

# **CHRIST comes from HEAVEN**

## **NATIVITY MATINS in ENGLISH**

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Romeiko Ensemble celebrates the Nativity with the performance of the complete Matins service for the Feast chanted in English. Also included is the Polyeleos of the Feast in three stanzas (seldom heard in parish churches) as well as the Canon and Praises that are performed with long ornate melodies. Finally, also included is the rare melody: *O Lord protect our Master*, in mode barys, sung in Matins before a Hierarchal Liturgy when a Bishop is celebrating. The melodies follow the chanting (i.e psaltic) style and tradition of 19th century, as was transmitted from the master cantors of Constantinople and still sung in Greek speaking Orthodox churches in Greece. The adaptation of the melodies to the English text has been done by Hieromonk Ephraim Poonen and Fr. Seraphim Dedes.

### **01. Apolytikion, mode 4**

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath shined the light of knowledge upon the world. For thereby they that worshipped the stars were instructed by a star; to worship Thee the Sun of Righteousness and to know Thee the dayspring from on high, O Lord, glory be to Thee. (dismissal hymn)

### **02. Kathisma 1 & 2, mode 4**

Come ye faithful let us see where Christ the Saviour hath been born. Let us follow with the kings even the Magi from the East, unto the place where the star doth direct their journey. For there the Angels' hosts sing praises ceaselessly, shepherds in the field offer a fitting song where saying: Glory in the highest to Him, this day born within the Cave from the pure Virgin, and Theotokos in Bethlehem of Judea.

Why O Mary marvest thou amazed at that which is in Thee? Because I have given birth in time unto the timeless. Yet none hath taught me concerning my child's conception. Without a man am I, how shall I bear a Son? Who has ever seen a birth without a man's seed? but as is written where God willeth the order of nature is overcome. Lo, Christ is born now of the pure Virgin in Bethlehem of Judea.

### **03. Polyeleos, stasis I, mode 3**

Servants praise the Lord, *allelouia*.

Praise ye the name of the Lord, praise O ye servants the Lord, *allelouia*.

For I know that the Lord is great and that our Lord is above all gods, *allelouia*.

Bringing clouds up from the uttermost parts of the earth; lightnings for the rain hath He made, *allelouia*.

O Lord, Thy name endureth forever and Thy memorial unto generation and generation, *allelouia*.  
O house of Israel bless ye the Lord; O house Aaron bless ye the Lord; O house of Levi bless ye the Lord, *allelouia*.

Ye that fear the Lord bless ye the Lord; blessed is the Lord out of Sion who dwelleth in Jerusalem, *allelouia*.

#### **04. Polyeleos, stasis II, modes: pl. 1, 4 mesos, 4, pl. 4, 1, 4 with barys**

O give thanks unto the Lord, *allelouia*; for His mercy endureth forever, *allelouia*.

O give thanks unto the God of gods, *allelouia*; for His mercy...

To Him that made the heavens with understanding, *allelouia*; for His mercy...

To Him that established the earth upon the waters, *allelouia*; for His mercy...

The moon and the stars for dominion of the night, *allelouia*; for His mercy...

To Him that divided the Red Sea into parts, *allelouia*; for His mercy ...

And overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, *allelouia*; for His mercy...

To Him that smote great kings, *allelouia*; for His mercy...

And slew mighty kings, *allelouia*; for His mercy...

And gave their land for an inheritance, *allelouia*; for His mercy...

An inheritance for Israel his servant, *allelouia*; for His mercy...

O give thanks unto the God of heaven, *allelouia*; for His mercy...

#### **05. Polyeleos, stasis III, modes: 4 and 4 (nenano)**

All the earth, *allelouia*.

Shout unto the Lord, all the earth; chant ye unto His name, *allelouia*.

Give glory in praise of him, tell forth all His wonders, *allelouia*.

The Lord hath sent redemption unto his people; holy and terrible is His name, *allelouia*.

And His throne shall be as the sun before me and as the moon that is established forever, *allelouia*.

He shall call upon me and shall say: my Father art Thou, my God and the helper of my salvation, *allelouia*.

And all the kings of the earth shall worship Him, *allelouia*.

What God is as great as our God? thou art God who alone workest wonders, *allelouia*.

