Reader’s Vespers on Friday January 8th, 2021

Nativity Postfeast -- Holy Apostle, Protomartyr, and Archdeacon Stephen

(December 27th/January 9th)

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, O Lord, Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us. Amen.

Glory to Thee O God, glory to Thee!

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, Who art everywhere present and fillest all things, Treasury of blessings and Giver of Life, come and abide in us and cleanse us from every impurity and save our souls, O Good One!

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. ***(Thrice)***

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

O Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. O Lord, blot out our sins. O Master, pardon our iniquities. O Holy One, 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 the ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, Who art in the Heavens, 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, O Lord, Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us. Amen.

Lord have mercy. ***Twelve Times***

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

O come, let us worship God our King.

O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ our King and God.

O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and God.

Bless the Lord, O my soul; O Lord my God, Thou hast been magnified exceedingly. Confession and majesty hast Thou put on, Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment, Who stretchest out the heaven as it were a curtain; Who supporteth His chambers in the waters, Who appointeth the clouds for His ascent, Who walketh upon the wings of the winds, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire, Who establisheth the earth in the sureness thereof; it shall not be turned back for ever and ever.  The abyss like a garment is His mantle; upon the mountains shall the waters stand.  At Thy rebuke they will flee, at the voice of Thy thunder shall they be afraid.  The mountains rise up and the plains sink down, unto the place where Thou hast established them.  Thou appointedst a bound that they shall not pass, neither return to cover the earth.  He sendeth forth springs in the valleys; between the mountains will the waters run.  They shall give drink to all the beasts of the field; the wild asses will wait to quench their thirst.  Beside them will the birds of the heaven lodge, from the midst of the rocks will they give voice.  He watereth the mountains from His chambers; the earth shall be satisfied with the fruit of Thy works.  He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and green herb for the service of men, To bring forth bread out of the earth; and wine maketh glad the heart of man.  To make his face cheerful with oil; and bread strengtheneth man's heart.  The trees of the plain shall be satisfied, the cedars of Lebanon, which Thou hast planted.  There will the sparrows make their nests; the house of the heron is chief among them.  The high mountains are a refuge for the harts, and so is the rock for the hares.  He hath made the moon for seasons; the sun knoweth his going down.  Thou appointedst the darkness, and there was the night, wherein all the beasts of the forest will go abroad.  Young lions roaring after their prey, and seeking their food from God. The sun ariseth, and they are gathered together, and they lay them down in their dens. But man shall go forth unto his work, and to his labor until the evening. How magnified are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is filled with Thy creation. So is this great and spacious sea, therein are things creeping innumerable, small living creatures with the great. There go the ships; there this dragon, whom Thou hast made to play therein. All things wait on Thee, to give them their food in due season; when Thou givest it them, they will gather it. When Thou openest Thy hand, all things shall be filled with goodness; when Thou turnest away Thy face, they shall be troubled.  Thou wilt take their spirit, and they shall cease; and unto their dust shall they return.  Thou wilt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created; and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.  Let the glory of the Lord be unto the ages; the Lord will rejoice in His works.  Who looketh on the earth and maketh it tremble, Who toucheth the mountains and they smoke. I will sing unto the Lord throughout my life, I will chant to my God for as long as I have my being.  May my words be sweet unto Him, and I will rejoice in the Lord.  O that sinners would cease from the earth, and they that work iniquity, that they should be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

The sun knoweth his going down, Thou appointedst the darkness, and there was the night.  How magnified are Thy works, O Lord!  In wisdom hast Thou made them all.

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

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

Lord, have mercy. ***Forty Times***

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

In the 4th Tone: Lord, I have cried unto Thee, hearken unto me.

Lord, I have cried unto Thee, hearken unto me. \* Hearken unto me, O Lord. \* Lord, I have cried unto Thee, hearken unto me; \* attend to the voice of my supplication, \* when I cry unto Thee. \* Hearken unto me, O Lord.

