**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20 TONE 3**

**28th Sunday after Pentecost (13th of Luke)**

**Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ**

**Sunday before the Nativity**

**[Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-bearer, Bishop of Antioch]**

*Note: The service to St. Ignatius is sung whenever the Superior wishes.*

**"Lord I Call..." Tone 3**

Lord, I call upon Thee, hear me.

Hear me, O Lord.

Lord, I call upon Thee, hear me.

Receive the voice of my prayer,

when I call upon Thee.//

Hear me, O Lord.

Let my prayer arise

in Thy sight as incense,

and let the lifting up of my hands

be an evening sacrifice.//

Hear me, O Lord.

V. (10) *Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks to Thy Name.*

 **Tone 3** *(for the Resurrection)*

By Thy Cross, O Christ our Savior,

death’s dominion has been shattered;

the devil’s delusion destroyed.

The race of man, being saved by faith,//

always offers Thee a song.

V. (9) *The righteous will surround me, for Thou wilt deal bountifully with me.*

All has been enlightened by Thy Resurrection, O Lord.

Paradise has been opened again.

All creation, praising Thee,//

always offers Thee a song.

V. (8) *Out of the depths I cry to Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!*

I glorify the power of the Father and the Son.

I praise the authority of the Holy Spirit:

the undivided, uncreated Godhead,//

the consubstantial Trinity which reigns forever.

V. (7) *Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!*

*(Resurrection stichera by Anatolius)*

We bow down in worship before Thy precious Cross, O Christ,

and we glorify and praise Thy Resurrection,//

for by Thy wounds we have all been healed.

V. (6) *If Thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee.*

**Tone 6** *(for the Forefeast)* *(Having placed all their hope)*

The never-setting Sun presses forward to rise,

enlightening all things under heaven.

Let us hasten with clean hands and pure deeds to meet Him;

let us prepare to be borne on high with Him in spirit!

Let us beseech Him in His compassion,

that, as He comes in His good pleasure to His own strange birth,

He may lead us, who have become strangers to the path of life in Eden,//

into Bethlehem where He comes to be born!

V. (5) *For Thy Name’s sake I wait for Thee, O Lord. My soul has waited for Thy word; my soul has hoped on the Lord.*

The Word of God, upborne on the shoulders of the cherubim,

goes to dwell in a womb without blemish.

Though without passions, He is bound fast to the flesh;

He comes on earth as a man, born of the tribe of Judah.

A cave becomes the palace of the King of all;

the fiery throne is replaced by a manger,

where the Virgin Mary lays Him as a babe,

for He comes to restore the first-created man,//

as He is well-pleased so to do.

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

O Word of God without beginning,

the Virgin lays Thee in a manger of dumb beasts.

Thou dost choose to begin Thy life in the flesh

in a manner beyond understanding.

Thou hast come to loose me from the fetters of evil

with which the envious serpent bound me.

O Lover of man, Thou art wrapped in swaddling clothes,

tearing to pieces the bonds of my countless sins.

Therefore I joyfully praise and worship Thy holy birth,//

for Thou didst come to set me free.

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 6** *(for the Holy Fathers)* *(Having placed all their hope)*

The memory of the Ancestors is revealed to the ends of the world,

truly filling it with light

and making known the dawning of grace.

For Christ shone forth from afar, brighter than the sun,

the leading rank of stars shining with Him;

and the divine-human birth was revealed to take place in Bethlehem.

Therefore with faith let us all gather at this birth,//

rejoicing in chorus and singing the pre-festal praise!

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

Adorned with the glory of divine communion,

Adam rejoices today,

as he is the foundation and support of the wise Ancestors.

With him Abel leaps with joy, and Enoch makes glad;

Seth dances, and Noah with him;

the all-praiseworthy Patriarch Abraham sings;

Melchizedek beholds from afar the birth that is without a father.

Therefore, as we celebrate the divine memory of the Forefathers of Christ,//

we pray for the salvation of our souls.

V. (1) *For His mercy is confirmed on us, and the truth of the Lord endures forever.*

The three Youths, wise in God,

who shone with joy in the furnace,

proclaimed the birth of Christ on earth;

For just as the Lord sent down a precious dew,

He preserved from the flame her who gave birth,

keeping her undefiled and enriching her with divine gifts.

Therefore Daniel, pleasing to God, rejoiced and was glad,

for having foreseen the Stone from the unquarried mountain,//

he now prays with boldness in behalf of our souls.

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

**Tone 6** *(for the Holy Fathers)*

Daniel, the man of desires, beheld Thee, O Lord,

the Stone cut without human hands from the Mountain.

Thus, he foretold that Thou wouldst take flesh without seed,

O Word of God, born of the Virgin,//

the changeless God and Savior of our souls!

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

**Tone 6** *(for the Forefeast, by Byzantius)*

O cave, make ready, for the Ewe Lamb comes,

bearing Christ in her womb!

O manger, receive Him Who by a word has released the dwellers of earth

from lawlessness!

You shepherds, abiding in the fields, bear witness to the fearful wonder,

And you magi from Persia, offer to the King gold, myrrh, and frankincense,

for the Lord has appeared from a Virgin Mother!

And she, bending over Him as a handmaiden,

worshipped Him as He lay in her arms, saying to Him:

“How wast Thou sown as seed in me?

How hast Thou grown within me,//

O my Deliverer and my God?”

 **Old Testament Readings**

 **Genesis 14:14-20**

 **Deuteronomy 1:8-11, 15-17**

 **Deuteronomy 10:14-21**

**Litya**

*(If the rector desires the Litya, these stichera are sung)*

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

Behold, the time of our salvation is at hand!

Prepare thyself, O cavern,

for the Virgin approaches to give birth to her Son!