#### **06. Kathisma 3, mode 4**

He whom nothing can contain, how is He held within the womb? And while in His Father's arms, how in His mother's pure embrace? Such is His will and good pleasure and as He knoweth for being without flesh He took flesh willingly. For us He who is, became what He was not. Without forsaking His own nature, He hath partaken of what we are. For Christ is born now two-fold in nature, to fill Heaven with mankind.

### **07. Hypakoe, mode plagal 3**

In calling the Magi by a star, Heaven brought the first fruits of the nations unto Thee; a Babe lying in a manger and they were astonished that there was neither scepter nor throne; but only the uttermost poverty. For what is meaner than a Cave? And what is lowlier than swaddling clothes? Yet in them the riches of Thy Divinity shone forth. O Lord glory be to Thee.

### **08. Hymns of Ascent, mode 4**

From my youth do many passions war against me. But do thou thyself defend and save me, O my Saviour.

Ye haters of Sion shall be shamed by the Lord; for, like grass, by the fire shall ye be withered.

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

In the Holy Spirit every soul is quickened; and through cleansing is exalted and made radiant by the Triple Unity in a hidden sacred manner.

*Both now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.*

By the Holy Spirit, the streams of grace gush forth; watering all creation unto the begetting of life.

From the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee. The Lord hath sworn and will not repent (Prokeimenon of Nativity)

*The Lord said unto my Lord; Sit Thou at my right hand until I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet.*

From the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee. The Lord hath sworn and will not repent.

### **09. After the 50 Psalm (and the Matins Gospel reading) mode 4**

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

All things are filled with joy today; Christ is born of the Virgin.

*Both now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.*

All things are filled with joy today; Christ is born of the Virgin.

*Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy; and according to the multitude of Thy compassions blot out my transgression.*

Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace. Today Bethlehem receiveth Him that sitteth all times with the Father. Today Angels glorify in a manner befitting God, the Babe that hath been born. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will towards men.

## 10. Kontakion, mode 3

On this day the Virgin gives birth to the Superessential; 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.

## 11. Katabasiae, Odes 1-8, mode 1

Christ is born therefore glorify; Christ is come from heaven encounter Him; Christ is on earth arise to Him; sing to the Lord all you who dwell on the earth and in merry spirits; O you peoples praise His birth; for He is glorified. (*Ode 1*)

Working a great wonder the Master saved the people of old when He made dry the sea's swelling water. And now He is born of His own will from a Maiden, making us a path that leadeth unto Heaven: Him we glorify, equal in essence with the Father and with mortals. (*Ode 1 iambic*)

To the Son begotten without flux of the Father before the ages; and who was lately made incarnate of the Virgin without seed; to Christ God now let us cry aloud: You have exalted the horn of our strength only You are holy O Lord. (*Ode 3*)

To Thy servants' hymns, incline O Benefactor; bring low the haughty pride of the adversary O Blessed One, that lookest down and sets all; keep us above sin, who ever sing Thy praises, steadfast and unmoved on the foundation of faith. (*Ode 3 iambic*)

Jesse's root produced a branch, O Christ and, You, its flower blossomed forth; from the Virgin who by Habbakkuk prophetically once was called: overshadowed dense mountain; from her who knew not man You came incarnate, the immaterial God Glory to Your power O Lord. (*Ode 4*)

God of peace and Father of mercies Your Son; You have sent unto us as Your messenger, the Angel of Great Counsel who is granting us Your peace. Therefore, having been guided to the light of godly knowledge, waking from the night to dawn we sing Your glory O Lover of man. (*Ode 5*)

As we now keep watch in the night to sing Thy praises as our Benefactor, O Christ grant us forgiveness of what we have done in benighted delusion; come provide a path that is easy to journey, that we may ascend upon it and find glory. (*Ode 5 iambic*)

Such as it received Jonah as an embryo the sea beast disgorged him from its bowels intact. With the Virgin though, when the Logos had dwelt in her taking on flesh, He came forth from her preserving her yet incorrupt. For from her no fluxion suffered He and He kept her unaltered in child birth. (*Ode 6*)

Dwelling in the deeps of the sea's lowest regions Jonas prayed to come unto Thee and calm the tempest. But I, that am pierced by the shaft of the tyrant, call on Thee, O Christ, the abolisher of evil: come anticipate my slothfulness speedily. (*Ode 6 iambic*)

