

GREAT VESPERS ON DECEMBER 26
SECOND DAY OF AFTER-FEAST OF NATIVITY OF CHRIST;
PROTO-MARTYR STEPHEN THE ARCHDEACON
VENERABLE-CONFESSOR THEODORE THE BRANDED

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

Choir: Amen.

Come, let us worship and fall down before 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.

THE PSALM OF INTRODUCTION—PSALM 103

Reader: Bless the Lord, O my soul; O Lord my God, Thou hast been magnified exceedingly. Confession and majesty hast Thou put on, Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment, Who stretchest out the heaven as it were a curtain; Who supporteth His chambers in the waters, Who appointeth the clouds for His ascent, Who walketh upon the wings of the winds, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire.

Who establisheth the earth in the sureness thereof; it shall not be turned back forever and ever. The abyss like a garment is His mantle; upon the mountains shall the waters stand. At Thy rebuke they will flee, at the voice of Thy thunder shall they be afraid.

The mountains rise up and the plains sink down, unto the place where Thou hast established them. Thou appointedst a bound that they shall not pass, neither return to cover the earth. He sendeth forth springs in the valleys; between the mountains will the waters run. They shall give drink to all the beasts of the field; the wild asses will wait to quench their thirst. Beside them will the birds of the heaven lodge, from the midst of the rocks will they give voice.

He watereth the mountains from His chambers; the earth shall be satisfied with the fruit of Thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and green herb for the service of men, to bring forth bread out of the earth; and wine maketh glad the heart of man. To make his face cheerful with oil; and bread strengtheneth man's heart.

The trees of the plain shall be satisfied, the cedars of Lebanon, which Thou hast planted. There will the sparrows make their nests; the house of the heron is chief among them. The high mountains are a refuge for the harts, and so is the rock for the hares.

He hath made the moon for seasons; the sun knoweth his going down. Thou appointedst the darkness, and there was the night, wherein all the beasts of the forest will go abroad; young lions roaring after their prey, and seeking their food from God. The sun ariseth, and they are gathered together, and they lay them down in their dens. Man shall go forth unto his work, and to his labor until the evening. How magnified are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all.

The earth is filled with Thy creation. So is this great and spacious sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, small living creatures with the great. There go the ships; there this leviathan, whom Thou hast made to play therein. All things wait on Thee, to give them their food in due season; when Thou givest it them, they will gather it. When Thou openest Thy hand, all things shall be filled with goodness; when Thou turnest away Thy face, they shall be troubled.

Thou wilt take their spirit, and they shall cease; and unto their dust shall they return. Thou wilt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created; and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Let the glory of the Lord be unto the ages; the Lord will rejoice in His works. Who looketh on the earth and maketh it tremble, Who toucheth the mountains and they smoke. I will sing unto the Lord throughout my life, I will chant to my God for as long as I have my being.

May my words be sweet unto Him; I will rejoice in the Lord. O that sinners would cease from the earth, and they that work iniquity, that they should be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

The sun knoweth his going down. Thou appointedst the darkness, and there was the night. How magnified are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all.

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

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Glory to Thee, O God. (THRICE)
O our God and our Hope, glory to Thee!

THE GREAT EKTENIA

Deacon: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For the peace from above, and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For the peace of the whole world, for the good estate of the Holy Churches of God, and for the union of all men, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For this Holy House, and for those who with faith, reverence, and fear of God, enter therein, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For our father and Metropolitan PHILIP, for our Bishop JOSEPH, for the venerable Priesthood, the Deaconate in Christ, for all the clergy and the people, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: (In the United States) For the President of the United States, for all civil authorities, and for our Armed Forces everywhere, let us pray to the Lord.

(In Canada) For Her Majesty, the Queen, for the Prime Minister of Canada, for all civil authorities, and for our Armed Forces everywhere, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: That He will aid them and grant them victory over every enemy and adversary, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For this city, and for every city and land, and for the faithful who dwell therein, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For healthful seasons, for abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For travelers by sea, by land, and by air; for the sick and the suffering; for captives and their salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For our deliverance from all tribulation, wrath, danger, and necessity, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Help us; save us; have mercy on us; and keep us, O God, by Thy grace.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Calling to remembrance our all-holy, immaculate, most blessed and glorious Lady Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, with all the Saints: let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.

Choir: To Thee, O Lord.

