

NOVEMBER 21

The Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

The Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Mother of God.

When the most holy Virgin Mary had reached the age of three, her parents, holy Joachim and Anna, took her from Nazareth to Jerusalem, to give her to the service of God in fulfillment of their promise. It was three days journey to Jerusalem, but, going as they were on God's work, they did not find the journey difficult. Many of Joachim and Anna's kinsmen gathered to take part in this celebration, in which the invisible angels of God also took part. Maidens went ahead with lighted candles in their hands, followed by the most holy Virgin, led on either side by her father and mother. The Virgin was clad in royal and beautiful garments, like those of the 'king's daughter', the Bride of God (Ps. 44:9,10). Behind them walked many of their kinsfolk and friends, all bearing lighted candles. There were fifteen steps leading to the Temple. Her parents stood the Virgin on the first step, and she ran quickly to the top on her own, where the High Priest, Zacharias, the father of St John the Forerunner, met her and, taking her by the hand, led her not only into the Temple but into the Holy of Holies, the holiest place of all, into which none could enter except the High Priest, and that once a year. St Theophylact of Ochrid says that Zacharias was, out of himself, and moved by God' when he led the Virgin into the chief place in the Temple, beyond the second curtain - otherwise there could be no explanation of his action. Her parents then offered sacrifices to God, according to the Law, received the priest's blessing and returned home, leaving the most holy Virgin in the Temple. She dwelt in the Temple for nine whole years. While her parents were alive, they visited her often. When they departed this life, the holy Virgin was left an orphan, and longed to remain in the Temple for the rest of her days, without entering into marriage. This being contrary both to the Law and Israelite custom, she was confided at the age of twelve to St Joseph, a kinsman of hers in Nazareth, so that she might, under the protection of betrothal, live in virginity and thus fulfill both her desire and the demands of the Law, for it was unknown in Israel at that time for a girl to vow perpetual virginity. The holy Virgin Mary was the first to do this, and was later followed by thousand upon thousand of virgin men and women in the Church of Christ.

GREAT VESPERS

LORD I CALL: All stikhera of the Feast

tone 1:

Today, let us dance, O faithful,
singing to the Lord in psalms and hymns
and honoring His sanctified Tabernacle, the living Ark,
that contained the Word Who cannot be contained;
for in wondrous fashion she is offered to the Lord
as a young child in the flesh,
and Zachariah, the great High Priest, joyfully receives her//
as the dwelling place of God.

Today the living Temple of the holy glory of Christ our God,
the pure Maiden who alone is blessed among women,
is offered in the Temple of the Law
that she may make her dwelling in the Holy Place.
Joachim and Anna rejoice with her in spirit,
and choirs of virgins sing to the Lord, //
chanting psalms, and honoring His Mother.

You are the preaching of the prophets, O Virgin Mother of God;
the glory of the Apostles and the boast of Martyrs,
and the renewal of all the earth-born,
for through you, we are reconciled to God.
Therefore, being saved by your intercessions,
we honor your coming into the Temple of the Lord;
and with the Angel we all cry out to you in song: //
“Rejoice, O all-revered Lady!”

tone 4:

Led by the Holy Spirit,
the holy Maiden without blemish is brought to dwell in the Holy of Holies,
where she is fed by an angel.
She is truly the most holy Temple of our holy God,
Who has made all things holy by dwelling in her, //
and has made God-like the fallen nature of mortals.

The young girls rejoice today,
and with lamps in hand they go before the spiritual Lamp,
as she is led with reverence into the Holy of Holies.
They foreshadow the Brightness past telling
Who is to shine forth from her //
and enlighten by the Spirit those who sat in the darkness of ignorance.

Anna the all-praised cried out rejoicing:
“Receive, O Zachariah, her whom God’s Prophets proclaimed in the Spirit,
and bring her into the holy Temple,
there to be brought up in reverence,
that she may become the divine throne of the Master of all, //
His palace and resting place and dwelling filled with light!”