The children nurtured piously together with contempt regarding the impious king's decree; intrepidly faced the threat of holocaust; and while standing in the midst of flames they chanted thus saying: O God of the fathers, You are blessed. (*Ode 7*)

For the King of all, longing heldfast the children, Who despised as nought the base ungodly babbling; of the tyrant who raged with fury insensate; and the boundless fire then gave way as they cried out to the Sov/reign Lord: Blessed art Thou to the ages. (*Ode 7 iambic*)  
*We praise and we bless and we worship the Lord.*

Babylon's bedewing furnace bore the image of an extraordinary wonder; for it did not burn the youths it accepted nor did the fire of Divinity consume the Virgin's womb wherein it went. So, let us melodiously chant in praise, let all creation bless and extol the Lord; and let it exalt Him supremely to the ages. (*Ode 8*)

Midst the flames unburnt, the Old Covenant children figure forth the womb of the virginal Maiden, which remaining sealed, doth conceive beyond nature. For in working both the same wondrous power, grace doth wisely rouse the peoples unto praises. (*Ode 8 iambic*)

*(Text and music score of Odes 1-8 is kindly provided by Hieromonk Seraphim Dedes. Text of Iambic Odes is copyright of Holy Transfiguration Monastery (HTM); the music score of Iambic Odes adapted by Ephraim Poonen)*

## **12. Ode 9, mode 1**

*Magnify, O my soul, her that is more honorable and more glorious than the hosts on high.*  
A strange and marvelous mystery do I behold; the cave is a Heaven, the Virgin a cherubic throne, the manger a space wherein Christ God the un-containable One hath reclined, Him do we praise and magnify.

*Magnify, O my soul, God who was born in the flesh of a Virgin.*  
When the Magi beheld the strange course of a new and uncommon star; which had but now begun to shine brighter than all the light in the heavens; they were given a sure sign that Christ the King had been on earth in Bethlehem for our salvation.

*Magnify, O my soul, God who was worshipped by the Magi.*  
When the Magi said: where is the newborn child and king whose star hath appeared in the heavens; for we are come to worship Him; then was Herod troubled and beside himself with fury; and the enemy of God madly sought to destroy Christ.

*Magnify, O my soul, Him that was made known by a star to the Magi.*  
Herod diligently inquired what time that star had appeared; by whose guidance the wise men were come to Bethlehem to worship Christ with gifts; and let back to their country by the same star, they left the wicked slayer of children behind in mockery.

*Today the Virgin giveth birth unto the Master in the cave.*  
Being well content out of fear to be silent would be easier, since silence hath no danger. O Virgin, it is hard to compose hymns with love, framed in harmony, but we pray thee O mother; do thou grant us strength, as great as our volition.

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

*Magnify, O my soul, the dominion of the Undivided Godhead of Three-Hypostases.*

O thou Mother pure, we have seen the dark figures of the Word of God, with the shadows that vanished; for He hath shined forth newly from thee, the shut gate; wherefore, seeing we have been thought to be worthy of the Light of Truth, we bless thy womb as is meet.

*Both now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.*

*Magnify, O my soul, her that hath delivered us from the curse.*

Having been vouchsafed God's own advent, the people that delighteth Christ hath obtained what it longed for; now it maketh prayer for that regeneration; that createth life O immaculate Virgin; grant to us the grace to worship Christ in His glory.

(Text is copyright of Holy Transfiguration Monastery (HTM); music score adapted by Ephraim Poonen.)

### **13. Exapostelaron, mode 3**

From the heights our Saviour Christ the day spring of the East is come to visit us; and we who once were in the shadow and the dark, behold now, we have found the truth, for from a holy Virgin the Lord hath been born today.

### **14. Praises (Psalm 150), mode 4**

Let every breath praise the Lord; Praise the Lord from the Heavens, praise Him in the highest; to Thee is due praise, O Lord.

Praise Him all ye His angels; praise Him all ye His hosts; to Thee is due praise, O Lord.

### **15. "Ton Despotin", mode barys**

O Lord protect our Master and Hierarch for many years O Master!

