

ON THE 21ST OF THE MONTH

Commemoration of the Holy Martyr Juliana of Nikomedia.

AT VESPERS

At Lord, I have cried, we insert 6 Stichera, and sing Prosomia of the Forefeast.

Tone 4. You have given us a sign.

This is our God, no other will be reckoned with him,¹ the Prophet cried out in spirit; for he has found every way of knowledge;² while after these things he will become like mortals, wearing flesh; for he hastens to be brought to birth of a Virgin, Child of God; he who is by nature unapproachable³ becoming approachable by me.

Your womb, all-blameless Mother of God, is acknowledged to be a heap of grain of a threshing floor,⁴ which carries ineffably, beyond mind and beyond reason, a ear of grain untilled; which you bear in the Cave of Bethlehem, and is about to nourish all creation by grace with divine knowledge and to rescue humankind from starvation which destroys the soul.

The unblemished Heifer⁵ comes forth to a holy Cave, carrying the fatted Calf,⁶ to give birth to him in a marvellous manner, to swad-

¹ Baruch 3:36.

² Baruch 3:37.

³ 1 Timothy 6:16.

⁴ Sophonias 2:9. The Septuagint reads 'threshing floor'—ἄλωνος—, but this is probably an error for 'salt'—ἅλός—, which is what the Hebrew has. Ziegler reads ἅλός, preferring the reading of two tenth century minuscules against the majority of manuscripts. St Jerome, naturally, follows the Hebrew, and so the Vulgate has 'salis'. In the Church's tradition this phrase is applied to the Mother of God, with a further reference to the Song of Songs 7:3, κοιλία σου θιμωνιά σίτου πεφραγμένη ἐν κρίνοις—'your belly/womb is a heap of wheat hedged about with lilies'.

⁵ The origin of this image of the Mother of God, which is very frequent in the liturgical texts, is obscure. If Christ is identified with the 'Fatted Calf' in Luke 15, as for example in St Romanos' Kontakion on the Prodigal Son, then the application of the word 'Heifer' to the Mother of God is easily understood, as it is by Romanos, and by the author of a homily on the Prodigal Son among the spuria of St John Chrysostom. However the idea seems also to go back to an obscure apocryphal text, the *Apocryphon of Ezekiel*, of which only a few fragments survive. It is quoted by Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria and

dle him as a mortal and lay him in a manger as an infant. Creation celebrates in advance, as it harmoniously magnifies the One who has wrought such marvels upon earth.

Glory. Both now. **Tone 6.**

Sion, keep festival; Jerusalem, be glad; City of Christ God, receive the Creator, contained in a Cave and in a Manger. Open to me your gates, and entering by them⁷ I shall see swaddled as a babe the one who holds creation in his grasp,⁸ whom Angels hymn with unceasing voice, the Lord, the Life-giver, who saves our race.

At the Aposticha, Prosomia.
Tone 2. O house of Ephratha.

The sayings of all the Prophets are fulfilled; for Christ is born in the city of Bethlehem from the pure Child of God.

Verse: God will come from Theman; and the Holy One from a shady wooded mountain.

Glory of those born of earth, their boast and fame, honoured Bethlehem, divine metropolis, receive your Creator.

Verse: Lord, I heard your report and was afraid; Lord I considered your works and was amazed.

The Word of the Father, through whom the universe came to be, without suffering and without change appears as one substance from two natures.

Glory. Both now. **Same melody.**

Epiphanius of Salamis. Epiphanius writes as follows, «ἰδοῦ» φησὶν «ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν»· καὶ οὐκ εἶπεν «ἰδοῦ, ἡ γυνή». καὶ πάλιν ἐν ἑτέρῳ τόπῳ λέγει «καὶ τέξεται ἡ δάμαλις καὶ ἐροῦσιν, οὐ τέτοκεν»—"Behold", says Scripture, "the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son"; it does not say "behold the woman". And in another place it says, "and the heifer will give birth, and they will say, 'she has not given birth'" [*Panarion* 1:30]. A spurious text, attributed to Gregory of Nyssa, simply has, "Behold the heifer has given birth, and has not given birth". This in turn seems to be related to another apocryphon, the *Ascension of Isaias* 11:14.

⁶ Luke 15:23.

⁷ Psalm 117:19.

⁸ Cf. Isaias 40:12.

City of Bethlehem, make ready the Cave, the Manger, the swaddling clothes for the Creator; for he is at hand to be brought to birth in you.

