

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21

22nd Sunday after Pentecost (9th of Luke)

The Entrance of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple

When the Most-holy Virgin Mary reached the age of three, her holy parents Joachim and Anna took her from Nazareth to Jerusalem to dedicate her to the service of God according to their earlier promise. It was a three-day journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem but, traveling to do a God-pleasing work, this journey was not difficult for them. Many kinsmen of Joachim and Anna gathered in Jerusalem to take part in this event, at which the invisible angels of God were also present. Leading the procession into the Temple were virgins with lighted tapers in their hands, then the Most-holy Virgin, led on one side by her father and on the other side by her mother. The virgin was clad in vesture of royal magnificence and adornments as was befitting the "King's daughter, the Bride of God" (Psalm 45:13-15). Following them were many kinsmen and friends, all with lighted tapers. Fifteen steps led up to the Temple. Joachim and Anna lifted the Virgin onto the first step, then she ran quickly to the top herself, where she was met by the High Priest Zacharias, who was to be the father of St. John the Forerunner. Taking her by the hand, he led her not only into the Temple, but into the "Holy of Holies," the holiest of holy places, into which no one but the high priest ever entered, and only once each year, at that. St. Theophylact of Ohrid says that Zacharias "was outside himself and possessed by God" when he led the Virgin into the holiest place in the Temple, beyond the second curtain--otherwise, his action could not be explained. Mary's parents then offered sacrifice to God according to the Law, received the priest's blessing and returned home. The Most-holy Virgin remained in the Temple and dwelt there for nine full years. While her parents were alive, they visited her often, especially Righteous Anna. When God called her parents from this world, the Most-holy Virgin was left an orphan and did not wish to leave the Temple until death or to enter into marriage. As that would have been against the Law and custom of Israel, she was given to St. Joseph, her kinsman in Nazareth, after

reaching the age of twelve. Under the acceptable role of one betrothed, she could live in virginity and thus fulfill her desire and formally satisfy the Law, for it was then unknown in Israel for maidens to vow virginity to the end of their lives. The Most-holy Virgin Mary was the first of such life-vowed virgins, of the thousands and thousands of virgin men and women who would follow her in the Church of Christ.

GREAT VESPERS

LORD I CALL: *Four stikhera of the Resurrection in tone 5 (spiral bound Vespers book), then three for the feast in tone 1, then three for the three in tone 4*

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!”

Feast, 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 igno-
rance.

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 ... for 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!

APOSTIKHA: All stikhera of the Resurrection in tone 5 (spiral bound Vespers book)

GLORY ... NOW AND EVER ... for the feast, 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.

TROPARIA

Resurrection, tone 5:

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word,
co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit,
born for our salvation from the Virgin;
for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh,
to endure death,
and to raise the dead//
by His glorious Resurrection.

Feast, tone 4:

Today is the prelude 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 Fulfillment//
of the Creator’s dispensation!“

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