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HEAR, O ISRAEL, THE LORD IS GOD, THE LORD IS ONE. + AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.

# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

August 18, 2013

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor; Subdeacon Daniel J. Korba and Nikitas Tsokris, Cantors      Rectory 215-862-9227; Parish Center 732-780-3158

## We Are A Stewardship Parish Of Time, Talent and Treasure

The mission of our parish faith community is to teach the Gospel message in the rich tradition of the Orthodox Church; to enable people to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in every day activities of life; to offer spiritual formation through changing times; and to celebrate community among Orthodox believers in our Freehold area.

We of St. Paul the Apostle Parish dedicate ourselves to maintaining the sanctity of worship and spiritual enlightenment in a family environment that reaches and involves all ages and unifies all people.

We believe in the spirit of ecumenism in which we share our faith by word and example and extend our spiritual insights to all people.

We accept the responsibility of Christian Stewardship that through generous giving we may all experience a faith communion with Christ as the Center of our lives.

We dedicate ourselves to insuring the well-being of all people so that we may truly experience the message of Christ's salutary gospel.

We are a beacon on a hill with the eyes of many upon us; that beacon is the inspired Light of Christ which must shine brightly in our lives.

*It is not ourselves we preach but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way possible, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us 2 Corinthians 4: 5 - 8.*

## GLAD TIDINGS

+++      We have festal anointing today on the occasion of this past week's feast day of the Dormition of the Birthgiver of God. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we reply, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ **Pirohi Schedule for the next few months: September 14; October 12, November 1 and December 7. The Bake Sales will take place on November 22 and December 20.**

+++ **Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Anna, Ryan, Betty, Mary, Beth, Ann Helene, Delores, Claire Elizabeth, Debra and Michael.**

+++ **The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.**

+++ **We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received last Sunday: Tithe Offering, \$342. 00; Holyday, \$47.00; Candles, \$17.00, for a total of \$580.00, We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offer their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 44 adults and 13 children last Sunday.**

+++ **As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Anna Zacharyczuk, Eleanor Korba, Michael Douglas, Debra Szmaida, Robert Gorbich, Maria Garcia and Pani Buletza.**

+++ **We make a PENNIES FROM HEAVEN Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of \$1694.00 from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.**

+++ **Please be certain to see a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using Shop Rite Food Coupons available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite ALL to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$5550.00 on this project to date!**

+++ **The Clothing Drive is a permanent on-going project in our parish. Please bring any type of clothing and fabrics along with stuffed animals and shoes for the benefit of our parish. The bags can be left in the vestibule or on the front porch of the rectory. Please invite your friends and neighbors to assist us in disposing of unwanted clothing, shoes and fabrics.**

+++ **Please pray the Lord our God grants us an enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory.**

+++ **May all glory, adoration and worship be accorded our God in the Holy Trinity by all the faithful of our parish with one mind, one soul and one heart each day of the week!**



## Relations With The Government

*By decree of the sentinels is this decided, by order of the holy one, is this sentence: that all who live may know that the most High rules over the kingdom of men; He can give it to whom he will or set over it the lowliest of men Daniel 4: 14.*

*Samuel called the people together to the Lord at Mizpah and addressed the Israelites: 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel. 'It was I who brought Israel up from Egypt and delivered you from the power of the Egyptians and from the power of all the kingdoms that oppressed you. But today you have rejected your God, who delivers you from all your evils and calamities by saying to him, 'Not so, but you must appoint a king over us.' Now, therefore, take your stand before the Lord according to tribes and families'' 1 Samuel 10: 17 - 19.*

*"Now you have the king you want, a king the Lord has given you. If you fear the Lord, and worship him, if you are obedient to him and do not rebel against the Lord's command, if both you and the king who rules you follow the Lord your God - well and good. But if you do not obey the Lord and if you rebel against this command, the Lord will deal severely with you and your king and destroy you" 1 Samuel 12: 13 - 15.*

*Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and power are his. He causes the changes of the times and seasons, makes kings and unmakes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who understand Daniel 2: 20, 21.*

*Kings have a horror for wrongdoing, for by righteousness the throne endures Proverbs 16: 12.*

*Kindness and pity safeguard the king, and he upholds his throne by justice Proverbs 20: 28.*

*If a king is zealous for the rights of the poor, his throne stands firm forever Proverbs 29: 14.*



