

FESTAL ORTHROS ON DECEMBER 27
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.

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. (Choir continues.)

O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance, granting to Thy people victory over all their enemies, and by the power of Thy Cross preserving Thy commonwealth.

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

Do Thou, Who of Thine own good will wast lifted up upon the Cross, O Christ our God, bestow Thy bounties upon the new Nation which is called by Thy Name; make glad in Thy might those who lawfully govern, that with them we may be led to victory over our adversaries, having in Thine aid a weapon of peace and a trophy invincible.

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

O Champion dread, who cannot be put to confusion, despise not our petitions, O Good and All-praised Theotokos; establish the way of the Orthodox; save those who have been called upon to govern us, leading us to that victory which is from heaven, for thou art she who gavest birth to God, and alone art blessed.

EKTENIA

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

Choir: Lord, have mercy. (THRICE)

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

Choir: Lord, have mercy. (THRICE)

Priest: Again we pray for our father and Metropolitan PHILIP, for our Archbishop JOSEPH, and for all our Brotherhood in Christ.

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. Bless, Father, in the Name of the Lord.

Priest: Glory to the Holy, Consubstantial, Life-giving and Undivided Trinity, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men. (THRICE)

O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise. (TWICE)

PSALM 3

O Lord, why are they multiplied that afflict me? Many rise up against me. Many say unto my soul: There is no salvation for him in his God. But Thou, O Lord, art my helper, my glory, and the lifter up of my head. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and He heard me out of His holy mountain. I laid me down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord will help me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that set themselves against me round about. Arise, O Lord, save me, O my God, for Thou hast smitten all who without cause are mine enemies; the teeth of sinners hast Thou broken. Salvation is of the Lord, and Thy blessing is upon Thy people.

I laid me down and slept; I awoke, for the Lord will help me.

PSALM 37

O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, nor chasten me in Thy wrath. For Thine arrows are fastened in me, and Thou hast laid Thy hand heavily upon me. There is no healing in my flesh in the face of Thy wrath; and there is no peace in my bones in the face of my sins. For mine iniquities are risen higher than my head; as a heavy burden have they pressed heavily upon me. My bruises are become noisome and corrupt in the face of my folly. I have been wretched and utterly bowed down until the end; all the day long I went with downcast face. For my loins are filled with mocking, and there is no healing in my flesh. I am afflicted and humbled exceedingly, I have roared from the groaning of my heart. O Lord, before Thee is all my desire, and my groaning is not hid from Thee. My heart is troubled, my strength hath failed me; and the light of mine eyes, even this is not with me. My friends and my neighbors drew nigh over against me and stood, and my nearest of kin stood afar off. And they that sought after my soul used violence; and they that sought evils for me spake vain things, and craftiness all the day long did they meditate. But as for me, like a deaf man I heard them not, and was as a speechless man that openeth not his mouth. And I became as a man that heareth not, and that hath in his mouth no reproofs. For in Thee have I hoped, O Lord; Thou wilt hearken unto me, O Lord my God. For I said: Let never mine enemies rejoice over me; yea, when my feet were shaken, those men spake boastful words against me. For I am ready for scourges, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare mine iniquity, and I will take heed concerning my sin. But mine enemies live and are made stronger than I, and they that hated me unjustly are multiplied. They that render me evil for good slandered me, because I pursued goodness. Forsake me not, O Lord my God, depart not from me. Be attentive unto my help, O Lord of my salvation.

Forsake me not, O Lord my God, depart not from me. Be attentive unto my help, O Lord of my salvation.

PSALM 62

O God, my God, unto Thee I rise early at dawn. My soul hath thirsted for Thee; how often hath my flesh longed after Thee in a land barren and untrodden and unwatered. So in the sanctuary have I appeared before Thee to see Thy power and Thy glory, For Thy mercy is better than lives; my lips shall praise Thee. So shall I bless Thee in my life, and in Thy name will I lift up my hands. As with marrow and fatness let my soul be filled, and with lips rejoicing shall my mouth praise Thee. If I remembered Thee on my bed, at the dawn I meditated on Thee. For Thou art become my helper; in the shelter of Thy wings will I rejoice. My soul hath cleaved after Thee; Thy right hand hath been quick to help me. But as for these, in vain have they sought after my soul; they shall go into the nethermost parts of the earth, they shall be surrendered unto the edge of the sword; portions for foxes shall they be. But the king shall be glad in God, everyone shall be praised that sweareth by Him; for the mouth of them is stopped that speak unjust things.