Apolytikion of the Forefeast. Tone 4.

Bethlehem prepare; Eden is opened for all. Make ready Ephratha, because the tree of life has flowered in the Cave from the Virgin. For her womb has been revealed as the spiritual Paradise in which is the plant of life; eating from it we shall live; we shall not die as Adam. Christ is born to raise up his image which had fallen.

Both now.

Bethlehem prepare.

AT COMPLINE

At Compline we sing the following Diode, of which the Acrostic is:
And on Tuesday.

Ode 8. Tone 2. Irmos.

T The three holy Youths for not obeying the tyrannical decree were cast into the furnace, and they confessed God as they sang, 'Works of the Lord, bless the Lord'.

Troparia

P Let us cast from us the sleep of idleness, and with wakefulness of soul let us sing out to Christ who is brought to birth of a pure Maiden: Works of the Lord, bless the Lord.⁹

I Let good action be sufficient for the store house of our soul; that with radiant face we may sing to Christ as he is brought to birth: Works of the Lord, bless the Lord.

T Increasing our talent¹⁰ by good works, let us offer them instead of gold and incense and myrrh¹¹ as gifts to Christ who gave them, as he comes to be born of a Maiden, Child of God.

Ode 9. Irmos.

⁹ The corresponding troparion in Holy Week is, "Let us cast sloth far from us, and with shining lamps let us meet the immortal Bridegroom Christ with hymns, crying: Bless the Lord his works".

¹⁰ Matthew 15:20.

¹¹ Matthew 2:11.

H All-holy Virgin, who contained in your womb the uncontainable God, and bore joy for the world, we hymn you.

Troparia

T To the understanding Christ has given the command to watch, to those who hope for his coming; for he has come to be born from a Virgin.¹²

[**E** At your second coming, O Christ, show me, who honour your coming in the flesh, to be a companion of the your sheep on your right hand.]¹³

E At your former coming, O Christ, you saved Adam; but at your second, save those who honour your Birth.

AT MATINS

The usual Reading from the Psalter. After the 1st Reading, Kathisma.

Tone 2. The noble Joseph.

The unapproachable¹⁴ God, through compassion willing to become approachable for me, comes forth in flesh, to be born as man in the city of Bethlehem from a Virgin girl; let us eagerly hasten to receive him as we cry out with fear: Lord, glory to you.

Glory. Both now. **The same.**

After the 2nd Reading, Kathisma.

Tone 3. Awed by the beauty.

A marvellous wonder appears today! For our Saviour is now hastening to be brought to birth for us in the Cave in flesh from the Virgin. Magi will worship him with gifts as a king. Shepherds and Angels will glorify him, with them let us also cry: Glory to him who for us became man.

Glory. Both now. **The same.**

¹² The Holy Week troparion is "O Good One, you said to your disciples: Watch; for at the hour you do not know the Lord will come to reward each one".

¹³ Matthew 25:33. Although the poets sometimes repeat a letter in an acrostic, this Troparion is clearly wrong in this place, being simply the corresponding one from matins of Tuesday in Holy Week.

¹⁴ Cf. 1 Timothy 6:16, the only use of ἀπρόσιτος in the Bible.

Psalm 50 and the Canon of the Forefeast, of which the Acrostic is the Alphabet. By Joseph.

Ode 1. Tone 4. Irmos.

Mighty captains third in rank, the third part of the soul, drown in a deep of dispassion, I beg, Lord born of a Virgin, that as on a timbrel I may, by putting the body to death, sing you a song of victory.

Troparia

Rejoice heaven, and earth be glad; for God is with us in flesh, he is being brought to birth from a Virgin girl and wrapped in swaddling clothes; while he looses the bonds of our offences as he is compassionate.

A pure Queen gives birth beyond understanding to the King of all things, who opens the kingdom above to believers and takes away completely the sin which ever reigned wretchedly in us.

Prophetic writings are now proved true; for see, Christ whom they foretold appears incarnate in the city of Bethlehem; let us now hasten beforehand to celebrate his Nativity today with uprightness of mind.

Of the Saint. Ode 1. Tone 4.

Theotokion.

The Virgin hastens to give birth in the Cave to the Fashioner of nature, who, ineffable by hypostasis, beyond nature bears flesh from her, that he may make humanity divine.

Forefeast. Ode 3. Irmos.

Because the barren one, the Church from the Nations, has given birth, and she who had many children, the synagogue, has grown weak,¹⁵ to our wondrous God let us cry: Holy are you, O Lord.

