

The Office of Readings

Vigil of Christmas

On Christmas Eve, we keep watch for the Birth of our Lord by an office of specially chosen psalms, ancient stichera (hymns), and readings from the Old Testament, the apostolic writings and the Gospels. In the present office, these texts are spread throughout the four offices/hours of the day (the First, Third, Sixth and Ninth Hours), and are called, therefore, in the Slav tradition, the “Royal Hours,” and in the Greek tradition, the “Great Hours.” In tradition, as, for example, in some of the Studite typicons of Constantinople, we see that this office of psalms and readings was often celebrated together at one of the the liturgical hours, usually the Sixth Hour, which could be served on days other than the actual eve of the feast. This arrangement, which is provided in this book, may better better the pastoral needs of some communities, and help us to prepare by the word of God and our spiritual songs to welcome Christ into our minds and hearts as we commemorate his holy birth.

The Very Reverend Archpriest David M. Petras
Byzantine Catholic Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

The Office of Readings

Christmas Vigil

The Priest vests in a dark epitrachilion and phelonion, the deacon in a dark orarion and sticharion. The deacon incenses the church. The priest then stands before the altar, the deacon at the ambon.

Deacon: Reverend Father, give the blessing!

Priest: Blessed is our God, always, now and ever and forever.

Psalm tone

Response:



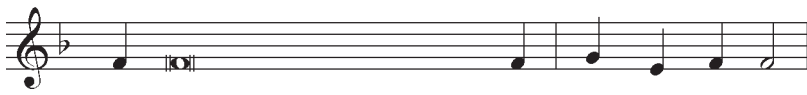
Glory to you, our God,
glory *to* you.

Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth,
everywhere present and filling all things,
Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life,
come and dwell within us,
cleanse us of all stain,
and save our souls, O *gracious* One.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal,
have mercy *on* us. (3 times)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and forever. *Amen*.

Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us;
Lord, cleanse us of our sins;
Master, forgive our transgressions;
Holy One, come to us and heal our infirmities for *your* name's sake.

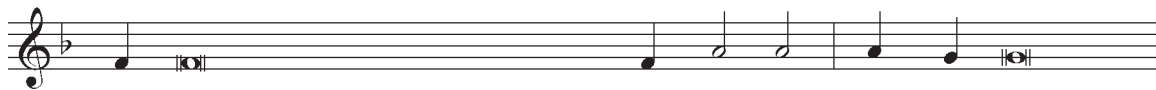


Lord, have mercy. Lord have mer-cy. Lord have mer-cy.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and forever. *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,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.



Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mercy. Lord,



have mercy. Lord, have mer - cy. (*sung twice*)

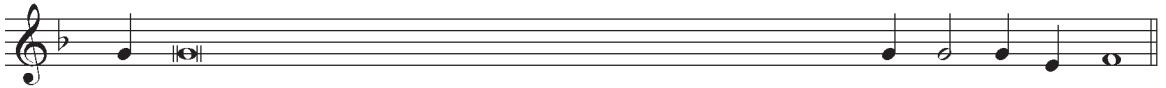
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and forever. *Amen.*

Call to Worship

Each time with a reverence:



Come, let us worship our King and God. Come, let us worship Christ, our King and God.



Come, let us worship and bow before the only Lord Jesus Christ, the King and our God.

The deacon enters the altar.

Psalm 71 O God, give your judgment to the king,
to a king's son **your** justice,
that he may judge your people in justice
and your poor in **right** judgment.
May the mountains bring forth peace for the people
and the **hills**, justice.
May he defend the poor of the people
and save the children of the needy
and crush the **oppressor**.
He shall endure like the sun and the moon
from age **to** age.
He shall descend like rain on the meadow,
like raindrops on **the** earth.
In his days justice shall flourish
and peace till **the** moon fails.
He shall rule from sea to sea,
from the Great River to **earth's** bounds.
Before him his enemies shall fall,
his foes lick **the** dust.
The kings of Tarshish and the seacoasts
shall pay **him** tribute.

The kings of Sheba and Seba
shall bring *him* gifts.
Before him all kings shall fall prostrate,
all nations *shall* serve him.
For he shall save the poor when they cry
and the needy who *are* helpless.
He will have pity on the weak
and save the lives of *the* poor.
From oppression he will rescue their lives,
to him their blood *is* dear.
Long may he live,
may the gold of Sheba *be* given him.
They shall pray for him without ceasing
and bless him all *the* day.
May corn be abundant in the land
to the peaks of *the* mountains.
May its fruit rustle like Lebanon;
may people flourish in the cities
like grass on *the* earth.
May his name be blessed for ever
and endure like *the* sun.
Every tribe shall be blessed in him,
all nations bless *his* name.
Blessed be the Lord, God of Israel,
who alone *works* wonders,
ever blessed his glorious name.
Let his glory fill the earth. Amen! Amen!

Psalm 71

O Lord, remember David
and all the many hardships he *endured*,
the oath he swore to the Lord,
his vow to the Strong One *of* Jacob.
“I will not enter the house where I live
nor go the bed where *I* rest.
I will give no sleep to my eyes,
to my eyelids I will give *no* slumber

till I find a place for the Lord,
a dwelling for the Strong One *of* Jacob.”
At Ephrata we heard of the ark;
we found it in the plains *of* Yearim.
“Let us go to the place of his dwelling;
let us go to kneel at *his* footstool.”
Go up, Lord, to the place of your rest,
you and the ark of *your* strength.
Your priests shall be clothed with holiness;
your faithful shall ring out *their* joy.
For the sake of David your servant
do not reject your *anointed*.
The Lord swore an oath to David;
he will not go back on *this* word:
“A son, the fruit of your body,
will I set upon *your* throne.
If they keep my covenant in truth
and my laws that I *have* taught them,
their sons too shall rule
on your throne from age *to* age.”
For the Lord has chosen Zion;
he has desired it for *his* dwelling:
“This is my resting-place for ever;
here have I chosen *to* live.
I will greatly bless her produce,
I will fill her poor *with* bread.
I will clothe her priests with salvation
and her faithful shall ring out *their* joy.
There David’s stock will flower;
I will prepare a lamp for my *anointed*.
I will cover his enemies with shame
but on him my crown *shall* shine.”

