

*Vespers with Divine Liturgy
for the Nativity
of our Lord, God, and Savior
Jesus Christ*



Metropolitan Cantor Institute
Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburgh
December 2023

FOREWORD

The joining of the service of Vespers on Christmas Eve to the celebration of the Divine Liturgy of our Holy Father Basil the Great is an ancient custom in our Byzantine Church. The singing of the first part of the service of evening prayer, joined to an extended Liturgy of the Word with responsorial troparia, and then climaxed by the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, is increasingly chosen as the evening service for the parochial observance of Christmas Eve.

This booklet takes the elements of the Vigil and the Divine Liturgy from the official texts and music published by the Metropolitan Church in 2007, and combines them with the stichera and troparia for Christmas Eve from the *Festal Menaion* of the Sisters of Saint Basil the Great of Uniontown, PA. These Christmas Eve texts are set to music in strict accord with the principles used by the Inter-Eparchial Music Commission of the Byzantine Catholic Church.

The image on the cover is from the Ruthenian *Časoslov* (Rome, 1950).

We hope that this booklet will provide edification and help to God's faithful as they begin the celebration of the birth of our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Vespers with Divine Liturgy for the Nativity of Our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ

GREAT VESPERS

*Full bright vestments are worn for this liturgy. The faithful **STAND** when the preparatory rites are completed and the clergy quietly say the prayers before commencing the Divine Liturgy. The holy doors remain closed until the Little Entrance.*

Deacon: Reverend Father, give the blessing.

Celebrant: Blessed is the kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.

Response: 
A - men.

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.

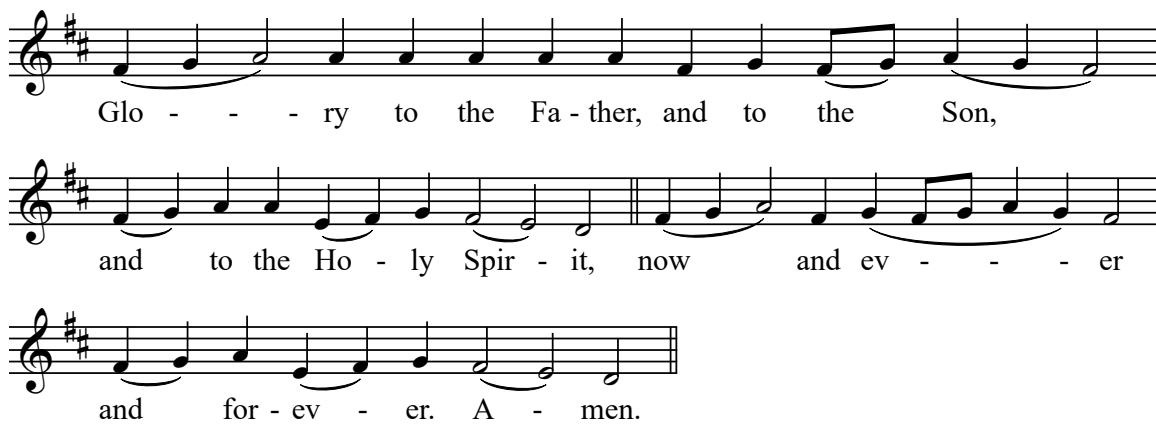
The celebrant goes before the closed holy doors and quietly recites the Prayers of Light of vespers.

Psalm 103



Bless the Lord, O my soul! Lord my God,
how great you are, clothed in maj - es - ty and glo - - - ry,
wrapped in light as in a robe. You stretch out the
heav-ens like a tent. A - bove the rains you build your
dwell - ing. You make the clouds your char - - - i - ot,
you walk on the wings of the wind; you make
your an - gels spir - - - its and your min - is - ters a
flam - ing fire. You found-ed the earth on its base,
to stand firm from age to age. You make the grass grow

for the cat - - - tle and the plants to serve man's needs,
that he may bring forth bread from the earth
and wine to cheer man's heart; oil, to
make his face shine and bread to strength - en
man's heart. I will sing to the Lord all my life,
make mu - sic to my God while I live.
You made the moon to mark the months; the sun
knows the time for its set - ting. How man - y are your
works, O Lord! In wis - dom you have made them all.