Troparia

Daniel sees you, O Word, as a stone cut from a virgin mountain,¹⁶ levelling the altars of idols by your might; and so in fear we glorify you.

¹⁵ Cf. 1 Reigns 2:5, Isaias 54:1.

¹⁶ Daniel 2:44-45.

Magi from the East, having journeyed with a star to the King of all, offer you gifts, O Christ, myrrh, gold and incense, amazed at your condescension.

Mary, an unploughed land, carries a life-bearing ear of wheat to give birth in the city of Bethlehem to the One who nourishes the souls of all who cry: Holy are you, O Lord.

Of the Saint. Theotokion

Delivering mortals, the Compassionate is brought to birth from the pure Virgin in Bethlehem, accepting swaddling clothes as an infant.

Irmos

Your Church, O Christ, rejoices in you and cries: You, Lord, are my strength, my refuge and my firmament.

Kathisma of the Forefeast. Tone 3.

Awed by the beauty.

All you ends of the earth be filled with joy; for the Mother of God presses on to give birth to the King of the universe, O inexpressible wonder! He who is without beginning begins; he who is without flesh takes flesh.¹⁷ A Cave receives the one who possesses all things. Bethlehem rejoice, and creation dance on this prefestal day.

Both now. Forefeast.

Tone 4. Come swiftly to help.

Virgins, take the lead at the joy of the Virgin; Mothers, give praise to the procession of the Mother of Christ our God; Magi with Angels; the Shepherds with us; for she comes to the city of Bethlehem

¹⁷ This troparion is clearly inspired by St Gregory's homily *On the Holy Theophany*, Ὁ ἄσαρκος σαρκούται, ὁ Λόγος παχύνεται, ὁ ἀόρατος ὁράται, ὁ ἀναφής ψηλαφᾶται, ὁ ἄχρονος ἄρχεται, ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ Υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου γίνεται—"The One without flesh becomes flesh, the Word becomes solid, the Invisible is seen, the Intangible is handled, the Timeless begins, the Son of God becomes Son of man". In his homily *On the Holy Lights*, he says, Πατήρ ὁ πατήρ, καὶ ἄναρχος· οὐ γὰρ ἔκ τινος. Υἱὸς ὁ υἱός, καὶ οὐκ ἄναρχος· ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γάρ. Εἰ δὲ τὴν ἀπὸ χρόνου λαμβάνοις ἀρχὴν, καὶ ἄναρχος· ποιητὴς γὰρ χρόνων, οὐχ ὑπὸ χρόνον—"The Father is father, and without beginning, for he is from none. The Son is son, and not without beginning, for he is from the Father. But if you mean the beginning from time, he too is without beginning, for he maker of times, and not subject to time".

for the birth of a son, God before the ages, who saves the world from corruption.

Forefeast. Ode 4. Irmos.

He who sits in glory upon the throne of the Godhead, Jesus, supremely divine, has come on a light cloud, and with his undefiled hand saved those who cry: Glory, O Christ, to your power!

Troparia

The holy fragrance box¹⁸ of revered sanctification¹⁹ is coming to the city of Bethlehem to empty out sanctification for all of us who cry: Glory, O Christ, to your power.

Inspired Isaia, as you see that your revered proclamations have become realities, rejoice and dance; for the Virgin without seed has borne the Uncontainable in flesh in the Cave of Bethlehem.

Jesus is born in the flesh, and in time the Timeless²⁰ appears as a babe, abolishing my perennial faults, and by his ineffable poverty he enriches me, who have been impoverished by destructive transgressions.

Of the Saint. Theotokion.

Seeing her virginity sealed after childbirth the Mother of God and moved by wonder she cried out, 'My Child, how is that I now wrap you in swaddling clothes, you who wrap the sea in sand'²¹.

Forefeast. Ode 5. Irmos.

The godless will not see your glory, O Christ; but we, rising in the night before dawn, will hymn you, O Only-begotten, radiance of the glory²² of the Father's Godhead, only lover of humankind.

Troparia

¹⁸ This image of the Mother of God is found in St Romanos– μυροθήκη τοῦ πνεύματος πάντερπνε– and in a fragment of a homily attributed to St John Chrysostom– ἀξία γὰρ μυροθήκη τῆς χάριτος.

¹⁹ Cf. Psalm 131:6-8. Note the reference to 'Ephratha' in verse 6.