Psalm 90 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
and abides in the shade of the *Al*mighty

says to the Lord: “My refuge,
my stronghold, my God in whom **I** trust!”
It is he who will free you from the snare
of the fowler who seeks to **destroy** you;
he will conceal you with his pinions
and under his wings you will **find** refuge.
You will not fear the terror of the night
nor the arrow that flies **by** day,
nor the plague that prowls in the darkness
nor the scourge that lays waste **at** noon.
A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand fall at **your** right,
you, it will never approach;
his faithfulness is buckler **and** shield.
Your eyes have only to look
to see how the wicked are **repaid**,
you who have said: “Lord, my refuge!”
and have made the Most High **your** dwelling.
Upon you no evil shall fall,
no plague approach where **you** dwell.
For you has he commanded his angels,
to keep you in all **your** ways.
They shall bear you upon their hands
lest you strike your foot against **a** stone.
On the lion and the viper you will tread
and trample the young lion and **the** dragon.
Since he clings to me in love, I will free him;
protect him for he knows **my** name.
When he calls I shall answer: “I am with you,”
I will save him in distress and give **him** glory.
With length of days I will content him;
I shall let him see my **saving** power.

The deacon opens the Royal Doors and proceeds to the Ambon through the Northern door.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and forever. Amen.

Twice, each with a reverence:
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Glory to you, O God!

Third time, with melody:



Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Glo - ry to you, O God!

Litany of Peace

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



Response: 1. Lord, have mer - cy.

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



Response: 2. Lord, have mer - cy.

Deacon: For peace in the whole world, for the stability of the holy Churches of God,
and for the union of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (1)

Deacon: For this holy church and for all who enter it with faith, reverence, and fear of
God, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (2)

Deacon: For our holy father, (*Name*), pope of Rome, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (1)

Deacon: For our most reverend metropolitan, (*Name*), for our God-loving bishop, (*Name*), for the venerable presbyterate, the diaconate in Christ, and all the clergy and people, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (2)

Deacon: For our government and for all in the service of our country, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (1)

Deacon: For this city, [or: For this holy monastery], for every city, community, and for the faithful living in them, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (2)

Deacon: For favorable weather, for an abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (1)

Deacon: For those who travel by sea, air, and land, for the sick, the suffering, the captive and for their salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (2)

Deacon: That we be delivered from all affliction, wrath, and need, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (1)

Deacon: Protect us, save us, have mercy on us, and preserve us, O God, by your grace.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (2)

Deacon: Commemorating our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Theotokos and ever-Virgin Mary with all the saints, let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.

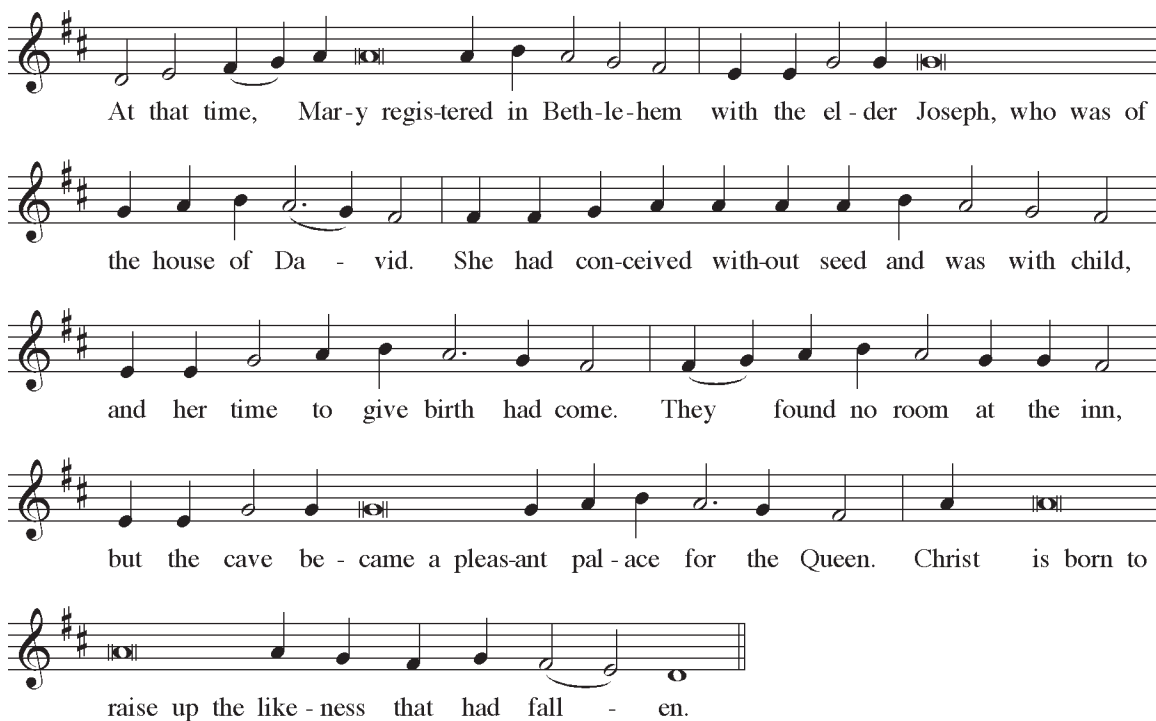
Response: 
To you, O Lord.

Priest: O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you grant the prayers and receive the petitions of your servants who cry to you night and day. Incline your ear and listen to the prayers of us sinners. Do not turn your face away from us, O Lord, and do not remember our past sins, because you know our nature and understand our weakness. O Lord, remember that we are dust, a spirit that passes and does not return, and by the power of your arm, fill our lives with mercy. Lead us in the path of your commandments, teach us to do your will, to speak of your mysteries and to study your law day and night. Command your angels to watch us in all our steps. Deliver us from the arrow that flies by day, from the plague that prowls in the darkness, from the scourge that lays waste at noon. Fill our mouths with praise and our lips with joy, that we may greet one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs in grace, singing and making melody with all our hearts, that we might give thanks to the God of all, for you give life to all who place their hope in your mercy. For you are a good God and you love us all, and to you belongs glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.