GLORY...NOW AND EVER... of the Feast, tone 8:

After your birth, O Lady and Bride of God,
you came to the Temple of the Lord
to be brought up in the Holy of Holies, since you yourself are holy.

And Gabriel then was sent to you, all-blameless Maiden, to bring you food.
All in heaven were amazed
to see how the Holy Spirit had made His abode in you.
Therefore, O spotless and undefiled Mother of God,
glorified in heaven and on earth, //
save the human race!

OLD TESTAMENT READINGS

The Reading from Exodus: The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “On the first day of the first month thou shalt set up the Tabernacle of the Testimony, and thou shalt put in it the Ark and cover it with the veil. Thou shalt bring in the table and the candle stand; and thou shalt set there a golden altar to burn incense before the Ark of the Testimony. And thou shalt put a covering on the door of the Tabernacle of the Testimony. “Then thou shalt take the oil of anointing and anoint the Tabernacle and all that is in it, and consecrate it and all its vessels; and it shall be holy. And thou shalt consecrate the altar of Burnt Offerings; it shall be most holy.” And Moses did all that the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel had commanded him. And a cloud covered the Tabernacle of the Testimony and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the Tabernacle of the Testimony, because the cloud overshadowed it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. (*Exod. 40:1-5, 9, 10, 16, 34-35*)

The Reading from the Third Book of Kings And it came to pass when Solomon had finished building the house of the Lord, he assembled all the elders of Israel in Zion, to bring the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord out of the City of David, which is Zion. And the priests took up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, the Tabernacle of the Testimony, and all the holy vessels that were in the Tabernacle of the Testimony. And the King and all Israel went before the Ark. And the priests brought the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord to its place, into the Oracle of the Temple – into the Holy of Holies, under the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the Ark so that the cherubim made a covering above the Ark and its holy things above. There was nothing in the Ark except the two tablets of the Covenant which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord had made a Covenant. And when the priests came out from the holy place, a cloud filled the house. And the priests were unable to stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord God Almighty filled the house. (*1 Kings 7:51, 8:1, 3-7, 9-11*)

The reading from the prophecy of Ezekiel

At the end of these days, from the eighth day on, the priests are to present your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings on the altar. Then I will accept you, declares the Sovereign LORD.” Then the man brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, the one facing east, and it was shut.

The LORD said to me, “This gate is to remain shut. It must not be opened; no one may enter through it. It is to remain shut because the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered through it. The prince himself is the only one who may sit inside the gateway to eat in the presence of the LORD. He is to enter by way of the portico of the gateway and go out the

same way.”

Then the man brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple. I looked and saw the glory of the LORD filling the temple of the LORD, and I fell facedown. (43:27-44:4)

LITYA: All Feast, tone 1 (By George of Nicomedia):

Today, let heaven above rejoice,
and let the clouds rain down gladness
at the mighty and exceeding marvelous works of our God.
For behold, the Gate that looks towards the east,
who was born from a barren and childless woman according to the promise
and dedicated to God as His dwelling place,
is today brought to the Temple as an offering without blemish.
Let David be glad, striking his harp.
For he says: “Virgins shall be brought to the King after her,
her companions will be brought to Him”;
that she may be raised within God’s tabernacle, His place of atonement,
to become the dwelling of Him Who was begotten of the
Father without change before the ages//
for the salvation of our souls.

Glory...Now & ever... tone 5:

The day of joy has dawned, the feast worthy of all reverence:
for today, she who was a virgin before giving birth and remained a virgin after bearing a
child,
is brought into the Temple.
The aged Zachariah, father of the Forerunner,
rejoices and cries out in gladness:
“The Expectation of those in affliction has come!”
She who is holy has come to the holy Temple,
there to be consecrated as the dwelling-place of the Lord of all!
Let Joachim the forefather be glad, and let Anna rejoice!
For they have offered to God the Lady without blemish,
like a heifer three years old.¹
Rejoice with them, O mothers!
Leap for joy, you virgins!
Join them in the dance, you barren women,
for the Kingdom of Heaven has been opened to us by her who is foreordained the Queen of
all!//
Rejoice and be glad, O peoples!