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.

Then three times, with a bow each time:



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

The faithful may SIT as the Litany of Peace begins:

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.

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. ①

For this holy church and for all who enter it with faith, reverence, and fear of God, let us pray to the Lord. ②

For our holy father (*Name*), pope of Rome, let us pray to the Lord. ①

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. ②

For our government and for all in the service of our country, let us pray to the Lord. ①

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. ②

For favorable weather, for an abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord. ①

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. ②

Special petitions may be inserted here.

That we be delivered from all affliction, wrath, and need, let us pray to the Lord. ①

Protect us, save us, have mercy on us, and preserve us, O God, by your grace. ②

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.

The musical notation consists of a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter).

Celebrant: Evening, morning, and at noon we praise you, we bless you, we thank you, and we pray to you, Master of All and loving Lord. Let our prayer rise like incense before you and do not let our hearts be turned to evil words or thoughts, but deliver us from all that might ensnare our souls. For to you Lord, O Lord, our eyes are turned and in you we hope; let us not be put to shame, O our God.

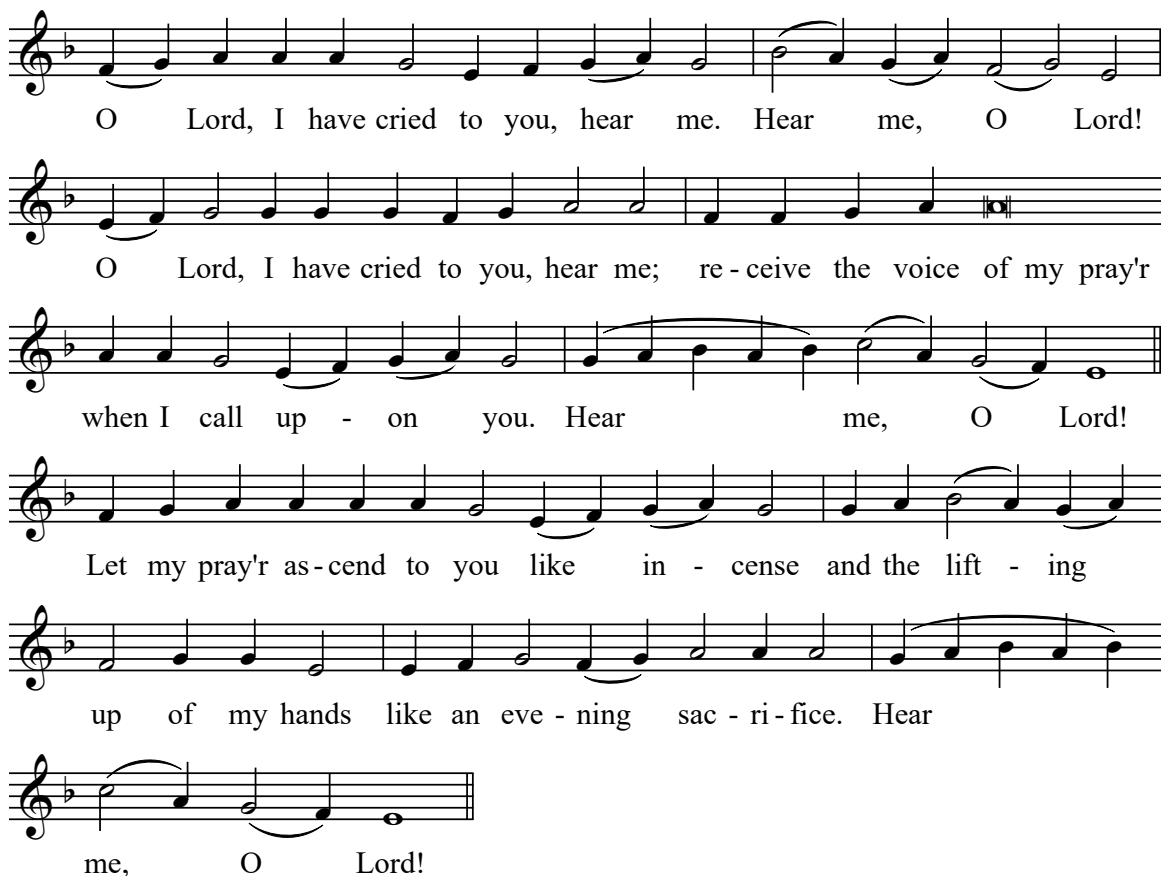
For to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is due all glory, honor, and worship, now and ever and forever.