Response: 
A - men.

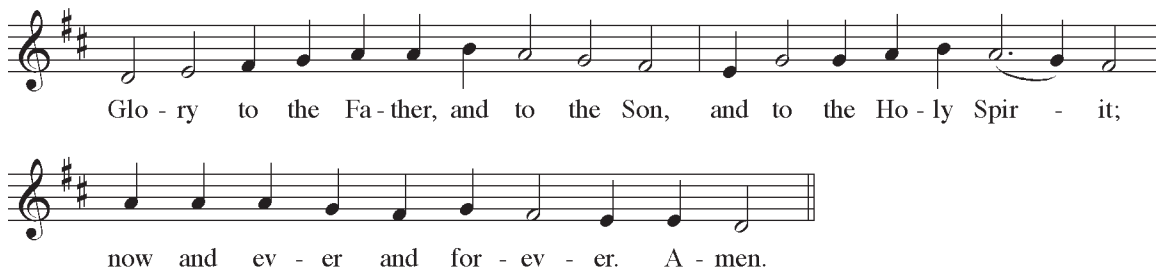
As the following Troparion and stichera are sung, the deacon censers the altar three times, then the icon screen and the people and gives the censer to the server. The priest gives the Gospel Book to the Deacon, who carries it in procession to the analogion in the middle of the Church. There the deacon censers the Gospel three times, and the priest and deacon return to the altar.

Troparion - Tone 4



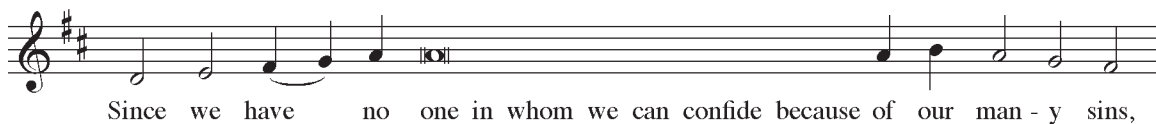
At that time, Mar-y regis-tered in Beth-le-hem with the el-der Joseph, who was of
the house of Da - vid. She had con-ceived with-out seed and was with child,
and her time to give birth had come. They found no room at the inn,
but the cave be - came a pleas-ant pal - ace for the Queen. Christ is born to
raise up the like - ness that had fall - en.

Cantor:



Glo - ry to the Fa-ther, and to the Son, and to the Ho - ly Spir - it;
now and ev - er and for - ev - er. A - men.

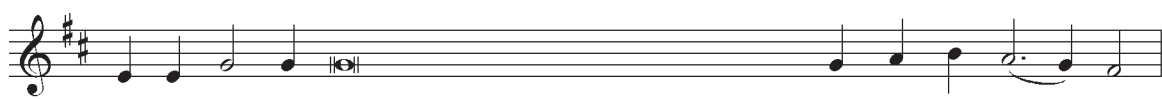
Theotokion



Since we have no one in whom we can confide because of our man - y sins,



O Vir-gin Theoto-kos, in-ter-cede for us with the One who was born of you,



for a moth-er's prayer is a powerful means for obtaining the Mas-ter's fa - vor.



You are most wor-thy of ven-er - a - tion, so do not turn away from the plead-ing



of us sin - ners; for the One who willed to suffer in the flesh for our sake



is full of mer - cy, and his power is suf-fi - cient to save us.

Stichera of the First Hour - Tone 8



Make read - y, O Beth - le - hem: pre-pare your-self, O man - ger.



Let the cave show its wel - come. The truth has come, the shad-ow has



passed a - way; born of a Vir-gin, God has ap-peared to all, formed

as we are and making our flesh god - like. There-fore Ad - am and Eve
 are re - newed, and they call out: Lov - ing-kindness has ap - peared on
 earth to save our hu - man race.

Cantor:

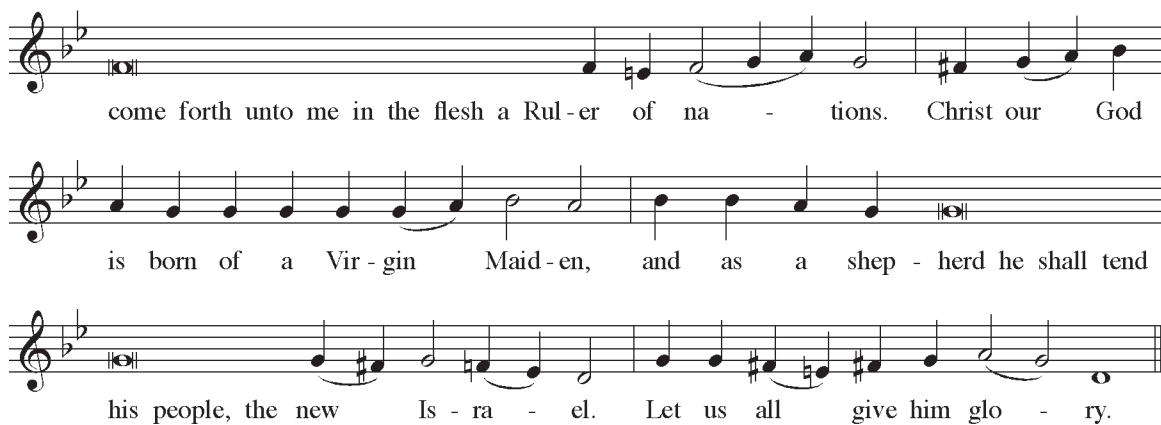
Tone 3

God comes from Teman, the Holy One from an overshadowed moun - tain. O Lord,
 I have heard your re - nown and feared.