THIS IS MY COMMANDMENT  
THAT YOU SHOULD  
LOVE ONE ANOTHER  
AS I HAVE LOVED YOU

# **WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE**

*You have destroyed death by Your Cross, You opened paradise to the thief. The sorrow of the women You turned to joy. You commanded Your apostles to proclaim to all: "Christ our God is risen, granting great mercy to the world" Troparion, Resurrection Tone Seven.*

*No longer can the might of death rule over men; Christ has come destroying and crushing its power. The Abyss is now in chains. The prophets with joy unite in proclaiming "The Saviour has appeared saying to those who believe: 'Come forth, you faithful, to the Resurrection'" Kontakion, Resurrection Tone Seven.*

*May the Lord give strength to His people; may the Lord bless His people with peace Prokimenon, Resurrection Tone Seven.*

*The Apostles saw the Resurrection of the Creator. They were amazed and sang the angelic hymn of praise. This is the glory of the Church; the devil has been defeated. This is the wealth of the kingdom. O Lord, You suffered for us; glory be to You! Vesper Hymn, Tone Seven.*

*Christ fulfilled the prophecies of David. On Sion He manifested His greatness to His disciples. He showed Himself praised and glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit, first as the Word before He became man; now incarnate He died for us as man. He rose by His own power. He is the Lord and Lover of mankind Vesper Hymn, Tone Seven.*

*Mother of God, you became a mother outside the law of nature. In birthgiving you remained a virgin. This is beyond understanding and human speech. Words cannot describe the wonder of your birthgiving. More glorious is the nature of conceiving, O Pure One! The manner of your birthgiving is beyond our understanding. For when God wills, the laws of nature are broken. We firmly believe you to be the Mother of God. We hasten to you in prayer: Intercede for the salvation of our souls Vesper Hymn, Tone Seven.*

*O Christ, You descended into the Abyss; You despoiled death and arose on the third day; You raised us with you; We glorify Your all powerful Resurrection. O Lord, You alone love mankind Vesper Hymn, Tone Seven.*

## Pleasures In Heaven

“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” Matthew 6: 20. The faithful Orthodox Christian can easily lay up treasures in heaven by what he gives to the Lord. If he simply hordes for himself and is parsimonious with God, he has no salvation. But he can also lay up pleasures in heaven by helping bring others to the Lord. With that in mind, a spiritual writer related the following story: As King Cyrus took one of his guests around his garden on a personal guided tour, the visitor admired it greatly and said that the king took much personal pleasure in it. “Ah,” said the king, “but you do not have as much pleasure in this garden as I have, for I have planted every tree in it myself.” Commenting on this incident, the spiritual writer made this application: “One reason Christ has so much pleasure in our Orthodox Church is that He did so much for it. And one reason some saints will have a greater fullness in heaven than others will be that they did more for heaven than others. By God’s grace, they were enabled to bring more souls into eternal life!

This reflection should cause all of us who know and love the Lord to do some serious thinking. Let us ask ourselves how many people will be in heaven because of us. Will our husband or wife; what about our children? When we reach our eternal home, will anyone greet us and say, “I am so thankful for you. It was your way of living, your commitment to Christ, your witness for the Lord, your sacrificial giving, your invitation to follow after Christ, your seriousness about the Lord that accounts for my being here.”

Is there any doubt that heaven’s joys will be the fullest for those who have helped lead others to Christ? In the book of Proverbs, we learn those who win souls for God are truly wise. It is the greatest embellishment they could ever yearn after. All Orthodox Christians should do all they can to bring the lost and alienated to Christ. That is how you lay up treasures and pleasures in heaven!

Heaven will mean the most to those who have invested the most into getting there!



# ORTHODOX LANGUAGE

**Diocese** A fully, completely and totally organized church district comprising a number of parishes under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction and pastoral direction and care of a bishop. From early church history, it usually bears the name of the see city in which the cathedral stands and where the ruling bishop resides.

**Ecclesiastical** Whatever refers or pertains to the Church and its life.

**Ecclesiology** That branch of theology which studies the nature, constitution, function and membership in the Body of Christ, the Orthodox Church.

**Ecumenism** The movement among various serious Christian Churches, initiated by the Ecumenical Patriarchate at the beginning of the last century which labors towards a mutual understanding of their problems and the concept of vital organic unity and love willed as necessary by our Saviour for His Body, the Church.

**Heterodoxy** Different, alien and therefore presumably false belief or teaching, opposed to and in contrast with Orthodoxy. Any of the various myriad denominations outside and opposite the spiritual unity of Orthodoxy.