Response: 
A - men.

THE LAMP-LIGHTING PSALMS

*The faithful **STAND** for the great incensation of the church. They may **SIT** when the great incensation is complete. The opening verses of Psalm 140 with refrain are sung according to the tone of the first sticheron:*

Psalm 140: - *Tone 2 samohlasen*



O Lord, I have cried to you, hear me. Hear me, O Lord!

O Lord, I have cried to you, hear me; re-ceive the voice of my pray'r

when I call up - on you. Hear me, O Lord!

Let my pray'r as-cend to you like in - cense and the lift - ing

up of my hands like an eve - ning sac - ri - fice. Hear

me, O Lord!

O Lord, set a guard before my mouth
and set a seal on the door of *my* lips.

Let not my heart be inclined to evil,
nor make excuses for sins I *commit*.

Let me never share in sinners' feasting.
If a just man strikes or reproves me it *is* kindness

but let the oil of the wicked not anoint my head.
Let my prayer be ever against *their* malice.

The princes were thrown down by the side of the rock;
then they understood that my words *were* kind.

As a millstone is shattered to pieces on the ground,
so their bones were strewn at the mouth of *the* grave.

To you, Lord God, my eyes are turned;
in you I take refuge; spare *my* soul!

From the trap they have laid for me keep me safe;
keep me from the snares of those who *do* evil.

Let the wicked fall into the traps they have set
while I pursue my way *unharm*ed.

Psalm 141 With all my voice I cry to the Lord,
with all my voice I entreat *the* Lord.

I pour out my trouble before him;
I tell him all my distress while my spirit faints *with*in me.

But you, O Lord, know my path.
On the way where I shall walk they have hidden a snare to *en*trap me.

Look on my right and see:
there is no one who takes *my* part.

I have no means of escape,
not one who cares for *my* soul.

I cry to you, O Lord.
I have said: "You are my refuge, all I have in the land of *the* living."

Listen, then, to my cry
for I am in the depths of *distress*.

Rescue me from those who pursue me
for they are stronger *than* I.

Bring my soul out of this prison
and then I shall praise *your* name.

Around me the just will assemble
because of your goodness *to* me.


Psalm 129: Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord;
Lord, hear *my* voice!

Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of *my* pleading.

If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt, Lord, who would survive?
But with you is found forgiveness: for this we *revere* you.

My soul is waiting for the Lord. I count on his word.
My soul is longing for the Lord more than watchman *for* daybreak.

Cantor

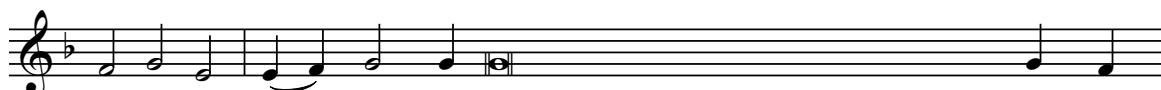


Let the watch-man count on daybreak and Is - ra - el on the Lord.