All:

Tone 3

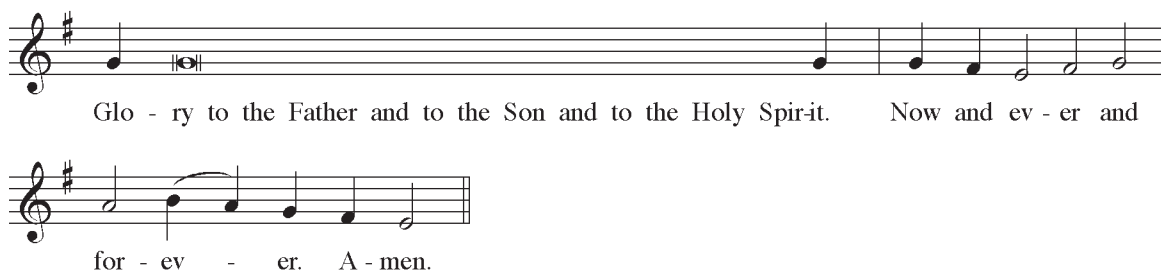
Now the proph - e - cy draws near to its ful - fill - ment, which mys - tic - ly said:
 "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Ju - dah, where the cave was
 pre - pared, you are not least a - mong prin - ces, for out of you shall



come forth unto me in the flesh a Rul-er of na - tions. Christ our God
is born of a Vir - gin Maid-en, and as a shep - herd he shall tend
his people, the new Is - ra - el. Let us all give him glo - ry.

Cantor:

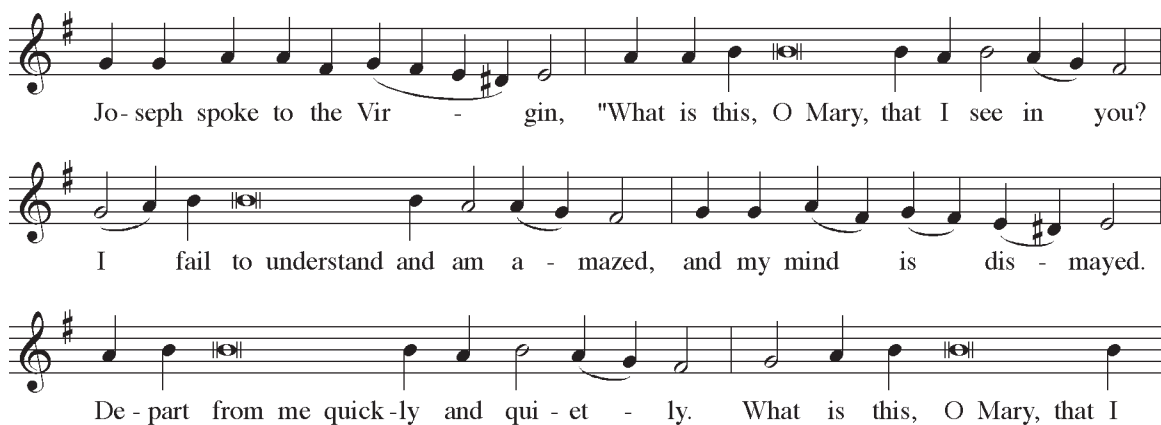
Tone 8



Glo - ry to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spir-it. Now and ev - er and
for - ev - er. A - men.

Doxastikon

Tone 8



Jo-seph spoke to the Vir - gin, "What is this, O Mary, that I see in you?
I fail to understand and am a - mazed, and my mind is dis - mayed.
De - part from me quick-ly and qui - et - ly. What is this, O Mary, that I

see in you? In - stead of honor, you have brought me shame; in - stead
of joy, sor-row; in - stead of praise, re - proof. No long - er shall I bear the re - proach
of peo - ple. I re - ceived you from the priests of the temple, as one blame - less
be - fore the Lord. And what is this that I now see?

Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Priest: ❖ Peace be to all!

Deacon: Wisdom! Be attentive!

Prokeimenon - Tone 4 (Psalm 2: 7-8)

The Lord said to me: "You are my Son: this day
I have be - got - ten you."

Verse: Ask and I shall bequeath you the nations. *All repeat the Prokeimenon.*

Deacon: Wisdom!

Lector: A reading from the Prophecy of Micah

Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Lector: Thus says the Lord: But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, too small 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 times. Therefore the Lord will give them up until the time, when she who is to give birth has borne, and the rest of his brethren shall return to the children of Israel, he shall stand firm and shepherd his flock by the strength of the Lord, in the majestic name of the Lord, his God, and they shall remain, for now his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth; he shall be peace.

Priest: Wisdom!

Deacon: A reading from the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Hebrews.

Priest: Let us be attentive!

Deacon: [Hebrews 1: 1 - 12]

Priest: Wisdom! Let us stand and listen to the Holy Gospel.


✠ Peace be to all!

Response: 
And to your spir - - it.

Priest: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew.

Response: 
Glo - ry to you, O Lord, glo - ry to you.

Priest: [Matthew 1: 18 - 25]

Response: 
Glo - ry to you, O Lord, glo - ry to you.

During the stichera the deacon censes the Gospel Book three times.

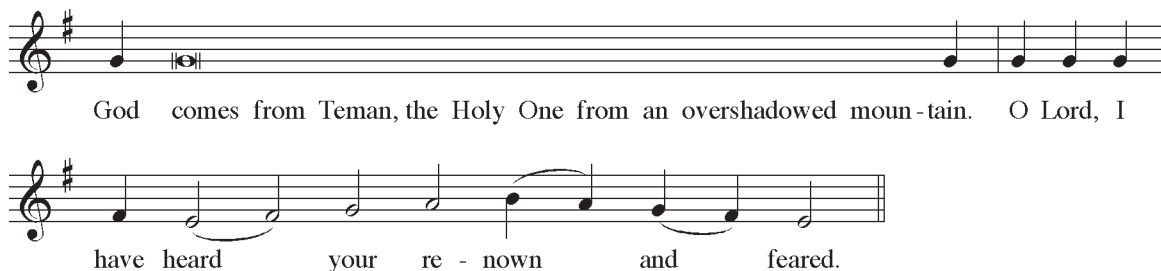
Stichera of the Third Hour - Tone 6



Such is our God, no other is to be com - pared to him. Born of a Virgin, he comes
to dwell a-mong us. Placed in a poor man - ger, the On - ly-begotten
Son is seen as a mor - tal man, and the Lord of glory is wrapped in
swad-dling clothes. A star guides the Magi to come and wor - ship him;
and we sing: O Ho - ly Trin - i - ty, save our souls.

