**DECEMBER 20**

**Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ/**

**Hieromartyr Ignatius the Godbearer, Bishop of Antioch**

**"Lord I Call..." Tone 1**

Lord, I call upon You, hear me!

Hear me, O Lord!

Lord, I call upon You, hear me!

Receive the voice of my prayer,

when I call upon You!//

Hear me, O Lord!

Let my prayer arise

in Your sight as incense,

and let the lifting up of my hands

be an evening sacrifice!//

Hear me, O Lord!

*v. (6) If You, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You.*

**Tone 1** *(for the Forefeast)**(Idiomelon, by Anatolius)*

O people, let us celebrate

the Forefeast of Christ's Nativity!

Let us raise our minds on high,

as we go up to Bethlehem in spirit!

With spiritual thoughts, let us contemplate the Virgin

as she hastens to the cave to give birth to the Lord and God of all!

Joseph, as he contemplated the greatness of the wonders,

thought that he saw only a human Child wrapped in swaddling clothes,

but from all that came to pass he discovered the Child to be the true

God//

Who grants the world great mercy.

*v. (5) For Your name's sake I have waited for You, O Lord, my soul has waited for Your word; my soul has hoped on the Lord.*

O people, let us celebrate

the Forefeast of Christ's Nativity!

Let us raise our minds on high,

as we go up to Bethlehem in spirit!

Let us behold the great mystery in the cavern:

for, once again, Eden is opened,

as God comes forth from a pure Virgin,

remaining the same perfect God, and perfect Man.

Therefore, let us cry aloud to Him:

“Holy God, the Father without beginning,

Holy Mighty, the incarnate Son,

Holy Immortal, the Spirit and Comforter,//

O Holy Trinity, glory to You!”

*v. (4) From the morning watch until night, from the morning watch let Israel hope on the Lord!*

Listen, O heaven, and give ear, O earth;

for behold, the Son and Word of the Father

comes forth to be born of a Maiden who has not known man,

at the good pleasure of the Father, Who begot Him before all ages,

and conceived by the co-operation of the Holy Spirit.

Bethlehem, make ready; Eden, open your gates,

for “He Who Is” comes to be that which He was not,

and He Who formed all creation takes the form of a man,//

granting the world great mercy!

*v. (3) For with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is plenteous redemption, and He will deliver Israel from all his iniquities.*

**Tone 4** *(for Hieromartyr Ignatius)**(Called from above)*

You were fittingly called the bearer of God, O blessed Ignatius,

when the Master in His mercy embraced you,

revealing the teachings of the highest way of life to you.

Then you received wonderful enlightenment,

drawing light from its Source as a sponge draws water.

Therefore you followed in the steps of Christ our God Who called you.//

Entreat Him that He will save and enlighten our souls!

*v. (2) Praise the Lord, all nations! Praise Him, all peoples!*

You were wounded with perfect love

when zeal for salvation enkindled your soul,

impelling you to go to the Master, O most sacred Father.

With your voice you ever chanted the words:

“I am the wheat of the Creator,

and I must be completely ground by the teeth of the wild beasts,

that I may be shown to be pure bread for the Word, our God.”//

Entreat Him that He may save and enlighten our souls!

*v. (1) For His mercy is abundant towards us; and the truth of the Lord endures for ever.*

As you were crucified with Christ,

O bearer of holiness,

You cried out with words inspired by God:

“My Beloved was crucified, and so I hasten to share in His suffering.”

Therefore, O blessed Ignatius,

you made your journey from the East to the West like the sun,

shedding light with your passage.

You have been brought before Christ wearing a royal diadem.//

Entreat Him that He may save and enlighten our souls!

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;*

**Tone 8** *(for Hieromartyr Ignatius, by Anatolius)*

Embracing Christ as your love, O God-bearer Ignatius,

you received the reward of being a priest of Christ’s Gospel,

even unto the shedding of your blood.

Thus, becoming the immortal Sower’s wheat,

ground by the teeth of wild beasts,

you offered yourself as a loaf of sweet bread to Christ.//

O blessed passion-bearer, never cease to pray for us!

*now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

**Tone 8**  *(for the Forefeast)*

Bethlehem, receive the indwelling of God,

the never-setting Light that comes to be born in you.