At the dawn I meditated on Thee. For Thou art become my helper; in the shelter of Thy wings will I rejoice. My soul hath cleaved after Thee; Thy right hand hath been quick to help me.

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)
Lord, have mercy. (THRICE)

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

PSALM 87

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

O Lord God of my salvation, by day have I cried and by night before Thee. Let my prayer come before Thee, bow down Thine ear unto my supplication, for filled with evils is my soul, and my life unto Hades hath drawn nigh. I am counted with them that go down into the pit; I am become as a man without help, free among the dead, like the bodies of the slain that sleep in the grave, whom Thou rememberest no more, and they are cut off from Thy hand. They laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness and in the shadow of death. Against me is Thine anger made strong, and all Thy billows hast Thou brought upon me. Thou hast removed my friends afar from me; they have made me an abomination unto themselves. I have been delivered up, and have not come forth; mine eyes are grown weak from poverty. I have cried unto Thee, O Lord, the whole day long; I have stretched out my hands unto Thee. Nay, for the dead wilt Thou work wonders? Or shall physicians raise them up that they may give thanks unto Thee? Nay, shall any in the grave tell of Thy mercy, and of Thy truth in that destruction? Nay, shall Thy wonders be known in that darkness, and Thy righteousness in that land that is forgotten? But as for me, unto Thee, O Lord, have I cried; and in the morning shall my prayer come before Thee. Wherefore, O Lord, dost Thou cast off my soul and turnest Thy face away from me? A poor man am I, and in troubles from my youth; yea, having been exalted, I was humbled and brought to distress. Thy furies have passed upon me, and Thy terrors have sorely troubled me. They came round about me like water, all the day long they compassed me about together. Thou hast removed afar from me friend and neighbor, and mine acquaintances because of my misery.

O Lord God of my salvation, by day have I cried and by night before Thee. Let my prayer come before Thee, bow down Thine ear unto my supplication.

PSALM 102

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all that He hath done for thee, Who is gracious unto all thine iniquities, Who healeth all thine infirmities, Who redeemeth thy life from corruption, Who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion, Who fulfilleth thy desire with good things; thy youth shall be renewed as the eagle's. The Lord performeth deeds of mercy, and executeth judgment for all them that are wronged. He hath made His ways known unto Moses, unto the sons of Israel the things that He hath willed. Compassionate and merciful is the Lord, long-suffering and plenteous in mercy; not unto the end will He be angered; neither unto eternity will He be wroth. Not according to our iniquities hath He dealt with us, neither according to our sins hath He rewarded us. For according to the height of heaven from the earth, the Lord hath made His mercy to prevail over them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our iniquities from us. Like as a father hath compassion upon his sons, so hath the Lord had compassion upon them that fear Him; for He knoweth whereof we are made, He hath remembered that we are dust. As for man, his days are as the grass; as a flower of the field, so shall he blossom forth. For when the wind is passed over it, then it shall be gone, and no longer will it know the place thereof. But the mercy of the Lord is from eternity, even unto eternity, upon them that fear Him. And His righteousness is upon sons of sons, upon them that keep His testament and remember His commandments to do them. The Lord in heaven hath prepared His throne, and His kingdom ruleth over all. Bless the Lord, all ye His angels, mighty in strength, that perform His word, to hear the voice of His words. Bless the Lord, all ye His hosts, His ministers that do His will. Bless the Lord, all ye His works, in every place of His dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

In every place of His dominion, bless the Lord, O my soul.