¹

APOSTIKHA: : All stikhera of the Feast, tone 5:

Heaven and earth rejoice,
beholding the spiritual Heaven, the only Virgin without blemish,
as she enters the house of God, there to be reared in reverence.
Zachariah cried to her in amazement:
“O Gate of the Lord, to you I open the gates of the Temple;
rejoice and go around it dancing.
For I know and believe that the deliverance of Israel
will now come to dwell openly in our midst,
and that from you shall be born God the Word, //
Who grants the world His great mercy!”

VERSE: *Virgins shall be brought to the King after her; her companions shall be brought to You.*

Anna, the namesake of grace,
joyfully brings into the Temple of God
the pure and ever-Virgin who is full of grace,
and calls young girls to go before her with lamps in hand.
She says: “Go, child, to Him Who gave you to me;
to be an offering and a sweet-smelling incense.
Go into the inner sanctuary that none may enter:
learn its mysteries,
and prepare yourself to become the pleasing and fair dwelling-place of Jesus, //
Who grants the world His great mercy!”

VERSE: *They shall be brought with gladness and rejoicing; they shall be led into the Temple of the King.*

The most holy Virgin, the Temple that is to contain God,
is dedicated within the Temple of God;
and young girls, bearing lamps, now go before her.
Her noble parents, Joachim and Anna, leap for joy and dance,
for they have borne her who is to bear the Creator.
And she who is all-pure dances around the divine habitations
and is fed by the hand of an angel.
She has been revealed as the Mother of Christ, //
Who grants the world His great mercy.

GLORY...NOW AND EVER..., tone 6:

Today let us, the crowds of the assembled faithful,
celebrate a spiritual feast:
let us reverently praise the Virgin Theotokos and child of God,
as she is brought into the Temple of the Lord!

She was forechosen from all generations
to be the dwelling-place of Christ, the Lord and God of all.
O Virgins, bearing lamps, go before her,
honoring the majestic advance of the ever-Virgin!
Mothers, lay aside every sorrow and accompany them with joy,
singing the praises of her who became the Mother of God,
the cause of joy for the world!
Therefore, let us all join with the angel,
and joyfully cry out: “Rejoice!” to her who is full of grace, //
and who ever intercedes for our souls.

DIVINE LITURGY

TROPARION, Tone 4

Today is the preview of the good will of God,
Of the preaching of the salvation of mankind.
The Virgin appears in the temple of God,
In anticipation proclaiming Christ to all.
Let us rejoice and sing to her:
Rejoice, O Divine Fulfillment
Of the Creator’s dispensation!

KONTAKION, Tone 4

The most pure Temple of the Savior;
The precious Chamber and Virgin;
The sacred Treasure of the glory of God,
Is presented today to the House of the Lord.
She brings with her the grace of the Spirit,
Which the angels of God do praise.
Truly this woman is the abode of Heaven!

PROKEIMENON, tone 3 (Song of the Theotokos): My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

Vs. For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden, for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

EPISTLE: (320) Hebrews 9:1-7 (Theotokos) Brethren, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the candlestand, and the table, and the showbread, which is called the Sanctuary; and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak in detail. Now

when these things had been thus ordained, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second part the high priest went alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for sins of the people...

Alleluia in the eighth tone: Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear.
vs. The rich among the people shall pray before thy face.

GOSPEL: (54) Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28 Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!" but He said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

COMMUNION HYMN: I will receive the cup of salvation and call on the Name of the Lord. Alleluia...

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twelve to St Joseph, a kinsman of hers in Nazareth, so that she might, under the protection of betrothal, live in virginity and thus fulfil both her desire and the demands of the Law, for it was unknown in Israel at that time for a girl to vow perpetual virginity. The holy Virgin Mary was the first to do this, and was later followed by thousand upon thousand of virgin men and women in the Church of Christ.