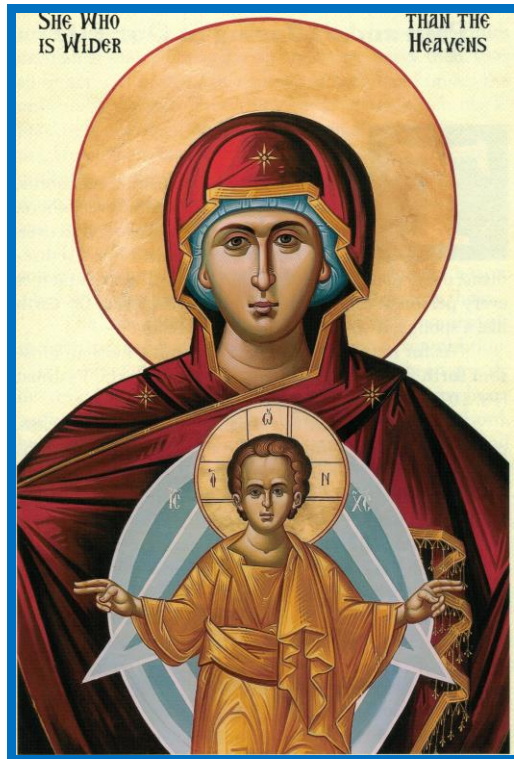


# Entreaty to the Most-Holy Theotokos



for

**Holy Ascension Orthodox Mission**

**HOLY ASCENSION  
ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN MISSION**

**[www.ascensionorthodox.org](http://www.ascensionorthodox.org)**

*02/02/2019*

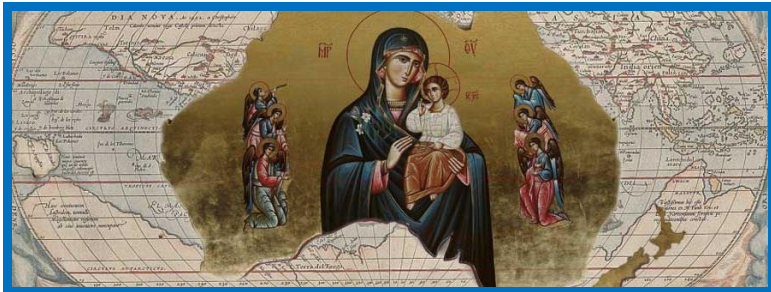
This project is still in draft and continues as a work-in-progress.

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# Entreaty to the Most-Holy Theotokos

**Deacon:** Bless, master.

**Priest:** Blessed is our God always, now and ever, and to the ages of ages.

**People:** Amen.

*During Paschaltide the clergy sing the Paschal Troparion 2<sup>1/2</sup> times, with the people concluding the last half. See lift out. The reader continues from Psalm 142. **Skip to Page 5.***

**Reader:** Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth, present everywhere and filling all things, Treasury of good things and Giver of life: Come and dwell in us, cleanse us of all impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (x 3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

All Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, blot out our sins. Master, pardon our iniquities. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for Your name's sake.

## Entreaty to the Theotokos 5

Lord, have mercy. (x 3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father in the Heavens, hallowed be Your Name. Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

(Matthew 6: 9 – 13)

***Priest:***

For Yours is the kingdom and the power, and the glory: of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages.

***Reader:***

Amen.

Lord, have mercy. (x 12)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

O come let us worship God our King.

O come let us worship and fall down before Christ our King and God.

O come let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and God.

**Psalm 142**

**Reader:** O Lord, hear my prayer, give ear to my supplication in Your truth, answer me in Your righteousness. Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for no one living shall become righteous in Your sight. For the enemy persecuted my soul; he humbled my life to the ground, he caused me to dwell in dark places as one long dead, and my spirit was in anguish within me, my heart was troubled within me. I remembered the days of old, and I meditated on all Your works, I meditated on the works of Your hands. I spread out my hands to You; my soul thirsts for You like a waterless land. Hear me speedily, O Lord; my spirit faints within me. Turn not Your face from me, lest I become like those who go down into the pit. Cause me to hear Your mercy in the morning; for I put my hope in You; make me know, O Lord, the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul to You. Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord, for to You I flee for refuge. Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God. Your good Spirit shall guide me in the land of uprightness. For Your name's sake, O Lord, give me life, in Your righteousness You shall bring my soul out of affliction. In Your mercy You shall destroy my enemies, You shall utterly destroy all who afflict my soul, for I am Your servant.

**Reader:** Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. Glory to You, O God.  
(x3)



**God is the Lord**  
**Tone 4**

(Psalm 117: 27, 26, 1, 10, 17, 22 - 23)

**Deacon:** In the 4th Tone: God is the Lord and He revealed Himself to us. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

**Deacon:** Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endures forever.

**People:** God is the Lord and He revealed Himself to us. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

**Deacon:** All the nations surrounded me, but in the name of the Lord I defended myself against them.

**People:** God is the Lord and He revealed Himself to us. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

**Deacon:** I shall not die, but live; and tell of the Lord's works.

**People:** God is the Lord and He revealed Himself to us. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

**Deacon:** The stone the builders rejected, the same became the head of the corner, and this came about from the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes.