**Icon** From the original Greek word for *image*. It is a spiritual style painting in oil on wood, canvas, paper or a wall fresco representing Christ, the Mother of God, or other saints or spiritual scenes from salvation history. Orthodoxy uses icons for veneration with the explicit understanding that the respect paid them is not at all to the material icon but to the person represented, ultimately to God the Creator Himself, "in spirit and in truth" John 4: 24. Icons do not depict the actual physical appearance of the individual, but the spiritual qualities of their soul and there is a rigid canon of requirements which must be adhered to in icon writing which in fact is the result of intensive prayer and dependence upon the Holy Spirit to guide the icon painter's creativity. There is a resurgence of interest in authentic iconography so that the recent history of westernizing interference and romanticizing interjection of the icon will be overcome and remain a thing of the unfortunate past.

**Laity** Those members of the Body of Christ, the Church, who are not ordained, but nevertheless, by teaching of Christ, in virtue of Baptism, participants in His priesthood, who are called, chosen and commissioned to be His witnesses in the world. They are not in opposition to the clergy but together with them must labor for God's glory and the salvation of their own souls, for the upbuilding of His Body, the Church.





*Lord, help us to be Christ-bearers*



Enthroned Christ as Lord  
in your hearts.

If anyone asks you  
to give an account  
of the hope  
which you cherish,  
be ready at all times  
to answer for it,  
but courteously  
and with due reverence.

SAINT PETER



1

Giving shelter  
to stranger  
and homeless



2

Serving meals  
to the hungry



5

Visiting the  
prisoner  
in jail



Visiti  
nu  
the



3

Giving drink  
to the thirsty



4

Making and  
giving clothes  
to those in need



6

ng and  
rsing  
sick



7

Giving  
Christian burial  
to the dead

# VESPER VERSES ACCORDING TO THE EIGHT TONES

## TONE 7

1. Come, let us rejoice in the Lord :  
He has crushed the power of death;  
He has enlightened the human race.  
Let us cry out with the angels of heaven :  
“ Our Maker and Savior, glory be to you! ”
2. You suffered the crucifixion and burial for us,  
O Savior.  
Being God, you put Death to death by your  
death.  
Therefore, we bow to your resurrection,  
O Lord.  
Glory be to you!
3. The Apostles saw the resurrection of the  
Creator.  
They were amazed and sang the angelic hymn  
of praise.

This is the glory of the Church;  
The devil has been defeated.  
This is the wealth of the Kingdom.  
O Lord, you suffered for us :  
Glory be to you!

4. Arrested by sinful men, O Christ,  
You are still my God; I am not ashamed.  
Seeing You scourged, I will not deny You;  
Seeing You on the cross, I will not hide.  
I praise your resurrection : your death is life  
for me.  
Almighty Lord, Lover of mankind, Glory be  
to You!
5. Christ fulfilled the prophecies of David.  
On Sion He manifested his greatness to his  
disciples.  
He showed Himself praised and glorified  
With the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
First as the Word before He became man;  
Now incarnate He died for us as man.  
He rose by his own power.  
He is the Lord and Lover of mankind.
6. O Christ, you freely descended into the Abyss.  
As God and Lord, You conquered Death.  
You arose on the third day.  
You freed Adam from the bonds of death.  
He cried out in song and said :  
" Glory be to your resurrection; You alone  
love mankind! "

7. O Lord, You were buried in the tomb as asleep.  
Powerful and strong, You arose on the third  
day.

You raised Adam from the corruption of  
death :

You are the Almighty Lord.

8. Glory be to the Father ✝, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and  
forever. Amen.

Mother of God : you became a mother outside  
the law of nature.

In birthgiving you remained a virgin.

This is beyond understanding and human  
speech.

Words cannot describe the wonder of your  
birthgiving.

More glorious is the nature of your conceiving,  
O Pure One!

The manner of your birthgiving is beyond our  
understanding.

For when God so wills, the laws of nature  
are broken.

We firmly believe you to be the mother of God.

We hasten to you in prayer :