Priest: For unto Thee are due all glory, honor, and worship: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

“O LORD, I HAVE CRIED” IN TONE FOUR

Choir: O Lord, I have cried out unto Thee, hear Thou me; hear Thou me, O Lord. O Lord, I have cried out unto Thee, hear Thou me. Give ear to the voice of my supplication when I cry out unto Thee: hear Thou me, O Lord.

Choir: Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as the incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice; hear Thou me, O Lord.

- + Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a protecting door round about my lips.
- + Incline not my heart to evil words, to make excuses in sins.
- + With men that work iniquity; and I will not communicate with the choicest of them.
- + The just man shall correct me in mercy and shall reprove me; but let not the oil of the sinner anoint my head.
- + For my prayer also shall still be against the things with which they are well pleased; their judges falling upon the rock have been swallowed up.

- + They shall hear my words, for they are sweet; as when the thickness of the earth is broken upon the ground, their bones are scattered by the side of hell.
- + But to Thee, O Lord, Lord, are mine eyes; in Thee have I put my trust, take not away my soul.
- + Keep me from the snare which they have laid for me, and the traps of the workers of iniquity.
- + Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst I alone escape.
- + I cried unto the Lord with my voice, with my voice unto the Lord, did I make my supplication.
- + I poured out my supplication before Him; I showed before Him my trouble.
- + When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knewest my path.
- + In the way wherein I walked have they secretly laid a snare for me.
- + I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me.
- + Refuge failed me; no one cared for my soul.
- + I cried unto Thee, O Lord; I said: Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.
- + Attend unto my cry, for I am brought very low.
- + Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are stronger than I.

Verse 10. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy Name.

Verse 9. The righteous shall wait for me until Thou recompense me.

Verse 8. Out of the depths have I cried to Thee, O Lord, Lord hear my voice.

Verse 7. Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.

For St. Stephen in Tone Four

Verse 6. If Thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? For with Thee there is forgiveness.

Since thy mind had been made to shine with the grace of the Comforter, thou wast seen to be as an Angel outwardly; for through thy body, O Stephen, was thine inward light shed abroad, which made plain for all to see that most fair brightness of thy soul, through which thou didst find the divine light of vision when the Heavens opened wondrously before thee, thou boast of and first-fruit of martyred Saints.

Verse 5. Because of Thy Name have I waited for Thee, O Lord; my soul hath waited upon Thy word, my soul hath hoped in the Lord.

The thick showers of stones became lofty ladders and steps to thee, for ascent to Heaven; and mounting thereupon, thou sawest standing at God the Father's right hand the Lord of all with His quickening right hand holding out unto thee the crown for which thou art named. Now, O Stephen, thou standest in His presence as a victor in the contest and as the athletes' most lofty peak.

Verse 4. From the morning watch until night, from the morning watch let Israel trust in the Lord. Flashing brightly with wondrous signs, and with doctrines and miracles, thou didst quell the council of the iniquitous; and as they stoned thee to death, thou madest prayer for thy murderers, that the Lord forgive their sin; and in this, thou didst imitate Christ the Savior's words; then, O Stephen, didst thou commit thine honorable and truly sacred spirit into His hands and didst fall asleep.

For St. Theodore in Tone Four

Verse 3. For with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is abundant redemption, and He will deliver Israel from all his iniquities.

To the wounds of thy banishment, wounds of exile were added on, at the ruthless harshness of him that lawlessly sat on the lawful and rightful throne, and terribly had confused the traditions of the Faith, casting down the immaculate icon of the Lord, Christ the Savior; but with the grace of God, thou didst abase the malefactor, O righteous servant Theodore of Christ the Lord.

Verse 2. Praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise Him, all ye people.

Neither prison nor sore constraint, nor a darkness that knew no day, neither wounds and lashings availed to separate thee from the love that thou hadst for Christ, O valorous Theodore; nor enduring malady that was grievous and harsh to bear, neither want of food; but unmoved, O divinely-speaking Father, thou didst bear all things while looking to the reward of thy sufferings.

Verse 1. For His mercy is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endureth forever.

In the stead of affection, praise, in the stead of thy torments; joy, in the stead of darkness, thou hast been granted light by the just Judge of the contest; and in recompense for the writ that was branded on thy face, man of God, thou art written now in the Book of Life; thou art ranked in the highest with the Church of all the First-born and art gone forth in endless joy to the Angels' feast.

