

SAINT LUKE THE EVANGELIST

G R E E K O R T H O D O X C H U R C H



DECEMBER 27, 2009

THE SUNDAY AFTER THE NATIVITY

Saint Joseph the Betrothed, David the Prophet-King, Iakovos the Brother of God
Saint Stefanos the Archdeacon and First-Martyr

Saint Joseph the Betrothed was of the lineage of King David. In his first marriage, he had four sons and two daughters. After he became a widower, St Joseph led a life of strict temperance. He was chosen to be the husband and guardian of the Most Holy Theotokos, who had taken a vow of virginity.

An angel told him of the Incarnation of the Son of God through her. St Joseph was present when the shepherds and the Magi worshiped the new-born divine Infant. On the orders of the angel, he fled into Egypt with the Mother of God and the Infant Jesus, saving them from the wrath of King Herod. He lived in Egypt with the Virgin Mary and the divine Child, working as a carpenter. St Joseph reputedly died at the age of one hundred.

St Joseph is commemorated on the Sunday after the Nativity. If there is no Sunday between December 25 and January 1, his Feast is moved to December 26. The Righteous Joseph is also commemorated on the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers.

The Holy Apostle James, Brother of God, was the eldest son of Joseph the Betrothed from his first marriage with Solomonia. The Apostle James is remembered after the Feast of the Nativity of Christ together with his father Joseph and the Prophet-King David, since he accompanied his family on the Flight into Egypt and lived there with the Infant Jesus, the Mother of God and Joseph. Later, he returned to Israel with them.

After the Ascension of the Lord, St James was the first Bishop of Jerusalem, gaining the great esteem not only of Christians, but also of Jews. He was thrown from the roof of the Jerusalem Temple because he had publicly preached to the people about the God-manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Apostle James is also commemorated on October 23.

The Holy Prophet-King David was a forefather of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh. The youngest son of Jesse, David shepherded a flock of sheep belonging to his father. He was distinguished by his deep faith, and he zealously fulfilled the will of God.

During a battle with the Philistines, he vanquished the giant Goliath in single combat, which decided the outcome of the war in favor of the Israelites. He endured many things from King Saul, who saw him as a favorite of the people and his rival. David, however, showed his own decency and magnanimity. Twice, when he had the possibility of killing Saul, he did not do so.

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AT THE SMALL ENTRANCE WE SING

APOLYTIKION OF THE FEAST. MODE 4.

Your nativity, O Christ our God, has caused the light of knowledge to rise upon the world. For therein the worshippers of the stars were by a star instructed to worship You, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know You as Orient from on high. Glory to You, O Lord.

RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION. MODE 4.

When the women Disciples of the Lord had learned from the Angel the joyful message of the Resurrection and had rejected the ancestral decision, they cried aloud to the Apostles triumphantly: Death has been despoiled, Christ God has risen, granting His great mercy to the world.

APOLYTIKION OF THE FEAST. MODE 4.

Your nativity, O Christ our God, has caused the light...

APOLYTIKION OF THE RIGHTEOUS. MODE 2.

Annunciate the miracles to David the ancestor of God, O Joseph. You saw the Virgin pregnant. You glorified with the shepherds. You worshipped with the Magi. And you were warned by an Angel. Entreat Christ God that our souls be saved.

APOLYTIKION OF THE SAINT. MODE 4.

Βασιλειον διάδημα, ἐστέφθη σὴ κορυφή, ἐξ ἄθλων ὦν ὑπέμεινας, ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ, Μαρτύρων πρωτόαθλε, σὺ γὰρ τὴν Ἰουδαίων, ἀπελέγξας μανίαν, εἶδες σου τὸν Σωτῆρα, τοῦ Πατρὸς δεξιόθεν, Αὐτὸν οὖν ἐκδυσώπει αἶε, ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ἡμῶν.

APOLYTIKION FOR THE CHURCH. MODE 5.

The holy Apostle, the All-hymned Luke, who is acknowledged by the Church of Christ as the recorder of the Acts of the Apostles, and the splendid author of the Gospel of Christ. Let us praise with sacred hymns as a physician, who heals the infirmities of man, and the ailments of nature, who cleanses spiritual wounds, and prays unceasingly for our souls.

KONTAKION. MODE 3.

On this day the Virgin gives birth unto the Super-essential. To the Unapproachable, earth is providing the grotto. Angels sing and with the shepherds offer up glory. Following a star the Magi are still proceeding. He was born for our salvation,* a newborn Child,* the pre-eternal God.

ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΕΟΡΤΗΣ. ΗΧΟΣ Δ΄.

Ἡ γέννησίς σου Χριστέ ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, ἀνέτειλε τῷ κόσμῳ, τὸ φῶς τὸ τῆς γνώσεως, ἐν αὐτῇ γὰρ οἱ τοῖς ἀστροῖς λατρεύοντες, ὑπὸ ἀστέρος ἐδιδάσκοντο, σὲ προσκυνεῖν, τὸν Ἥλιον τῆς δικαιοσύνης, καὶ σὲ γινώσκειν ἐξ ὕψους ἀνατολῆν, Κύριε δόξα σοι.

ΑΝΑΣΤ. ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ. ΗΧΟΣ Δ΄.

Τὸ φαιδρὸν τῆς Ἀναστάσεως κήρυγμα, ἐκ τοῦ Ἀγγέλου μαθοῦσαι αἱ τοῦ Κυρίου μαθήτριά, καὶ τὴν προγονικὴν ἀπόφασιν ἀπορρίψασαι, τοῖς Ἀποστόλοις καυχώμεναι ἔλεγον Ἐσκύλευται ὁ θάνατος, ἠγγέρθη Χριστὸς ὁ Θεός, δωρούμενος τῷ κόσμῳ τὸ μέγα ἔλεος.

ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΕΟΡΤΗΣ. ΗΧΟΣ Δ΄.

Ἡ γέννησίς σου Χριστέ ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, ἀνέτειλε τῷ...

ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΤΩΝ ΔΙΚΑΙΩΝ. ΗΧΟΣ Β΄.

Εὐαγγελίζου Ἰωσήφ, τῷ Δαυΐδ τὰ θαύματα τῷ Θεοπάτορι, Παρθένον εἶδες κυοφορήσασαν, μετὰ Μάγων προσεκύνησας, μετὰ Ποιμένων ἐδοξολόγησας ἑξ Ἀγγέλου χρηματισθείς, ἰκέτευε Χριστὸν τὸν Θεόν, σωθῆναι τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν.

ΑΠΟΛΥΤΙΚΙΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ. ΗΧΟΣ Δ΄.

Stephen, a crown of royalty was laid on your head* for contests you courageously endured for Christ our God, * as first among Martyr saints. * You stood in accusation of the raging Judeans; * and you saw your Savior at the right hand of the Father. * We pray that you will ever entreat Him to save our souls.

KONTAKION. ΗΧΟΣ Γ΄.

Ἡ Παρθένος σήμερον, τὸν ὑπερούσιον τίκει, καὶ ἡ γῆ τὸ Σπήλαιον, τῷ ἀπροσίτῳ προσάγει. Ἄγγελοι μετὰ Ποιμένων δοξολογοῦσι. Μάγοι δὲ μετὰ ἀστέρος ὁδοιποροῦσι. Δι' ἡμᾶς γὰρ ἐγεννήθη, Παιδίον νέον, ὁ πρὸ αἰῶνων Θεός.

THE READINGS OF THE DAY

EPISTLE READING

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 6:8-15; 7:1-5, 47-60

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

And the high priest said, "Is this so?" And Stephen said: "Brethren and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, and said to him, 'Depart from your land and from your kindred and go into the land which I will show you.' Then he departed from the land of the Chaldeans, and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living; yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot's length, but promised to give it to him in possession and to his posterity after him, though he had no child.

"But it was Solomon who built a house for him. Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands; as the prophet says, 'Heaven is my throne, and earth my footstool. What house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all these things?'

"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."

Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth against him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

GOSPEL READING

MATTHEW 2:13-23

When the wise men departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my son."

Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more." But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." And he rose and took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaos reigned over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

ANNOUNCEMENTS

UPCOMING CHURCH SERVICES:

Thursday, Dec. 31, The Circumcision of our Lord, St. Basil the Great, Divine Liturgy, 6pm
Saturday, Jan. 2, Great Vespers, 6pm

UPCOMING CLASSES:

NO CLASSES THIS WEEK

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

We have received 35 pledge cards totaling \$55,370. Our current average pledge is \$1582. Our annual budget exceed \$135,000. Thank you to all who have already made their pledge for 2010 – we humbly ask that you give generously so that we can meet our expenses. *Please return your Stewardship Card* as soon as possible. Your generosity is appreciated!

HOUSE BLESSINGS

Following the celebration of Epiphany of January 5-6, it is customary for Orthodox Christians to have their homes blessed in order to ask for God's blessings upon themselves and their families dur-

ing the new year. If you would like to have your home blessed, please see the sign-up sheet in the Narthex.

PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The following individuals were elected to the vacancies on the Parish Council: Loukas Grafakos, Vicki Kardon & Julie Kalaitzandonakes.

VASILOPITA

We will celebrate the cutting of the Vasilopita on Sunday January 3rd. Please bring a donation for Saint Basil's Academy, the Archdiocesan home for disadvantaged youth.

“Therefore the Word of God, Himself God, the Son of God who “in the beginning was with God,” through whom “all things were made” and “without” whom “was nothing made,” with the purpose of delivering man from eternal death, became man: so bending Himself to take on Him our humility without decrease in His own majesty, that remaining what He was and assuming what He was not, He might unite the true form of a slave to that form in which He is equal to God the Father, and join both natures together by such a compact that the lower should not be swallowed up in its exaltation nor the higher impaired by its new associate. Without detriment therefore to the properties of either substance which then came together in one person, majesty took on humility, strength weakness, eternity mortality: and for the paying off of the debt, belonging to our condition, inviolable nature was united with possible nature, and true God and true man were combined to form one Lord, SO that, as suited the needs of our case, one and the same Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, could both die with the one and rise again with the other.

—SAINT LEO THE GREAT (400-461)”

SYNAXARION OF THE DAY

Continued from front page...

After Saul and his son perished, David was proclaimed king of the southern part of Israel, and after Saul's second son was killed, he became king of all Israel. He built a new capital, Jerusalem ("the City of Peace"), and a new tabernacle. His great wish to build a Temple was not realized. It was foretold to him that his son would build the Temple.

The life of the Prophet David was darkened by a grievous falling: he took Uriah's wife for himself, and sent Uriah to his death in battle. He was also an example of great repentance, humbly and with faith bearing the sorrows sent in punishment for his sins. St David gave a model for repentance in Psalm 50/51. King David died in great old age with steadfast faith in the coming of the promised Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. His divinely-inspired Psalter is widely used in the divine services and in personal prayers. (See the Books of Kings and Chronicles).

The holy Prophet-King David is invoked by those facing a difficult situation, such as an interview, etc.

The Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stefanos was the eldest of the seven deacons, appointed by the Apostles themselves, and therefore he is called "archdeacon." He was the first Christian martyr, and he suffered for Christ when he was about thirty. In the words of Asterias, he was "the starting point of the martyrs, the instructor of suffering for Christ, the foundation of righteous confession, since Stefanos was the first to shed his blood for the Gospel."

Filled with the Holy Spirit, St Stefanos preached Christianity and defeated Jewish teachers of the Law in debate. The Jews maligned St Stefanos, saying that he had uttered blasphemy against God and against Moses. St Stefanos came before the Sanhedrin and the High Priest to answer these charges. He gave a fiery speech, in which he recounted the history of the Jewish nation, and denounced the Jews for persecuting the prophets, and also for executing the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ (Acts ch. 7).

During his speech, St Stefanos suddenly saw the heavens opened and Jesus Christ standing at the right

hand of God. The Jews shouted and covered their ears, and rushed at him. They dragged him out of the city and stoned him, but the holy martyr prayed for his murderers. Far off on the heights stood the Mother of God with the holy Apostle John the Theologian, and She prayed fervently for the martyr. Before his death St Stefanos said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. O Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Then he joyfully gave up his pure soul to Christ.

The body of the holy Protomartyr Stefanos, left to be eaten by beasts, was secretly taken up by the Jewish teacher Gamaliel and his son Habib, who buried Stefanos on his estate. They both believed in Christ, and later received holy Baptism.

Saint Theodore, Archbishop of Constantinople, was a native of Constantinople, led a pious life, was ordained as a priest and served in the cathedral of Hagia Sophia, where he was also the keeper of the sacred vessels.

In the year 676 he was chosen to be Patriarch of Constantinople, although after two years he was deposed because of slander. But truth triumphed, and St Theodore was restored to the Patriarchal throne in 683. He then guided the Church of Constantinople to the very end of his life. He died around the year 686.

From the Father's of the Church

ON THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S LOVING-KINDNESS TOWARDS MANKIND

**SAINT GREGORY
THE THEOLOGIAN
NATIVITY SERMON**

Christ is born, glorify Him. Christ from heaven, go out to meet Him. Christ on earth, be exalted. Sing to the Lord all the whole earth; and that I may join both in one word, let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad, for Him who is of heaven and then of earth. Christ in the flesh, rejoice with trembling and with joy; with trembling because of your sins, with joy because of your hope.

