It is one last meditation on the cosmic meaning of the Nativity, on the decisive and radical change it performed in the entire creation.

First Hour

Deacon: Bless Master!

Priest: Blessed is our God, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Reader: Amen. Glory to Thee, O God, glory to Thee! O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth; who art everywhere and fillest all things; Treasury of blessings, and Giver of life: come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us! (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O most-holy Trinity: have mercy on us. Lord: cleanse us from our sins. Master: pardon our transgressions. Holy One: visit and heal our infirmities, for Thy Name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

 ur Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven, give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Priest: For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Reader: Amen. Lord, have mercy. (12)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Come, let us worship God our King! Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God! Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and our God!

As the Psalms are chanted, the priest opens the royal doors, takes the Gospel and places it in the center of the Church, after which he with the censor and the deacon with a candle, make a full censuring of the Church, beginning by censuring around the Gospel, and concluding by censuring before it.

Psalm 5

Unto my words, give ear, O Lord; hear my cry. Attend unto the voice of my supplication, O my King and my God; for unto Thee will I pray, O Lord. In the morning Thou shalt hear my voice. In the morning shall I stand before Thee, and Thou shalt look upon me; for not a God that willest iniquity art Thou. He that worketh evil shall not dwell near Thee, nor shall transgressors abide before Thine eyes. Thou hast hated all them that work iniquity; Thou shalt destroy all them that speak a lie. A man that is bloody and deceitful shall the Lord abhor. But as for me, in the multitude of Thy mercy shall I go into Thy house; I shall worship toward Thy holy temple in fear of Thee. O Lord, guide me in the way of Thy righteousness; because of mine enemies, make straight my way before Thee. For in their mouth there is no truth; their heart is vain. Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues have they spoken deceitfully; judge them, O God. Let them fall down on account of their own devisings; according to the multitude of their ungodliness, cast them out, for they have embittered Thee, O Lord. And let all them be glad that hope in Thee; they shall ever rejoice, and Thou shalt dwell among them. And all shall glory in Thee that love Thy name, for Thou shalt bless the righteous. O Lord, as with a shield of Thy good pleasure hast Thou crowned us.

Psalm 44

My heart hath poured forth a good word; I speak of my works to the king; my tongue is the pen of a swiftly writing scribe. Comely art Thou in beauty more than the sons of men; grace hath been poured forth on Thy lips, wherefore God hath blessed Thee for ever. Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Mighty One, in Thy comeliness and Thy beauty. And bend Thy bow, and proceed prosperously, and be king, because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Thy right hand shall guide Thee wondrously. Thine arrows are sharp, O Mighty One, *(under Thee shall peoples fall)* sharp in the heart of the enemies of the king. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity. Wherefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness more than Thy fellows. Myrrh and stacte and cassia exhale from Thy garments, from the ivory palaces, whereby they have made Thee glad, they the daughters of kings in Thine honour. At Thy right hand stood the queen, arrayed in a vesture of inwoven gold, adorned in varied colours. Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear; and forget thine own people and thy father's house. And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty, for He Himself is thy Lord, and thou shalt worship Him. And Him shall the daughters of Tyre worship with gifts; the rich among the people shall entreat thy countenance. All the glory of the daughter of the King is within, with gold-fringed garments is she arrayed, adorned in varied colours. The virgins that follow after her shall be brought unto the King, those near her shall be

brought unto Thee. They shall be brought with gladness and rejoicing, they shall be brought into the temple of the King. In the stead of thy fathers, sons are born to thee; thou shalt make them princes over all the earth. I shall commemorate thy name in every generation and generation. Therefore shall peoples give praise unto thee for ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Psalm 45

ur God is refuge and strength, a helper in afflictions which mightily befall us. Therefore shall we not fear when the earth be shaken, nor when the mountains be removed into the heart of the seas. Their waters roared and were troubled, the mountains were troubled by His might. The rushings of the river make glad the city of God; the Most High hath hallowed His tabernacle. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be shaken; God shall help her right early in the morning. The nations were troubled, kingdoms tottered, the Most High gave forth His voice, the earth was shaken. The Lord of hosts is with us, our helper is the God of Jacob. Come and behold the works of God, what marvels He hath wrought on the earth, making wars to cease unto the ends of the earth. He will crush the bow and will shatter the weapon, and shields will He utterly burn with fire. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us, our helper is the God of Jacob.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Glory to Thee, O God. (3)

Lord, have mercy. (3) Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

* Troparion (Tone 4)

Mary was of David's seed, So she went with Joseph to register in Bethlehem. She bore in her womb the fruit not sown by man. The time for the birth was at hand. Since there was no room at the inn, the cave became a beautiful palace for the queen. Christ is born, raising up the image that fell of old.

