The Nativity of the Holy Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist John, who, while still in the womb of his mother, was filled with the Holy Spirit. He exulted in joy at the coming of the salvation of humanity. His own birth foretold the Lord Christ. Such great grace shone forth in him, that the Lord himself said concerning him that no one born of woman was greater than John the Baptist.

Supplement for The Order of Vespers for Sundays after Pentecost, 2006

The Lamplighting Psalms are sung in Tone 4 (p.58)

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.

Cantor: Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; Psalm 129
(on 8) Lord, hear my voice!

Stichera of the holy prophet and forerunner John - Tone 4 samohlasen

When John was born, the silence of Zechariah was broken. For when the Voice appeared, it was not proper that his father remain silent. Just as disbelief bound the father's tongue, so now the appearance of John frees him. Having revealed himself, he preaches the good tidings to all. The Forerunner of Light
and the Voice of the Word is born. and he prays for the salvation of our souls.

Cantor:  Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my pleading.  All repeat "When John was born..."

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

To-day the Voice of the Word frees his father's voice which was lost through disbelief, and he reveals the Church's blessed posterity, by loosing his mother's bond of barrenness. The Lamp preceding the Light appears;

the Star proclaims the coming of the Sun of Justice who is the restoration of all and the salvation of our souls.

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

When the time approached for the Word of God to be born of a virgin,
a messenger came forth from a barren womb. He is the greatest born of woman and the greatest of the prophets. Behold, the beginning of God's actions is beyond our understanding. You were begotten eternally, and conceived, O Lord, without seed. You work wonders for our salvation.

Almighty Lord, glory to you.

Cantor: Let the watchman count on daybreak, and Israel on the Lord.

Today the great Forerunner appears, born from the barren womb of Elizabeth.

He is a prophet greater than all prophets; there is no other like him, nor has there ever been. For the most wonderful Light followed the Lamp of the Forerunner; the Word followed the Voice, and the Bridegroom followed the bridegroom's friend.
He prepares a special people for the Lord cleansing them with water until the coming of the Spirit. He is the offspring of Zechariah and the noble dweller in the desert, the preacher of repentance, and the purification of our sins. He announced the Good News of the Resurrection from the dead to those in Hades, and he prays for our souls.

**Cantor:** Because with the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption, Israel indeed he will redeem from all its iniquity.

O John, the Baptizer of Christ, you manifested yourself to be a fore-runner and prophet, from the time you were in the womb. When you saw the queen coming to her servant, you leaped for joy in the womb of your mother,
you, the one conceived of a barren woman, according to the promise made to the elder, Zechariah. You knew she was bearing the Eternal One who was from the Father without a mother. Now implore God to have mercy on our souls.

Zechariah did not believe the angel's word, who told that Elizabeth would conceive and bear a son. Instead he replied, "How can she give birth, for we are both advanced in years?" He was made silent by your decree because of his disbelief.

Today he sees the promised birth and his silence is ended to give way to joy.

O what a glorious marvel! He shouts aloud, "Blessed is the Lord, the Cantor: Praise the Lord all the nations; Psalm 116 (on 2) acclaim him all you people.

Psalm 116:1-10 (on 2)

Therefore I will praise you, my God and Father, in the greatness of your steadfast love.

Your name, O Lord, is near; I seek you, O God of my salvation.

All my longings are before you, my heart and my soul.

O Lord, you are my portion and my cup; you are the desire of my heart.

My vows are bound by the solemn decree of my mouth to your judgments.

I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me.

O Lord, be not far from me; quickly come to help me.

O life-giving God, come quickly to help me.

You answer me when I call; you increase my strength.

To the one who is near I cry, and you hear me, O God of my salvation, you give me answers.

I am consumed with wanderings, food from my longing has failed me.

I am also wasted with many sorrows; my life is in the power of death.

I am in trouble and I am in distress.

But you have brought gladness to my heart, which was in my youth.

I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; on the strings I will sing to you the glories of your salvation.

I will tell of your name to my neighbors, in the midst of those who know you I will praise you.

O Lord, you have been my refuge; my hope in the midst of tribulation.

When I called, you answered me; you strengthened me with strength in my soul.

So I will sing with the strings to the One who has右手 with me in my trouble.

I will sing praise to you, O God, among the nations.

I will sing praise to you among the peoples.

You have delivered my life from distress; my tongue has triumphed over my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows with gladness.

Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
God of Is-ra-el!" for he has turned to his people and brought them sal-va-tion.

He grants great mer - cy to the world.

Cantor: Strong is the love of the Lord for us; he is faithful forever.

O most praise-wor-thy John and u-ni-ver-sal a-pos-tle, good news of Ga-bri-el
and flow'r of the bar-ren wom - an, no-ble child of the des - ert,
true friend of Christ the bride-groom pray to him to have mer - cy
on our souls.

Cantor: (Tone 6) Glory...

Doxatikon - Tone 6 samohlasen

To - day, like a shin-ing star, the Lamp prepares the way for the coming of the Word
of God. To-day Ze-cha-ri-ah speaks clear - ly, which ends the silence
imposed by the angel; for it was not right that the father of the Voice should remain in silence, once John was born from a barren womb.