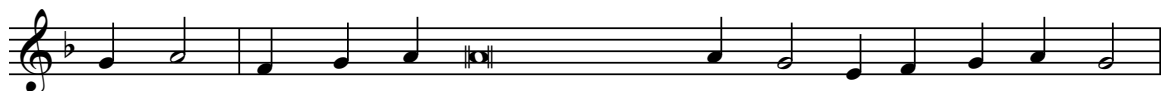
All (4)



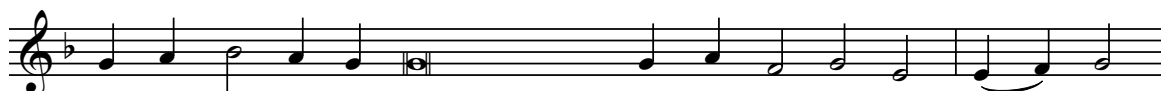
Come, let us re-joice in the Lord; let us pro-claim the pres-ent



mys-te - ry by which the partition has been broken and the flam-ing sword



with-held. Now the Cher - ubim shall let us all come to the Tree of Life.




As for me, I am returning to the bliss of Par - a - dise from which




I had been banished by dis - o - be - dience. Be - hold! The Im - age of the




Father and his un - change - a - ble e - ter - ni - ty has tak - en the form of



a ser - vant. With - out suf - fer - ing he has come forth to us from an all -



pure Vir - gin, and yet he has re - mained un - - - changed.



He is true God as he was be - fore, and he has tak - en



on himself what he had not been, be - com - ing man out of his love




for all. There-fore, let us raise our voices in hymns sing - ing:



O God, born of the Vir - gin, have mer - cy on us.

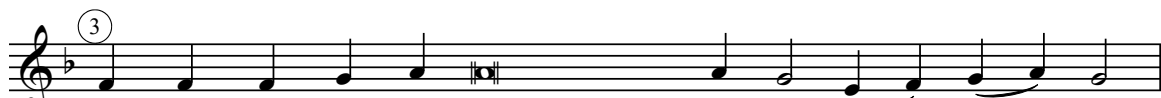
Cantor




Be-cause with the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemp-tion, Is-ra-el



in-deed he will re-deem from all its in - i - qui - ty.




Be - cause the Lord Je - sus was born of the ho - ly Vir - gin,



all cre - a - tion is en - light - ened. Be - hold! The shep - herds keep watch



and the ma-gi are a - dor - ing; the an-gels are sing - ing hymns of



praise and Her-od is trem - bling; for the Sav - ior of our souls has

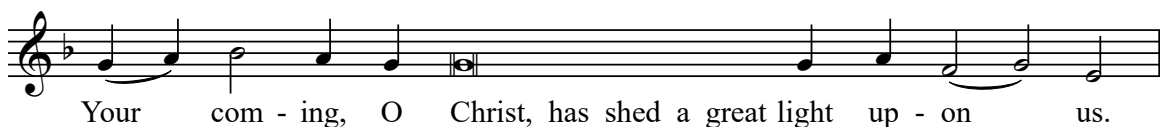
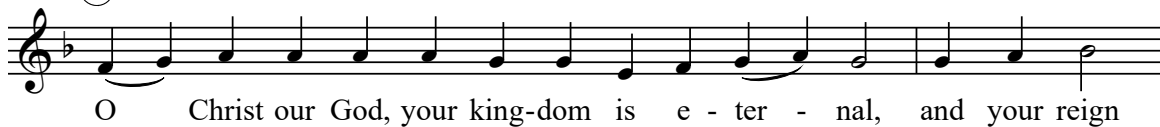


re-vealed him - self in the flesh.

Cantor



②





a - ges, who shone forth from the Vir - gin. O Lord our God,



have mer - cy on us.