** When Christmas Day falls on Sunday or Monday, so that the Royal Hours are served on December 22 or 23, the Troparion at all the hours is as follows:*

Alternate Troparion (Tone 4)

Prepare, O Bethlehem, for Eden has been opened to all. Adorn yourself, O Ephratha, for the Tree of Life blossoms forth from the virgin in the cave. Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the Divine Fruit; if we eat of it, we shall live forever and not die like Adam. Christ comes to restore the image which He made in the beginning!

Reader: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

What shall we call thee, O full of grace? Heaven, for from thee hast shone forth the Sun of Righteousness; Paradise, for thou hast budded forth the flower of immortality; Virgin, for thou hast remained undefiled; Pure Mother, for thou hast held in thine arms the Son, who is God of all. Beseech Him to save our souls.

(Tone 8) **Make ready, O Bethlehem. Let the manger be prepared. Let the cave show its welcome. The truth comes and the shadow flees. God is born of a virgin and revealed to men. He is clothed in our flesh, and makes it divine. Therefore Adam is renewed, and cries out with Eve, Thy favor has appeared on earth, O Lord, For the salvation of the human race.**

Verse: God shall come from Teman, and the Holy One from the mountain overshadowed by the forest. *(Habakkuk 3:3)*

(Tone 3) **Now the prophecy approaches its fulfillment, for it had mystically proclaimed: "Thou, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art by no means the least among Judah's rulers. Prepare thy cave! From thee the Ruler of the nations comes to me in the flesh: Christ our God, born of a young Virgin. He will feed His flock, the new Israel."// Let us all give Him glory!**

Verse: Lord, I have heard the report of Thee, and Thy work, Lord, do I fear. *(Habakkuk 3:2)*

(repeat) **Now the prophecy... omitted in our practice**

Verse: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

(Tone 8) **Joseph said to the Virgin: "What has happened to thee, O Mary? I am troubled; what can I say to thee? Doubt clouds my mind; depart from me! What has happened to thee, O Mary? Instead of honor, thou bringest me shame. Instead of joy, thou fillest me with grief. Men who praised me will blame me. I cannot bear condemnation from every side. I received thee, a pure virgin, from the priests of the temple of the Lord.// And what is this that I now see?"**

And immediately the Prokeimenon of the Prophecy follows:

Deacon: Wisdom! Let us attend!

Reader: *The Prokeimenon of the Prophecy in the 4th Tone:* The Lord said to me: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee. (*Psalm 2*)

Choir: **The Lord said to me: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee.**

Reader: Ask of me, and I shall give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, and the ends of the earth as Thy possession.

Choir: **The Lord said to me: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee.**

Reader: The Lord said to me: Thou art my Son...

Choir: **This day have I begotten Thee.**

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The reading from Prophecy of Micah (*5:2-4*)

Deacon: Let us attend.

Reader: *Thus saith the Lord:* "But you, Bethlehem Ephrata, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." Therefore He shall give them up, until the time that she who is in labor has given birth; then the remnant of His brethren shall return to the children of Israel. And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God; and they shall abide, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth.

The Epistle and Gospel follow immediately; The Gospel is not preceded by censing.

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The reading from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Hebrews (*1:1-12*)

Deacon: Let us attend.

Reader: *Brethren,* God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did

He ever say: "You are My Son, today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son"? But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire." But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions." And: "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail."

Deacon: And that we may be accounted worthy of hearing the Holy Gospel, let us pray to the Lord God!

Choir: Lord, have mercy! (3)

Deacon: Wisdom, let us attend! Let us listen to the Holy Gospel.

Priest: Peace be unto all!

Choir: And to your spirit!

Priest: The reading is from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew (1:18-25)

Choir: Glory to Thee, O Lord, Glory to Thee!

Deacon: *Let us attend!*

Priest: Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins. So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, "God with us." Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.

Choir: Glory to Thee, O Lord, Glory to Thee!

Reader: Order my steps in Thy word, and so shall no wickedness have dominion over me. Deliver me from the wrongful dealings of men, and so shall I keep Thy commandments. Show the light of Thy countenance upon Thy Servant, and teach me Thy statutes. Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise, O Lord, that I may sing of Thy glory and honor all the day long.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us! (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O most-holy Trinity: have mercy on us. Lord: cleanse us from our sins. Master: pardon our transgressions. Holy One: visit and heal our infirmities, for Thy Name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (3)

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ur Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven, give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Priest: For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Kontakion *(Tone 3)*

Today the Virgin comes to the cave to give birth to the Eternal Word. Hear the glad tidings and rejoice, O universe! Glorify with the Angels and the shepherds // the Eternal God, Who is willing to appear as a little Child!

Reader: Lord, have mercy. (12)



Thou who at every season and every hour, in heaven and on earth, art worshipped and glorified, O Christ our God, long-suffering, merciful, and compassionate; who lovest the just and showest mercy upon the sinner; who callest all men to salvation through the promise of blessings to come: O Lord, in this hour receive our supplications and direct our lives according to Thy commandments. Sanctify our souls, hallow our bodies, correct our thoughts, cleanse our minds; deliver us from all tribulations, evil and

distress. Surround us with Thy holy angels, that guided and guarded by their host, we may attain to the unity of the faith and to the knowledge of Thine un-approachable glory, for Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim: without defilement thou gavest birth to God the Word: true Theotokos, we magnify thee. *In the name of the Lord, Father bless.*

Priest: God be bountiful unto us, and bless us and show the light of His countenance upon us, and have mercy us.