Rejoice, O Angels in heaven!

Send up glory, O men on earth!

Magi, bring your glorious gifts from Persia!

Shepherds, lift up the thrice-holy hymn with sweet melody!//

Let everything that breathes praise the Creator of all!

**Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ/Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-bearer**

**Aposticha**

**Tone 2** *(for the Forefeast, by Cyprian)*

Behold, the time of our salvation is at hand!

Prepare yourself, O cavern,

for the Virgin approaches to give birth to her Son!

Be glad and rejoice, Bethlehem, land of Judah,

for from you our Lord shines forth as the dawn!

Give ear, you mountains and hills and all lands round about Judea,

for Christ is coming to save mankind,//

whom He created and whom He loves!

*v. God shall come from Teman, and the Holy One from the mountain*

*overshadowed by the forest. (Habakkuk 3:3)*

Bethlehem, land of Judah,

prepare the divine cavern

as a dwelling for God to be born in the flesh

from a Virgin who knew not a man//

to save the human race!

*v***.** *Lord, I have heard the report of You, and Your work, Lord, do I fear.*

*(Habakkuk 3:2)*

**Tone 2** *(for the Forefeast, by Andrew the Persian)*

Come, all you faithful,

let us celebrate the Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ

as we spiritually offer our hymn as the star!

Sing with the Magi and shepherds:

“Salvation comes from the Virgin's womb,//

recalling the faithful to life!”

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;*

**Tone 1** - *(for Hieromartyr Ignatius, by the Studite)*

O blessed Ignatius,

your soul was strong and hard as a stone.

You cried to your beloved Christ with great longing:

“It is not a material fire burning within me,

but the voice of the living water dwelling within my heart,

continually crying: ‘Come to the Father!’”

Therefore in your desire to be with Christ,

inflamed with the Holy Spirit,

you urged the beasts to speedily take you from this world.//

Never cease to pray for the salvation of our souls!

*now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

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**Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ/Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-bearer**

**Tone 4 Troparion** *(Hieromartyr Ignatius)*

By sharing in the ways of the Apostles,

you became a successor to their throne.

Through the practice of virtue, you found the way to divine

contemplation, O inspired one of God;

by teaching the word of truth without error, you defended the Faith, even

to the shedding of your blood.//

Hieromartyr Ignatius, entreat Christ God to save our souls!

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

*now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

**Tone 4 Troparion of the Forefeast**

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.

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***(at the Divine Liturgy)***

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**Kontakion Tone 3** *(Hieromartyr Ignatius)*

The light-bearing day of your radiant struggles

is an announcement of the One Who is to be born of the Virgin.

In your thirsting from love to delight in Him,

you hastened to be devoured by the wild beasts.//

Therefore, O glorious Ignatius, you were called the Godbearer.

**Tone 3** **Kontakion**  *(Forefeast)*

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!

**Tone 7** **Prokeimenon**

The righteous shall rejoice in the Lord and shall hope in Him. *(Ps 63/64:10)*

*v: Hear my voice, O God, when I pray to You! (Ps 63/64:1)*

**Epistle**

2 Timothy 1:1-2, 8-18

Hebrews 4:14-5:6 *(St Ignatius)*

**Tone 4**

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

*v: The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, and grow like a cedar in*

*Lebanon.* *(Ps 91/92:12)*

*v: They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts*

*of our God. (Ps 91/92:13).*

**Gospel**

Mark 10:23-32

Mark 9:33-41 *(St Ignatius)*

**Communion Hymn**

The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not fear evil

tidings. *(Ps 111/112:6)*

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Liturgical texts for this service represent modified versions of translations provided by Holy Myrrhbearers Monastery, Otego, New York and St. Tikhon’s Monastery, South Canaan, Pa. The Department of Liturgical Music and Translations of the Orthodox Church in America expresses its gratitude to Holy Myrrhbearers Monastery and St. Tikhon’s Monastery and to those translators whose work has been consulted at times in the course of reviewing and modifying these texts to their present form: Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware), Archimandrite Ephrem (Lash), Archimandrite Juvenaly, Father Benedict Churchill, Isaac Lambertson, St. Vladimir’s Seminary, and Holy Transfiguration Monastery, among others.