

The First Hour

Priest: Blessed is our God, 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 fills 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.
Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.
Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.

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

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, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy.

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

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*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.*

The reader then continues with the following:

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.

PSALM 5

Give ear to my words, O Lord; give heed to my groaning. Hearken to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to thee do I pray. O Lord, in the morning thou dost hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for thee, and watch. For thou art not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not sojourn with thee. The boastful may not stand before thy eyes; thou hatest all evildoers. Thou destroyest those who speak lies; the Lord abhors bloodthirsty and deceitful men. But I through the abundance of thy steadfast love will enter thy house, I will worship toward thy holy temple in the fear of thee. Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of my enemies; make thy way straight before me. For there is no truth in their mouth; their heart is destruction, their throat is an open sepulcher, they flatter with their tongue. Make them bear their guilt, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; because of their many transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against thee. But let all who take refuge in thee rejoice, let them ever sing for joy; and do thou defend them, that those who love thy name may exult in thee. For thou dost bless the righteous, O Lord; thou dost cover him with favor as with a shield.

PSALM 45

My heart overflows with a goodly theme; I address my verses to the king;

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my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe. You are the fairest of the sons of men; grace is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever. Gird your sword upon your thigh, O mighty one, in your glory and majesty! In your majesty ride forth victoriously for the cause of truth and to defend the right; let your right hand teach you dread deeds! Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; the peoples fall under you. Your divine throne endures forever and ever. Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity; you love righteousness and hate wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows; your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia. From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad; daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor; at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir. Hear, O daughter, consider, and incline your ear; forget your people and your father's house; and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your lord, bow to him; the people of Tyre will sue your favor with gifts, the richest of the people with all kinds of wealth. The princess is decked in her chamber with gold-woven robes; in many-colored robes she is led to the king, with her virgin companions, her escort, in her train. With joy and gladness they are led along as they enter the palace of the king. Instead of your fathers shall be your sons; you will make them princes in all the earth. I will cause your name to be celebrated in all generations; therefore the peoples will praise you forever and ever.

PSALM 46

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God will help her right early. The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come, behold the

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works of the Lord, how he has wrought desolations in the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, he burns the chariots with fire! "Be still, and know that I am God. I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth!" The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

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.
Alleluia, alleluia, Alleluia. Glory to Thee, O God
Alleluia, alleluia, Alleluia. Glory to Thee, O God

Lord, have mercy, Lord, have mercy, Lord, have mercy.

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

THE TROPARION may be read or sung (see appendix for music)

(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 fall on Sunday or Monday, so that the Royal Hours are served on December 22 or 23, the Troparion at all hours is as follows:

(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 Fruit Divine; / If we eat of it, we shall live forever and not die like Adam. // Christ is coming to restore the image which He made in the beginning.

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

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

*The following **STICHERA** may be read or sung (see appendix for music)*

Reader (Tone 8) Bethlehem make ready; let the Manger be prepared; let the Cave receive. The truth has come, the shadow has passed away, and God has appeared among men from a Virgin, formed as we are and making divine what he has put on. And so Adam is renewed with Eve as they cry, 'God's good pleasure has appeared on earth to save our race'.

Vs. God will come from Teman, and the Holy One from a dark and shady mountain.

(Tone 3) Now the prophetic saying hastens to its fulfillment, which mystically said, 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are in no way least among the Leaders as you prepare the Cave, for from you will go forth for me in flesh a leader of the Nations, from a Virgin Maiden, Christ God, who will shepherd his people, the new Israel'. Let us all give him great glory.

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

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(Tone 8) Joseph spoke thus to the Virgin, 'Mary, what is this that I see in you? I am at a loss and am amazed, and my mind is struck with dismay. What is this that I see in you? Instead of honor, you have brought me shame; instead of gladness, sorrow; instead of praise, reproof. No longer will I bear men's reproach; for I received you as a pure virgin in the sight of the Lord. What is this I now see?

The Readings

Priest *Wisdom. Let us attend*

Reader The Prokeimenon is in the 4th Tone:

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

Vs: Ask of me, and I shall give you the nations as your inheritance.

Priest Wisdom

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

Thus says the Lord: You, O Bethlehem of Ephrata, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in travail has brought forth; then the rest of his brethren shall return to the people 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 dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth

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Priest Wisdom

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

Brethren, In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs. For to what angel did God ever say, "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee"? Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"? And again, when he brings the first-born into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." Of the angels he says, "Who makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire." But of the Son he says, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, the righteous scepter is the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, thy God, has anointed thee with the oil of gladness beyond thy comrades." And, "Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they will perish, but thou remainest; they will all grow old like a garment, like a mantle thou wilt roll them up, and they will be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years will never end."

*Priest Wisdom. Let us attend. Let us listen to the Holy Gospel.
Peace be unto all.*

Choir And to Thy spirit

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

Choir *Glory to Thee, O Lord. Glory to Thee.*

Priest *Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.*

Choir *Glory to Thee, O Lord. Glory to Thee.*

Reader *Direct my steps according to Thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me. Deliver me from the slander of men, and I shall keep Thy commandments.*

Let Thy face shine on Thy servant, and teach me Thy statutes.

Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise, O Lord, that I may hymn Thy glory and honor all day long.

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Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.
Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.
Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.

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

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, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy.

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

*Priet 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

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THE KONTAKION can either be read or sung (see appendix for music)

(Tone 3) Today the virgin comes to the cave / Where she will give birth to the Eternal Word. / Hear the glad tidings and rejoice, O universe. / With the angels and shepherds glorify Him who reveals Himself. // The eternal God, a little child.

Reader Lord have mercy (12x)

Thou who at every season and in every hour, in heaven and on earth art worshipped and glorified, O Christ our God, who art long-suffering, merciful and compassionate: who lovest the just and showest mercy upon the sinner; who callest all 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 them we may attain 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, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy

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 You gave birth to God the Word: true Theotokos we magnify You.

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In the name of the Lord, bless Father.

Priest *God be bountiful unto us and bless us and show us the light of His countenance, and be merciful unto us.*

Reader Amen. O Christ, the True light who enlightens and sanctifies 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.