Reader: Amen. O Christ, the True Light who enlightenest and sanctifiest every man who comes into the world, let the light of Thy countenance shine upon us, that in it we may behold the unapproachable light, and guide our footsteps aright to the keeping of Thy commandments, through the prayers of Thy most pure Mother, and of all Thy saints. Amen.

Third Hour

Reader: Come, let us worship God, our King! Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God! Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and our God!

As the Psalms are chanted, the deacon censes around the Gospel, after which he censes the altar, the sanctuary, the iconostas, and the people, then the main icons again, concluding by censing before the Gospel.

Psalm 66

God be gracious unto us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us and have mercy on us, That we may know upon the earth Thy way, among all the nations Thy salvation. Let the peoples give Thee praise, O God, let all the peoples praise Thee. Let the nations be glad and rejoice, for Thou shalt judge peoples with uprightness; and nations shalt Thou guide upon the earth. Let the peoples give Thee praise, O God, let all the peoples praise Thee; the earth hath yielded her fruit. Let God, our God, bless us; let God bless us, and let all the ends of the earth fear Him.

Psalm 86

His foundations are in the holy mountains; the Lord loveth the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. I will make mention of Raab and Babylon to them that know me. And lo, the foreigners and Tyre and the people of the Ethiopians, these were born there. A man will say: Mother Sion; and: That man was born in her; and: The Most High Himself hath founded her. The Lord shall tell it in the writ of the peoples and the princes, even these that were born in her. How joyous are all they that have their habitation in Thee.

Psalm 50

Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy; and according to the multitude of Thy compassions blot out my transgression. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know mine iniquity, and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil before Thee, that Thou mightest be justified in Thy words, and prevail when Thou art judged. For behold, I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother bear me. For behold, Thou hast loved truth; the hidden and secret things of Thy wisdom hast Thou made manifest unto me. Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be made clean; Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow. Thou shalt make me to hear joy and gladness; the bones that be humbled, they shall rejoice. Turn Thy face away from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and with Thy governing Spirit establish me. I shall teach

transgressors Thy ways, and the ungodly shall turn back unto Thee. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation; my tongue shall rejoice in Thy righteousness. O Lord, Thou shalt open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Thy praise. For if Thou hadst desired sacrifice, I had given it; with whole-burnt offerings Thou shalt not be pleased. A sacrifice unto God is a broken spirit; a heart that is broken and humbled God will not despise. Do good, O Lord, in Thy good pleasure unto Sion, and let the walls of Jerusalem be builded. Then shalt Thou be pleased with a sacrifice of righteousness, with oblation and whole-burnt offerings. Then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Glory to Thee, O God! (3)

Lord, have mercy. (3) Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

***Troparion** (Tone 4)

Mary was of David's seed, So she went with Joseph to register in Bethlehem. She bore in her womb the fruit not sown by man. The time for the birth was at hand. Since there was no room at the inn, the cave became a beautiful palace for the queen. Christ is born, raising up the image that fell of old.

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Reader: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O Theotokos, thou art the true vine laden with the fruit of life. We pray to thee, O Lady: intercede together with the Apostles and all the saints, that mercy may be granted to our souls.

(Tone 6) **He is our God; there is no other to compare with Him. Born of a Virgin, He comes to live with men. The only-begotten Son appears as a mortal man. He rests in a lowly manger. The Lord of Glory is wrapped in swaddling clothes. A star leads the Wise men to worship Him, and with them we sing:// "O Holy Trinity, save our souls!"**

Verse: God shall come from Teman, and the Holy One from the mountain overshadowed by the forest. (*Habakkuk 3:3*)

(Tone 8) **Before Thy birth, O Lord, the hosts of Angels already perceived the mystery. They were struck with wonder and trembled, for Thou, Who didst adorn the heavens with stars, art now well-pleased to be born as a babe. Thou holdest the ends of the earth in Thy hands; but now Thou art laid in a manger of dumb beasts. Yet all these things fulfilled Thy saving plan, by which Thy compassion was revealed to us.// O Christ of great mercy, glory to Thee!**

Verse: Lord, I have heard the report of Thee, and Thy work, Lord, do I fear. (*Habakkuk 3:2*)

(repeat) **Before Thy birth...** *omitted in our practice*

Verse: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

(Tone 3) **Tell us, O Joseph, how is it that thou bringest to Bethlehem, great with child, the Maiden whom thou didst receive from the Holy of Holies? "I have searched the Prophets," he said. "I have been instructed by an Angel. I am convinced that Mary will give birth to God in a manner beyond understanding. Wise men from the East will come to worship Him, offering precious gifts in adoration."// O Lord, incarnate for us, glory to Thee!**

And immediately the Prokeimenon of the Prophecy follows:

Deacon: Wisdom! Let us attend!