## Entreaty to the Theotokos 8

**People:** God is the Lord and He revealed Himself to us.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

### **Troparion** **Tone 4**

**People:**

To the Theotokos let us run now most earnestly, /  
we sinners all and wretched ones, /  
and falling down in repentance calling from the depths of our souls: /

O Lady, come to our aid and have compassion on us; /  
hasten for we are lost in a throng of transgressions. /  
Do not turn your servants away with empty hands, //  
for we hope in you alone. (x 2)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

### **Theotokion** **Tone 4**

**People:**

O Theotokos, /  
we will never cease to speak of your powers, unworthy as we are. /

For if you did not intercede for us in prayer, /  
who would have delivered us from so many dangers? /  
Who would have kept us free until now? /

Let us never forsake you O Lady, //  
for you always save your servants from all perils.



***Psalm 50***

**Reader:** Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your great mercy; and according to the abundance of Your compassion, blot out my transgression. Wash me thoroughly from my lawlessness and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my lawlessness, and my sin is always before me. Against You only have I sinned and done evil in Your sight; that You may be justified in Your words, and overcome when You are judged. For behold, I was conceived in transgressions, and in sins my mother bore me. Behold, You love truth; You showed me the unknown and secret things of Your wisdom. You shall sprinkle me with hyssop, and I will be cleansed; You shall wash me, and I will be made whiter than snow. You shall make me hear joy and gladness; my bones that were humbled shall greatly rejoice. Turn Your face from my sins, and blot out all my transgressions. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with Your guiding Spirit. I will teach transgressors Your ways, and the ungodly shall turn back to You. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall greatly rejoice in Your righteousness. O Lord, You shall open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise. For if You desired sacrifice, I would give it; You will not be pleased with whole burnt offerings. A sacrifice to God is a broken spirit, a broken and humbled heart God will not despise. Do good, O Lord, in Your good pleasure to Zion, and let the walls of Jerusalem be built; then You will be pleased with a sacrifice of righteousness, with offerings and whole burnt offerings; then shall they offer young bulls on Your altar.

After this, a canon may then be read, but in any case, the proper refrains are chanted:

***Refrains for the Theotokos***

**Clergy:** Most holy Theotokos, save us!

**People:** Most holy Theotokos, save us!

**Clergy:** Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

**People:** Now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

***Repeat refrains.***

***Special Melody***

**People:**

Save your servants from harm, /  
O Theotokos, /  
for after God, we all run to you, /  
as to an unassailable wall and intercessor.

Look with loving-kindness, /  
O all hymned-Theotokos, /  
upon my cruel bodily suffering, /  
and heal the sickness of my soul.

**Deacon:** Again and again, in peace let us pray to the Lord.

**People:** Lord, have mercy.

**Deacon:** Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and protect us, O God, by Your grace.

**People:** Lord, have mercy.

## Entreaty to the Theotokos 11

**Deacon:** Commemorating our most holy, most pure, most blessed, glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, with all the saints, let us commit ourselves and one another and all our life to Christ our God.

**People:** To You, O Lord.

**Priest:** For You are the King of Peace and the Saviour of our souls, and to You we send up glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages.

**People:** Amen.

Then, if the priest desires, he reads an akathist.

## **Prokeimenon** **Tone 4**

**Deacon:** Let us attend. Wisdom! Let us attend. The prokeimenon in the 4th Tone: I will remember your name from generation to generation.

**People:** I will remember your name from generation to generation.

**Deacon:** My heart has poured out a good word.

**People:** I will remember your name from generation to generation.

**Deacon:** I will remember your name ...

**People:** ... from generation to generation.

## Entreaty to the Theotokos 12

**Deacon:** Let us pray to the Lord.

**People:** Lord, have mercy.

**Priest:** For You are holy, O our God who dwells with the saints, and to You we send up glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages.