Intercede for the salvation of our souls

*At the Apostichon*

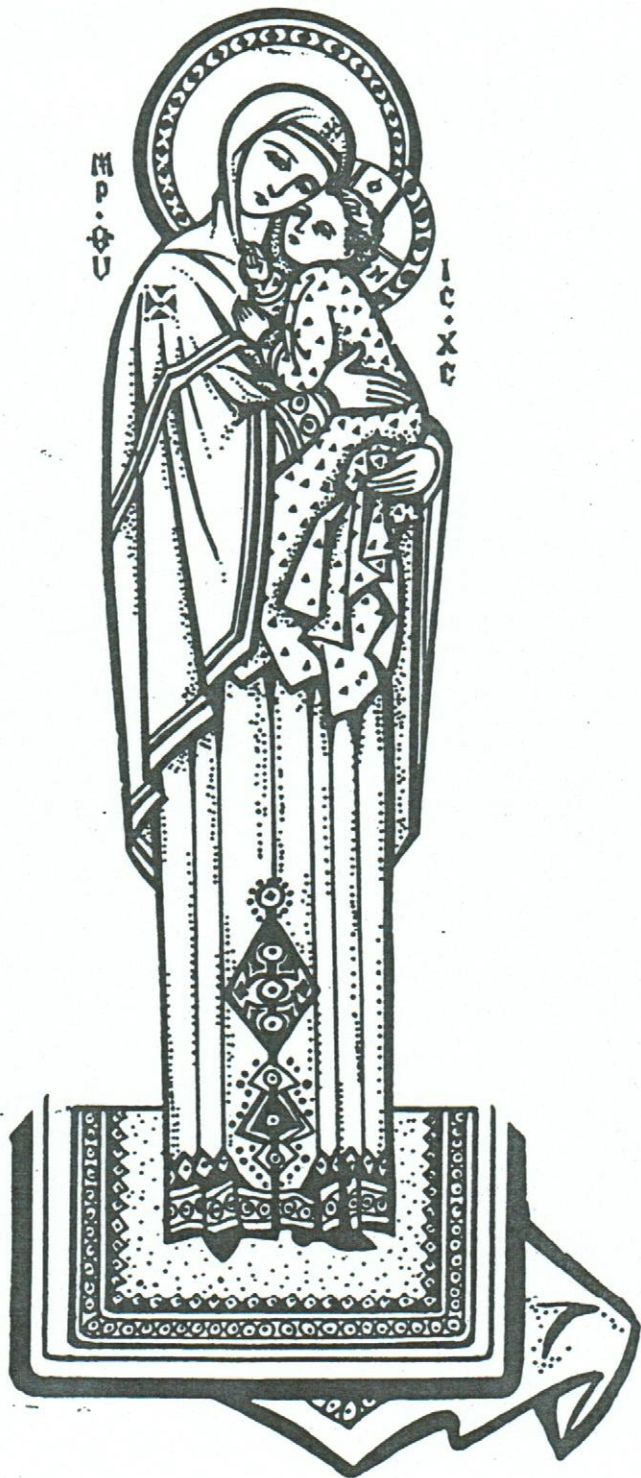
1. You rose from the dead, O Savior of mankind.  
Through your body, you raised mankind.  
O Lord, glory be to you!

2. Let us worship the Lord :  
He has risen from the dead and enlightened  
mankind.  
By his resurrection, He has freed us from the  
suffering of the Abyss.  
He has granted us life and great mercy.
3. O Christ, you descended into the Abyss;  
You despoiled Death and rose on the third day;  
You raised us with you :  
We glorify your all powerful resurrection.  
O Lord, you alone love mankind.
4. O Lord, you were awe-inspiring :  
Even when in the tomb as asleep,  
Being all powerful, you rose on the third day.  
You raised Adam who cried out :  
“ Glory to your resurrection; You alone love  
mankind! ”
5. Glory be to the Father ✝, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and  
forever. Amen.  
O most pure Lady :  
All on earth take refuge under your protection.  
We cry out to you : Mother of God and our  
hope,  
Deliver us from our many sins  
And save our souls.

## THE MOST HOLY BIRTH- GIVER OF GOD AND EVER VIRGIN MARY

In the theology and piety of the Orthodox Church, a special place of honor is given to the Mother of God, who is venerated by the faithful as *"more honorable than the cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim."* She achieved this status of holiness and completion in the sight of the Eternal Father. This is also a challenge to faithful believers to cooperate with the grace of the Holy Spirit and be finally exalted and glorified as was she. Since the grace of God, and her cooperation with it enabled her to be glorified, it shows us that it is also possible for us who follow her Son and our God. As faithful believers, we style her as the most exalted among God's creatures, but we do not regard her as some sort of goddess, the fourth person of the Blessed Trinity, as some would erroneously infer, nor do we offer her the *worship* due to the Holy Trinity alone. Just as with holy icons, the veneration due the Blessed Virgin Mary is expressed in quite different language in the writings of the Byzantine Fathers of the Church and the spiritual practice of believers that is due only to our God.

At many divine services, the deacon exclaims, *"Remembering our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary with all the saints...."* Here we understand three basic truths and dimensions.