Reader: *The Prokeimenon of the Prophecy in the 4th tone:* For unto us a Child is born. Unto us a Son is given. (*Isaiah 9:6*)

Choir: For unto us a Child is born. Unto us a Son is given.

Reader: And the government shall be upon His shoulder.

Choir: For unto us a Child is born. Unto us a Son is given.

Reader: For unto us a Child is born...

Choir: Unto us a Son is given.

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The Reading from the Prophecy of Baruch (*3:35-4:4*)

Deacon: Let us attend.

Reader: Hear, O Israel: This is our God; no other can be compared to him! He found the whole way to knowledge, and gave her to Jacob his servant and to Israel whom He loved. Afterward she appeared on earth and lived among men. She is the book of the commandments of God, and the law that endures for ever. All who hold fast will live, and those who forsake her will die. Turn, O Jacob, and take her; walk toward the shining of her light. Do not give your glory to another, or your advantage to an alien people. Happy we are, O Israel, for we know what is pleasing to God.

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The reading from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Galatians (3:23-29)

Deacon: Let us attend.

Reader: *Brethren*, before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Deacon: And that we may be accounted worthy of hearing the Holy Gospel, let us pray to the Lord God!

Choir: **Lord, have mercy!** (3)

Deacon: Wisdom, let us attend! Let us listen to the Holy Gospel.

Priest: Peace be unto all!

Choir: **And to your spirit!**

Priest: The reading from the Holy Gospel according to the St. Luke (2:1-20)

Choir: **Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee!**

Deacon: *Let us attend!*

Priest: And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

Choir: Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee!

After the Gospel, the reader continues:

Reader: Blessed be the Lord God, blessed be the Lord from day to day, and may the God of our salvation prosper us, for He is our God, the God of salvation.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us! (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O most-holy Trinity: have mercy on us. Lord: cleanse us from our sins. Master: pardon our transgressions. Holy One: visit and heal our infirmities, for Thy Name's sake.

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ur Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven, give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Priest: For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Kontakion *(Tone 3)*

Today the Virgin comes to the cave to give birth to the Eternal Word. Hear the glad tidings and rejoice, O universe! Glorify with the Angels and the shepherds // the Eternal God, Who is willing to appear as a little Child!

Reader: Lord, have mercy. *(12)*



Thou, who at every season and every hour, in heaven and on earth, art worshipped and glorified, O Christ our God, long-suffering, merciful, and compassionate; who lovest the just and showest mercy upon the sinner; who callest all men to salvation through the promise of blessings to come: O Lord, in this hour receive our supplications and direct our lives according to Thy commandments. Sanctify our souls, hallow our bodies, correct our thoughts, cleanse our minds; deliver us from all tribulations, evil and distress. Surround us with Thy holy angels, that guided and guarded by their host, we may attain to the unity of the faith, and to the knowledge of Thine unapproachable glory, for Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. *(3)* Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim: without defilement thou gavest birth to God the Word: true Theotokos, we magnify thee. *In the name of the Lord, Father bless.*

Priest: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on us, and save us!

Reader: Amen. O God the Master, Father Almighty, O Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son, and Thou, O Holy Spirit, one Godhead, one Power, have mercy upon me, a sinner, and according to Thy divine judgments save me, Thine unworthy servant, for Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

Sixth Hour

Reader: Come, let us worship God, our King! Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God! Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and our God!

As the Psalms are chanted, the deacon censes around the Gospel, after which he censes the altar, the sanctuary, the iconostas, and the people, then the main icons again, concluding by censing before the Gospel.

Psalm 71



God, give Thy judgement to the king, and Thy righteousness to the son of the king, That he may judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgement. Let the mountains receive peace for the people, and let the hills receive righteousness. He shall judge the beggars among the people, and shall save the sons of the poor, and shall humble the false accuser. And He shall continue as long as the sun, and before the moon from generation to generation. He shall come down like rain upon a fleece, and like rain-drops that fall upon the earth. In His days shall righteousness dawn forth an abundance of peace, until the moon be taken away. And He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the rivers even unto the ends of the inhabited earth. Before Him shall the Ethiopians fall down, and His enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tharsis and the islands shall bring gifts, kings of the Arabians and of Saba shall bring presents. And all the kings of the earth shall worship Him, all the nations shall serve Him, For He hath delivered the beggar from the oppressor, and the poor man for whom there was no helper. He shall spare the poor man and the pauper, and the souls of the poor shall He save. From usury and from injustices shall He redeem their souls, and precious shall be His name before them. And He shall live, and there shall be given unto Him of the gold of Arabia, and they shall make prayer concerning Him always; all the day long shall they bless Him. He shall be a support in the earth on the summits of the mountains; exalted more than Lebanon shall be His fruit, and they of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth. His name shall be blessed unto the ages, before the sun doth His name continue. And in Him shall be blessed all the tribes of the earth, all the nations shall call Him blessed. Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel, Who alone doeth wonders. And blessed is the name of His glory for ever, and unto the ages of ages. And all the earth shall be filled with His glory. So be it. So be it.