Cantor:

Tone 8



God comes from Teman, the Holy One from an overshadowed moun-tain. O Lord, I
have heard your re - nown and feared.

All:*Tone 8*

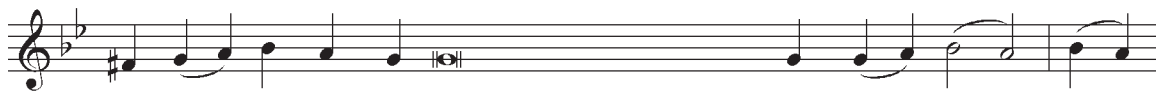
Be-fore your birth, O Lord, the an - gel - ic hosts looked with trembling
 on this mys - ter - y and were struck with won - der: you a - dorn the
 vault of heav-en with stars yet were pleased to be born as a Ba - by.
 You hold all the ends of the earth in the hol-low of your hand, yet were placed
 in a man-ger of dumb beasts. For by such a dispensation have your compassion and
 great mercy been made known, O Christ. Glo - - ry to you!

Cantor:*Tone 3*

Glo - ry to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spir-it, now and ev - er
 and for - ev - er. A - - - men.

Doxastikon

Tone 3



Tell us, Jo-seph, how do you bring to Bethlehem, great with child, the



vir - gin you have received from the sanc - tu - ar - y? He said: I have



searched the proph - ets and have been warned by an an - gel; and



I am persuaded that Mary shall give birth to God, in ways surpassing all



in - ter - pre - ta - tion. Ma - gi from the east shall come to worship him



with pre - cious gifts. O Lord, for our sake you have tak - en flesh:



glo - - - - ry to you!

Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Priest: ❖ Peace be to all!

Deacon: Wisdom! Be attentive!

Prokeimenon - Tone 4 (Isaiah 9: 5)



For a child is born to us, a Son is giv - en us.

Verse: Upon his shoulder dominion rests. *All repeat Prokeimenon.*

Deacon: Wisdom!

Lector: A reading from the Prophecy of Jeremiah.

Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Lector: Such is our God; no other is to be compared to him: He has traced out all the way of understanding, and has given her to Jacob, his servant, to Israel, his beloved Son. Since then she has appeared on earth and moved among men. She is the book of the precepts of God, the law that endures forever. All who cling to her will live, but those will die who forsake her. Turn, O Jacob, and receive her: walk by her light toward splendor. Give not your glory to another, your privileges to an alien race. Blessed are we, O Israel; for what pleases God is known to us!

Priest: Wisdom!

Deacon: A reading from the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Galatians.

Priest: Let us be attentive!


Deacon: [Galatians 3: 23 - 29]

Priest: Wisdom! Let us stand and listen to the Holy Gospel.
❖ Peace be to all!


Response: 

And to your spir - - it.

Priest: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke.

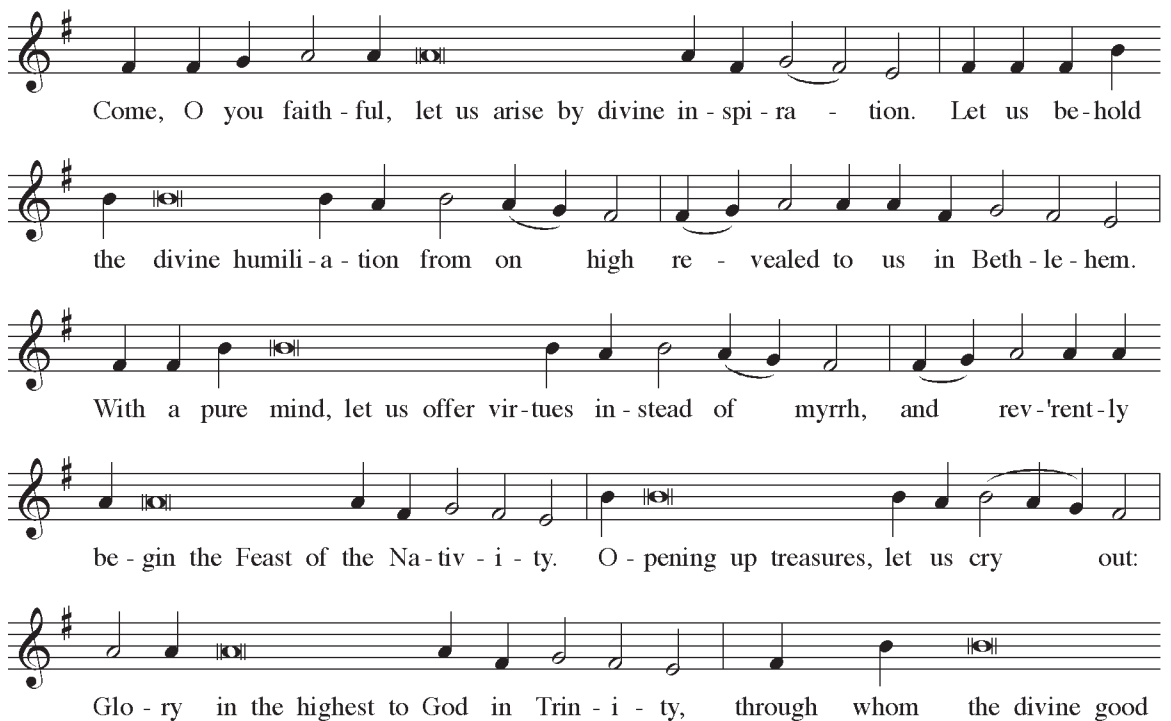
Response: 
Glo - ry to you, O Lord, glo - ry to you.

Priest: [Luke 2: 1 - 20]

Response: 
Glo - ry to you, O Lord, glo - ry to you.

During the stichera the deacon censes the Gospel Book three times.

Stichera of the Sixth Hour - Tone 1



Come, O you faith - ful, let us arise by divine in - spi - ra - tion. Let us be - hold
the divine humili - a - tion from on high re - vealed to us in Beth - le - hem.
With a pure mind, let us offer vir - tues in - stead of myrrh, and rev - 'rent - ly
be - gin the Feast of the Na - tiv - i - ty. O - pening up treasures, let us cry out:
Glo - ry in the highest to God in Trin - i - ty, through whom the divine good

will ap-pear to hu-man-i - ty to set Ad-am free from the an-ces-tral curse,
for he is the lov-er of hu-man-i - ty.

