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**Sunday, December 20, 2020**  
**28th Sunday after Pentecost - Tone 3**  
**Sunday Before the Nativity of Christ**

Troparion:

Let the heavens rejoice! Let the earth be glad! For the Lord has shown strength with His arm! He has trampled down death by death! He has become the first-born of the dead! He has delivered us from the depths of hell, and has granted the world great mercy!

Prepare, O Bethlehem, for Eden has been opened to all! Adorn yourself, O Ephratha, for the tree of life blossoms forth from the Virgin in the cave! Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the divine fruit. If we eat of it, we shall live forever and not die like Adam. Christ comes to restore the image which He made in the beginning.

Great are the accomplishments of faith, for the Three Holy Youths rejoiced in the flames as though at the waters of rest, and the prophet Daniel appeared, a shepherd to the lions as though they were sheep. So by their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls!

Kontakion:

Rejoice, O Bethlehem! Prepare yourself, O Ephratha! The lamb is on her way to give birth to the Chief Shepherd she carries in the womb. The God-bearing Forefathers will rejoice, beholding Him, and with the shepherds, they will glorify the Virgin nursing Him.

Today the Virgin comes to the cave to give birth to the Eternal Word. Hear the glad tidings and rejoice, O universe! Glorify with the angels and the shepherds the Eternal God, who is willing to appear as a little child!

Prokeimenon in the 4th Tone (Forefathers):

Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our Fathers: and praised and glorified is Thy Name forever!  
(Vs.) For Thou art just in all that Thou hast done for us.

Epistle:

The reading from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Hebrews. (Heb. 11:9-10; 17-23; 32-40)

Brethren, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your descendants be named." He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his burial. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets - who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated - of whom the

world was not worthy - wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Alleluia Verses:

We have heard with our ears, O God; for our Fathers have told us.

(Vs.) For Thou hast saved us from them that oppose us, and hast put to shame them who hate us.

Gospel:

The Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew. (Chapter 1:1-25)

The book of the origin of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, Jacob begot Judah and his brethren. Judah begot Perez and Zarah whose mother was Tamar. Perez begot Hezron, Hezron begot Ram. And Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, Nahshon begot Salma. Salma begot Boaz of Rahab. Boaz begot Obed of Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, Jesse begot David the King. And David the King begot Solomon of the former wife of Uriah. Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, Abijah begot Asa. And Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, Joram begot Azariah. And Azariah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, Ahaz begot Ezechiah. And Ezechiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, Amon begot Josiah. And Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brethren at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. And Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, Eliakim begot Azor. And Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, Achim begot Eliud. And Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, and of her was born Jesus who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to Christ, fourteen generations. Now the origin of Christ was like this. When Mary His mother had been betrothed to Joseph, she was found, before they came together, to be with child by the Holy Spirit. But Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wishing to expose her to reproach, was thinking of putting her away privately. But while he was considering these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Do not be afraid, Joseph, son of David, to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son, and you shall call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins." Now all this came to pass that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son; and they shall call His name Emmanuel;" which is interpreted, "God with us." So Joseph, arising from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took Mary to be his wife. And he did not know her till she brought forth her firstborn son. And he called His name Jesus.