**People:** Amen.

### **Let Every Breath Tone 4**

(Psalm 150: 6, 1)

**Deacon:** Let every breath praise the Lord.

**People:** Let every breath praise the Lord.

**Deacon:** Praise God in His saints, praise Him in the firmament of His power.

**People:** Let every breath praise the Lord.

**Deacon:** Let every breath ...

**People:** ... praise the Lord.

**Deacon:** And that He will make us worthy of hearing the Holy Gospel, let us pray to the Lord God.

**People:** Lord, have mercy. (x 3)

**Deacon:** Wisdom! Arise! Let us listen to the Holy Gospel.

## Entreaty to the Theotokos 13

**Priest:** Peace be to all.

**People:** And to your spirit.

**Priest:** The reading is from the Holy Gospel according to St Luke.

**People:** Glory to You, Lord, glory to You.

**Deacon:** Let us attend.

**Priest:** **Luke 10: 38 – 42, 11: 27 – 28**

**People:** Glory to You, Lord, glory to You.

### **Refrains for the Theotokos**

**Clergy:** Most holy Theotokos, save us!

**People:** Most holy Theotokos, save us!

**Clergy:** Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

**People:** Now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

*Repeat refrains twice.*

*During Paschaltide, instead of "It is truly right..." we sing the Paschal Irmos of the 9<sup>th</sup> Ode for the Theotokos, "Shine, shine, O New Jerusalem..." See lift-out. The reader resumes from **Holy God...***

**Tone 8**

**People:**

It is truly right to bless you, the Theotokos, /  
ever-blessed and most-blameless, and Mother of our God. /  
More honorable than the cherubim /  
and beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim; /  
who without corruption gave birth to God the Word, //  
the very Theotokos, we magnify you.

**Reader:**

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have  
mercy on us. (x 3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the  
Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of  
ages. Amen.

All Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, blot out  
our sins. Master, pardon our iniquities. Holy  
One, visit and heal our infirmities for Your  
name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (x 3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the  
Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of  
ages. Amen.

Our Father in the Heavens, hallowed be Your  
Name. Your Kingdom come, Your will be done,  
on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our  
daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we  
forgive our debtors; and lead us not into  
temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.



Entreaty to the Theotokos 15

**Priest:** For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages.

**People:** Amen.

***Troparion of the Feast or Saint***

***The Litany of Fervent Supplication***

**Deacon:** Have mercy on us, O God, according to Your great mercy, we pray to You, hear us and have mercy.

**People:** Lord, have mercy. (x 3)

**Deacon:** Again we pray for our great lord and father, His Holiness, Patriarch *N.*; for our lord the Most Reverend Metropolitan *N.*, First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad; for our lord the Most Reverend (Archbishop *or* Bishop *N.*, whose diocese it is) and all our brethren in Christ.

**People:** Lord, have mercy. (x 3)

**Deacon:** Again we pray for this land, its authorities and armed forces, and for every Christian land.

**People:** Lord, have mercy. (x 3)

## Entreaty to the Theotokos 16

**Deacon:** Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, visitation, pardon and prosperity for the servants of God (N).

**People:** Lord, have mercy. (x 3)

**Deacon:** Again we pray to You O Lord our God, that You will hear the voice of our supplication and prayer, and have mercy on Your servant(s) N\*(N.), through Your grace and compassions, and forgive all his (her) (their) petitions, and pardon him (her) (them) all transgressions voluntary and involuntary; let his (her) (their) prayers and alms be acceptable before the throne of Your dominion, and protect him (her) (them) from enemies visible and invisible, from every temptation, harm and sorrow, and deliver him (her) (them) from ailments, and grant him (her) (them) health and length of days: let us all say, O Lord, hear us and have mercy.

**People:** Lord, have mercy. (x 3)

### *For the Sick & Incapacitated*

**Deacon:** O Physician of souls and bodies, with compunction and contrite hearts we fall down before You, and we cry to You: Heal the sicknesses and passions of the soul(s) and body(ies) of Your servant(s) N. and pardon him (her) (them), all transgressions, voluntary and involuntary, and quickly raise him (her) (them) up from his (her) (their) bed of sickness, for You are kind-hearted and we pray to You, hear us and have mercy.

**People:** Lord, have mercy. (x 3)

## Entreaty to the Theotokos 17

### *For Special Needs*

**Deacon:**

O Master, Lover of mankind, look down with Your merciful eye, upon Your servant(s) **N.** and hear our supplication which is offered with faith, for You Yourself have said: "All things whatsoever you ask in prayer, believe that you will receive, and it will be done for you; and again: "Ask, and it will be given to you." Therefore though we are unworthy, yet hoping in Your mercy, we ask: Bestow Your kindness upon Your servant(s) **N.** and fulfill his (her) (their) good desires, preserve him (her) (them) all his (her) (their) days peacefully and calmly in health and length of days: let us all say, quickly hear us and graciously have mercy.

**People:**

Lord, have mercy. (x 3)

### *For Travelers*

**Deacon:**

O Lord, who most gloriously rescued Joseph from the animosity of his brethren, and lead him to Egypt, and through the blessing of Your goodness made him to prosper in all things: Bless also this (these) Your servant(s) who desires (desire) to travel, and cause his (her) (their) journey to be safe and tranquil, we pray to You, hear us and have mercy.

**People:**

Lord, have mercy. (x 3)

### *For the Departed*

**Deacon:**

We pray for the repose of the soul(s) of the departed servant(s) of God **N. (N.)**, and that he / she / they may be forgiven every transgression, both voluntary and involuntary and that the Lord God will establish his / her / their soul(s) where the righteous repose.