PSALM 142

O Lord, hear my prayer, give ear unto my supplication in Thy truth; hearken unto me in Thy righteousness. And enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified. For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath humbled my life down to the earth. He hath sat me in darkness as those that have been long dead, and my spirit within me is become despondent; within me my heart is troubled. I remembered days of old, I meditated on all Thy works, I pondered on the creations of Thy hands. I stretched forth my hands unto Thee; my soul thirsteth after Thee like a waterless land. Quickly hear me, O Lord; my spirit hath fainted away. Turn not Thy face away from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. Cause me to hear Thy mercy in the morning; for in Thee have I put my hope. Cause me to know, O Lord, the way wherein I should walk; for unto Thee have I lifted up my soul. Rescue me from mine enemies, O Lord; unto Thee have I fled for refuge. Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God. Thy good Spirit shall lead me in the land of uprightness; for Thy name's sake, O Lord, shalt Thou quicken me. In Thy righteousness shalt Thou bring my soul out of affliction, and in Thy mercy shalt Thou utterly destroy mine enemies. And Thou shalt cut off all them that afflict my soul, for I am Thy servant.

O Lord, give ear unto my supplication and enter not into judgment with Thy servant. (TWICE)
Thy good Spirit shall lead me in the land of uprightness.

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 Archbishop 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.

“GOD IS THE LORD” IN TONE FOUR

Choir: God is the Lord Who hath shown us light. Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.

1. O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever.
God is the Lord....
2. All nations compassed me about: but in the Name of the Lord will I destroy them.
God is the Lord....
3. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.
God is the Lord....
4. The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.
God is the Lord....

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 LITTLE EKTENIA

Deacon: Again and again, in peace, 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 Thine is the majesty, and 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.

POETIC KATHISMATA FOR AFTER-FEAST & ST. STEPHEN (Plain Reading)

Thou sittest in the highest upon a throne of fire, with Thy co-beginningless Father and Thine All-holy Spirit; yet Thou wast well pleased to be made flesh, when born of a pure Maid who knew not man. For this cause, a star, O Jesus, showed Thee unto the Magi that came from Persia. Glory to Thine exceeding good will; glory to Thy Theophany; glory to Thine extreme condescension toward us, O Lord.

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

Since he mystically possessed the Spirit's well-spring in his heart, the First Martyr of Christ God, with truth and full of eloquence, reproved the Jews for their willfulness and presumption. He clearly showed to them that Christ, the Son of God, truly had sprung forth from holy David's seed; for the renowned Stephen was truly filled with the fullness of wisdom and grace. O thou thrice-blessed, by thine entreaties, save all them that revere thee.

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

He that all containeth not, how was He contained in the womb? And He that is in the bosom of the Father, how shall He be carried in the arms of his Mother? Verily, all this hath been fulfilled as He Himself knew and willed and was pleased to do; for He that is not carnal hath become incarnate by His own choice; and He that is, hath turned for our sakes to that which He was not, sharing our creation, yet inseparable from His essence. Verily, Christ hath been born with two Natures, desiring to perfect the heavenly world.

FESTAL ANABATHMOI IN TONE FOUR

- + From my youth up many passions have warred against me. But do Thou help and save me, O my Savior. (REPEAT)
- + Ye who hate Zion shall be put to confusion of the Lord; like grass in the fire shall ye be withered up. (REPEAT)
- + *Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.*
- + Through the Holy Spirit is every soul quickened and exalted in purity, and made resplendent by the Triune Unity in mystic holiness.
- + *Both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.*
- + Through the Holy Spirit the channels and streams of grace overflow showering all creation with invigorating Life.

PROKEIMENON FOR ST. STEPHEN IN TONE FOUR

The righteous man shall flourish like a palm tree; like a cedar in Lebanon shall he be multiplied.
(TWICE)

Stichos: They that are planted in the house of the Lord, in the courts of our God shall they blossom forth.

The righteous man shall flourish like a palm tree; like a cedar in Lebanon shall he be multiplied.

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: For Holy art Thou, O our God, Who restest in the Holy Place, 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.

Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. (TWICE)

Praise ye God in His saints; praise Him in the firm foundation of His power.

Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.

THE FESTAL ORTHROS GOSPEL

Deacon: And that we may be accounted worthy to hear the Holy Gospel, let us pray to the Lord God.

Choir: Lord, have mercy. (THRICE)

Deacon: Wisdom! Attend! Let us hear the Holy Gospel.

Priest: Peace be to all.

Choir: And to thy spirit.

Priest: The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke (12:2-12).

Choir: Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee.

Deacon: Let us attend!

Priest: The Lord said: "For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore, whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him Who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven. Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

Choir: Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee.

PSALM 50

Reader: Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy Great Mercy; and according to the multitude of Thy compassions blot out my transgression. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know mine iniquity, and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil before Thee, that Thou mightest be justified in Thy words, and prevail when Thou art judged. For behold, I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother bear me. For behold, Thou hast loved truth; the hidden and secret things of Thy wisdom hast Thou made manifest unto me. Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be made clean; Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow. Thou shalt make me to hear joy and gladness; the bones that be humbled, they shall rejoice. Turn Thy face away from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and with Thy governing Spirit establish me. I shall teach transgressors Thy ways, and the ungodly shall turn back unto Thee. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation; my tongue shall rejoice in Thy righteousness. O Lord, Thou shalt open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Thy praise. For if Thou hadst desired sacrifice, I had given it; with whole-burnt offerings Thou shalt not be pleased. A sacrifice unto God is a broken spirit; a heart that is broken and humbled God will not despise. Do good, O Lord, in Thy good pleasure unto Zion, and let the walls of Jerusalem be built up. Then shalt Thou be pleased with a sacrifice of righteousness, with oblation and whole-burnt offerings. Then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar.

FESTAL TROPARIA AFTER PSALM 50 IN TONE TWO

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

Through the protection of the Proto-martyr, O Thou Who art merciful, blot out all the multitudes of our transgressions.

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

Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Thou Who art merciful, blot out all the multitudes of our transgressions.

(TONE FOUR) Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

Cleansing thy soul from passions O holy one, and becoming a sacred vessel of the Holy Spirit, thou didst receive from Christ the divine and holy unction, consecrated a Hierarch and counselor of the Divinely-wise people and an invincible Martyr of Him Who for our sake endured the passion from which flows dispassion, O holy sufferer Stephen.

THE INTERCESSION

Deacon: O God, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance. Visit Thy world with mercies and bounties. Exalt the estate of Orthodox Christians, and send down upon us Thy rich mercies. Through the intercessions of our all-immaculate Lady Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary; by the might of the precious and life-giving Cross; by the protection of the honorable Bodiless Powers of Heaven; at the supplications of the honorable, glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John; of the holy, glorious, all-laudable and foremost of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and of all the holy apostles; of our Fathers among the Saints, great Hierarchs and Ecumenical Teachers, Basil the

Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom; of our fathers among the saints, Athanasius, Cyril and John the Merciful, patriarchs of Alexandria; of our Holy Father Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia; Spyridon, bishop of Trimythous and Nektarios, bishop of Pentapolis, the wonder-workers; Nicholai of Zicha, who labored in America, Innocent, Evangelizer of Alaska and Enlightener of North America, John, Wonderworker of Shanghai and San Francisco, and Raphael, bishop of Brooklyn; of the holy, glorious, great-martyrs, George the Trophy-bearer, Demetrius the Myrrh-streamer, Theodore the Soldier, Theodore the General, and Menas the wonder-worker; of the hieromartyrs, Ignatios the God-bearer of Antioch, Charalampos and Eleutherios, Tikhon, patriarch of Moscow and Enlightener of North America, and Juvenaly of Iliamna; of the holy, glorious great women martyrs, Thekla, Barbara, Anastasia, Katherine, Kyriaki, Photeini, Marina, Paraskeva and Irene; of the holy, glorious, right-victorious martyrs, especially Peter the Aleut; of our venerable and God-bearing fathers who shone in the ascetic life, Anthony the Great, Seraphim of Sarov, and Herman of Alaska; (*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, and of all the saints: we beseech Thee, O most merciful Lord, hearken unto the petitions of us sinners who make our supplications unto Thee, and have mercy upon us.

