'I am Thy Servant and the Son of Thy Handmaid' The Theotokos and the Church



"Let it be to me according to thy word."

טומווט נס נווץ שטומ.

Luke 1:38

Spirit overshadows her and God is conceived within her. Mary says 'yes' to God's message, and thereby the Holy

also called "Panagia" (All-Holy). Son was truly the co-eternal Son of God Incarnate. She is She is called "Theotokos" (God-bearer), affirming that her

side of the church/royal doors, and the Theotokos saying 'yes' to God on the other side - the Holy Altar is in the The icon of the Archangel Gabriel is often placed on one

 between God's call and our response. The mystery of salvation takes place in exactly this 'space'



In the sixth century B.C., during the Babylonian invasions of the Holy Land, the **Ark of the Covenant** (which bore the presence of God and the manna bread from heaven) was taken away from the Holy of Holies in the temple.

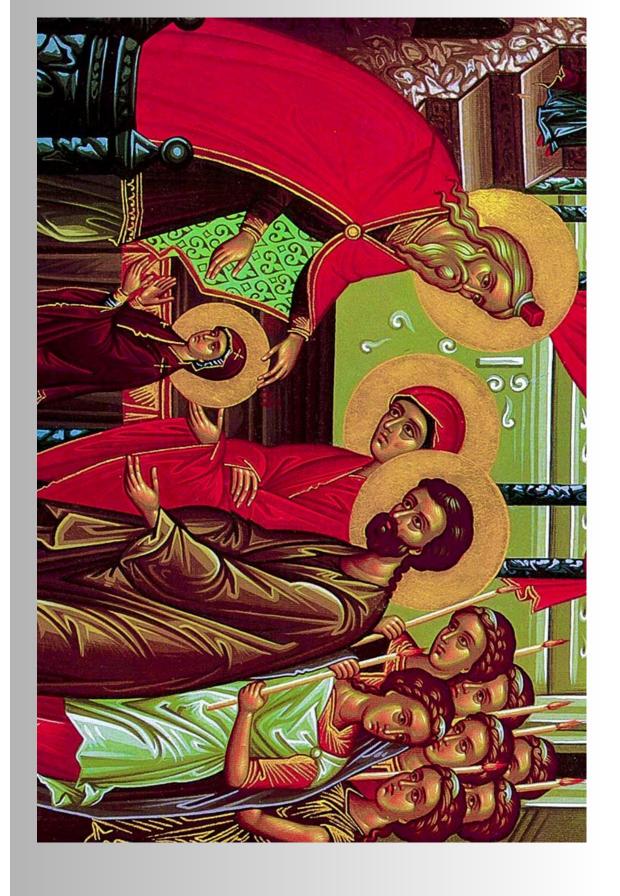
As a child, the Theotokos was led to the temple, and the high priest Zacharias led her into the Altar, where she lived. This is celebrated as the "Entrance of the Theotokos" (21 November).

She becomes the **Ark**, who bears in herself the presence of God Incarnate - Christ. She bears within her "the **Living Bread** which came down from Heaven" (John 6:51).



danced with her feet, and all the house of Israel loved her." they went up into the temple of the Lord. And the priest daughters of the Hebrews that are undefiled, and let them child was three years old, and Joachim said: Invite the wait for the third year, in order that the child may not seek for us, and our offering be not received. And Anna said: Let us vow that we have vowed, lest perchance the Lord send to "And the child was two years old, and Joachim said: Let us the altar, and the Lord God sent grace upon her; and she the sons of Israel. And he set her down upon the third step of the last of the days, the Lord will manifest His redemption to Lord has magnified your name in all generations. In you, on received her, and kissed her, and blessed her, saying: The captivated from the temple of the Lord. And they did so until **burning**, that the child may not turn back, and her heart be take each a lamp, and let them stand with the lamps father or mother. And Joachim said: So let us wait. And the take her up to the temple of the Lord, that we may pay the

Protoevangelium of James





through the ages. extol today, and chose her from among His elect down to this task, God pre-ordained this ever-virgin Maid whom we word" (Luke 1:38). In order that there would be a virgin equal spiritual joy, she conceived and gave birth - "Behold the desire. Having utterly banished such desire by prayer and and was preceded by the annunciation and her faith in the all-Holy Spirit coming upon her, not from fleshly desire, and pure virgin or, more precisely, of this exceedingly handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy not heby submission to, or any experience of, passionate outside the normal course of events and beyond words, but carnal thoughts. Her conception of Christ resulted from the physical stain, but also far beyond the reach of any defiled, "God was not just born among men, but born of a holy in-dwelling of God in a manner we cannot describe, as it was pure and most holy of virgins, who was not only above any

St. Gregory Palamas





Christ gave the Theotokos as a Mother to the Church in the person of St. John the Beloved.