Cantor:

Tone 4

God comes from Teman, the Holy One from an overshadowed moun-tain. O Lord, I
have heard your re-nown and feared.

All:

Tone 4

Lis-ten, O heaven, and give ear, O earth. Let the foundations be shaken, and let the
earth trem-ble, for our God and Creator has clothed himself in cre-a-ted flesh.
The Cre-a-tor of all by his strong right arm is creat-ed in the womb. O, the
depths of the riches of the wis-dom and knowl-edge of God! How inscrutable are

his judg-ments, and how un-search-a - ble are his ways!

Cantor:

Tone 5

Glo - ry to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spir-it, now and ev - er

and for - ev - er. A - - - men.

Doxastikon

Tone 5

Come, you peo - ple, bear - ers of Christ, and see won - ders that overwhelm every

mind with as - ton - ish-ment. In rev - erent worship let us sing prais-es.

To-day a maid-en great with child comes to Beth-le-hem to give birth to the Lord.

The choirs of an-gels go be-fore her. See-ing this, Joseph, her be-trothed,

cried out: "What is this strange mystery in you, O vir - gin? How shall you



Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Priest: ❖ Peace be to all!

Deacon: Wisdom! Be attentive!

Prokeimenon - Tone 4 (Psalm 109: 3, 1)



Verse: The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand,
till I make your enemies your footstool." *All repeat the Prokeimenon.*

Deacon: Wisdom!

Lector: A reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Lector: Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz: Ask for a sign from the Lord, your God; let it be deep as the nether world, or high as the sky! But Ahaz answered, "I will not ask! I will not tempt the Lord!" Then he said: Listen, O house of David! Is it not enough for you to weary men, must you also weary my God? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name Him Immanuel. He shall be living on curds and honey by the time he learns to reject the bad and choose the good. For before the child learns to reject the bad and choose the good, the land of those two kings whom you dread shall be deserted. The Lord said to me: Take a large cylinder-seal, and inscribe on it in ordinary letters: "Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz." And I took reliable witnesses, Uriah the priest,

and Zechariah, son of Jeberechiah. Then I went to the prophetess and she conceived and bore a son. The Lord said to me: Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz, for before the child knows how to call his father or mother by name, the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried off by the king of Assyria. Know, O peoples, and be appalled! Give ear, all you distant lands! Arm, but be crushed! Arm, but be crushed! Form a plan, and it shall be thwarted; make a resolve, and it shall not be carried out, for “God is with us!”

Priest: Wisdom!

Deacon: A reading from the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Hebrews.

Priest: Let us be attentive!

Deacon: [Hebrews 1: 10 - 2: 3]


Priest: Wisdom! Let us stand and listen to the Holy Gospel
✠ Peace be to all!

Response: 
And to your spir - - it.

Priest: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew.

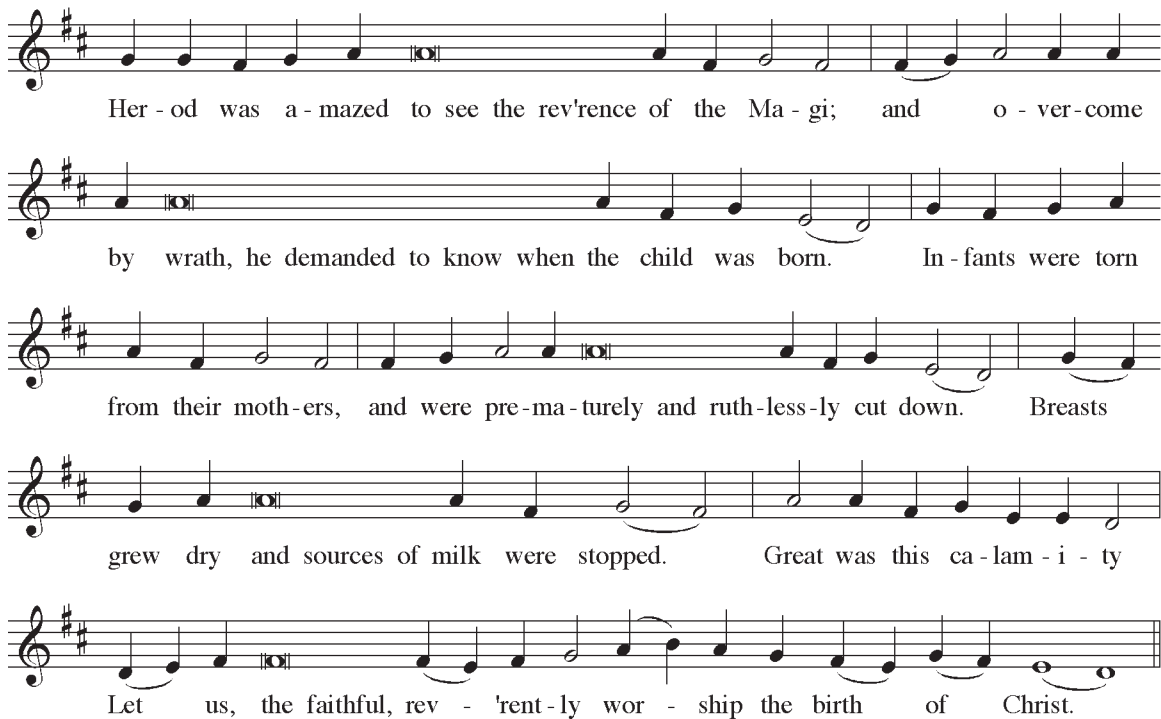
Response: 
Glo - ry to you, O Lord, glo - ry to you.

Priest: [Matthew 2: 1 - 12]

Response: 
Glo - ry to you, O Lord, glo - ry to you.

The deacon censes the altar, the icon screen, the people and then the Gospel Book, the latter three times, as the stichera are sung.