Let my prayer be set forth \* as incense before Thee, \* the lifting up of my hands \* as an evening sacrifice. \* Hearken unto me, O Lord.

Set, O Lord, a watch before my mouth, and a door of enclosure round about my lips.

Incline not my heart unto words of evil, to make excuse with excuses in sins.

With men that work iniquity; and I will not join with their chosen.

The righteous man will chasten me with mercy and reprove me; as for the oil of the sinner, let it not anoint my head.

For yet more is my prayer in the presence of their pleasures; swallowed up near by the rock have their judges been.

They shall hear my words, for they be sweetened; as a clod of earth is broken upon the earth, so have their bones been scattered nigh unto hades.

For unto Thee, O Lord, O Lord, are mine eyes, in Thee have I hoped; take not my soul away.

Keep me from the snare which they have laid for me, and from the stumbling-blocks of them that work iniquity.

The sinners shall fall into their own net; I am alone until I pass by.

With my voice unto the Lord have I cried, with my voice unto the Lord have I made supplication.

I will pour out before Him my supplication, mine affliction before Him will I declare.

When my spirit was fainting within me, then Thou knewest my paths.

In this way wherein I have walked they hid for me a snare.

I looked upon my right hand, and beheld, and there was none that did know me.

Flight hath failed me, and there is none that watcheth out for my soul.

I have cried unto Thee, O Lord; I said: Thou art my hope, my portion art Thou in the land of the living.

Attend unto my supplication, for I am brought very low.

Deliver me from them that persecute me, for they are stronger than I.

Bring my soul out of prison:  that I may confess Thy name.

The righteous shall wait patiently for me until Thou shalt reward me.

Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord; O Lord, hear my voice.

Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.

If Thou shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, O Lord, who shall stand? For with Thee there is forgiveness.

Your soul was illumined with the grace of the Holy Spirit;

your face shone as an angel, O Stephen.

Your body was made radiant by the brightness within you:

Contemplation of God’s light was your only joy:

Therefore the heavens were wondrously opened to you, //

O leader and glory of the martyrs

For Thy name’s sake have I patiently waited for Thee, O Lord; my soul hath patiently waited for Thy word, my soul hath hoped in the Lord.

The torrent of stones became a ladder for you:

on its steps you ascended to the gates of heaven.

You beheld the Lord standing at the right hand of the Father;

He offered you a crown with his own life-giving hand;

truly you have fulfilled the meaning of your name!

Now you stand before him, O glorious conqueror; //

the first warrior offered in battle.

From the morning watch until night, from the morning watch let Israel hope in the Lord.

Renowned for signs, wonders, and heavenly preaching,

you destroyed the malice of the wickèd council.

As they stoned you to death, you begged God to forgive them,

using the words of the Savior as he hung upon the Cross, //

commending your pure spirit into his hands, O blessèd Stephen.

For with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption; and He shall redeem Israel out of all his iniquities.

To the bitterness of thine exile \* was added the most grievous misery of imprisonment, \* O venerable one, \* when he who iniquitously \* usurped the lawful throne \* grievously perverted the laws of the Faith \* and cast down the most pure image of the Savior. \* But by the grace of God, O favorite of Christ, \*\* thou didst put him to shame

O praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise Him, all ye peoples.

Neither prison, nor confinement, \* nor lightless gloom, \* nor wounds, nor beatings, \* nor grievous, long and unbearable affliction, \* nor lack of food, \* could separate thee from thy love for God, \* O divinely eloquent father Theodore; \* for thou didst steadfastly endure them, \*\* foreseeing the reward of thy labors.

For He hath made His mercy to prevail over us, and the truth of the Lord abideth forever.

In place of tribulation \* the just Judge of the contest hath given thee liberty; \* in place of darkness, radiance. \* And for that which was graven on thy face, O wondrous one, \* thou hast been written in the Book of Life, \* and hast been numbered \* among the firstborn of the Church in the highest, \* and hast most joyously come \*\* to the feast of the angels.