²⁰ See the earlier quotations from St Gregory's homilies *On the Holy Theophany* and *On the Lights*.

²¹ Cf. Jeremiah 5:22.

²² Hebrews 1:3.

God Emmanuel is born of a Maiden and laid in a manger, he works our restoration as he wills; let us devoutly celebrate beforehand his Nativity.

You, the Word without beginning and one in nature with the Father, were laid in a manger of irrational beasts and freed from unreason²³ us who celebrate devoutly the Forefeast of your Nativity.

The blessed root of Jesse²⁴ has sprung up, its blossom the pure Virgin who bears a divine flower, Christ the Lord; whose Nativity we gladly celebrate beforehand.

Of the Saint. Theotokion.

A new wonder! The immaculate Virgin hastens to bear God made man in the Cave of Bethlehem.

Forefeast. Ode 6. Irmos.

I have come to the depths of the sea, and a storm of many sins has drowned me; but as God lead my life back from corruption, as you love mankind.

Troparia

A young Child born²⁵ for us on earth, and who shone ineffably from the Father before the ages has freed us all from the ancient transgression as he is compassionate.

Strange and marvellous things were heard in the city of Bethlehem when you were born, O Word without beginning; for Shepherds with Angels brought you a hymn as their Master.

The Star reveals to Magi the Sun of justice who is brought to birth ineffably; rejoicing let us now celebrate the Forefeast of his Nativity.

Of the Saint. Theotokion.

The Creator who wrapped the sea in swaddling clothes of mist²⁶ by his will is born from a Virgin Maiden, and like a babe accepts swaddling clothes as he redeems the world.

²³ Again the familiar play on 'Word', 'irrational' and 'unreason'.

²⁴ Isaías 11:2.

²⁵ Isaías 8:4.

²⁶ Job 38:9.

Irmos

I will sacrifice to you with a voice of praise, O Lord, the Church cries to you, cleansed from the filth of demons by the blood which flowed with pity from your side.

Kontakion of the Forefeast. Tone 2.

As we see him who holds the whole earth in his hand wrapped in swaddling clothes in Bethlehem, let us bring prefestal songs to the one who gave him birth; for as a mother she rejoices as she holds in her bosom the Son of God.

The Ikos.

The Virgin, holding in her embrace the Son of God, and as she kissed him with a mother's greetings she exclaimed, 'In conceiving I knew no seed, and in giving birth I did not undergo corruption, but even after giving birth I am pure as before; and so I venerate, my Child, your great compassion and the ineffable miracle which you have shown me; therefore I too rejoice as I hold in my bosom the Son of God'.

Forefeast. Ode 7. Irmos.

Three youths in Babylon held the tyrant's command as idle chatter, and in the midst of the fire they cried aloud: Blessed are you, the God of our fathers.

Troparia

How will a Cave contain you, the Uncontainable, as you come to be born for us? How will a Virgin suckle you, compassionate Jesus, who are called the nourisher of all?

Following the words of the Seer Balaam,²⁷ Magi hasten to worship Christ with gifts, recognising him as the one who reigns over everything that has breath.

Human nature, barren of every virtue, rejoice and dance; for Christ has come to be born from a Virgin in the flesh, that he may make you fertile by good deeds.

Of the Saint. Theotokion.

²⁷ Cf. Numbers 24.

Hail, Virgin Mother, place which contained the Uncontainable, for you are about to give birth for us in a Cave, O Immaculate, to him who sets right the creation of his own hands.

Forefeast. Ode 8. Irmos.

All-powerful Redeemer of all, you came down and bedewed the devout in the midst of the flame, and taught them to sing: All you works, bless, praise the Lord.

Troparia

O Christ you deigned to be born in the Cave of a pure Virgin through your ineffable compassion, to save me who by my many transgressions have been declared a robbers' cave.²⁸

Signing my complete forgiveness, you, the Maker of creation, were enrolled by Caesar's decree with your servants; I hymn the measureless mercy of your compassion, my Master.

Palace of the King, filled with light, how have you entered a tiny Cave to bear the King, the Lord, incarnate for us, O All-holy Virgin, Bride of God?

Of the Saint. Theotokion.

The Lord, mounted upon a cloud,²⁹ is coming to be brought to birth for us through a cloud, the Virgin, that he may banish the dark clouds of sin from the souls of us who cry to him: All you works of the Lord, bless the Lord.

Forefeast. Ode 9. Irmos.