Again, the darkness is past; again Light is made; again Egypt is punished with darkness; again Israel is enlightened by a pillar. The people who sat in the darkness of ignorance, let them see the great Light full of knowledge. Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new. The letter gives way, the Spirit comes to the front. The shadows flee away, the truth comes in on them. Melchizedek is concluded. He who was without Mother becomes without Father (without mother of His former state, without father of His second). The laws of nature are upset; the world above must be filled. Christ commands it, let us not set ourselves against Him. O clap your hands together all you people, because unto us a Child is born, and a Son given unto us, whose government is upon His shoulder (for with the cross it is raised up), and His name is called The Angel of the Great Counsel of the Father. Let John cry, prepare the way of the Lord; I too will cry the power of this Day. He who is not carnal is Incarnate; the Son of God becomes the Son of Man, Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Let the Jews be offended, let the Greeks deride; let heretics talk until their tongues

ache. Then shall they believe, when they see Him ascending into heaven; and if not then, yet when they see Him coming out of heaven and sitting as Judge.

This is our present Festival; it is this which we are celebrating today, the Coming of God to Man, that we might go forth, or rather (for this is the more proper expression) that we might go back to God - that putting off of the old man, we might put on the new; and that as we died in Adam, so we might live in Christ, being born with Christ and crucified with Him and buried with Him and rising with Him. For I must undergo the beautiful conversion, and as the painful succeeded the more blissful, so must the more blissful come out of the painful. For where sin abounded grace did much more abound; and if a taste condemned us, how much more does the passion of Christ justify us? Therefore let us keep the Feast, not after the manner of a heathen festival, but after a godly sort; not after the way of the world, but in a fashion above the world; not as our own, but as belonging to Him who is ours, or rather as our master's; not as of weakness, but as of healing; not as of creation, but of re-creation.

**SAINT ISAAC THE SYRIAN
NATIVITY SERMON**

This Christmas night bestowed peace on the whole world; So let no one threaten; This is the night of the Most Gentle One - Let no one be cruel; This is the night of the Humble One - Let no one be proud. Now is the day of joy - Let us not revenge; Now is the day of Good Will - Let us not be mean. In this Day of Peace - Let us not be conquered by anger.

Today the Bountiful impoverished Himself for our sake; So, rich one, invite the poor to your table. Today

we receive a Gift for which we did not ask; So let us give alms to those who implore and beg us. This present Day cast open the heavenly doors to our prayers; Let us open our door to those who ask our forgiveness. Today the DIVINE BEING took upon Himself the seal of our humanity, In order for humanity to be decorated by the Seal of DIVINITY.

SAINT JOHN OF KRONSTADT

The Mystery Of Loving-Kindness **NATIVITY SERMON**

“Great is the mystery of piety: God is manifested in the flesh.” (1 Tim. 3, 16)

It is on this day that, throughout the entire inhabited world, the Holy Church brings to our remembrance and observes that most majestic and sublime of mysteries: the Incarnation of God the Word from a Most-pure virgin through an outpouring of, and an overshadowing by, God’s Holy Spirit. Wondrous, inexpressible, and awesome is this mystery, both for the exalted and all-contemplating celestial minds of those who dwell in the heavens: the ranks of the angels, – and for the minds of men, enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Imagine: the unoriginate God from Whom everything received the commencement of its existence: the Angels, and the human race, and the entire world, both visible and invisible, – takes a beginning in His humanity. He Whom the heavens cannot contain – is contained in a virginal womb. God – becomes an infant, and is borne upon the arms of a Mother. He Who nourishes every breath – is nourished by paps.

The science of astronomy has learned and affirms that, in the order of creation, our earth is but a barely-noticeable point; that millions of worlds around our own fill up the vastnesses of space. And, lo! this single point, this barely-noticeable globe of God’s creation, being inhabited by men, – has been accounted worthy of the inexpressible honour of bearing upon itself God-in-the-Flesh, the God-Man, Who did deign to dwell amongst men, to teach erring mankind the knowledge of God, to work innumerable miracles of good, to preach repen-

tance and complete forgiveness of sins; to suffer and to die as an holy Sacrifice for the sins of the world, to be resurrected through the power of Divinity from amongst the dead, – having vanquished death, which is natural to all men, – and to make a gift of resurrection to the entire human race.