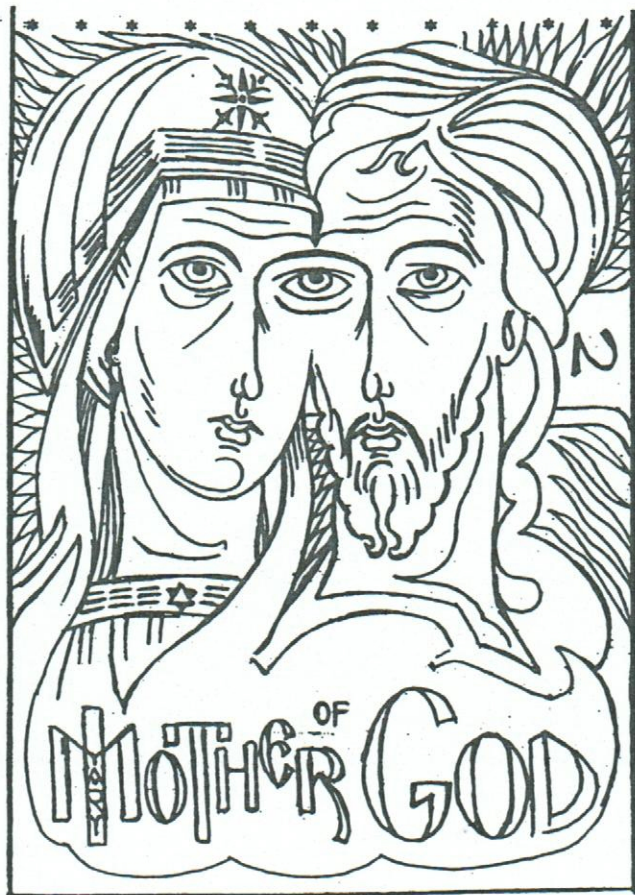




The Virgin is honored because she is *Theotokos*, the Birthgiver of God, not of His divinity, but of His humanity, yet of God in that Jesus Christ is, in the teaching of the Church, both God and man, at one and the same time, in the Incarnation which we celebrate at the solemn feast of the Annunciation, and even more splendidly in the feast of the Nativity of our Lord when this became manifest to all. Therefore, the honor attributed to Mary, the Mother of God is due solely to her relationship to Christ. And this honor, rather than detracting from that which is due the Holy Trinity, makes us even more aware of God's majesty, for it is precisely on account of the Son Who is Himself God, that she is venerated. Oftentimes, when some refuse to honor Mary properly, it is simply because they do not believe in the cause of her veneration which is the Incarnation of the Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity. They fail to recognize it was the Eternal Father Who chose her and found her worthy to impart our humanity to Jesus Christ, our Saviour, so that man's redemption might finally take place.

We also speak of Mary as ever-virgin, which was officially proclaimed at the Fifth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 553 AD, while the dogma/truth concerning her being the Mother of God was proclaimed in 431 AD at the Third Ecumenical Council in Ephesus. This notion does not contradict God's revelation to us in Sacred Scripture as some erroneously contend, "*And his mother and*

*his brothers came; and standing outside they sent to him and called him"* Mark 3: 31. Here the use of the metaphor, *brothers*, in the original Greek can mean half-brother, cousin or near relative, as well as brother in the strict sense. Our Orthodox Church, historically associated and connected as it is in direct line with the apostolic Church has always seen the term *brothers* referring to Christ's half-brothers, not natural or physical brothers.



The divine Son of God was born as a human being, a man, from the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1; Luke 1). The Church teaches that the virgin birth is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy, *"Therefore, the Lord himself will give you this sign: the Virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel"* Isaiah 7: 14, and that it is as well the fulfillment of the longings of all men for salvation which are found in all religions and philosophies in human history. It is only our God Who can save the world. Man alone cannot do it because it is man himself who desperately needs to be saved.



Therefore, according to the time honored Orthodox Christian understanding, the virgin birth is necessary not at all because of a false idolization of virginity as such or because of a sinful repulsion to normal human sexuality. Nor is it necessary as some would contend to give "added weight" to the moral teachings of our Saviour. The virgin birth is understood as a necessity because the one who is born must not be merely a man like all others needing salvation himself, inheriting the sins of Adam, becoming Himself its victim, *"You belong to what is below; I belong to what is above. You belong to the world, a world which cannot hold me"* John 8: 23. The Saviour of the world cannot be merely one of the race of Adam, born of the flesh like all others. He must be "not of this world" in order to save the world.