By the sickness of disobedience Eve gave entrance to the curse; while you, Virgin Mother of God, by the offshoot of your child-bearing, made the blessing flower for the world; therefore we all magnify you.

Troparia

Believers, let us all dance, let us leap for joy and shout in harmony; the salvation of all, the Lord, draws near to be brought to birth and to save those who with devout mind celebrate his Nativity.

²⁸ Matthew 21:13.

²⁹ Psalm 103:3, of which the opening is an almost exact quotation, Isaiah 19:1.

Holy David, take up psaltery and harp and sing, 'Be glad house of Ephratha'; for he whom the Father begot from the womb³⁰ is being clearly brought to birth in you, embodied from the Virgin.

Theotokion.

Like a great shower of rain³¹ the Master has come down into your womb, watered the earth parched by the drought of godlessness and dried up the seas of error, O Virgin Mother, Mother of God.

Of the Saint. Theotokion.

Carrying him who carries all things you are coming to Bethlehem, O Virgin, to bear him and to lay as an infant in a manger him who above all works the restoration of mortals.

The Irmos

A stone not cut by hand³² from you, an unhewn mountain, O Virgin, has been cut as the cornerstone.³³ Christ who joined together separated natures; therefore with gladness, Mother of God, we magnify you.

**Exapostilarion of the Saint.
Your Bridal Chamber.**

The Martyr, longing for your bridal chamber, O Word, bravely endured every trial of torments by your aid. At her intercessions I beg you, as God, to have compassion on my soul.

Of the Forefeast. Same melody.

Bethlehem, land of Juda, make ready your entrances; for in you the Virgin and Mother of God has now come, to give birth in a Cave as a mortal to my God and Lord.

At Lauds we insert 4 Stichera, and we sing Prosomia.³⁴

Tone 6.

H The creative Wisdom now advances; the prophetic clouds part asunder; grace clears the sky; the truth has shone out; shadowy

³⁰ Psalm 109:3.

³¹ Psalm 71:6.

³² Daniel 2:34.

³³ Isaias 28:16, Ephesians 2:20, 1 Peter 2:6; Psalm 117:22.

³⁴ The continuation from 20 December of the alphabetical poem by St Romanos.

riddles cease; the gate of Eden has been opened; Adam dance; our God who fashioned us is himself willingly fashioned.

⊕ Fulfilling the oracles and visions of the Prophets, the Word is brought to birth in flesh and becomes solid,³⁵ and after birth he is laid in a manger of irrational beasts. This is the supreme condescension! This the awesome dispensation! For this we sing, 'The King of Israel, Christ draws near'.

I That you may cleanse the poison of corruption and refashion for me the original image, you become incarnate and take suck, and you, who at your behest cause the universe to revolve, are wrapped around in swaddling clothes; O Word, who work wonders, I sing your praise, Angel of the Father's counsel, through which I am made immortal.

K Not leaving the bosom of the Father, you appeared as a mortal; and carried in a Virgin's arms you summoned from Persia through a star the Magi who worshipped you as sovereign God; with the breath of your lips you destroy the godless rulers of the nations and shepherd your chosen people.

Glory. *Same melody.*

Λ The Word, who is consubstantial with the Father, kneaded from pure virgin blood, is fashioned and will grow with the passing of time, and again is born in a Cave. Amazement! But Angels clap their hands, Shepherds sing: the King of Israel, Christ is at hand.

Both now. *Same melody.*

M The oracles of the Seer Balaam are being fulfilled; for those who gaped at Persian prodigies, made radiant by the shining of an unaccustomed star, recognised by their gifts the unsetting Sun, Christ, embodied in Bethlehem, to be God, sovereign and willingly one dead.

At the Aposticha, Prosomia.

Tone 2. O house of Ephratha.

The Star shines out already in the Cave; you Shepherds with Angels, you Magi with gifts, get ready to arrive.

³⁵ St Gregory

Verse: God will come from Theman; and the Holy One from a shady, wooded mountain.

That he may fulfil the sayings of the Prophets, the Lord is born in Bethlehem and opens Eden to Adam's posterity.

Verse: Lord, I heard your report and was afraid; Lord I considered your works and was amazed.

Anoint with myrrh the holy Manger, Bethlehem; for in you the Master unfurls the beams of his Godhead.

Glory. Both now. **The same melody.**

Come, let us who are born of earth ceaselessly hymn with one voice the Virgin, Mary, Mother of God, from Christ is brought to birth.

The rest of the Office of Matins as usual and Dismissal.