DOXASTICON OF ST. STEPHEN IN TONE TWO

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

Unto the King and Lord of all, Who is born upon the earth, Stephen is presented as an exceedingly bright crown, not made of precious stones, but arrayed with the garlands of his own blood. Wherefore come, ye that love the Martyrs, let us gather garlands of song, and crowning our heads with them, and singing hymns, let us say: Thou wast adorned in soul with wisdom and grace, O First Martyr of Christ God, ask that peace and Great Mercy be granted unto us.

THEOTOKION FOR AFTERFEAST OF NATIVITY IN TONE TWO

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

Today hath come about a great and wonderful thing, in that a Virgin giveth birth, yet corruption hath not entered the womb; the Word is incarnate, yet is not separated from the Father; the angels give glory with the shepherds, and we lift our voices with them crying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace.

THE HOLY ENTRANCE

(While the Doxasticon is chanted, the following dialogue occurs QUIETLY as the clergy make the entrance.)

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.

Priest: In the evening and in the morning and at noonday we praise Thee, we bless Thee, we give thanks unto Thee, and we pray unto Thee, O Master of all, Lord Who lovest mankind: Direct our prayer as incense before Thee, and incline not our hearts unto words or thoughts of evil, but deliver us from all who seek after our souls. For unto Thee, O Lord, Lord, are our eyes, and in Thee have we hoped. Put us not to shame, O our God. For unto Thee are due all glory, honor, and worship: to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Deacon: Amen.

(When the clergy reach the center of the soleia, the first part of the great censuring begins. After the first part of the great censuring is completed, this next dialogue occurs QUIETLY.)

Deacon: Bless, father, the Holy Entrance.

Priest: Blessed is the entrance to Thy Holy Place, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

(After the choir has finished, the following is said ALOUD.)

Deacon: Wisdom! Let us attend!

O GLADSOME LIGHT

Choir: O gladsome Light of the holy glory of the immortal, heavenly, holy and blessed Father: O Jesus Christ. Lo now that we have come to the setting of the sun, as we behold the evening light, we hymn Thee: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God. Meet it is for Thee at all times to be magnified by joyous voices, O Son of God and Giver of life. Wherefore the whole world doth glorify Thee.

Deacon: The Evening Prokeimenon!

- *Now sing the day's set Prokeimenon. If this Feast falls on a Sunday, consult the Weekend Service Texts page: http://www.antiochianladiocese.org/service_texts_weekends.html.*

SUNDAY PROKEIMENON IN TONE EIGHT

Choir: Behold now, bless the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord. (TWICE)

Verse. Ye who stand in the temple of the Lord, in the courts of the House of our God!

Choir: Behold now, bless the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord.

MONDAY PROKEIMENON IN TONE FOUR

Choir: The Lord will hear me, when I cry unto Him. (TWICE)

Verse. When I called upon Thee, O God of my righteousness, Thou didst hearken unto me!

Choir: The Lord will hear me, when I cry unto Him.

TUESDAY PROKEIMENON IN TONE ONE

Choir: Thy mercy, O Lord, shall follow me all the days of my life. (TWICE)

Verse. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; He makes me to lie down in green pastures!

Choir: Thy mercy, O Lord, shall follow me all the days of my life.

WEDNESDAY PROKEIMENON IN TONE FIVE

Choir: Save me, O God, by Thy Name, and judge me by Thy strength. (TWICE)

Verse. Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth!

Choir: Save me, O God, by Thy Name, and judge me by Thy strength.

THURSDAY PROKEIMENON IN TONE SIX

Choir: My help cometh from the Lord, Who hath made heaven and earth. (TWICE)

Verse. I lift up my eyes to the hills, from where my help will come!

Choir: My help cometh from the Lord, Who hath made heaven and earth.

FRIDAY PROKEIMENON IN TONE SEVEN

Choir: Thou, O God, art my helper, and Thy mercy shall go before me. (TWICE)

Verse. Deliver me from my enemies, O God, and deliver me from those who rise up against me!

Choir: Thou, O God, art my helper, and Thy mercy shall go before me.

THE NEW TESTAMENT READINGS

The First Passage

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The Reading from the Acts of the Apostles. (6:1-7)

Deacon: Let us attend!

Reader: In those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicholas, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the Apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands upon them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

The Second Passage

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The Reading from the Acts of the Apostles. (6:8-15)

Deacon: Let us attend!

Reader: Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, arose and disputed with Stephen. But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. Then they secretly instigated men, who said, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, and set up false witnesses who said, "This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, and will change the customs which Moses delivered to us." And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

The Third Passage

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The Reading from the Acts of the Apostles. (7:1-5, 47-60)

Deacon: Let us attend!