Cantor



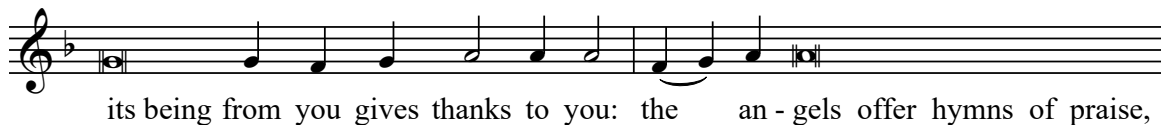
Strong is the love of the Lord for us; he is faith - ful for - ev - er.



① O Christ, what shall we of - fer you for your com - ing on



earth in our human - i - ty for our sake? Ev - 'ry crea - ture that has its



its being from you gives thanks to you: the an - gels offer hymns of praise,



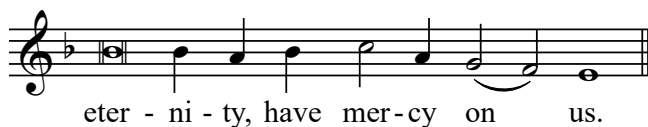
the heav - ens give a star; the Ma - gi pre - sent their gifts and the shep - herds,



their won - der; the earth pro - vides a cave and the des - ert a man - ger.



As for us, we offer a Vir - gin Moth - er. O God who are from all



eter - ni - ty, have mer-cy on us.

*The faithful **STAND** when the holy doors are opened and the cantor sings:*



Glo-ry to the Fa-ther, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spir-it, now and ever



and for - ev - er. A - men.

While the sticheron at “Glory ...” is sung, the Little Entrance with the holy gospel book and censer is made through the northern door and the holy doors.

Doxastikon - Tone 2 samohlasen



When Au - gus - tus became su - preme rul - er of the world, the man - y



king-doms a-mong the peo-ple came to an end. Like-wise, when you



be - came incarnate of the Im-mac - u - late One, the wor-ship of man-y



gods had to cease. The cit - ies came under a uni-ver - sal



pow - er, and the Gen - tiles believed in one su-preme Di - vin - i - ty.



Na-tions were re - gistered in the name of Cae - sar Au - gus - tus, and



we, the faith - ful, were registered in your divine name, O In-car-nate One.



O Lord, great is your mer - cy; glo - ry to you!

Deacon: Wisdom! Be attentive!

The clergy and servers enter the sanctuary as “O Joyful Light” is sung. The sanctuary and the faithful are incensed.



O Joy-ful Light of the ho - ly glo - ry of the Fa-ther Im - mor - tal,



the hea-ven-ly, ho - ly, bless-ed One, O Je - sus Christ: Now that we have



reached the set - ting of the sun, and see the eve - ning light,



we sing to God, Fa-ther, Son, and Ho - ly Spir - it. It is fit-ting



at all times to raise a song of praise in meas-ured mel-o - dy to you,

O Son of God, the Giv - er of Life. There-fore, the un - i - verse

sings your glo - ry.

THE READINGS

Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Celebrant: Peace be to all!

Deacon: Wisdom! Be attentive!

The faithful sing the PROKEIMENON OF THE DAY (pages 118-120 in the Divine Liturgies book). But if it is Friday evening, we sing the Great Prokeimenon in Tone 7, “What god is as great as our God? You are the God who works wonders.” The deacon chants the verse(s). Then the lector chants the following readings.

Readings 1-3 (For the sake of brevity, one reading may be chosen.)

Genesis 1:1-13

Numbers 24: 2-3, 5-9, 17-18

Micah 4: 6-7, 5: 2-4

First Responsorial Troparion

All

Tone 6 troparion melody

You were born in a cave, hidden from the eyes of all; but the

heav - ens revealed you to all by means of a star, O Sav - ior.

Refrain

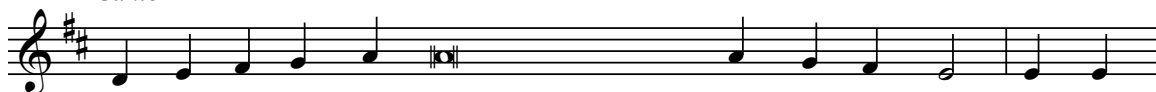


It brought the Ma-gi to you; they wor-shipped you in the fer-vor of



their faith. Have mer-cy up-on all of us.

Cantor



On the ho-ly moun-tain is his city cher-ished by the Lord. The Lord



pre-fers the gates of Zion to all Ja-cob's dwel-lings. Of you are told



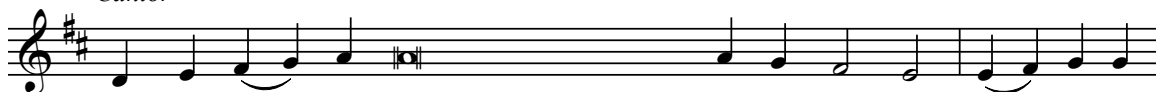
glo-rious things, O Cit-y of God. E-gypt and Bab-ylon I will count among



those who know me.

Refrain

Cantor



For-ign-ers, Tyre, and Ethiopia these will be her chil-dren and Zi-on



shall be called "Mother" for a man was born there. It is he, the



Lord Most High, who found-ed her.

Refrain

Cantor

In his reg - ister of peoples the Lord writes: "These princes are her
 chil-dren," and while they dance they will sing: In you all find their home. *Refrain*

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.

And the faithful sing the entire troparion: You were born in a cave, hidden from the eyes of all; * but the heavens revealed you to all by means of a star, O Savior. * It brought the Magi to you; * they worshipped you in the fervor of their faith. * Have mercy upon all of us.

Readings 4-6: *(For the sake of brevity, one reading may be chosen.)*

- Isaiah 11:1-10**
- Baruch 3: 35 through 4: 4**
- Daniel 2:31-36, 44-45**

Second Responsorial Troparion

All *Tone 6 troparion melody*

You have shone forth from the Virgin, O Christ, Sun of Jus - tice. A
 star found you, whom nothing can contain, mani - fest - ed in the cave.

Refrain



It led the Ma-gi to a-dore you. With them we wor-ship you;



O Giv-er of Life, glo-ry to you!

Cantor



The Lord reigns, he is clothed in ma-jes-ty; robed is the Lord



and girt a-bout with strength.

Refrain

Cantor



The world you made firm, not to be moved Your throne has stood firm from



of old. From all e-ter-ni-ty, O Lord, you are.

Refrain

Cantor



The wa-ters have lift-ed up their voice, O Lord, the wa-ters have lift-ed



up their voice; the wa-ters have lift-ed up their thun-der.

Refrain

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.

And the faithful sing the entire troparion: You have shone forth from the Virgin, O Christ, Sun of Justice. * A star found you, whom nothing could contain, manifested in the cave. * It led the Magi to adore you. * With them we worship you; * O Giver of Life, glory to you!

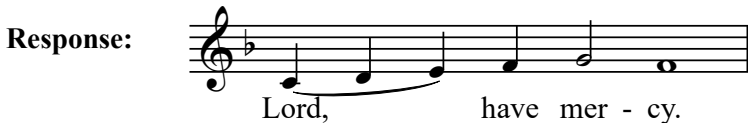
Readings 7-8 *(For the sake of brevity, the first reading may be omitted.)*

Isaiah 9: 6-7

Isaiah 7:10-16; 8: 1-4, 9-10 *(This reading should always be taken.)*

Small Litany

Deacon: Again and again, in peace, let us pray to the Lord



Lord, have mer - cy.

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



Lord, have mer - cy.


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.



To you, O Lord.


Celebrant: For you are holy, our God, and we give glory to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
now and ever

Deacon: And forever.

Response:  *The faithful STAND.*
A - men.

The Liturgy of St. Basil is now celebrated, beginning with the Trisagion ("Holy God")..

Prokeimenon - Tone 1 (Psalm 2:7-8):


The Lord said to my Lord: You are my Son;

this day have I be - got - ten you.

Verse: Ask and I shall bequeath you the nations, put the ends of the earth in your possession.

Alleluia - Tone 5 (Psalm 109:1-3):


Al - - le - lu - ia! Al-le-lu - ia! Al-le-lu - ia!

Verse: The Lord said to my Lord:
Sit at my right hand till I make your enemies your footstool.

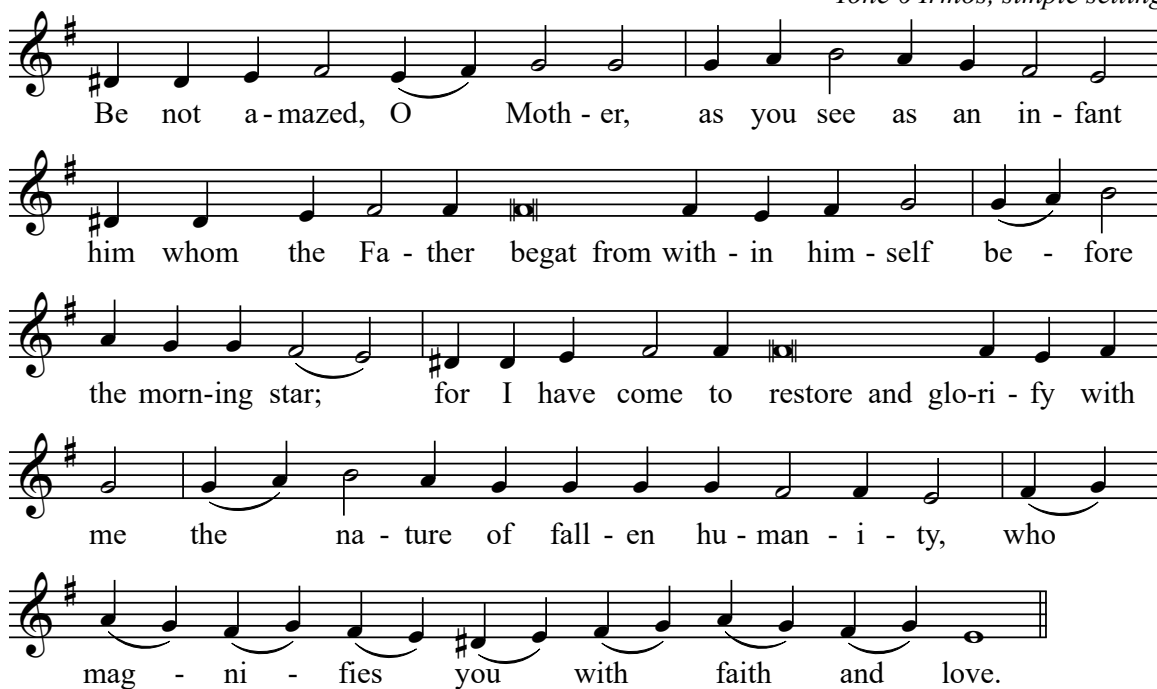
Verse: The Lord will yield from Zion your scepter of power:
rule in the midst of all your foes.

Verse: From the womb, before the morning star, I have begotten you.
The Lord has sworn and he will not repent.

Music for the responses at the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great can be found on pages 96-103 of the Divine Liturgies book.

At the discretion of the celebrant, the irmos of the ninth ode of the canon of Compline may be sung in place of "In You, O Woman Full of Grace."

Tone 6 Irmos, simple setting



Be not a-mazed, O Moth-er, as you see as an in-fant
him whom the Fa-ther begat from with-in him-self be-fore
the morn-ing star; for I have come to restore and glo-ri-fy with
me the na-ture of fall-en hu-man-i-ty, who
mag-ni-fies you with faith and love.