*(This melody is performed when a Hierarch prays in front the Iconostas [in Greek: καιρός] in order to dress up silently in the Altar so He can celebrate the Liturgy. The melody as transcribed in Chrysanthine notation from the old stenographic parasemantiki is very intrinsic with alternating motifs of modes barys chromatic and first diatonic with many repetitions of the words so as to coordinate with the time needed for the Hierarch to finish his prayer.)*

### **16. Praises stichera, mode 4**

*Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him according to the multitude of His greatness.*

Be glad, O ye righteous; ye heavens, rejoice exceedingly; ye mountains, skip for joy, as Christ is born. Imitating the Cherubim, the Virgin becometh a throne, carrying in her bosom God the Word incarnate. Shepherds glorify Him that is born; Magi offer gifts unto the Master; and Angels sing praises, saying: O incomprehensible Lord, glory be to Thee.

*Praise Him with the sound of trumpet, praise Him with the psaltery and harp.*

The Father was well pleased: the Word is become flesh, and the Virgin hath given birth unto God

become man. A star is the herald; Magi worship; shepherds marvel; and creation doth rejoice.

*Praise Him with timbrel and dance, praise Him with strings and flute.*

O Virgin Theotokos, who hast given birth unto the Saviour, thou hast overturned the ancient curse of Eve. For thou art become the Mother of Him that is the Good Will of the Father, and hast carried in thy bosom God the Word incarnate. This mystery cannot be searched out; we all glorify it with faith alone, crying with thee and saying: O Lord, Who art past interpretation, glory be to Thee. (soloist: Giorgos Kossenias)

*Praise Him with tuneful cymbals, praise Him with cymbals of jubilation; let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.*

Come, let us sing hymns unto the Mother of the Saviour, who after childbirth still remained a virgin. Rejoice, thou Living City of our King and God, wherein Christ hath dwelt and hath wrought salvation. Together with Gabriel we praise thee; with the shepherds we glorify thee, crying: O Theotokos, intercede with Him that was incarnate of thee, that we be saved. (soloist: Konstantinos Bilalis)

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## **17. Praises Glory, mode plagal 2**

When it was time for Thy coming upon earth, the world was enrolled to be taxed for the first time. Then wast Thou minded to enroll the names of them that believed in Thy Birth. For this cause was such a decree pronounced by Caesar. Since Thy timeless and everlasting kingdom was inaugurated. Wherefore, we also in the stead of tribute money offer the wealth of our Orthodox theology unto Thee. The God and Saviour of our souls. (soloist: Yorgos Bilalis)

*(Text is copyright of Holy Transfiguration Monastery (HTM); music score by Ephraim Poonen.)*

## **18. Praises Both now, mode 2**

Today Christ is born of the Virgin in Bethlehem. Today the Beginningless beginneth, and the Word is made flesh. The powers of the Heavens rejoice, and the earth together with men is glad. The Magi offer their gifts, the shepherds proclaim the marvel, and we ceaselessly cry out: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.

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## **19. Doxology, mode 2**

Glory be to Thee who hast shown the light. Glory in the highest to God, and on earth peace, good will among men.

We praise Thee; we bless Thee; we worship Thee; we glorify Thee; we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory.

O Lord King, heavenly 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, Thou who takest away the sins of the world.

Receive our prayer, Thou who sittest at the right hand of the Father; and have mercy on us.  
For Thou alone art holy; Thou alone art Lord; Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.

Every day will I bless Thee, and I will praise Thy name forever and unto the ages of ages.

Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day 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, even as we have hoped in Thee.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me Thy statutes (thrice).

Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from generation to generation. I said: O Lord, have mercy on me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee.

O Lord, to Thee have I fled for refuge; teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God.

For in Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light we shall see light.

Continue thy mercy unto those who 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 the ages of ages. Amen.

Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.

ASMATIKON:

Holy God

Holy Mighty

Holy Immortal, have mercy on us

## **20. Glory to God, for two voices**

Glory to God. Glory to God.

The grace from above to the world has been given

and all the earth has been filled with joy

Redeemed is all creation

and opened now is life and the source

Glory to God. Glory to God.

The hosts of the angels to God sing their praises

Their voices full of love resound

For born today is the Savior

The heavenly powers rejoice

Glory to God. Glory to God

The gifts of the Magi, the gold, myrrh and incense

The manger plays the host to God

Rejoice, O pure and blameless Mary

And Zion's people, leap for joy

*(Melody appears in "Forminx", book published 1888 by Iakovos Nafpliotis, Protosaltis of Ecumenical Patriarchate. Text in English was adjusted to fit the meter and melody by Hier. Seraphim Dedes.)*