In the 2nd Tone: Glory…:

To the King and Lord of all who is born on earth

today is offered the all-beautiful Stephen,

adorned in the crimson of his own blood as with precious gems.

Come, O lovers of the martyrs,

weave the flowers of song into a crown,

honoring the Protomartyr of Christ our God,

for his spirit is radiant with wisdom and love: //

Through his prayers we will receive peace and great mercy!

Now and ever... :

A great and wondrous mystery unfolds today.

A virgin gives birth and remains a virgin!

The Word is made flesh without leaving his Father!

Angels and shepherds glorify him!

Let us join in their song:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace!”

O Gladsome Light of the holy glory of the immortal, heavenly, holy, blessed Father, O Jesus Christ: Having come to the setting of the sun, having beheld the evening light, we praise the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: God.  Meet it is for Thee at all times to be praised with reverent voices, O Son of God, Giver of life.  Wherefore, the world doth glorify Thee.

The Prokeimenon in the 7th Tone:

Thou, O God, art my Helper, and Thy mercy shall go before me.

Verse: Rescue me from my enemies, O God, and redeem me from them that rise up against me.

Thou, O God, art my Helper,/ and Thy mercy shall go before me.

Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this evening without sin.  Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Thy name unto the ages.  Amen.

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we have hoped in Thee.  Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me Thy statutes.  Blessed art Thou, O Master, give me understanding of Thy statutes.  Blessed art Thou, O Holy One, enlighten me by Thy statutes.

O Lord, Thy mercy endureth forever; disdain not the work of Thy hands.  To Thee is due praise, to Thee is due a song, to Thee glory is due, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.  Amen.

Lord, have mercy. ***Twelve Times***

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

In the 1st Tone:

Let us sing to the eternal Son

who sprang from the bosom of the Father before all ages:

In the fullness of time, he rests on the throne of his Mother’s arms:

Together with the angels, the shepherds, and the Magi, //

let us worship him!

#### Verse: The Lord said unto my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your

enemies your footstool.”

Let us, the faithful, assemble in Bethlehem,

beholding the creator of all lying in the manger.

The Magi from Chaldea offer him three precious gifts, //

for as our King and God he will dwell three days among the dead.

Verse: Out of the womb before the morning star have I begotten you!

You were born in the cave from the Virgin,

as the host of angels hovered about you, crying out:

Glory to you, O God, in the highest!

Glory to you, for you have taken the form of a servant:

Born from the womb of the unwedded Mother and Virgin, //

you have refashioned the universe!

In the 6th Tone: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

O blessèd Stephen, the adornment of Christ’s warriors,

first of deacons and first of martyrs,

joy of the faithful and glory of the righteous,

as you stand before Christ, the Lord of all,

pray for us who celebrate your hon’rable memory

that we may receive remission of our sins //

and be accounted worthy of the Kingdom of heaven.

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

All the angels in heaven make merry and dance today.

All creation leaps for joy.

The Lord and Savior is born in Bethlehem.

Ev’ry deception of idols is swept away,

and Christ reigns unto all ages!

Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, O Master, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; a light of revelation for the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.

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 the ages of ages. Amen.

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Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, O Lord, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Amen.

Tone 4:

Protomartyr and mighty warrior of Christ our God,

you are victorious in battle and crowned with glory, O holy Stephen!

You confounded the council of those who persecuted you,

beholding your Savior enthroned at the right hand of the Father. //

Never cease to intercede for the salvation of our souls!

Glory… now and ever… :

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God,

has shone to the world the light of wisdom,

for by it those who worshipped the stars

were taught by a star to adore thee,

the Sun of Righteousness,

and to know thee, the Orient from on high.

O Lord, glory to thee!

Lord have mercy. ***Forty times***

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

More honorable than the Cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim; who without corruption gavest birth to God the Word, the very Theotokos, thee do we magnify.

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

Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord bless!

Through the prayers of the Theotokos, of the Holy Apostle, Protomartyr, and Archdeacon Stephen, and of all the saints, Lord, Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen.