

The Love for Mankind of the All-Holy *Theotokos*

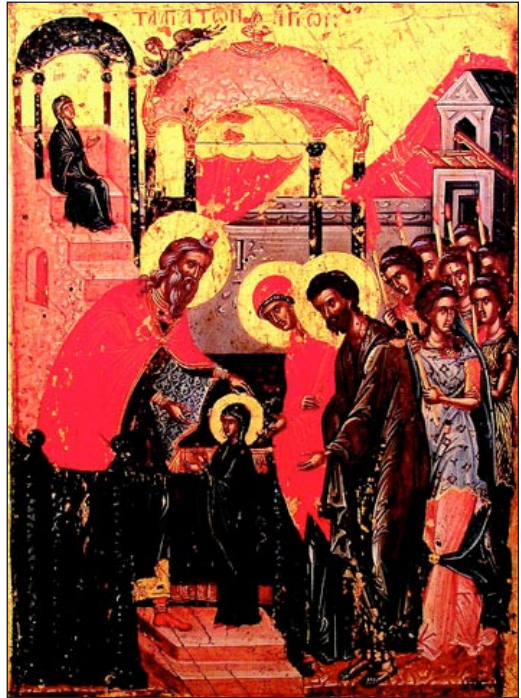
*“The supplication of a Mother availeth
much to win the Master’s favor.”*

a. “We all take pride in being called her children.”

Come, all ye Faithful who love the *Theotokos*! Let us celebrate once again in a godly manner. Let us light the torches of chastity in Christ; let us cense with the fragrant incense of Divine love; let us raise up our minds with heavenly thoughts; let us bring peace to our hearts with the Grace of the Mother of God, distributing these things with righteousness to the three faculties of our souls.

And thus, being all light and fragrance and sobriety, let us go forth to meet the *Theotokos*, “radiantly coming into the House of the Lord”¹ to prepare and adorn herself, in a God-befitting manner, and to become a “Heavenly Tabernacle.”²

On this celebration of the Mother of God, let each one contribute “a worthy gift, according to the spiritual gift given to him”;³ for today once again the *Theotokos* Mary celebrates, she who is “the common refuge of all Christians,”⁴ “truly great and honored in deed and name,” the Davidic offspring, “from whom blossomed forth the Son



of God in the flesh, Who is above and before the world, coëternal with the Begetter.”⁵

How could it be possible for her children to become negligent and slothful, now that she brings forth the Light of Grace? Now that the shadow of the symbols of the Law is receding? And while the Sun of Righteousness, Christ, will soon rise?

It is meet and right ceaselessly to bless and magnify the Immaculate Mother of God; for she was the first to magnify our Lord: “firstly, with thoughts great, lofty, and worthy of the Majesty of God,” “secondly, with great words, with lofty words, and with words befitting the Divine Majesty,” and “thirdly, with great works, with lofty works, and with works worthy of the Divine Majesty.”⁶

The Most Blessed One enters into the Holy of Holies to become a sacred Temple and spotless Altar where He, the first and only High Priest and King, “having worked, through His CEconomy, our reconciliation with His Father, assumed all of the essence of man, according to essence and above all essence.”⁷

There, in the Temple’s holy sanctuary—as the Holy Fathers theologize in lofty and grand language—, our Lady the Virgin Mother sought “to converse with God” by means of holy *hesychia*, which is the ascension to *theoria*, or vision of God. There, she practiced the hesychastic method; that is, she followed the “new and secret way to the Heavens,” “noetic silence”;⁸ for “she was occupied in and dwelt on nothing other than *theoria*, or rather, the vision of God.”⁹

During that period of twelve years, the Saints expound, the All-Pure Mary “developed a noetic activity (*praxis*); for “by means of the return of the mind to itself, attention, and Divine and perpetual prayer, having united wholly with her own self, she was exalted above all forms and figures. In this way, she built a new path to the Heavens—that is, ‘noetic silence’; for her mind being attached to this, she rose above all of creation and saw the glory of God more perfectly than did Moses. And she contemplated Divine Grace, which is not at all perceived through the senses, but which is a holy and most Grace-filled vision, given solely to pure souls and Angels. The *Theotokos* by herself found and practiced this noetic activity and vision and transmitted it to those who came after,” becoming “the teacher of noetic prayer.”¹⁰

Hence, magnifying our Lady the *Theotokos*, let us pray to her unceasingly and let us remind her that “all we Christians, primarily, have only her as Mother in the Heavens, and we all take pride in being called her children”; and that “without her intercessions, no one—neither Angel nor man—is able to approach God, for she alone stands on the boundary between uncreated and created nature”; and, finally, that “there is no one who, calling upon her with faith, will not be heard with compassion.”¹¹

The following particularly striking narrative underscores this truth and bolsters us to take refuge, with faith and hope, in the love for mankind of the All-Holy *Theotokos*.

* * *

b. “My Lady, I saw him in a wretched condition....”

The blessed Abba Paul the Simple recounted the following incident:

“I had a disciple who, unbeknownst to me, fell into various sins. It so happened that he died. I prayed at length to God and besought the Holy *Theotokos* to reveal to me in whose company his soul was to be found after its departure from his body.

“After quite a few days spent in prayer, I fell into ecstasy. I saw my disciple being supported by two strangers, deprived of any mental or bodily power whatsoever. Nor did he speak at all; it was if he were turned to stone. I was in great agony.... Then, as if by Divine inspiration, I recalled that which the Lord said: ‘Him who is not clothed in a wedding garment, bind hand and foot and cast into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

“When I had awoken from the ecstasy, I began to be exceedingly sorrowful and anxious. I gave alms, according to my ability, for the repose of his soul and had him commemorated at Divine Liturgies. I besought the Holy *Theotokos* to have mercy on him. I also besought God, Who loves mankind, on his account. And even though I had reached such deep old age, I began to toil in asceticism and eat only uncooked foods.

“After a few days, I saw the All-Holy *Theotokos*, who said to me: ‘Why are you sorrowful and anxious, little Father?’ I replied: ‘On account of the brother, my Lady, because I saw him in a wretched condition.’ She answered: ‘Was it not you who supplicated me because you wanted to see him? Now, then, you have been informed.’ And I said: ‘Yes, I entreated you, I supplicated; but I did not wish to see him in that condition. Of what use is it to me to see him and to cry and be in pain?’ And the Holy *Theotokos* said to me: ‘Go now. For your humility, toil, and love, I will show him to you in such a way that you will not be sorrowful.’

“The next day, I once again saw (in ecstasy) the brother coming towards me in elation, advancing forward by himself, laughing. And he said to me: “Your intercessions, Father, inclined the All-Holy *Theotokos*, because she loves you exceedingly. And she besought our Savior to release me from my bonds, since I was constricted by the ropes of my sins.’

“When the brother spoke these words, I was filled with joy. And forthwith I saw the All-Holy *Theotokos*, who said to me: ‘Were you informed, Elder, just now?’ I answered: ‘Yes, my Lady, and I was very pleased, because I saw him in comfort.’ She replied: ‘Go, then, and always remember the brother through prayer, almsgiving, and Divine Liturgies. For almsgiving and Liturgies exceedingly aid those who have reposed.”¹²



Notes

1. *Megalynarion*, 20 November.
2. *Kontakion* for the Entrance of the *Theotokos*.
3. St. Andrew of Crete, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XCVII, col. 817D.
4. *Ibid.*, col. 880C.
5. *Ibid.*, col. 832B.
6. St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, *Κήπος Χαρίτων* [*Garden of Graces*] (Thessaloniki: Ekdoseis B. Regopoulou, 1979), pp. 195a, 196a.
7. St. Andrew of Crete, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XCVII, col. 876A.
8. St. Gregory Palamas, “Homily LIII,” §§ 51, 59, *Ἑλληνες Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, Vol. XI (Thessaloniki: Paterikai Ekdoseis Gregorios Ho Palamas, 1986).
9. See note 6.
10. St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, *Κήπος Χαρίτων*, pp. 195b-196a, 215b.

11. *Idem*, *Άόρατος Πόλεμος* [*Unseen Warfare*], Part I, §49 (Athens: Ekdoseis “Phos,” 1977), p. 176.

12. *Τὸ Μέγα Γεροντικόν* [*The Great Gerontikon*], Vol. IV, ch. 18, §32 (Panorama, Thessaloniki: Ekdosis Hierou Hesyhasteriou to Genesion tes Theotokou, 1999), pp. 348-351.