



Catechist Connection

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!



May is dedicated to the Mother of God. For centuries the Church has dedicated this month to Mary and we have praying devotions, like Molebens and Akafists, and rosaries in her honour. During this month we pray for the Mother of God to intercede on our behalf.

In the Byzantine liturgy we find three main expressions of Mariology: Marian liturgical prayers, Marian feasts and Marian iconography

Marian Liturgical Prayers

Each cycle of prayers concludes with a special prayer addressed to Mary. For example, the groups of hymns called sticheras in the structure of the daily services always conclude with the theotokion, which follows the doxology: "Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever." This rule applies to all liturgical prayer units—daily, weekly, and yearly cycles. Whatever the theme of any liturgical celebration, the last word and seal will be the Theotokos, Mary the Mother of God.

The theotokia, concluding prayers dedicated to Mary, vary for each day of the week in ordinary time, for special seasons, and for major feasts.

For a Tuesday that is an ordinary weekday, the proper theotokion reads: "O Mother of God and Virgin forever, through you we were made to share in the divine nature. You gave birth for us to the incarnate God. Therefore we all exalt you with great devotion."

For the Annunciation on March 25: "Today is the fountainhead of our salvation and the revelation of the mystery that was planned from all eternity: the Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin and Gabriel announces this grace. Let us join him in crying out to the Mother of God, "Hail, O Woman, full of grace! The Lord is with you."

Marian Feasts

The liturgical year includes a series of highly developed Marian commemorations. Four belong to the category of the twelve major feasts: the Nativity of the Virgin, September 8; the Presentation of the Theotokos into the Temple, November 21; the Annunciation, March 25; the Dormition, August 15. The feast of the Meeting of Our Lord in the Temple, February 2, belongs to the same category and is also deeply Marian in meaning. Among the lesser Marian feasts are the Protection of the Virgin, October 1; the Synaxis of the Theotokos, December 26; the Conception of Mary, December 9, and others.

Marian Iconography

The icons of the Theotokos are integral to the life of the Byzantine Church. Their very position in the apse and on the iconostasis indicates definite theological meaning.

An icon is not meant to be a visual representation to stimulate the imagination for devotional purposes. Neither is it meant to teach or inspire. In the spiritual sense, it is a living thing, the point at which heaven and earth meet. St. John of Damascus called the icon a "channel of divine grace." Laden with faith and grace, the icon is a mirror of divine revelation and gives testimony to the reality that the saving truth is not communicated only by mere human words but also through wordless beauty.

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