With great boldness he comes to announce the great news of salvation for all of the world.

Cantor: Now and ever...

Theotokion

Elizabeth carried the Forerunner of grace, and the Virgin carried the Lord of glory. When the mothers greeted each other, the infant leapt for joy for even within the womb, the servant praised the Master. The mother of the Forerunner was amazed and cried out: "How have I deserved that the mother of my Lord has come to me?" Glory to Him who with great mercy saves a
The Prokeimena for weekdays are found on page 114 in the Appendix.

Readings:  
Genesis 17: 15-17, 19; 18:11-14; 28: 1-2, 4-8  
Judges 13: 2-8, 13-14, 17-18, 21  
Isaiah  40: 1-3, 9; 41:17-18; 45: 8; 48-20-21; 54: 1

Hymns of the Litija

Tone 1 Bolhar

O moun-tains, give forth your sweet-ness; O hills, skip a-bout like lambs; for to-day the Lord's fore-run-ner, de-sir-ing to a-bide with us, is born of E-liz-a-beth. At his birth, he loosed his fa-ther's si-lence. There-fore, let us cry out to him: O bap-tiz-er of Christ, im-plore him to save our souls.
The God-named Voice and Lamp of the Light, the Fore-runner of the Lord, was attested to by Christ as the fore-most of the prophets. Please remember your flock in order to preserve it intact, and we also ask that you pray for the world.

O prophet and fore-runner John, you were the preacher of the Lamb who is the Word of God. You prophesied the future; you spoke beforehand to the ends of the earth: Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world and grants great mercy to all.
To-day Elizabeth rejoices as she gives birth to the end of the prophets and the beginning of the apostles, the earthly angel and the heavenly man, the voice of the Word, the soldier and forerunner of Christ, who leaped for joy beforehand because of the promised one and who preached before the birth of the Sun of Justice. In his old age, Zechariah is amazed, having cast aside the muteness imposed as a punishment.

As the father of the Voice, he prophesies most splendidly:

And you, O child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,
and you shall go before him to prepare the way.

Therefore, O angel, prophet, apostle and soldier,
foreunner, baptizer, preacher of penance, and guide,
as the voice of the light of the Word, pray unceasingly for us
who faithfully keep your memory.

Cantor: Now and ever...

Theotokion

O most pure Virgin, you are the temple, the gate, the
palace, and the throne of the King. Christ, our redeemer
and Lord, appeared through you to those who slumbered in
darkness. For he, as the Sun of Righteousness, wished to
en-light-en those whom he cre-a-ted with his own hands ac-cord-ing
to his own im-age. There-fore, O La-dy whom we
al-ways praise in song, we be-seech you to in-ter-cede with Christ
for the sal-va-tion of our souls; for, as his moth-er,
you can approach him with the great-est of con-fi-dence.

The Litija Litany is found on page 116 in the Appendix.

Aposticha

With psalms and hymns and spi-ri-tual songs let us praise the glo-rious des-ert-
dwell-er, John, since he is the proph-et of proph-ets and the fruit of a
bar-ren womb, great-er than all born of wom-en. Let us cry out to him:
O Baptist and Forerunner of the Savior, by your holy birth you may implore Christ with confidence to grant peace to the world and great mercy to our souls.

Cantor

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and ransomed his people.

According to the Scripture's promise, John the Forerunner and the Voice of the grace of the Word has appeared. He was born today of the childless, barren woman. Rejoice now, all you people, for he has come to prepare for us the way of the Savior to whom he bowed down and
leapt for joy while still in the womb of his mother. He is the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world and grants great mercy to us.

And you, O child, shall become the prophet of the Most High. John, who was sanctified in the womb of his mother and received the fullness of prophecy, is born today of a barren woman. Clearly he announces the coming of the Lord: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Cantor: (Tone 8) Glory...

Doxastikon - Tone 8

Today the voice of the prophet Isaiah is fulfilled in the birth of the greatest of the prophets, John. He had said: Behold, I will prepare the way of the Lord.
He will be a soldier of the kingdom of heaven, running before the path of our God. By nature, he was a man, yet in the present life he became an angel for he welcomed moderation in complete purity. He had a human nature but fled what was according to nature and struggled beyond the natural. Therefore, let all the faithful imitate his virtues and beg him to pray for our souls' salvation.

Cantor: Now and ever...

Theotokion

Elizabeth said to the Virgin Mary: How is it that the Mother of my God has come to me? You bear the King, and I, a soldier. You bear the Lawgiver, and I, a preacher of the law. You bear the Word, and I, the voice
who announces the kingdom of heaven.

Troparia

Troparion of the Nativity of the Forerunner - Tone 4 - sung once by the priest and once by the faithful

Prophet and fore-runner of the coming of Christ, although we honor you with love, we cannot give you worthy praise. Through your glorious and holy birth, your mother was freed from barrenness and your father from the loss of speech, and the incarnation of the Son of God is proclaimed to the world.

Cantor: Glory... now and ever...

The faithful sing the troparion, "Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos" (p. 119).

The service continues with the Blessing of Bread (p. 119).