Jesus is born of the Virgin Mary because He is the divine Son of God, the Saviour of the world. It is the formal teaching of the Orthodox Christian Church that Jesus is not a "mere man" like all other men. He is indeed a real man, a whole and perfectly complete man with a human mind, body and soul. But He is the man which the Son and Word of God has become. Thus the Church, formally confesses that Mary should properly be called *Theotokos*, which literally means "the one who gives birth to God," for the One born of Mary is in the hymnology of the Church proclaimed on the feast of His Nativity in the flesh, *"He Who from all eternity is God."* The Kontakion of the feast expresses it perfectly: *"Today the*

*Virgin gives birth to perfect Essence, and the earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible. The angels sing His glory with the shepherds; the wise men journey with the star, for there is born for us an Infant Child, God eternal."*

Jesus of Nazareth is God, or more accurately, the divine Son of God in human flesh. He is truly man in every way. He was physically born, He grew up in obedience to His parents. He increased in wisdom and stature (Luke 2: 51, 52). He had a family life with "brethren" (Mark 2: 31 - 34), who according to Orthodox understanding and doctrine were not other children born of Mary who is confessed as "ever virgin," but were either cousins or children of Joseph from his first marriage because he was a widower at the time of his betrothal to Mary.

As a man Jesus experienced all normal and natural human experiences such as growth and development, ignorance and learning, hunger, thirst, fatigue, sorrow, pain and disappointment. He also knew human temptation, suffering and death. He assumed these human qualities for us men and for our salvation as the Creed enumerates. *"Since, therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to life long bondage. For surely it was not with angels that it is concerned but with the descendants of*

*Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in very respect...to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted"* Hebrews 2: 9- 18.



Christ entered our world becoming like all men in all things except sin. *"He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did*

*not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly*" 1 Peter 2: 22; Hebrews 4: 15.

Jesus was tempted, but He did not sin. He was perfect in every way, absolutely obedient to God the Father, speaking His words, doing His works, and accomplishing His will. As a man, Jesus fulfilled His role perfectly as the perfect man, the new and final Adam. He did all things that man fails to do, being in everything the most perfect response to the divine initiative of God the Father toward creation. In this sense, the Son of God as man "recapitulated" the life of Adam, that is, of the entire human race, bringing man and his world back to the Eternal Father and allowing for a new beginning of life free from the power of sin, the devil and death.

As the Saviour-Messiah, Christ fulfilled as well all of the prophecies and expectations of the Old Covenant, fulfilling and crowning in final and absolute perfection all that was begun in Israel for human and cosmic salvation. Thus, Christ is the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, the completion of the Law of Moses, the fulfillment of the prophets and Himself the final Prophet, the King and Teacher, the one great High Priest of salvation and perfect sacrificial Victim, the new and eternal Passover and Bestower of the Holy Spirit on all creation.

It is in this role as Messiah-King of Israel and Saviour of the world that Christ insisted upon His Identity with God the

Father and called Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life; the Resurrection and the Life, the Light of the world, the Bread of Life, the Door to the Sheepfold, the Good Shepherd, the Heavenly Son of Man, the Son of God and God Himself, the I AM.

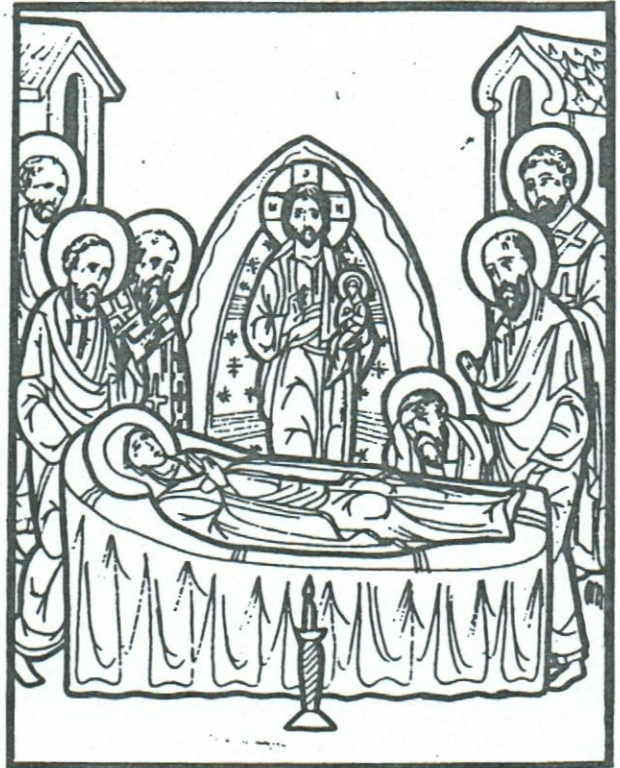
As Mary is honored as the Birthgiver of God, so she is honored because she is *Panagia*, all holy. She is the supreme example of the cooperation between God and man, for God, Who always respects human freedom, did not become incarnate of her without her free consent, which as Sacred Scripture witnesses for us, was freely given: "*Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word*" Luke 1: 38. Thus Mary is seen by the Church as the New Eve, as Christ is the new Adam, whose perfect obedience contrasted the disobedience of the first Mother, Eve, in Paradise. In his *Against Heresies, III, xxi, 4*, St. Irenaeus teaches for our understanding, "*...the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosened through the obedience of Mary, for what Eve, a virgin, bound by her disbelief and sin, that Mary, a virgin, unloosened by her profound faith.*"