**People:**

Lord, have mercy. (x 3)

## Entreaty to the Theotokos 18

**Deacon:** Again we pray that this city (**or** town), and this holy Mission (**or** monastery), and every city and country may be preserved from famine, pestilence, earthquake, flood, fire, the sword, the invasion of enemies, and civil war; that our good and man-loving God may be gracious and favorable to us, that He may turn away all wrath stirred up against us, and rescue us from His righteous threatening which hangs over us, and have mercy on us.

**People:** Lord, have mercy. (**x 3**)

**Deacon:** Again we pray also that the Lord God may hear the voice of the supplication of us sinners and have mercy on us.

**People:** Lord, have mercy. (**x 3**)

**Priest:** Hear us, O God our Savior, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of those who are far off at sea; and be merciful, be merciful, O Master, regarding our sins, and have mercy on us; for You are a merciful God who loves mankind, and to You we send up glory; to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages.

**People:** Amen.

**Deacon:** To the most holy Lady Virgin Theotokos, let us pray!

## Entreaty to the Theotokos 19

**People:** Most holy Theotokos, save us!

### ***Prayer to the Most-Holy Theotokos***

**Priest:** O our most blessed Queen, O Theotokos our hope, guardian of orphans, intercessor for strangers, joy of the sorrowful, protectress of the wronged: you see our misfortune and affliction; help us, for we are infirm; feed us, for we are strangers. You know our offence: absolve it as you will, for we have no other help beside you, no other intercessor, nor good consoler, except you, O Mother of God. Preserve and protect us to the ages of ages.

**People:** Amen.

**Deacon:** Wisdom!

*During Paschaltide, see lift-out for remainder of service.*

**Priest:** All-holy Theotokos, save us!

**People:** More honorable than the cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim; who without corruption gave birth to God the Word, the very Theotokos, we magnify you.

**Priest:** Glory to You, Christ God, our hope, glory to You.

**People:** Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

## Entreaty to the Theotokos 20

Lord, have mercy. (x 3)

Father, bless.

**Priest:** May Christ our true God, through the intercessions of His most pure Mother, and of all the saints, have mercy on us and save us, for He is good and loves mankind.

**People:** Amen.

*The faithful now line up to venerate the icons and relics and are anointed with the Oil of Gladness by the Superior.*





## Questions often asked about the Mother of God

***"Behold, from now on  
all generations will call me blessed"***

### **Q.: Why do you pray to the Mother of God?**

A.: Since Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead, conquering death for us, there is no reason why we cannot ask those in heaven to pray for us just as we ask those still living on earth for their prayers. After all, in Christ all are alive. Therefore we ask the Ever-Virgin Mary to pray to her Son for us, just as we also ask the angels, the saints, and all faithful believers here on earth to pray on our behalf, as Scripture commands us to do: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men... I will therefore, that men pray everywhere (I Tim. 2:1,8). We turn readily to our friends and neighbors to ask for their prayers in our time of need; are not those in heaven even more our friends than those on earth? Why should they not intercede for us also before the throne of God?

### **Q.: Why do Orthodox Christians call the Virgin Mary "Mother of God"? This term seems to imply that God is not the creator and origin of all things.**

A. We call the Holy Virgin Mary the Mother of God (from the Greek, Theotokos: literally, the "Birth giver of God") because it is Scriptural: the righteous Elizabeth addressed the Virgin with these words: "Why am I so favored, that the mother of my

## Entreaty to the Theotokos 22

Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43). Who is this "Lord" of which Elizabeth speaks? It is Christ, the Lord God. For this reason we say, correctly, that the Virgin Mary is the Mother of God. She is not the Mother of God the Father, but the Mother of God the Son, who was begotten by the Father before all ages, and took flesh from the Virgin Mary.

### **Q.: Why do Orthodox Christians give so much honor to the Mother of God?**

A.: We honor her because Jesus Christ Himself honored her on several occasions recorded in Scripture. He fulfilled her requests and also gave her special thought even while He was dying on the cross (Luke 2:51; John 2:3-9; John 19:26-27). Even before Christ was born, she was honored by Heaven when the Archangel Gabriel appeared and said to her: "Rejoice, full of grace! The Lord is with you! Blessed are you among women!" (Luke 1:28). Holy Scripture further proclaims of her that "From now on all generations shall call me blessed" (Luke 1:48), because from her womb came forth God in the flesh. This means that all who believe in Christ and in the Bible must give special honor and veneration to the one that is "blessed among women." It is not enough to merely give attention to her at Christmas-time, when she appears in the manger scenes of western Christian churches. No, this "highly favored one" must occupy a very special place in the hearts of those who follow her Son, just as she did among the first Christians.