Choir: Lord, have mercy. (*Twelve times*)

Priest: Through the mercies and compassions and love for mankind of Thine Only-begotten Son, with Whom Thou art blessed, together with Thine all-holy, and good, and life-giving Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

KONTAKION AND OIKOS FOR ST. STEPHEN (Plain Reading)

Yesterday the Lord came in the flesh; and today the servant hath departed in the flesh. Yesterday the King was born in the flesh; and today the servant is stoned for His sake, and for His sake didst pass away, namely the divine Stephen, first of the Martyrs.

Stephen the First Martyr hath shone out like a luminous star jointly with the Nativity of Christ, flashing brightly and enlightening all the uttermost regions of the earth. Single-handed, he brought to naught all the impiety of the Jews, reproving them with words of wisdom, reasoning with them from the Scriptures; and persuading them that Jesus, Who was born of the Virgin, is the very Son of God, he put to shame their impious villainy, namely the divine Stephen, first of the Martyrs.

THE SYNAXARION (Plain Reading)

On December 27 in the Holy Orthodox Church, the second day of the After-feast of the Nativity of Christ, we commemorate the holy Apostle, First Martyr and Archdeacon Stephen, one of the Seven Deacons.

Verses

With crowns of words, as it were with stones most precious,
I now crown Stephen, whom the stones crowned before time.
On the twenty-seventh a stony destiny took Stephen away.

Stephen was the first and archdeacon of the seven deacons whom the holy apostles ordained and appointed to the service of assisting the poor in Jerusalem. The account of Stephen's ministry

and martyrdom is outlined in detail in Acts of the Apostles, from which we read in today's Great Vespers and Divine Liturgy. Among the Proto-martyr's persecutors was his kinsman Saul, later the Apostle Paul. At that time, the Most-holy Theotokos, standing on a rock at a distance with John the Theologian, witnessed the martyrdom of this first martyr for the truth of her Son and God, and she prayed to God for Stephen. This occurred one year after the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. Gamaliel, a prince of the Jews and a secret Christian, clandestinely took Stephen's body and buried it on his own estate. Thus, this first among the Christian martyrs gloriously reposed and took up his habitation in the Kingdom of Christ God.

On this day, we also commemorate Venerable-confessor Theodore the Branded. He was born in Palestine and well educated in both secular and spiritual wisdom. He was a monk in the community of St. Sava the Sanctified and was later ordained a priest. Theodore suffered harshly for his defense of icons under three emperors: Leo the Armenian, Michael Balbus and Theophilus. The demented Theophilus beat him with his own hands and ordered that Theodore be branded by an iron on his face with derisive verses, for which he was called "the Branded." Theodore was cast into prison in the town of Apamea in Bithynia. Theodore died there from his pains and wounds in the year 833. Through their intercessions, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us, and save us. Amen.

KATAVASIAS OF THE SECOND CANON OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY IN TONE ONE

Ode 1. The Lord performed a miracle and saved the people when of old He turned the moist waves of the sea into dry land. And having been born now of a Virgin by His own choice, He hath trodden the way for us to heaven, being equal to the Father and to men in essence; therefore, do we glorify Him.

Ode 3. Incline Thine ear, O glorious benefactor, to the praise of Thy servants, abolishing the boasting of the proud adversary. And help us who sing to Thee to overcome sin, and confirm us on the unshakeable foundation of faith.

Ode 4. The Prophet Habakkuk of old foretold in song the re-creation of mankind; for he was worthy to behold that sign in an ineffable manner; for the Word did come forth as a new Babe from the mountain of the Virgin, for the re-creation of the nations.

Ode 5. Grant forgiveness, O Christ, to us who have been in the darkness of our deeds of error since the night, who eagerly praise Thee, since Thou art our Benefactor; that Thou mayest hasten to us and prepare for us a good way, wherein if we walk we shall find glory and honor.

Ode 6. Verily, Jonah when he was in the depth of the sea, begged to ascend to Thee and to be rescued from the tempest. But as for me, having been pierced by the arrows of the tyrant, in Thee I seek refuge, O evil-destroying Christ. Hasten Thou to me and deliver me hastily from my negligence.

Ode 7. The youths having clung steadfastly to the love of the King of all, ridiculed the prating and blasphemy of the blaspheming usurper. And being filled with wrath, he delivered them to the terrible fire which did not harm them. Wherefore, they lifted their voices to the Master, saying: Blessed art Thou unto all ages.

Let us praise, bless, and worship the Lord.

Ode 8. The youths who were cast of old into the fire and remained unburned, were a sign of the womb of the Maiden who gave birth supernaturally while yet sealed. These two matters grace hath accomplished through one miracle, arousing the nations to praise.

Deacon: The Theotokos and Mother of the Light let us honor and magnify in song.

MAGNIFICATIONS IN TONE ONE

Choir: My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.

Refrain: More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, thou who without corruption barest God the Word, and art truly Theotokos, we magnify thee. (*Repeat after each Verse.*)

- + For He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. (*Refrain*)
- + For He that is mighty hath magnified me, and holy is His Name; and His mercy is on them that fear Him, throughout all generations. (*Refrain*)
- + He hath showed strength with His arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. (*Refrain*)
- + He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek. He hath filled the empty with good things, and the rich hath He sent empty away. (*Refrain*)
- + He remembering His mercy hath helped His servant Israel, as He promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed forever. (*Refrain*)

Ode 9. *Magi and shepherds came to worship Christ, Who was born in the city of Bethlehem.*

Verily it is easier for us to endure silence since there is no dread danger there from for us. But because of our strong desire, O Virgin, and Mother of sameness, to begin well-balanced songs of praise, this becometh indeed onerous to us. Wherefore, grant us power to equal our natural inclination.

THE LITTLE EKTENIA

Deacon: Again and again, in peace, 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 all the powers of Heaven praise Thee, and unto Thee do 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.

EXAPOSTEILARION FOR ST. STEPHEN IN TONE THREE

Unto Thee as to the King is Stephen brought, that living crown, who now departeth from the flesh to Thee, Who camest down in flesh; and for Thy sake, Almighty God, he hath in splendid glory accomplished his contest well.

ANOTHER EXAPOSTELARION FOR ST. STEPHEN IN TONE TWO

He that was filled in very truth with Godlike grace and power, in working wondrous signs, reproved the body of Christ-slayers, who meditated but vainly. Yet with a tongue most lofty, did Stephen speak the things of God: Now I see Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father; so spake the first of Martyrs; and when they stoned him, he went up to Christ God crowned in glory.

THEOTOKION OF AFTER-FEAST & ST. STEPHEN IN TONE TWO

Now there is born in Bethlehem, as the Babe of a Virgin, the coeternal Word of God, of equal throne and nature with both the Father and Spirit; and the First Martyr Stephen, having proclaimed Him openly as our God and our Savior, is stoned to death by blood-guilty hands, yet rejoiceth greatly; and he ascendeth unto Christ, wearing a crown in glory.

AINOI (PRAISES) IN TONE ONE

Choir: Let everything that hath breath, praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise Him in the heights. To Thee, O God, is due our song.

Choir: Praise ye Him, all His angels: praise ye Him, all His hosts. To Thee, O God, is due our song.

For St. Stephen in Tone One

Verse 1. This glory shall be to all His saints.

With spiritual flowers, let us the faithful plait a crown worthy of a prizewinner for Stephen, the first to contend; for he it is that prepared the way for the Martyrs, and with joy he cried: Behold, I see the Heavens opened, and the Son of God standing at the right hand of the Invisible Father.

Also for St. Stephen in Tone Two

Verse 2. Praise the Lord in His sanctuary. Praise ye Him in the firmament of His power.

Thou hast clad thyself in holiness, O blessed Stephen, thou First Martyr and First Deacon, thou fellow communicant with the angels. Beseech and intercede with the sinless Lord and Savior in our behalf.

Verse 3. Praise ye Him for His mighty acts. Praise ye Him according to the multitude of His greatness.