As All-Holy, and Most Pure, Mary was free from actual sin, but she did fall under the curse of Adam's Original Sin as does all mankind. But she was absolved of this because at the time of the Annunciation, the angelic visitor announced, "*Rejoice O highly favored daughter! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women*" Luke

1: 28. For this reason, by virtue of her solidarity with all humanity, the Mother of God died a bodily death which we celebrate on the feast of the Dormition when she fell asleep in the Lord. Yet, in her case, the resurrection of the body had been anticipated and she was assumed body and soul into Heaven and her tomb was found empty, which is the event we celebrate. Thus as the hymns of the feast proclaim, she has *"been transferred to life," "has passed from earth to heaven"* beyond death and judgment, living already in the age to come.

Whereas the Church has officially proclaimed as dogmas and necessary doctrines concerning the Trinity and the Incarnation, the glorification of the Mother of God belongs to the inner Tradition of the Church. It is hard to speak and not less difficult to think about the mysteries which the Church keeps in the hidden depths of her inner consciousness. The Mother of God was never a theme of the public preaching of the apostles, while Christ was preached from the house tops, and proclaimed for all to know in an initiatory teaching addressed to the whole world, the mystery of the Mother of God was revealed only to those who were within the Body of Christ, within the bosom of Church, its faithful communicants, who were possessed of the grace of the Spirit to know and understand. It is not so much an object of faith as a foundation of our hope, a fruit of faith, ripened in Tradition, come to perfection with the passing of time. Let us therefore keep silence, and let us not try

to speculate about the supreme glory of the Mother of God, but simply adhere to what our Mother, the Church of Christ teaches.



### Names of the Mother of God

**Ark** The Mother of God is often called an Ark, for the Glory of God settled on her, just the as the glory of God descended on the mercy seat of the Old Testament

**Ark of the Covenant** *"There I will meet you and there...I will tell you all the commands that I wish to give the Israelites"* Exodus 25: 22.

**Aaron's Rod** Just as Aaron's Rod sprouted miraculously in the Old Covenant, so too, the Mother of God budded forth the Flower of Immortality, Christ our God *"...Aaron's staff, representing the house of Levi, had sprouted and put forth not only shoots but blossoms as well..."* Numbers 17: 23.

**Burning Bush** On Mount Sinai, the Old Covenant Patriarch, Moses saw the bush that was burning, but was not consumed. So, too, the Mother of God bore the fire of divinity, but was not consumed. She was a Virgin before, during and after the Nativity of our Lord. *"As he looked on, he was surprised to see that the bush, though on fire, was not consumed"* Exodus 3: 2.

**Golden Candlestick** In the Old Covenant tabernacle, there were found in the sanctuary golden candlesticks. The Mother of God is the candlestick which held that Eternal Light which illumines the world, *"You shall make a lamp stand of pure beaten gold"* Exodus 25: 31.

**Golden Censer** Just as the censer holds a burning coal, so to, the Mother of God held the Living Coal. In the Apocalypse stands an angel before the throne of God, swinging a censer, representing the prayers of the saints rising up before God. This is also seen as a symbol of the Mother of

God, for it is her intercessory prayers that find special favor before her Son and our God.

**Cloud** At the time of the Exodus, the Israelites were led out of Egypt by a Cloud of Light, symbolizing the presence of God in their midst. So, too, the Mother of God is a Cloud, mystically and physically bearing God within.