**Q.: Didn't our Lord, during His earthly life, sometimes place His mother (and His other kinsmen) in a decidedly secondary position, emphasizing spiritual virtues over kinship according to the flesh?**

A.: No one who accepts the Gospel can believe that our Lord was in any way lacking respect for His mother. Any seeming disrespect on His part can only be due to a faulty, superficial interpretation of Scripture, due sometimes to 'understandably imperfect translations into modern languages.' When, for example, at the marriage of Cana, His mother tells Him: "They have no wine," and our Lord replies: "Woman, what is that to you and me?" (John 2: 4)--one must understand that although the word "woman" might sound disrespectful in modern English, it was not so in the ancient East; it is the very word our Lord used to address His mother as He was dying on the Cross and entrusted her to His beloved disciple (John 19: 26). His words to her at the marriage feast in no way indicate disrespect, but only emphasize the importance of the miracle which was to follow (the changing of water into wine)--a miracle which He indeed performed at her request. When our Lord extends the concept of spiritual kinship to all those who "do the will of God," (Mark 3:34-5) He does not deny such a higher kinship to His own family; we know of several of His kinsmen who were Apostles (James, Jude, Simon), and especially "blessed" in this spiritual kinship, of course, was His own mother, of whom alone does the Scripture say that "all generations shall call me blessed" (Luke 1: 48).

Again, when a certain woman praises His mother for being the one who bore Him, our Lord says, "Yes, and more than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it." (Luke 11:28). He has a higher degree of veneration for His mother: she is blessed not only for bearing Him in the flesh,

but even more for being one who "hears the word of God and keeps it."

**Q. Yet in your church services I have heard Orthodox Christians call on the Mother of God to "save" them. How can she "save" anyone, since Christ is the only Savior?**

A.: We believe that there is only one Lord God and Saviour of mankind, Jesus Christ, No one is equal to Him, and no one but Him can save mankind. We do not turn to Mary, the Mother of Christ our God as to a saviour, and we certainly do not put her on the same level as her Son, but we turn to her as to one who helps us by her prayers, just as St Paul himself said that he had become all things to all men, "that I might by all means and in any way save them" (I Cor 9: 22). St Paul was not claiming to usurp Christ as the saviour; he merely wanted to help and strengthen others on the path to salvation. It is in this sense that we Orthodox Christians say, "Most Holy Mother of God save us"-that is, "Please help us toward salvation by your prayers."



# **What do Orthodox Christian's believe about Mary, the Theotokos?**

## **What does Theotokos mean?**

Theotokos simply means God bearer or Birthgiver of God and is used in reference to Mary the Mother of God. In the early 5th century, Nestorius, who was excommunicated from the Church, delivered a sermon arguing against the well accepted belief that Mary was the Theotokos. His belief regarding Mary was an outcome of his teaching that Jesus was born as a man, not as God, and later adopted the nature of God. St Cyril of Alexandria wrote 12 anathemas condemning the Nestorian view as heresy. These were upheld by the Council of Ephesus in 431 and later the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Today, the Orthodox Church still maintains Mary as the Theotokos.

## **Mary, the Theotokos as Ever-Virgin**

Christian belief commonly regards the Theotokos as the Virgin Mary. The Old Testament writings are plain in their prophecies that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. For this reason, Catholics and most Protestants believe that the Theotokos was a virgin, at least up to her conception of Christ. The Orthodox Christian belief that the Theotokos was a virgin before, during, and after her giving birth to Jesus, is not held by the other denominations. Protestants believe that she remarried after Joseph's death and had other children. They often quote the passages in the New Testament that identify the brother(s) of the Lord. Maintaining the Virgin birth, these brothers must have been born after Jesus and were



younger. The brothers of the Lord are the stepchildren of Mary, born to Joseph and his first wife, Solomonina.

### **The Theotokos as Mediator**

Both the Orthodox Church and Catholics call the Theotokos the Mediator between God and man. Protestants do not regard the Theotokos as Mediator. Orthodox Christianity sees the role of the Theotokos as an intercessor between man and God. We pray for the intercessions of the Theotokos. We ask for her to intercede for our behalf to her Son, our God, as only a mother can. This can be seen as an extension of our general belief in the Saints (who are alive with God) praying for us, and more specifically the Glorious Ever-Virgin Mary, praying for us.

Catholics take this belief much further to elevate the Theotokos to co-redeemer with Jesus. This idea came very late in church history and was not discussed at any ecumenical council. Romans even differ on what is meant by this title ranging from claiming that He came to us through Mary and we must go to Him through her" or with others merely believing that the Theotokos is a co-redeemer just as anyone who preaches the Gospel. Plainly, Orthodox Christianity does not speak of the Theotokos as co-redeemer.

### **What are the Feast Days of the Theotokos?**

#### **The Nativity of the Theotokos (Sep 8)**

The Protevangelium of James (c. 100) although not included in the New Testament, was quoted by the early Church Fathers. Many of the details of the Theotokos' life are found here.



**Placing of the Veil at Blachernae (Aug 31) – (469 AD)**

The veil of the Theotokos is her only known relic. Tradition tells us that the very veil that the Theotokos wore as she fed Jesus, was given to 2 women who attended her. In 451, Empress Pulcheria desired to locate the body of the Theotokos. She was told that her body had been taken to heaven. The veil was the only relic of the Theotokos. It was placed at the Blachernae church, an outer lying suburb of Constantinople.

**The Annunciation (March 25)**

The announcement of the conception of Christ by the Archangel Gabriel was established in the 6th century, it is celebrated on March 25th, 9 months prior to Christmas.

**The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Feb 2)** was also instituted by the Emperor Justinian in the 6th century.

**The Entrance into the Temple is celebrated (Nov 21)**

This feast describes the Theotokos as the Holy Temple of God.

**The Dormition (Aug 15)**

This is the falling asleep or death of the Theotokos.

**This Central Orthodox Christian Belief Confirms Other Orthodox Christian Beliefs**

**The Nature of Christ:** Christ was born from His mother, Mary the Theotokos, not as a phantom but as a real child as the Messiah, or God with us.

**Nature of Sin:** The Roman Catholic belief in the stain of Original Sin is not an Orthodox Christian doctrine, nor do we believe man is totally depraved (a Protestant belief). The Theotokos (just as Post-Adamic man) was born into a fallen world but it was her (as it is our choice) to sin or not. Sin was not passed onto her through her parents as a genetic attribute. Roman Catholics believe that all are sinful at conception and hence developed the idea of the Immaculate Conception to compensate for Mary being sinless. This belief, not formalized until 1854 by the Pope Pius IX, makes her more than human. Orthodox Christians believe that the Theotokos was conceived from the union of Joachim and Anna, Mary's parents, that she being human inherited the effects of sin the greatest effect being death.

In addition, these beliefs are reinforced:

### **Respect for Women**

Orthodox Christians place the Theotokos as the highest of all mankind.

### **Respect for Chastity**

Leading a monastic life and maintaining her purity exalts this virtue.

### **Iconography**

The first icon known to be written was that of the Theotokos, painted by St Luke.

### **Veneration of the Saints**

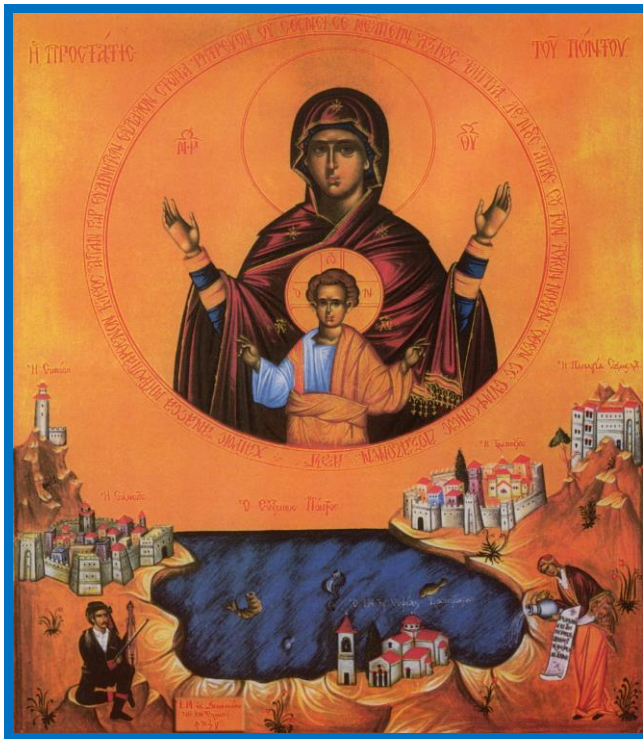
As we venerate the Theotokos, so to do we venerate other Saints of the Church.

## The further confirmation in Apostolic writings

Beyond the Old and New Testaments we have the Protoevangelium (First Gospel) of James, the Results of Church Councils, such the Acts (minutes of the council), Definitions and Canons, and the Anathema's of St. Cyril of Alexandria.

## Belief in Angels

Much of what we know about angels is discovered in understanding the Life of the Theotokos.



## The Annunciation to the All-Holy Theotokos (March 25/April 7)



The role that the Theotokos plays in the redemption of the human race cannot be emphasized strongly enough. As the feast of her nativity shows, she was the ladder bridging Earth and Heaven. The troparion of the feast of the Annunciation proclaims in part, “Today is the beginning of our salvation, the revelation of the eternal mystery! The Son of God becomes



the Son of the Virgin as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace.” This was effected through the perfect obedience of the Theotokos whose humble “yes” to the will of God overthrew the disobedience of the first mother, Eve, in the Garden of Eden.

As Holy Scripture tells us: Now in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. Having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, full of grace! The Lord is with you! Blessed are you among women!” But when she saw him, she was greatly troubled at his saying and considered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son, and you will call His name ‘Jesus.’ He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father, David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of His Kingdom there shall be no end.” Mary said to the angel, “How can this be happening to me, since I do not know a man?” [Luke 1: 26 - 34].

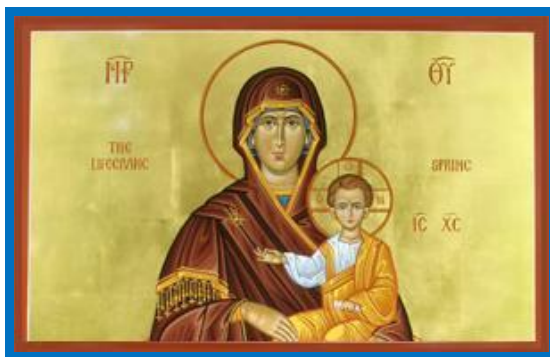
Mary's question, How can this be...? is not an expression of doubt. This differs quite radically from the attitude of Zechariah, the father of St John the Baptist, when the angel announced to him news of the birth of his own son. She simply poses a respectful question. The angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the Holy One who is born will be called the Son of God. Behold, your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age and this is the sixth month of her pregnancy for her who was called

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barren. For nothing shall be impossible with God.” [Luke 1: 35 - 37].

With perfect obedience and humility, Mary gives her reply to the angel and with it overturns the condemnation of the first parents, Adam and Eve: And Mary said, “Behold, the handmaid of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her. [Luke 1: 38]. Thus, with the Archangel Gabriel we can all cry out to her from the depths of our hearts:

Rejoice, you through whom joy will shine forth: Rejoice, you through whom the curse will cease! Rejoice, restoration of fallen Adam: Rejoice, redemption of the tears of Eve! Rejoice, height hard to climb for the thoughts of man: Rejoice, depth hard to perceive even for the eyes of angels! Rejoice, you who are the throne of the King: Rejoice, you who hold Him who holds all! Rejoice, star who makes the Sun appear: Rejoice, womb of the Divine Incarnation! Rejoice, you through whom the Creation is made new: Rejoice, you through whom the Creator becomes a newborn child! Rejoice, Unwedded Bride! [From the Ikos of the Matins of the Feast].





## The Dormition of the Most-Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary

The most important Feast of the Theotokos in the Orthodox Church's liturgical calendar is that of her Dormition or Falling-Asleep. There is a two-week fast leading up to the Feast of the Dormition, beginning on 1<sup>st</sup> August (14<sup>th</sup> August Old Calendar). The fast is temporarily relaxed only on the Feast of the Transfiguration on 6/19 August. In many parishes, there is the custom of serving daily during the period of the Dormition Fast, what is called the Paraclesis (Paraklisis) to the Theotokos. It is a Divine Service of Supplication to the Theotokos, honouring her and asking her to intercede on our behalf to God Himself – as only a mother can. There are two distinct aspects to the Dormition Feast. On the one hand, there is death and burial of the Theotokos, and on the other hand, the resurrection and the taking up of both her body and soul into Heaven by her Son, Jesus Christ.



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The Orthodox Church commemorates every year the anniversaries of the deaths of the saints. It also commemorates the death and resurrection of her founder, Jesus Christ, at Great and Holy Friday and Pascha respectively. It therefore stands to reason that the Church would also commemorate the death of the Theotokos as well. She was a perfect example of that obedience to God which all Christians are called upon to exercise. She alone as the Theotokos, did not experience the natural corruption which follows bodily death, but was raised from the dead and carried to the glory of the King of All in Heaven.

The account of her dormition was recorded by the apostles themselves who witnessed her death. It was also passed on by the followers and successors of the apostles in various accounts. Her dormition is especially known in the apostolic work known as the Proto-evangelion of James. It is an apocryphal text from the second century AD which relates, among other things, the life and death of the Theotokos.

The Theotokos lived in the house of St John the Evangelist and often she went alone to the Mount of Olives, which was nearby, offering her fervent prayer there to her Son. Once, as she was praying on the Mount of Olives, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her and announced that in three days she would depart and be with Christ. The Archangel told her that she should not be troubled, but should receive his words with joy as she was being called to immortal life and to the eternal King of Glory.

Before her departure from this life, the Theotokos wanted to see the apostles who were scattered all over the world, and were spreading the Good News of Christ. On her knees she

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prayed that this might be possible and that at the hour of her death she might not see the devil and his terrible servants, the demons, but that her Son and God Himself would come and receive her soul into His holy hands. As she knelt, the olive trees growing on the Mountain bent as well, and when the Theotokos got up, they straightened themselves out again, honouring her as the Mother of God.



Returning home, the Theotokos began to make preparations for her burial. St John sent word to St James, first bishop of Jerusalem, and also to all other relatives and neighbors, informing them of the impending decease of the Theotokos. In

turn St James informed all the Christians living in Jerusalem and the surrounding towns. With weeping they came to the home of the Theotokos to await her death.

As the crowd was gathered at the house, suddenly a loud noise was heard, like thunder, and a cloud surrounded the home of St John the Evangelist. At the command of God, angels took the apostles who had spread to the ends of the Earth and, bringing them on clouds to Jerusalem, placed them before the door of the house. St John greeted them and told them of the immediate departure of the Virgin Mary. Later the Apostle Paul, accompanied by his close followers, Saints Dionysius the Areopagite (the first bishop of Athens), Hierotheus and Timothy, as well as the Seventy Apostles arrived at the home.

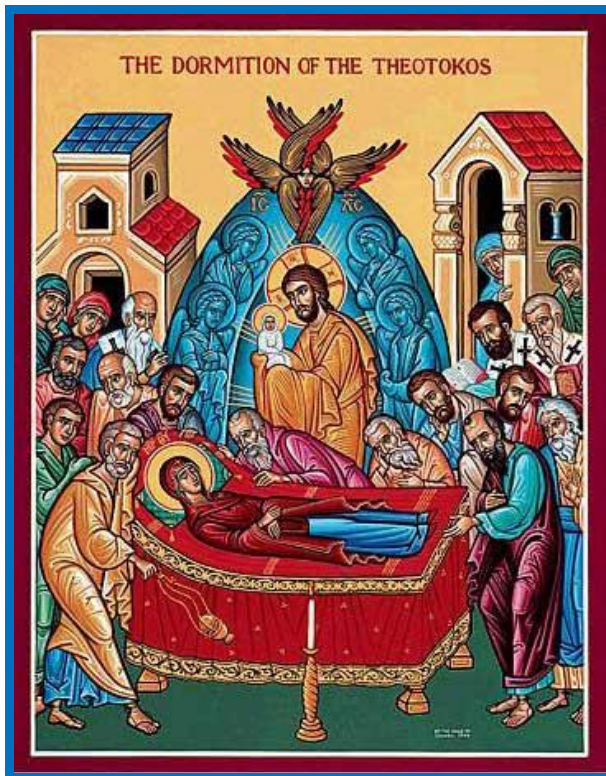
On the fifteenth day of the month of August, as all were awaiting the final hour, there suddenly shone in the room an indescribable light of Divine Glory which dimmed the lamps that had been lit in the house. The people inside the house saw the roof of the room opened and the glory of the Lord descending from Heaven. Christ the King of Glory Himself approached His Mother, along with the hosts of angels and archangels, and with all the heavenly powers, as well as the holy Fathers and Prophets of the past who had prophesied about the Virgin.

After greeting Her Son, the Virgin surrendered her pure soul into His hands. She felt no pain whatsoever. The end was as if she had fallen into a sweet sleep. At once there began angelic singing while the heavenly hosts accompanied the soul of the Virgin as she went in the arms of the Lord to Heaven.



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After her death, the apostles carried the body of the Theotokos to the Garden of Gethsemane, where she was placed in a tomb. The apostles stayed by the tomb of the Theotokos without leaving the garden for three full days, chanting psalms day and night, as was, and still is the custom at the death of an Orthodox faithful. The Angels as well were heard to be singing and praising God and blessing the Ever-Virgin Mary.



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The Lord had arranged it so that one of the apostles, St Thomas, was not present at the burial of the body of the Theotokos. He only arrived at Gethsemane on the third day. Grieving that he had not been granted the last greeting and blessing of the Theotokos, St Thomas wept bitterly. Taking pity on him, the apostles decided to open the tomb so that he might at least see the dead body of the Theotokos. But when the tomb was opened, the body of the Theotokos was not there, only the burial clothes, which were giving off a wonderful, sweet-smelling fragrance!

With weeping and reverence the apostles kissed the burial clothes, praying that the Lord would reveal to them the location of the body of the Virgin. Later, after having eaten a meal in the garden, the apostles suddenly heard angelic singing. Looking up, they saw standing in the air the Virgin surrounded by a multitude of angels. She was covered in a heavenly light and she said to them: "Rejoice! I am with you always!" Filled with joy, instead of saying the usual, "Lord Jesus Christ, help us!" the apostles cried: "Most-Holy Theotokos, help us!" From that time on the apostles passed down the tradition in the Orthodox Church that the Virgin Mary was raised by her Son and taken with her body to Heaven on the third day after her burial.





## **Sources**

### ***Scripture – Old Testament***

The Orthodox Study Bible (Old Testament). St Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology. 2008.

Psalms and Old Testament in general are according to the Septuagint usage and numbering as contained in The Orthodox Study Bible.

### ***Scripture – New Testament***

The Eastern Orthodox Bible.