"Behold your son, that is, Jesus Christ." when he [Jesus] speaks of him [John] to Mary, he says, that lives, but **Christ lives in him** (cf. Gal 2:20); therefore bore." Indeed, when someone is perfect, it is no longer he other words, he said to her, "This man is Jesus, whom you as it appears to those who think correctly about her, another Jesus. While Mary has no son other than Jesus "He who wishes to be another John must become (Jn 19:26), and not, "Behold, this man also is your son." In nevertheless Jesus said to his Mother, "Behold your son"

Origen (3rd century)

Christ), one must also have Mary as mother. If one would have God as Father (by being united with



the Church for his Mother." "He can no longer have God for his father, who has not

St. Cyprian of Carthage (3rd century)

Father, one must likewise have the Theotokos as mother, who is herself a symbol of the Church. Likewise, to be united with Christ and have God as

within herself, Christ is made present in the world believers (who are united with Christ). By receiving God The Theotokos is the Mother of God Incarnate and of

the Body of Christ. also receives God within herself and through the Holy Communion and the ministry of the Church, which is Church Christ is made present in the world through the The Theotokos is thereby a **symbol of the Church**, which



me? "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward

name of the Lord will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the

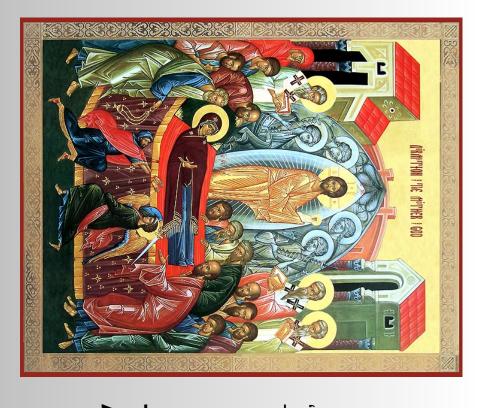
His people I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all

saints Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His

bonds asunder. the son of Thy maidservant; Thou hast broken my O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Thy servant and

will call upon the name of the Lord." I shall offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, And

Psalm 116/117:12-17



"Arise, O Lord, to Thy resting place, Thou and the Ark of Thy strength."

Psalm 132/133:8 // II Chronicles 6:41

August. The Dormition of the Theotokos is celebrated on 15



Evil Hearts'. The seven swords represent the fullness of pain at the crucifixion of her Son, as St. Symeon prophesied, "A sword will pierce thy own soul also" (Luke 2:35). The image and intercessions of her who bore sorrows with love and forgiveness softens the hearts of those who pray before her icon with faith.

have gained fervent advocates with the Saviour be delivered from dangers and afflictions: for in you we "Pray for us, holy Apostles and all you Saints, that we may

danger deliver us, only pure, only blessed one." Our prayers, do not despise in necessities, but from "Beneath your Compassion we take refuge, O Theotokos!

λύτρωσαι ἡμᾶς, μόνη άγνὴ μόνη εὐλογημένη· ήμῶν ἰκεσίας μὴ παρίδης ἐν περιστάσει, ἀλλ' ἐκ κινδύνου Ύπὸ τὴν σὴν εὐσπλαγχνίαν καταφεύγομεν Θεοτὸκε· τὰς

Orthodox Lenten Hymns

a papyrus from c. 250 A.D. (John Rylands Library, Manchester, UK). The earliest extant text of 'Beneath Thy Compassion' is on

Great and Holy Lent. It is still sung in the Orthodox Church during Vespers in



child). iconography with Christ (usually holding the Christ i ne i neotokos is aimost aiways pictured in

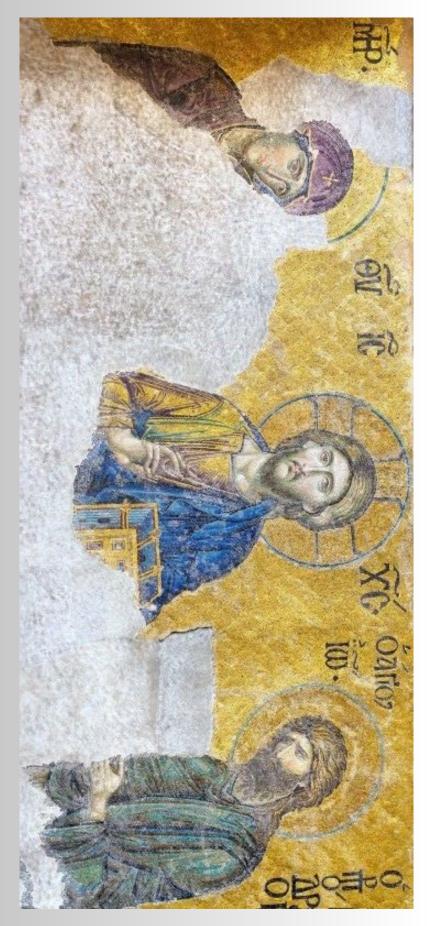
Protection of the Theotokos, and (2) the icon of the Two notable exceptions are: (1) the icon of the Theotokos as Abbess of Mount Athos

Orthodox Christianity. within less than a century the Rus had received the protection of her holy intercessions before the Savior. century. They saw the Theotokos spread a veil of at Blachernae in Constantinople in the early 10th St. Epiphanius (as well as others) who saw the vision of St. Andrew the Fool for Christ and his disciple tradition / 1/12 October in Slavic tradition) comes from the A threat from Russian barbarians was averted, and **protection** over those present, which is understood as Theotokos kneeling and praying with tears in the **church** The Feast of the Protection (28 October in Greek



and protection of the Theotokos. protectorate of Greece), is under the special patronage **Mount Athos**, a semi-independent monastic republic (a

Athonite monasteries. of an abbess, indicating her spiritual leadership of the Theotokos. She is depicted in this icon holding the staff The Athonite monastics have a strong devotion to the



'Deisis' (supplication) icon, Agia Sophia, 13th c.

Questions / Discussion