Being first among deacons, thou wast also shown to be the first among martyrs, O all-holy Stephen. For thou becamest a path for the saints, and leddest many martyrs unto the Lord. Therefore, Heaven was opened unto thee and God appeared to thee. Do thou entreat Him that our souls be saved.

Verse 4. Praise Him with the sound of trumpet. Praise Him with the psaltery and harp.

As is meet, let us honor Stephen, the First Deacon and First Martyr, the noble servant of Christ. For while standing in the midst of the transgressors, he saw the Son standing at the right hand of the Father.

Also for St. Stephen in Tone Four

Verse 5. Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; praise Him with stringed instruments and organs.

O glorious Stephen, citizen of Heaven and blessed servant of Christ, offer intercession in behalf of our souls.

Verse 6. Praise Him upon the loud cymbals: praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.

Stephen, the good first-fruit of the martyrs, who was full of grace and power, who wrought signs and mighty wonders among the people, was stoned by the lawless. But he shone like an angel, and saw at the right hand of the power the glory of Thee Who wast incarnate for our sakes; and he was taken up into the Heavens by the Spirit of grace. And as he dwelleth with the choirs of the angels, he intercedeth that our souls be saved.

THE DOXASTICON FOR ST. STEPHEN IN TONE FIVE

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

O First Martyr, Apostle and First Deacon, gateway of the Martyrs, glory of the righteous, boast of the Apostles: as thou stoodest in the conflict, thou sawest the Heavens opened and the Son of God standing at the right hand of the invisible Father. Wherefore, thou shonest in countenance as an angel and didst joyfully cry out for them that stoned thee: Lay not this sin to their charge. And now, do thou ask that they who acclaim thee with love be granted forgiveness of sins and Great Mercy.

THE THEOTOKION FOR THE AFTER-FEAST IN TONE FIVE

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

Incomprehensible is the mystery which is accomplished in Bethlehem today! He that is invisible, is seen; the Fleshless receiveth flesh; the Word assumeth substance; and He Who Is, becometh what He was not. In a cave, a Virgin bringeth forth a newborn Babe that is the Fashioner of nature. A manger portrayeth a heavenly throne; cattle becometh an image of the arrays of the Cherubim. Shepherds marvel, Wise Men bring gifts, and angels sing praises, saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace; for Emmanuel, without suffering change, hath been well-pleased to be with men.

THE GREAT DOXOLOGY IN TONE FIVE

- + Glory to Thee, Who hast shown us the Light; Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men.
- + We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee; we give thanks unto Thee for Thy great glory.
- + O Lord, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty; O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit.
- + O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, Who takest away the sin of the world, have mercy on us; O Thou Who takest away the sins of the world.
- + Receive our prayer, O Thou Who sittest at the right hand of the Father, and have mercy on us.
- + For Thou only art holy, Thou only art the Lord, O Jesus Christ, to the Glory of God the Father. Amen.
- + Every day will I bless Thee, and I will praise Thy Name forever; yea, forever and ever.
- + Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin.
- + Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our Fathers, and praised and glorified be Thy Name forever. Amen.
- + Let Thy mercy, O Lord: be upon us, as we do put our hope in Thee.
- + Blessed art Thou, O Lord: teach me Thy statutes. (THRICE)
- + Lord, Thou hast been our refuge in all generations. I said: Be merciful unto me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee.
- + Lord, I have fled unto Thee: teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God.

- + For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light.
- + O continue Thy loving-kindness unto them that know Thee.
- + 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.
- + Holy Immortal: have mercy on us.
- + Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: have mercy on us.

APOLYTIKION OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST IN TONE FOUR

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.

Portions of the Diocesan Service Texts include texts from *The Menaion*, *The Great Horologion*, *The Pentecostarion*, and *The Psalter of the Seventy*, which are Copyright © Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, Massachusetts, and are used with permission. All rights reserved. These works may not be further reproduced, beyond printing out a single copy for personal non-commercial use, without the prior written authorization of Holy Transfiguration Monastery.