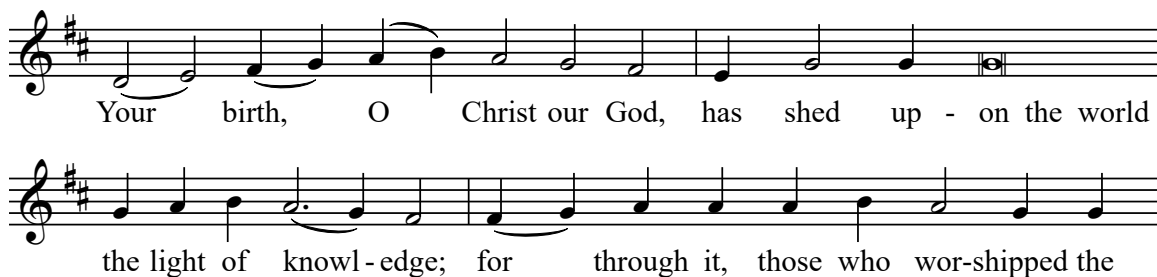
Communion Hymn (Psalm 148:1):

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the highest. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

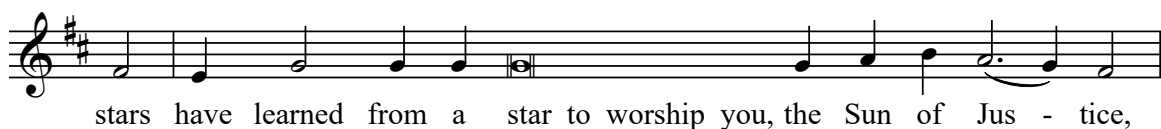
Immediately after the liturgy, the church is darkened, and a candle is lit and set on a stand in the middle of the church.

Standing beside it, the cantor sings the troparion and kontakion of the feast:

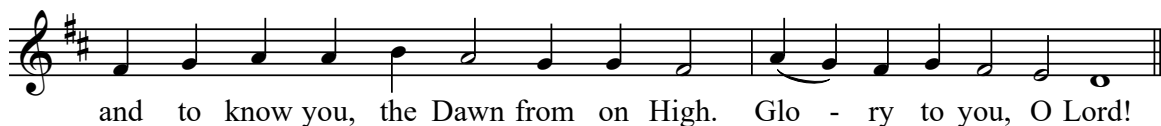
Troparion of the Nativity - Tone 4:



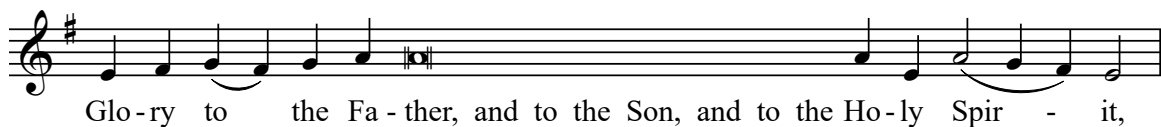
Your birth, O Christ our God, has shed up-on the world
the light of knowl-edge; for through it, those who wor-shipped the



stars have learned from a star to worship you, the Sun of Jus - tice,



and to know you, the Dawn from on High. Glo - ry to you, O Lord!

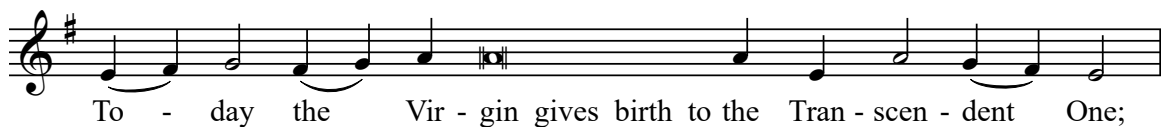


Glo-ry to the Fa - ther, and to the Son, and to the Ho-ly Spir - it,



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

Kontakion of the Nativity - 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.