Psalm 131

Remember, O Lord, David and all his meekness. How he made an oath unto the Lord, and vowed unto the God of Jacob: I shall not go into the dwelling of my house, I shall not ascend upon the bed of my couch, I shall not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eyelids, nor rest to my temples, Until I find a place for the Lord, a habitation for the God of Jacob. Lo, we have heard of it in Ephratha, we have found it in

the plains of the wood. Let us go forth into His tabernacles, let us worship at the place where His feet have stood. Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest, Thou and the ark of Thy holiness. Thy priests shall be clothed with righteousness, and Thy righteous shall rejoice. For the sake of David Thy servant, turn not Thy face away from Thine anointed one. The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David, and He will not annul it: Of the fruit of thy loins will I set upon thy throne. If thy sons keep My covenant and these testimonies which I will teach them, Their sons also shall sit for ever on thy throne. For the Lord hath elected Sion, He hath chosen her to be a habitation for Himself. This is My rest for ever and ever; here will I dwell, for I have chosen her. Blessing, I will bless her pursuit; her beggars will I satisfy with bread. Her priests will I clothe with salvation, and her saints with rejoicing shall rejoice. There will I make to spring forth a horn for David, I have prepared a lamp for My Christ. His enemies will I clothe with shame, but upon Him shall My sanctification flourish.

Psalm 90

He that dwelleth in the help of the Most High shall abide in the shelter of the God of heaven. He shall say unto the Lord: Thou art my helper and my refuge. He is my God, and I will hope in Him. For He shall deliver thee from the snare of the hunters and from every troubling word. With His shoulders will He overshadow thee, and under His wings shalt thou have hope. With a shield will His truth encompass thee; thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day, Nor for the thing that walketh in darkness, nor for the mishap and demon of noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but unto thee shall it not come nigh. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and thou shalt see the reward of sinners. For Thou, O Lord, art my hope. Thou madest the Most High thy refuge; No evils shall come nigh thee, and no scourge shall draw nigh unto thy dwelling. For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. On their hands shall they bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Upon the asp and basilisk shalt thou tread, and thou shalt trample upon the lion and dragon. For he hath set his hope on Me, and I will deliver him; I will shelter him because he hath known My name. He shall cry unto Me, and I will hearken unto him. I am with him in affliction, and I will rescue him and glorify him. With length of days will I satisfy him, and I will show him My salvation.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Glory to Thee, O God! (3)

Lord, have mercy. (3) Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

*** Troparion (Tone 4)**

Mary was of David's seed, so she went with Joseph to register in Bethlehem. She bore in her womb the fruit not sown by man. Since there was no room at the inn, the cave became a beautiful palace for the queen. Christ is born, raising up the image that fell of old.

** When Christmas Day falls on Sunday or Monday, so that the Royal Hours are served on December 22 or 23, the Troparion at all the hours is as follows:*

Alternate Troparion (Tone 4)

Prepare, O Bethlehem, for Eden has been opened to all. Adorn yourself, O Ephratha, for the Tree of Life blossoms forth from the virgin in the cave. Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the Divine Fruit; if we eat of it, we shall live forever and not die like Adam. Christ comes to restore the image which He made in the beginning!

Reader: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

We have no boldness because of the multitude of our sins, but entreat Him Who was born of thee, O Virgin Theotokos, for the prayer of a mother has great power to win the favor of the Master. Do not despise the supplications of sinners, O all-pure one, for merciful and strong to save is He Who willed to suffer for us!

(Tone 1) **Come, O God-inspired faithful, arise and behold the descent of God from on high! He manifests Himself to us in Bethlehem. Let us cleanse our minds and offer Him a life of virtue instead of myrrh. Let us prepare with faith to celebrate His Nativity, storing up spiritual treasure and crying out: "Glory in the highest to God in Trinity! His good pleasure is now revealed to men.// In His love for mankind He sets Adam free from the ancestral curse."**

Verse: God shall come from Teman, and the Holy One from the mountain overshadowed by the forest. *(Habakkuk 3:3)*

(Tone 4) **Hearken, O heaven! Give ear, O earth! Let the foundations of the earth be shaken! Let trembling seize the regions beneath the earth, for our God and Creator has clothed Himself in created flesh; He fashioned all creation, yet reveals Himself in the womb of her that He formed. O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments,// and how unsearchable His ways!**

Verse: O Lord, I have heard what Thou hast done, and am filled with awe.

(repeat) Listen, O heaven... omitted in our practice

Verse: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

(Tone 5) **Come, O Christ-bearing people, let us behold wonders that will amaze every mind! As we worship in faith, let us sing praises! Today a Maiden great with child goes up to Bethlehem. There she will give birth to the Lord. Choirs of Angels go before her. Joseph, her husband, cried out when he saw these things: "What is this strange mystery in thee, O Virgin? How wilt thou bear a child, // O calf, who hast never borne the yoke of man!"**

And immediately the Prokeimenon of the Prophecy follows:

Deacon: Wisdom! Let us attend!

Reader: *The Prokeimenon of the Prophecy in the 4th Tone:* Out of the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee. The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind. *(Ps 110)*

Choir: **Out of the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee. The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind.**

Reader: The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.

Choir: **Out of the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee. The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind.**

Reader: Out of the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee...

Choir: **The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind.**

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The Reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah *(7:10-16; 8:1-4, 8-10)*

Deacon: Let us attend.

Reader: The Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying, "Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!" Then he said, "Hear now, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also? "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

“Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. “For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings. Moreover the Lord said to me, “Take a large scroll, and write on it with a man’s pen concerning Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. And I will take for Myself faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah.” Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the Lord said to me, “Call his name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz; for before the child shall have knowledge to cry ‘My father’ and ‘My mother,’ the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be taken away before the king of Assyria.’ Be shattered, O you peoples, and be broken in pieces! Give ear, all you from far countries. Gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces; take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak the word, but it will not stand, for God is with us.

The Epistle and Gospel follow immediately. The priest proclaims the Gospel from the center of the church. The Gospel is not preceded by censing.

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The reading from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Hebrews (1:10 - 2:3)

Deacon: Let us attend.

Reader: *Brethren, it is written:* “You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail.” But to which of the angels has He ever said: “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him.

Deacon: And that we may be accounted worthy of hearing the Holy Gospel, let us pray to the Lord God!

Choir: Lord, have mercy! (3)

Deacon: Wisdom, let us attend! Let us listen to the Holy Gospel.

Priest: Peace be unto all!

Choir: And to your spirit!

Priest: The reading is from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew (2:1-12)

Choir: Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee!

Deacon: *Let us attend!*

Priest: Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.' " Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also." When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

Choir: Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee!

After the Gospel, the reader continues:

Reader: Let Thy tender mercies, O Lord, speedily go before us, for we have become exceedingly poor. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy Name: O Lord, deliver us and purge away our sins, for Thy Name's sake.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us! (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O most-holy Trinity: have mercy on us. Lord: cleanse us from our sins. Master: pardon our transgressions. Holy One: visit and heal our infirmities, for Thy Name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

ur Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven, give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Priest: For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Kontakion *(Tone 3)*

Today the Virgin comes to the cave to give birth to the Eternal Word. Hear the glad tidings and rejoice, O universe! Glorify with the Angels and the shepherds // the Eternal God, Who is willing to appear as a little Child!

Reader: Lord, have mercy. (12)

 Thou, who at every season and every hour, in heaven and on earth, art worshipped and glorified, O Christ our God, long-suffering, merciful, and compassionate; who lovest the just and showest mercy upon the sinner; who callest all men to salvation through the promise of blessings to come: O Lord, in this hour receive our supplications and direct our lives according to Thy commandments. Sanctify our souls, hallow our bodies, correct our thoughts, cleanse our minds; deliver us from all tribulations, evil and distress. Surround us with Thy holy angels that guided and guarded by their host, we may attain to the unity of the faith, and to the knowledge of Thine unapproachable glory, for Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim: without defilement thou gavest birth to God the Word: true Theotokos, we magnify thee. *In the name of the Lord, Father bless.*

Priest: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and save us!

Reader: Amen. O God, the Lord of hosts, and Author of all creation, who in Thy boundless tender mercy hast sent down Thine only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, for the salvation of the human race, and through His Holy Cross hast torn up the handwriting of our sins and thereby triumphed over the princes and dominions of darkness: Do Thou, O Master, who lovest mankind, accept these prayers of thanksgiving and supplication even from us sinners, and deliver us from every deadly and dark transgression and from all the visible and invisible enemies that seek to do us harm. Nail our flesh with the fear of Thee, and let not our hearts incline to evil words or thoughts, but wound our souls with Thy love, that ever gazing upon Thee, guided by Thy light and beholding Thee, the eternal light that no man can approach, we may send up unceasing praises and thanks unto Thee, the Father without beginning, together with Thine only-begotten Son, and Thy most holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Ninth Hour

Reader: Come, let us worship God, our King! Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God! Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and our God!

As the Psalms are chanted, the priest with the censor, and the deacon with a candle, make a full censuring of the Church beginning by censuring around the Gospel, and concluding by censuring before it.

Psalm 109

The Lord said unto my Lord: Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet. A sceptre of power shall the Lord send unto Thee out of Sion; rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies. With Thee is dominion in the day of Thy power, in the splendour of Thy saints. From the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee. The Lord hath sworn and will not repent: Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek. The Lord at Thy right hand hath broken kings in the day of His wrath. He shall judge among the nations, He shall fill them with dead bodies, He shall crush the heads of many upon the earth. He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall He lift up His head.

Psalm 110

I will confess Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart, in the council of the upright and in the congregation. Great are the works of the Lord, sought out in all the things that He hath willed. Confession and majesty are His work, and His righteousness abideth unto ages of ages. He made a remembrance of His wondrous deeds; merciful and compassionate is the Lord; He hath given food to them that fear Him. He will be mindful for ever of His covenant; the power of His works hath He declared unto His people, That He may give them the inheritance of the nations; the works of His hands are truth and judgement. Faithful are all His commandments, confirmed unto ages of ages, made in truth and uprightness. He hath sent redemption unto His people, He hath enjoined His covenant for ever; holy and terrible is His name. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and all they that foster this have a good understanding. His praise abideth unto ages of ages.

Psalm 85

Bow down Thine ear, O Lord, and hearken unto me, for poor and needy am I. Preserve my soul, for I am holy; save Thy servant, O my God, that hopeth in Thee. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for unto Thee will I cry all the day long; make glad the soul of Thy servant, for unto Thee have I lifted up my soul. For Thou, O Lord, art good and gentle, and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee. Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer, and attend unto the voice of my supplication. In the day of mine affliction have I cried unto

Thee, for Thou hast heard me. There is none like unto Thee among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like unto Thy works. All the nations whom Thou hast made shall come and shall worship before Thee, O Lord, and shall glorify Thy name. For Thou art great and workest wonders; Thou alone art God. Guide me, O Lord, in Thy way, and I will walk in Thy truth; let my heart rejoice that I may fear Thy name. I will confess Thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Thy name for ever. For great is Thy mercy upon me, and Thou hast delivered my soul from the nethermost hades. O God, transgressors have risen up against me, and the assembly of the mighty hath sought after my soul, and they have not set Thee before them. But Thou, O Lord my God, art compassionate and merciful, long-suffering and plenteous in mercy, and true. Look upon me and have mercy upon me; give Thy strength unto Thy servant, and save the son of Thy handmaiden. Work in me a sign unto good, and let them that hate me behold and be put to shame; for Thou, O Lord, hast helped me and comforted me.

Glory to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Glory to Thee, O God! (3)

Lord, have mercy. (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

*** Troparion** *(Tone 4)*

Mary was of David's seed, So she went with Joseph to register in Bethlehem. She bore in her womb the fruit not sown by man. The time for the birth was at hand. Since there was no room at the inn, the cave became a beautiful palace for the queen. Christ is born, raising up the image that fell of old.

** When Christmas Day falls on Sunday or Monday, so that the Royal Hours are served on December 22 or 23, the Troparion at all the hours is as follows:*

Alternative Troparion *(Tone 4)*

Prepare, O Bethlehem, for Eden has been opened to all. Adorn yourself, O Ephratha, for the Tree of Life blossoms forth from the virgin in the cave. Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the Divine Fruit; if we eat of it, we shall live forever and not die like Adam. Christ comes to restore the image which He made in the beginning!

Reader: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O Loving Lord, who for our sakes wast born of a virgin and hast endured crucifixion, trampling down death by death and as God revealing the Resurrection: Despise not the works of Thy hands, but show Thy love for mankind, O merciful one. Accept the prayers made on our behalf by her who gave Thee birth, and save Thy despairing people, O our Savior.

(Tone 7) **Herod was filled with alarm When he saw the righteous wise men. Overcome by fury, He determined precisely when the Child was born. Mothers were robbed of their infants: Their tender lives were reaped as a bitter harvest. Milk stopped flowing and breasts dried up. Great was the suffering! Therefore assemble in holy fear, O faithful, To worship the birth of Christ!**

verse: God shall come from Teman, and the Holy One from the mountain overshadowed by the forest. *(Habakkuk 3:3)*

(Tone 2) **When Joseph went up to Bethlehem, his heart was filled with sadness. But thou didst cry out to Him, O Virgin: "Why art thou so troubled? Why art thou in misery seeing me with child? Dost thou not understand at all? I bear a fearful mystery. Cast thy fears away, and learn a strange wonder: God, in His mercy, descends from heaven to earth. Within my womb He has taken flesh. When He is pleased to be born, thou shalt see Him. Thou shalt rejoice, and worship Him, thy Creator. The Angels ceaselessly praise Him in song, // glorifying Him with the Father and the Holy Spirit."**

Verse: Lord, I have heard the report of Thee, and Thy work, Lord, do I fear. *(Habakkuk 3:2)*

(repeat) When Joseph went up... omitted in our practice

Verse: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

(Tone 6) **Today He Who holds the whole creation in His hand is born of a Virgin. He Whose essence none can touch is bound in swaddling-clothes as a mortal Man. God, Who in the beginning fashioned the heavens, lies in a manger. He who rained manna on His people in the wilderness is fed on milk from His mother's breast. The Bridegroom of the Church summons the wise men; the Son of the Virgin accepts their gifts. We worship Thy birth, O Christ. We worship Thy birth, O Christ. We worship Thy birth, O Christ. // Show us also Thy Holy Theophany!**

And immediately the Prokeimenon of the Prophecy follows:

Deacon: Wisdom! Let us attend!

Reader: *The Prokeimenon of the Prophecy in the 4th Tone:* "Zion is my mother," a man will say, "and such a man was born in her." (*Psalms 87*)

Choir: "Zion is my mother," a man will say, "and such a man was born in her."

Reader: His foundations are on the holy mountain, the Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

Choir: "Zion is my mother," a man will say, "and such a man was born in her."

Reader: "Zion is my mother," a man will say...

Choir: ...and such a man was born in her."

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah (*9:6-7*)

Deacon: Let us attend.

Reader: *Thus saith the Lord:* "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His Name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

The Epistle and Gospel follow immediately. The priest proclaims the Gospel from the center of the church. The Gospel is not preceded by censing.

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The reading is from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Hebrews (*2:11-18*)

Deacon: Let us attend.

Reader: *Brethren,* both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise

shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

Deacon: And that we may be accounted worthy of hearing the Holy Gospel, let us pray to the Lord God!

Choir: Lord, have mercy! (3)

Deacon: Wisdom, let us attend! Let us listen to the Holy Gospel.

Priest: Peace be unto all!

Choir: And to your spirit!

Priest: The reading is from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew (2:13-23)

Choir: Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee!

Deacon: *Let us attend!*

Priest: Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more." Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

Choir: Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee!

After the Gospel, the reader continues:

Reader: For Thy holy Name's sake, do not abandon us forever; do not annul Thy covenant; do not take away Thy mercy from us, for the sake of Abraham Thy beloved, and Isaac Thy servant, and Israel Thy holy one.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us! (3)
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O most-holy Trinity: have mercy on us. Lord: cleanse us from our sins. Master: pardon our transgressions. Holy One: visit and heal our infirmities, for Thy Name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

ur Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven, give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Priest: For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Kontakion *(Tone 3)*

Today the Virgin comes to the cave to give birth to the Eternal Word. Hear the glad tidings and rejoice, O universe! Glorify with the Angels and the shepherds // the Eternal God, Who is willing to appear as a little Child!

Reader: Lord, have mercy. (12)

 Thou who at every season and every hour, in heaven and on earth, art worshipped and glorified, O Christ our God, long-suffering, merciful, and compassionate; who lovest the just and showest mercy upon the sinner; who callest all men to salvation through the promise of blessings to come: O Lord, in this hour receive our supplications

and direct our lives according to Thy commandments. Sanctify our souls, hallow our bodies, correct our thoughts, cleanse our minds; deliver us from all tribulations, evil and distress. Surround us with Thy holy angels, that guided and guarded by their host, we may attain to the unity of the faith and to the knowledge of Thine unapproachable glory, for Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim: without defilement thou gavest birth to God the Word: true Theotokos, we magnify thee. In the name of the Lord, Father bless.

Priest: God be bountiful unto us, and bless us; and show the light of His countenance upon us, and have mercy us.

Reader: Amen. O Master and Lord, Jesus Christ our God, who art long-suffering towards our sins and hast brought us even unto this present hour, in which, hanging upon the life-giving cross, Thou hast opened unto the good thief the way into paradise, and destroyed death by death: be merciful to us, Thy humble and sinful and unworthy servants. For we have sinned and transgressed, and we are not worthy to lift up our eyes and look at the height of heaven, since we have forsaken the path of Thy righteousness and have walked according to the desires of our own hearts. But we pray Thee of Thy boundless goodness, spare us, O Lord, according to the abundance of Thy mercy, and save us for Thy holy name's sake, for our days are consumed in vanity. Deliver us from the hand of the adversary, forgive us our sins, and kill the passions of the flesh, that putting off the old man, we may be clothed with the new, and may live for Thee, our Master and Protector; and that so, following Thine ordinances, we may attain to eternal rest, in the place where all the joyful dwell. For Thou, O Christ our God, art indeed the true joy and gladness of those that love Thee, and unto Thee we ascribe glory, together with Thy Father, who is without beginning, and Thy most holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Dismissal

Priest: Glory to Thee, O Christ our God, and and our only sure Hope, glory to Thee.

Choir: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen. Lord, have mercy. (3) Father, bless.

Priest: May Christ our True God, through the prayers of His Most Holy Mother, and of all the Saints, have mercy upon us and save us!

Choir: Amen.

The Vespereal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is prescribed to be served following Royal Hours. But in our current parish practice we are serving the Royal Hours prior to the Eve of Nativity, and will celebrate the Vespereal Divine Liturgy on the morning of Dec 24.

**The end.
Glory to God!**