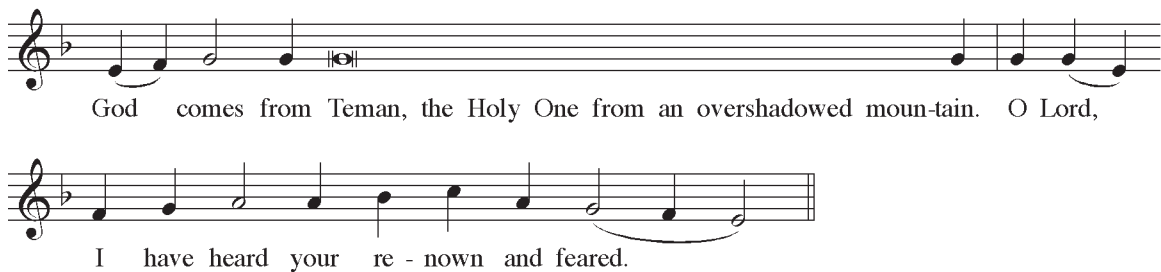
Stichera of the Ninth Hour - Tone 7



Her - od was a - mazed to see the rev'rence of the Ma - gi; and o - ver - come
by wrath, he demanded to know when the child was born. In - fants were torn
from their moth - ers, and were pre - ma - turely and ruth - less - ly cut down. Breasts
grew dry and sources of milk were stopped. Great was this ca - lam - i - ty
Let us, the faithful, rev - 'rent - ly wor - ship the birth of Christ.

Cantor:

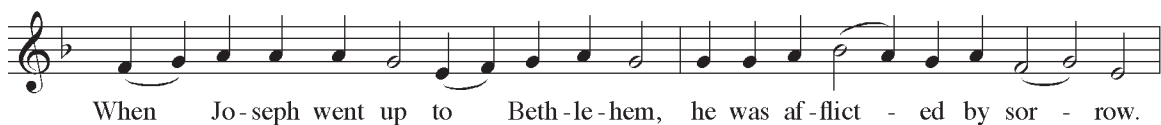
Tone 2



God comes from Teman, the Holy One from an overshadowed moun-tain. O Lord,
I have heard your re - nown and feared.

All:

Tone 2



When Jo - seph went up to Beth - le - hem, he was af - flict - ed by sor - row.

You said to him, "Why are you downcast and troubled, seeing me great with child,
 completely ignorant of the fearful mystery in me? Cast out
 fear and understand this strange marvel: God is now coming upon earth for
 the sake of mercy, he is now taking flesh in my womb. You will
 see him be born as he wished, and filled with joy, you shall worship him
 as your creator. The angels praise him without ceasing,
 and glorify him with the Father and the Holy Spirit."

Cantor:

Tone 6

Glo - ry to the Fa - ther, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spir - it,
 now and ev - er and for - ev - er. A - men.

Doxastikon

Tone 6

To - day God who holds creation in the hol - low of his hand is born of the
 vir - gin. God whose es - sence is un - touch - a - ble is wrapped in
 swad - dling clothes. In the beginning God found-ed the heav - ens and now
 lies in a man - ger. He rained man - na down on the people in the
 wil - der - ness and is now fed on milk from his moth - er's breast.
 The bride - groom of the church calls the Ma - gi. The Son of the virgin
reverence *reverence*
 ac - cepts their gifts. We wor - ship your birth, O Christ. We wor - ship
reverence
 your birth, O Christ. We wor - ship your birth, O Christ. Show us al - so
 your The - o - pha - ny.

Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Priest: ❖ Peace be to all!

Deacon: Wisdom! Be attentive!

Prokeimenon - Tone 4 (Psalm 85: 5, 1-2)

Zi - on shall be called "Moth - - - ther;" one and all were
born in her.

Verse: God's foundations are in the holy mountain.

The Lord loves the gates of Zion. *All repeat the Prokeimenon.*

Deacon: Wisdom!

Lector: A reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Lector: Thus says the Lord: For a Child is born to us, a Son is given us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. His dominion is vast and forever peaceful, from David's throne, and over his kingdom, which he confirms and sustains by judgment and justice, both now and forever, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this!

Priest: Wisdom!

Deacon: A reading from the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Hebrews.

Priest: Let us be attentive!

Deacon: [Hebrews 2: 11 - 18]


Priest: Peace be with you, reader.

Priest: Wisdom! Let us stand and listen to the Holy Gospel.


❖ Peace be to all!

Response: 
And to your spir - - it.

Priest: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew.

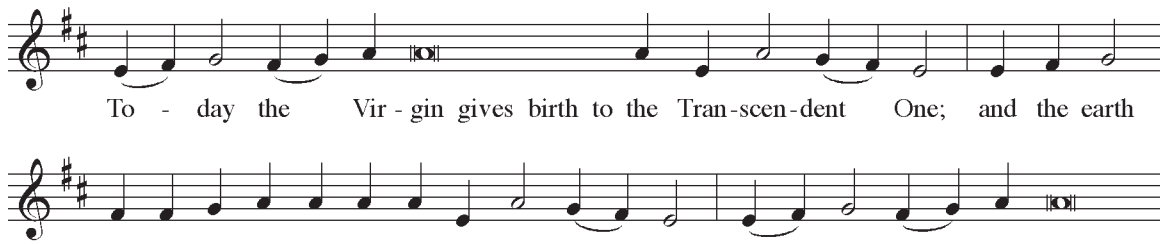
Response: 
Glo - ry to you, O Lord, glo - ry to you.

Priest: [Matthew 2: 13 - 23]

Response: 
Glo - ry to you, O Lord, glo - ry to you.

After the Gospel, the priest carries the Gospel book in procession to the Holy Table. The deacon precedes him, incensing. The Royal Doors remain open.

Kontakion - Tone 3



To - day the Vir - gin gives birth to the Tran - scen - dent One; and the earth
of - fers a cave to the Un - ap - proach - a - ble. The an - gels sing his glory

with the shep - herds; the wise men jour - ney with the star.

The e - ter - nal God is born for us as an in - fant child.