Be glad and rejoice, Bethlehem, land of Judah,

for from thee 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!

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 race of man!

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

Come, all you faithful,

let us celebrate the Forefeast of the Nativity of Christ

as we spiritually offer our hymn as the star,

singing with the Magi and shepherds:

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

recalling the faithful to life!”

**Tone 1** *(for the Holy Fathers)*

Enlightened by the rays of divine utterance,

the Prophets, distinguished in name, are called blessed forever.

With the words of the Spirit, they proclaimed to all the birth of Christ our God,

which in words is inexpressible.//

And having lawfully completed their end, they live the life that is most

wondrous.

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

**Tone 3** *(for the Holy Fathers, by Germanus)*

Come all who love the feast,

let us praise in psalms the assembly of the Forefathers:

Adam, our first Father,

Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek,

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob;

and those who came after the Law:

Moses, Aaron, Joshua,

Samuel and David,

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel,

and with them the Twelve Prophets:

Elijah, Elisha, and all the rest,

Zachariah and John the Baptist:

all those who proclaimed Christ,//

the Life and Resurrection of the human race!

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

**Tone 3** *(for the Forefeast)*

Make ready, O Bethlehem, for Eden is opened!

Prepare, Ephratha, for Adam and Eve are renewed!

Salvation enters the world and the curse is destroyed;

make ready, O hearts of righteous men!

Instead of myrrh, bring hymns as an offering of wisdom;

receive salvation and immortality of your souls and bodies!

Behold, the Master lying in the manger

urges us to complete our spiritual songs.

Let us cry out to Him unceasingly,//

“O Lord, glory to Thee!”

**Aposticha**

**Tone 3** *(for the Resurrection)*

The sun was darkened by Thy Passion, O Christ,

but all creation was enlightened by the light of Thy Resurrection.//

Accept our evening song, O Lover of man!

V. *The Lord is King; He is robed in majesty!*

Thy life-bearing Resurrection, O Lord,

enlightened the whole universe, recalling Thy creation.

Delivered from Adam’s curse, we sing://

O Almighty Lord, glory to Thee!

V. *For He has established the world, so that it shall never be moved.*

Thou art the changeless God,

Who, suffering in the flesh, wast changed.

Creation could not endure seeing Thee on the Cross.

It was filled with fear while praising Thy patience.

By descending to hell and rising on the third day,//

Thou hast granted to the world life and great mercy.

V. *Holiness befits Thy house, O Lord, forevermore!*

Thou didst endure death, O Christ,

to deliver the race of men from death.

Thou didst rise from the dead on the third day,

raising with thyself those who knew Thee as God//

and enlightening the world. Glory to Thee!

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

**Tone 2** *(for the Holy Fathers, by Cyprian)*

Rejoice, O honored Prophets,

who laid well the foundation of the Law of the Lord,

and were revealed as firm and unshaken pillars of faith!

You became indeed the mediators of Christ’s new covenant.

Since, therefore, you have been taken up into heaven,//

intercede with Him to grant peace to the world and salvation to our souls!

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

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

The time of our salvation draws near.

Make ready, O cave!

The Virgin draws near to bear the Christ.

Be glad and rejoice, O Bethlehem, land of Judah,

for our Lord has come from thee!

Hearken, O mountains and hills, you lands around Judea,//

for Christ, the Lover of man, is coming to save those whom He created!

***(at Great Vespers)***

**Tone 3** **Troparion** *(Resurrection)*

Let the heavens rejoice!

Let the earth be glad!

For the Lord has shown strength with His arm.

He has trampled down death by death.

He has become the first born of the dead.

He has delivered us from the depths of hell,

and has granted to the world//

great mercy.

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

**Tone 2 Troparion** *(Holy Fathers)*

Great are the accomplishments of faith,

for the three Holy Youths rejoice in the fountain of flames as though

in the waters of rest;

and the Prophet Daniel appeared

a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep.//

So by their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls!

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

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

Prepare, O Bethlehem, for Eden has been opened to all!

Adorn thyself, 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.

***(at Vigil)***

**Tone 4 Troparion to the Theotokos**

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos,

Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee!

Blessed art thou among women,

and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb,//

for thou hast borne the Savior of our souls. *(twice)*

**Tone 2 Troparion** *(Holy Fathers)*

Great are the accomplishments of faith,

for the three Holy Youths rejoice in the fountain of flames as though

in the waters of rest;

and the Prophet Daniel appeared

a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep.//

So by their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls! *(once)*

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

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Let the earth be glad!

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He has trampled down death by death.

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**Tone 1** **Kontakion** *(Fathers)*

Rejoice, O Bethlehem! Prepare thyself, O Ephratha!

The Lamb is on her way to give birth to the Chief Shepherd she carries in

her womb.

The God-bearing Forefathers will rejoice, beholding Him,

and with the shepherds, they will glorify the Virgin nursing Him.

**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 4** **Prokeimenon** *(Holy Fathers)*

Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers, / and praised and glorified is

Thy Name forever! *(Song of the Three Holy Children, v. 3)*

V. *For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us! (v. 4)*

**Epistle**

 (328) Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40 *(Sunday Before)*

**Tone 4**

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

V. *We have heard with our ears, O God, for our fathers have told us. (Ps. 43:1a)*

V. *For Thou hast saved us from them that oppose us, and hast put to shame them that hate us. (Ps. 43:8)*

 **Gospel**

 (1) Matthew 1:1-25 *(Sunday Before)*

**Communion Hymn**

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! *(Ps. 148:1)*

Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous; praise befits the just! *(Ps. 32:1)*

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

In addition to translations from the Department of Liturgical Music and Translations, 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), Father Benedict Churchill, Isaac Lambertson, St. Vladimir’s Seminary, and Holy Transfiguration Monastery, among others.