Reader: The high priest said, “Is this so?” And Stephen said: “Brethren and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, ‘Depart from your land and from your kindred and go into the land which I will show you.’ Then he departed from the land of the Chaldeans, and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living; yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot’s length, but promised to give it to him in possession and to his posterity after him, though he had no child. But it was Solomon who built a house for him. Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands; as the prophet says, ‘Heaven is My throne, and earth My footstool. What house will you build for Me’, says the Lord, ‘or what is the place of My rest? Did not My hand make all these things?’ You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, Whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.” Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth against him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.” But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

THE EKTENIA OF FERVENT SUPPLICATION

Deacon: Let us say with our whole soul, and with our whole mind, let us say.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: O Lord Almighty, the God of our Fathers, we pray Thee, hearken and have mercy.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Have mercy on us, O God, according to Thy great mercy, we pray Thee, hearken and have mercy.

Choir: Lord, have mercy. (THRICE)

Deacon: Again we pray for all pious and Orthodox Christians.

Choir: Lord, have mercy. (THRICE)

Deacon: Again we pray for our father and Metropolitan PHILIP, and for our Bishop JOSEPH.

Choir: Lord, have mercy. (THRICE)

Deacon: Again we pray for our brethren: the priests, hieromonks, deacons, hierodeacons and monastics and all our brotherhood in Christ.

Choir: Lord, have mercy. (THRICE)

Deacon: Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation and visitation and pardon and remission of sins for (the servants of God, [Names], and) all Orthodox Christians of true worship, who live and dwell in this community.

Choir: Lord, have mercy. (THRICE)

Deacon: Again we pray for the blessed and ever-memorable founders of this holy church and for (the departed servants of God, [Names], and) all our fathers and brethren, the Orthodox departed this life before us, who here and in all the world lie asleep in the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy. (THRICE)

Deacon: Again we pray for those who bear fruit and do good works in this holy and all-venerable temple, those who serve and those who sing, and for all the people here present, who await Thy great and rich mercy.

Choir: Lord, have mercy. (THRICE)

Priest: For Thou art a merciful God and lovest mankind, and unto Thee we ascribe glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

THE EVENING PRAYER

People: Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this evening without sin. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Thy Name forever. Amen.

Let Thy mercy be upon us, O Lord, even as we have set our hope on Thee. Blessed art Thou, O Lord; teach me Thy statutes. Blessed art Thou, O Master; make me to understand Thy statutes. Blessed art Thou, O Holy One; enlighten me with Thy statutes.

Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever. O despise not the works of Thy hands. To Thee belongeth worship, to Thee belongeth praise, to Thee belongeth glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

THE EKTENIA OF SUPPLICATION

Deacon: Let us complete our evening prayer unto the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Help us; save us; have mercy on us; and keep us, O God, by Thy grace.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: That the whole evening may be perfect, holy, peaceful and sinless, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant this, O Lord.

Deacon: An angel of peace, a faithful guide, a guardian of our souls and bodies, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant this, O Lord.

Deacon: Pardon and remission of our sins and transgressions, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant this, O Lord.

Deacon: All things good and profitable for our souls and peace for the world, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant this, O Lord.

Deacon: That we may complete the remaining time of our life in peace and repentance, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant this, O Lord.

Deacon: A Christian ending to our life, painless, blameless, peaceful, and a good defense before the fearful judgment seat of Christ, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant this, O Lord.

Deacon: Calling to remembrance our all-holy, immaculate, most blessed and glorious Lady Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, with all the Saints: let us commend ourselves and each another, and all our life unto Christ our God.

Choir: To Thee, O Lord.

Priest: For Thou art a good God and lovest mankind, and unto Thee we ascribe glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

THE PEACE

Priest: Peace be to all.

Choir: And to thy spirit.

Deacon: Let us bow our heads unto the Lord.

Choir: To Thee, O Lord.

- *All bow their heads as the priest says the following prayer:*

Priest: O Lord our God, Who didst bow the heavens and come down for the salvation of mankind: Look upon Thy servants and Thine inheritance; for unto Thee, the fearful Judge Who yet lovest mankind, have Thy servants bowed their heads and submissively inclined their necks, awaiting not help from men but entreating Thy mercy and looking confidently for Thy salvation. Guard them at all times, both during this present evening and in the approaching night, from every foe, from all adverse powers of the devil, and from vain thoughts and from evil imaginations.

Blessed and glorified be the might of Thy kingdom: of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

- *If your parish will offer “The Service of the Litia and Artoklasia”, it is performed here.*

THE APOSTICHA FOR AFTER-FEAST OF NATIVITY IN TONE ONE

He that dawned forth from the Father before the ages began, even the Son that ever is in His Father’s bosom, enthroned in these last times in a mother’s embrace, is adorned by the Angel hosts along with Magi and shepherds in Bethlehem; let us also sing His praise with them.

Verse 1. God cometh from Teman, the Holy One from the mountain overshadowed by the forest. Ye faithful, let us assemble in Bethlehem to see Him Who created all things lying now in a manger, and them of the Chaldeans, who came from afar, bringing threefold and goodly gifts as to a King, as to God, and as unto Him that for our sakes shall be three days dead.

Verse 2. O Lord, I have heard of the report of Thee and was afraid. Of the pure Virgin, O Savior, wast Thou born in a cave, and the angelic armies then drew nigh and they cried out: Glory in the highest to Thee, O our God, Who art born in a servant’s form and hast refashioned the whole world within the womb of the Virgin Mother who knew not man.

DOXASTICON OF ST. STEPHEN IN TONE SIX

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

Thou didst prove to be the first both among the Martyrs and the Deacons, O blessed Stephen, thou adornment of athletes, boast of the faithful, and glory of the righteous. As thou standest before the throne of Christ the King of all, ask that they who celebrate thy solemn memorial may receive the forgiveness of their failings and be counted worthy of the Kingdom of the Heavens.

THEOTOKION FOR AFTER-FEAST OF NATIVITY IN TONE SIX

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

Today all the angels exchange glad tidings and rejoice; and the entire creation exulteth for the Birth of the Lord Savior in Bethlehem; for the error of the idols hath passed out completely, and Christ shall reign forever.

THE HYMN OF ST. SIMEON THE GOD-RECEIVER

Choir: Lord, now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel.

THE TRISAGION PRAYERS

People: Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: have mercy on us. (THRICE)
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.
 All-holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our iniquities. Holy God, visit and heal our infirmities for Thy Name’s sake.
 Lord, have mercy. (THRICE)
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.
 Our 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 evil.

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.

APOLYTIKION OF ST. STEPHEN IN TONE FOUR

O first of strivers among the Martyrs, thy head was crowned with a kingly crown, through the struggles that thou didst endure for the sake of Christ God; for thou didst reproach the folly of the Jews, and therefore, didst see thy Savior on the right hand of the Father. Wherefore, O Stephen, to Him continuously plead for our souls.

APOLYTIKION OF ST. THEODORE IN TONE EIGHT

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

Guide of Orthodoxy, teacher of piety and holiness, luminary of the world, God-inspired adornment of monastics, O wise Theodore, by thy teachings thou hast enlightened all, O harp of the Spirit. Intercede with Christ God that our souls be saved.

APOLYTIKION OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST IN TONE FOUR

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

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath given rise to the light of knowledge in the world; for they that worshipped the stars did learn there from to worship Thee, O Sun of justice, and to know that from the east of the Highest Thou didst come. O Lord, glory to Thee.

THE DISMISSAL

Deacon: Wisdom!

Choir: Father, bless!

Priest: Christ our God, the Existing One, is blessed, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Choir: Amen. Preserve, O God, the holy Orthodox faith and all Orthodox Christians, unto ages of ages. Amen.

Priest: Most holy Theotokos, save us.

Choir: More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, thou who without corruption bearest God the Word and art truly Theotokos: we magnify thee.

Priest: Glory to Thee, O Christ our God and our hope, glory to Thee.

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

Priest: May He Who was born in a cave and lay in a manger for our salvation, Christ our true God, through the intercessions of His all-immaculate and all-blameless holy Mother; by the might of the Precious and Life-giving Cross; by the protection of the honorable Bodiless Powers

of Heaven; at the supplication of the honorable, glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John; of the holy, glorious and all-laudable apostles; of the holy, glorious and right-victorious Martyrs; of our venerable and God-bearing Fathers; (*of Saint N., the patron and protector of this holy community;*) of the holy and righteous ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna; of the holy, glorious and right-victorious Proto-martyr Stephen the archdeacon; and Venerable-confessor Theodore the Branded, whose memory we celebrate today, and of all the saints: have mercy on us and save us, forasmuch as He is good and loveth mankind.

Priest: Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us and save us.

Choir: Amen.