**Fleece** In the Book of Judges, we read the account of dew which appeared miraculously on Gideon's fleece, *"...If indeed you are going to save Israel through me as you promised, I am putting this woolen fleece on the threshing floor. If dew comes on the fleece alone, I know that you will save Israel through me as you promised"* Judges 6: 36,37. So, like the Dew, Christ appeared miraculously on the Living Fleece, the Mother of God.

**Holy Of Holies** Into the Holy of Holies only the High Priest could enter. So, too, the Mother of God is the Holy of Holies into which only the Eternal High Priest, Christ entered, *"...but only the high priest went into the inner one, and that but once a year, with the blood which he offered for himself and for the sins of the people"* Hebrews 9: 7.

**Ladder** In a dream Jacob saw a ladder ascending to heaven, with angels ascending and descending on it. The Mother of God is a ladder, stretching from earth to heaven, for on it and through her God descended to man, having become incarnate.

**Mountain** The Prophet Daniel saw a mountain, from which was cut a stone, not by the hand of man, *"...a stone which was hewn from a mountain without a hand being put to it..."* Daniel 2: 34. This is in reference to the miraculous virgin birth which was accomplished without the aid and hand of man.

**Palace** The Birthgiver of God is the palace within which the King, Christ our God was formed and lived for nine months.

**Root of Jesse** In the Nativity services, the Lord is referred to as the descendant of Jesse, *"But a shoot shall sprout from the root of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom"* Isaiah 11: 1. This indicates His lineage from David which was fulfilled through Mary, who was a stem of the line of David, the son of Jesse.

**Tabernacle** The tabernacle was the place where the glory of God dwelt. So, too, the glory of God dwelt in the Birthgiver of God, the living and eternal Tabernacle. *"...the glory of the Lord filled the Dwelling"* Exodus 40:34, 35.

**Holy Table** This refers to the Altar Table on which, at the Divine Liturgy, eternal Food is offered to believers. So, too, the Birthgiver of God is the Holy Table which bore the Bread of Eternal Life.

**Temple** The Prophet Ezekiel speaks of the Temple whose east gate remains sealed, through which only the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered. This is a reference in to

the prophecy concerning the virgin birth of the Mother of God, *"Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, facing the east; but it was closed. He said to me: 'This gate is to remain closed; it is not to be opened for anyone to enter by it, since the Lord, the God of Israel has entered by it, it shall remain closed' Only the prince may sit down in it to eat his meal in the presence of the Lord. He must enter by the way of the vestibule of the gate and leave by the same way"*, Ezekiel 44: 1-4.

**Throne** The Birthgiver of God is the throne upon which Christ, the King of the Universe rested.

**Golden Urn** In the Old Testament, the Ark of the Covenant contained within itself a golden urn filled with heavenly manna. The Mother of God is the Urn which contained Christ, the Divine Manna, nourishment of eternal life *"In the Ark were the Golden Urn containing the manna..."* Hebrews 9: 3.

**Vine** The Mother of God is the Vine which bore the ripe cluster of grapes, Christ our Lord, Who was crushed in sacrifice for our salvation.

ΜΡΘΥ

Mother of God

“NEITHER SAVED NOR LOST BY THE PLACE YOU ARE IN”

**A**ttaining eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven is the goal of every Orthodox Christian. Have you ever thought, in fact, about just who will be successful in achieving that lofty goal? Do bishops and priests have an “inside track” on getting to Heaven? Will those who have followed a monastic life of solitude be given “special preference” by our Heavenly Father? Will Heaven be reserved solely for those who have given all of their possessions to the poor? Indeed, what chance does a common, ordinary person have of dwelling in the abode of the saints one day? The truth of the matter is this: it doesn’t matter who we are, what we have given up or where we have spent our life when it comes down to how God will judge us. St. Niphon, a 12th century Saint who spent many years living in the Kievan Caves before becoming Bishop of Novgorod, offered these wise words to a young man who felt he needed to go to a monastery in order to be saved: “My son, a man is neither saved nor lost by the place he is in, but is saved or lost by his deeds. Neither a holy place or a holy state is of use to him if he does not fulfill the commandments of the Lord.” There you have it! We will be judged by our deeds, and by how well we followed Christ’s commandments. Nothing else about us will really matter to the Lord -- we are all equal in His sight. In addition to the ranks of worthy clergy, we, no doubt, will find soldiers, farmers, craftsmen, aristocrats, athletes and men and women of all races, creeds and ethnic backgrounds gathered around God’s Throne when He returns to judge the living and the dead. Remember these additional words of St. Niphon: “Be devout towards God and loving towards men, and you will be saved.”

*Icon by Austin Kachek - Manville, NJ*