

DECEMBER 27

Third Day of the Feast of the Nativity

Holy Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen

Ven. Theodore Graptus ("the Branded"), Confessor and Brother of St.

Theophanes the Confessor

"Lord I Call..." Tone 4

Lord, I call upon You, hear me!

Hear me, O Lord!

Lord, I call upon You, hear me!

Receive the voice of my prayer,

when I call upon You!//

Hear me, O Lord!

Let my prayer arise

in Your sight as incense,

and let the lifting up of my hands

be an evening sacrifice!//

Hear me, O Lord!

v. (10) Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks to Your Name!

v. (9) The righteous will surround me, for You will deal bountifully with me.

v. (8) Out of the depths I cry to You, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!

v. (7) Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

v. (6) If You, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You.

Tone 4 *(for St. Stephen)* *(As one valiant among the martyrs)*

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

your face shone like 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,//

the leader and glory of martyrs.

v. (5) For Your Name's sake I wait for You, O Lord. My soul has waited for Your word; my soul has hoped on 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,
and now you stand before Him, O glorious conqueror,//
the first warrior offered in battle.

*V. (4) From the morning watch until night, from the morning watch, let Israel
hope on the Lord!*

Renowned with signs, wonders, and heavenly preaching,
you destroyed the malice of the wicked council.
As they stoned you to death, you begged God to forgive them,
using the words of the Savior as He hung on the cross,//
commending your pure spirit into His hands, O blessed Stephen.

*V. (3) For with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is plenteous redemption, and
He will deliver Israel from all his iniquities.*

Tone 4 *(for Ven. Theodore)* *(As one valiant among the martyrs)*

To the pangs of solitude, O holy confessor,
the wounds of banishment were added to you,
because of the harshness of the ruler who lawlessly occupied the lawful throne,
severely confounding the laws of the faith,
and destroying the undefiled image of the Savior.//
But by divine grace you put him to shame, O servant of Christ.

V. (2) Praise the Lord, all nations! Praise Him, all peoples!

Neither prison nor confinement,
nor savage darkness, nor wounds and scourgings,
nor grievous, long-lasting, unbearable distress, nor lack of food,
were able to confine your love for Christ, O eloquent Father Theodore.//
All this you endured, foreseeing the reward of your sufferings.

V. (1) For His mercy is confirmed on us, and the truth of the Lord endures forever.

* Stephanos (“crown, garland.”)

Instead of affliction, praises;
instead of grief, enjoyment;
instead of darkness, brightness was granted to you by the just Judge of the
contest.

Instead of that which was written[†] on your face, O Father Theodore,
you have been inscribed in the Book of Life;
you are ranked in the highest among the first-born of the Church, //
and have joyfully entered the feast of the Angels.

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

Tone 2 *(for St. Stephen, by Anatolius)*

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, 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, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Tone 2 *(for the Feast, by Germanos)*

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!”

Aposticha

Tone 1 *(for the Feast, by John the Monk) (Joy of the Heavenly Hosts)*

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!

[†] During the iconoclastic period Theodore was tortured, branded, and put in prison where he died in 833.

V. The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool!" (Ps. 109:1)

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.

V. Out of the womb before the morning star have I begotten You. (Ps. 109:4a)

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!"

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

Tone 6 *(for St. Stephen)*

O Blessed 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 honorable 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.

Tone 6 *(for the Feast, by Germanus)*

All the Angels in heaven make merry and dance today.
All creation leaps for joy.
The Lord and Savior is born in Bethlehem.
Every deception of idols is swept away, //
and Christ reigns unto all ages.

Tone 4 Troparion (*St. Stephen*)

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 your persecutors,
beholding your Savior enthroned at the right hand of the Father.//
Never cease to intercede for the salvation of our souls!

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

Tone 8 Troparion (*Ven. Theodore*)

Wise Father Theodore, guide of Orthodoxy, teacher of piety and holiness;
light of the inhabited earth, divinely-inspired adornment of monastics;
you have enlightened all with your teachings, O harp of the Spirit.//
Intercede with Christ our God that our souls may be saved!

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

Tone 4 Troparion (*Feast*)

Your 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 You,
the Sun of Righteousness,
and to know You, the Orient from on high.//
O Lord, glory to You!

(at the Divine Liturgy)

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Tone 3 Kontakion *(St. Stephen)*

Yesterday the Master assumed our flesh and became our guest;
today His servant is stoned to death and departs in the flesh://
the glorious first martyr Stephen.

Tone 3 Kontakion *(Feast)*

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One,
and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable One.
Angels with shepherds glorify Him;
The Wise Men journey with the star,//
since for our sake the eternal God was born as a little Child.

Tone 8 Prokeimenon *(Feast)*

Let all the earth worship You and praise You; / let it praise Your Name, O Most
High! *(Ps. 65:3)*

V. Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth! Sing of His Name, give glory to His praise! (Ps. 65:1)

Tone 8 Prokeimenon (St. Stephen)

Their proclamation has gone out into all the earth, / and their words to the ends of the universe. *(Ps. 18:4)*

Epistle

(323) Hebrews 10:1-18

(17) Acts 6:8-7:5, 47-60 *(St. Stephen)*

Tone 1

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

V. The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork. (Ps. 18:1)

V. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. (Ps. 18:2)

Tone 1

V. The heavens will praise Your wonders, O Lord; and Your truth in the congregation of the saints. (Ps. 88:5)

Gospel

(51) Mark 11:23-26

(87) Matthew 21:33-42 *(St. Stephen)*

(Instead of "It is truly meet...", we sing:)

Magnify, O my soul, the most pure Virgin Theotokos,
more honorable and more glorious than the heavenly hosts.

I behold a strange, most glorious mystery:
heaven – the cave;
the cherubic throne – the Virgin;
the manger – the place where Christ lay;
the uncontainable God, Whom we magnify in song.

Communion Hymn

The Lord has sent redemption to His people. *(Ps. 110:8a)*

Their proclamation has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the universe. *(Ps. 18:4)*

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!