Not a single one of the visible worlds, save the earth, has been deemed worthy of this greatest of all honours: for it was only upon the earth that Jesus Christ, the only-begotten of the heavenly Father, had a Virgin-Mother, and He alone was Her Son by way of humanity. Why was the earth given such preference? Why was it only on earth that God appeared in the flesh? – This is a great Divine mystery, a mystery of immeasurable loving-kindness and of God’s condescension to perishing mankind.

Thus, God did appear in the flesh: rejoice and be exceeding glad, O earth; rejoice and celebrate, ye earth-born. The Creator Himself did come to you, in order to create you anew; to restore you, who were corrupted by transgressions. To you did He come: the almighty Physician Himself, – powerful to treat all the inveterate afflictions of sin, – in order that He might heal all the passions of the soul and all the infirmities of the body, – all of the which He truly did do, as we know from the Gospel and from the history of the Church.

Thus, greet Him joyfully – with pure minds and hearts, with bodies chaste and restrained by fasting and abstinence, which the Holy Church has thoughtfully instituted prior to this great feast in order to prepare us worthily to meet the heavenly Tsar’, Who comes to us in order to abide in us.

He came to us with the mercy and good will of His heavenly Father, – and from us He demands mercy toward our neighbours; He is the righteous Tsar’ – and He demands of us all righteousness; for He, too, as a man, fulfilled all righteousness (Matt. 3,15), showing us an example and providing us with grace and the strength to carry it out. He Himself did suffer for us, having borne the cross; and He taught us to deny ourselves, – or our sins and our passions, – and to follow after Him, doing what is holy out of reverence for God (2 Cor. 7, 1).

He came to heal our souls, ailing from sin, and commanded all to repent; let us ever, then, be earnestly contrite, correcting ourselves and striving toward holiness and perfection. The holy Angels, at the Nativity of the God-man, did declare peace unto the world; and unto men – the good will of the Heavenly Father. Let us then, ourselves, have within us a peaceful conscience, and let us be at peace with everyone, if possible. Be at peace and be holy with all, sayeth the apostle, – for without this shall none see the Lord. (comp. Heb. 12, 14). Amen.

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM
NATIVITY SERMON

I behold a new and wondrous mystery! My ears resound to the shepherd's song, piping no soft melody, but loudly chanting a heavenly hymn!

The angels sing!
The archangels blend their voices in harmony!
The cherubim resound their joyful praise!
The Seraphim exalt His glory!

All join to praise this holy feast, beholding the Godhead herein... on earth and man in heaven. He who is above now, for our salvation, dwells here below; and we, who were lowly, are exalted by divine mercy!

Today Bethlehem resembles heaven, hearing from the stars the singing of angelic voices and, in place of the sun, witnessing the rising of the Sun of Justice

Ask not how this is accomplished, for where God wills, the order of nature is overturned. For He willed He had the powers He descended. He saved. All things move in obedience to God. Today He Who Is, is born! And He Who Is becomes what He was not! For when He was God, He became man-while not relinquishing the Godhead that is His...

And so the kings have come, and they have seen the heavenly King that has come upon the earth, not bringing with Him angels, nor archangels, nor thrones, nor dominions, nor powers, nor principalities, but, treading a new and solitary path, He has come forth from a spotless womb.

Yet He has not forsaken His angels, nor left them deprived of His care, nor because of His incarnation has He ceased being God. And behold kings have come, that they might serve the Leader of the Hosts of Heaven; Women, that they might adore Him Who was born of a woman so that He might change the pains of childbirth into joy; Virgins, to the Son of the Virgin...

Infants, that they may adore Him who became a little child, so that out of the mouths of infants He might perfect praise; Children, to the Child who raised up martyrs through the rage of Herod; Men, to Him who became man that He might heal the miseries of His servants;

Shepherds, to the Good Shepherd who was laid down His life for His sheep; Priests, to Him who has become a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek; Servants, to Him who took upon Himself the form of a servant, that He might bless our stewardship with the reward of freedom (Philippians 2:7); Fishermen, to the Fisher of humanity; Publicans, to Him who from among them named a chosen evangelist; Sinful women, to Him who exposed His feet to the tears of the repentant woman;

And that I may embrace them all together, all sinners have come, that they may look upon the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! Since, therefore, all rejoice, I too desire to rejoice! I too wish to share the choral dance, to celebrate the festival! But I take my part, not plucking the harp nor with the music of the pipes nor holding a torch, but holding in my arms the cradle of Christ!

For this is all my hope!
This is my life!
This is my salvation!
This is my pipe, my harp!

And bearing it I come, and having from its power received the gift of speech, I too, with the angels and shepherds, sing:

“Glory to God in the Highest! and on earth peace to men of good will! “