All: Lord, have mercy. (*40 times*)

Lector: O Good God, in all times and places you are worshiped and glorified both in heaven and on earth. You are long-suffering and generous in your mercy and compassion. You love the just and show mercy to the sinner, calling all to salvation throught the promise of blessings to come. At this very hour, O Lord, receive our supplications and direct our lives in the path of your commandments. Sanctify our souls; purify our bodies; set right our minds; cleanse our thoughts; deliver us from all affliction, trouble and distress; surround us with your holy angels so that, guided and guarded in their camp, we may attain oneness of faith and the knowledge of your unpeakable glory. For you are blessed forever and ever. Amen.

We kneel for the following litany. The deacon says this litany standing, at the ambon.

Deacon: Let us complete our *morning/evening* prayer to the Lord.

Response:

1. Lord, have mer - cy.

Deacon: Protect us, save us, have mercy on us, and preserve us, O God, by your grace.

Response: 
2. Lord, have mer - cy.

Deacon: That this whole evening be perfect, holy, peaceful, and without sin, let us beseech the Lord.

Response: 
3. Grant this, O Lord.

Deacon: For an angel of peace, a faithful guide and guardian of our souls and bodies, let us beseech the Lord.

Response: 
4. Grant this, O Lord.

Deacon: For the pardon and remission of our sins and offenses, let us beseech the Lord.

Response: Grant this, O Lord. (3)

Deacon: For what is good and beneficial to our souls and for peace in the world, let us beseech the Lord.

Response: Grant this, O Lord (4)


Deacon: That we spend the rest of our life in peace and repentance, let us beseech the Lord.

Response: Grant this, O Lord. (3)

Deacon: For a Christian, painless, unashamed, peaceful end of our life, and for a good account before the fearsome judgement seat of Christ, let us beseech the Lord.

Response: Grant this, O Lord. (4)

Deacon: Commemorating our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Theotokos and ever-Virgin Mary with all the Saints, let us commit ourselves and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God.

Response: 
To you, O Lord.

Priest: O eternal God, you dwell in inaccessible light. No one has seen you nor is able to see you., O inexhaustible Treasury of eternal blessings. O Master of all, now protect those who hope in you, filling us with your divine and saving grace.

For to you is due all dominion and yours is the Kingdom, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.


Response: 
A - men.

All stand.

Priest: ✠ Peace be to all!

Response: 
And to your spir - - it.

Deacon: Bow your heads to the Lord!

Response: 
To you, O Lord.

Priest: O Lord our God, look down upon your creation from the heights of your holy dwelling-place, and keep in peace and goodness those who bow their necks under the yoke of the good Christ.

For blessed and glorified is your honorable and majestic name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.

Response: 
A - men.

The deacon stands before the icon of Christ, and the priest proceeds to the ambon.

Priest: Let us go forth in peace.

Response: 
In the name of the Lord.

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: 
Lord have mer - - - cy.

At the Ambon, facing East, the priest prays:

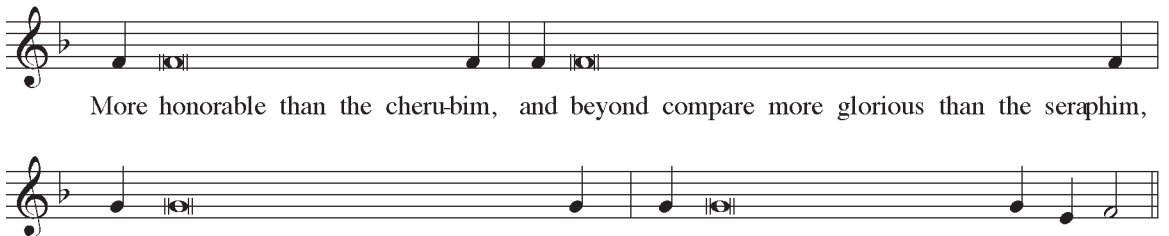
Priest: O Christ our Lord and our God, you did not think equality with God something to be grasped at, but you emptied yourself, took the form of a slave and were born in human likeness. Enlighten us as we prepare to celebrate the feast of your holy birth, Make us worthy to see the mystery of your becoming human for us, while remaining God in eternity. Fill our minds with understanding, that we might see you even in the least of our brithers and sisters. You have given us the gift of your Holy Spirit. You have loved us even to the point of your saving death and glorious resurrection; grant us also a faith that cannot

be confounded, a love that does not pretend, and a wisdom that is complete. You have said, “Unless you become like little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven;” grant that in this feast we may again experience the rebirth given us in baptism, that we might sing out with the angels, “Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to those on whom his favor rests.” You have humbled yourself, O Christ our God; may your name be exalted, together with the name of your eternal Father and the name of your all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and forever.

Response: 
A - men.

Deacon: Wisdom!

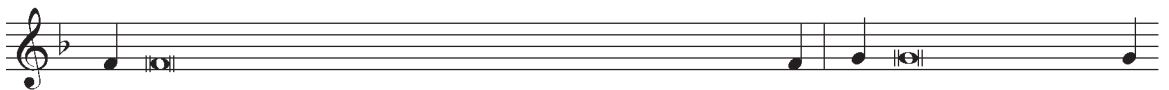
Response:



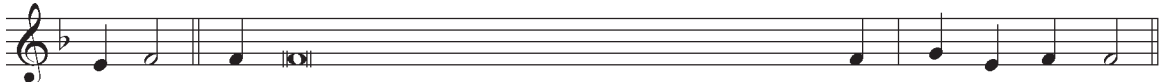
More honorable than the cheru-bim, and beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim,
who, a virgin, gave birth to God the Word, you, truly the Theotokos, we mag-ni-fy.

Priest: Glory to you, O Christ our God, our hope; glory to you!

Response:



Glo-ry to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spir-it; now and ever and for ev-er.



A-men. Lord, have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord, have mer-cy. Give the bless-ing.

Priest: May Christ our true God have mercy on us and save us, through the prayers of his most holy Mother, and of the holy, glorious, and illustrious apostles, and of our holy ascetical fathers and mothers, and of _____ (*patron of the church*) and of _____ (*whose feast we keep this day*) and of all the saints; for Christ is good and loves us all.

Response:

