



St. Vladimir Orthodox Church

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Afterfeast of the Entry of the Most Holy Mother of God into the Temple November 22, 2020

Troparion – Tone 7

By Thy Cross Thou didst destroy death. To the thief Thou didst open Paradise. For the Myrrhbearers Thou didst change weeping into joy, and Thou didst command Thy disciples, O Christ God, to proclaim that Thou art risen,// granting the world great mercy.

Troparion – 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!”

Troparion – Tone 3

Holy Apostles Philemon, Archipus, Apphia, and Onesimus, entreat the merciful God// to grant our souls forgiveness of transgressions!

Kontakion – Tone 7

The dominion of death can no longer hold men captive, for Christ descended, shattering and destroying its powers. Hell is bound, while the Prophets rejoice and cry: “The Savior has come to those in faith;// enter, you faithful, into the Resurrection!”

Kontakion – Tone 2

Let us praise the Apostles of Christ, who illumine the ends of the earth like all-radiant stars: glorious Philemon and dedicated Archippus, Onesimus, together with Mark and Apollos, and the all-wise Apphia. Let us cry to them:// “Unceasingly pray for us all!”

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, therefore, the angels of God praise her:// “Truly this woman is the abode of Heaven!”

Prokeimenon – Tone 7

The Lord shall give strength to His people. / The Lord shall bless His people with peace.

V. Offer to the Lord, O you sons of God! Offer young rams to the Lord!

Prokeimenon – Tone 3

My soul doth magnify the Lord, / and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.

Afterfeast of the Entry of the Most Holy Mother of God into the Temple

According to Holy Tradition, the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple took place in the following manner. The parents of the Virgin Mary, Saints Joachim and Anna, praying for an end to their childlessness, vowed that if a child were born to them, they would dedicate it to the service of God.

When the Most Holy Virgin reached the age of three, the holy parents decided to fulfill their vow. They gathered together their relatives and acquaintances, and dressed the All-Pure Virgin in Her finest clothes. Singing sacred songs and with lighted candles in their hands, virgins escorted Her to the Temple (Ps. 44/45:14-15). There the High Priest and several priests met the handmaiden of God. In the Temple, fifteen high steps led to the sanctuary, which only the priests and High Priest could enter. (Because they recited a Psalm on each step, Psalms 119/120-133/134 are called “Psalms of Ascent.”) The child Mary, so it seemed, could not make it up this stairway. But just as they placed Her on the first step, strengthened by the power of God, She quickly went up the remaining steps and ascended to the highest one. Then the High Priest, through inspiration from above, led the Most Holy Virgin into the Holy of Holies, where only the High Priest entered once a year to offer a purifying sacrifice of blood. Therefore, all those present in the Temple were astonished at this most unusual occurrence.

After entrusting their child to the Heavenly Father, Joachim and Anna returned home. The All-Holy Virgin remained in the quarters for virgins near the Temple. According to the testimony of Holy Scripture (Exodus 38; 1 Kings 1: 28; Luke 2: 37), and also the historian Josephus Flavius, there were many living quarters around the Temple, in which those who were dedicated to the service of God dwelt.

The earthly life of the Most Holy Theotokos from Her infancy until She was taken up to Heaven is shrouded in deep mystery. Her life at the Jerusalem Temple was also a secret. “If anyone were to ask me,” said Saint Jerome, “how the Most Holy Virgin spent the time of Her youth, I would answer that that is known to God Himself and the Archangel Gabriel, Her constant guardian.”

But there are accounts in Church Tradition, that during the All-Pure Virgin’s stay at the Temple, She grew up in a community of pious virgins, diligently read the Holy Scripture, occupied Herself with handicrafts, prayed constantly, and grew in love for God. From ancient times, the Church has celebrated the Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple. Indications that the Feast was observed in the first centuries of Christianity are found in the traditions of Palestinian Christians, which say that the holy Empress Helen (May 21) built a church in honor of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple. Saint Gregory of Nyssa, in the fourth century, also mentions this Feast. In the eighth century Saints Germanus and Tarasius, Patriarchs of Constantinople, delivered sermons on the Feast of the Entry. The Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple foretells God’s blessing for the human race, the preaching of salvation, the promise of the coming of Christ.

DISCOURSE ON THE FEAST OF THE ENTRY OF OUR MOST PURE LADY THEOTOKOS INTO THE HOLY OF HOLIES

by Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica

If a tree is known by its fruit, and a good tree bears good fruit (Mt. 7:17; Luke 6:44), then is not the Mother of Goodness Itself, She who bore the Eternal Beauty, incomparably more excellent than every good, whether in this world or the world above? Therefore, the coeternal and identical Image of goodness, Preeternal, transcending all being, He Who is the preexisting and good Word of the Father, moved by His unutterable love for mankind and compassion for us, put on our image, that He might reclaim for Himself our nature which had been dragged down to uttermost Hades, so as to renew this corrupted nature and raise it to the heights of Heaven. For this purpose, He had to assume a flesh that was both new and ours, that He might refashion us from out of ourselves. Now He finds a Handmaiden perfectly suited to these needs, the supplier of Her own unsullied nature, the Ever-Virgin now hymned by us, and Whose miraculous Entrance into the Temple, into the Holy of Holies, we now celebrate. God predestined Her before the ages for the salvation and reclaiming of our kind. She was chosen, not just from the crowd, but from the ranks of the chosen of all ages, renowned for piety and understanding, and for their God-pleasing words and deeds.

In the beginning, there was one who rose up against us: the author of evil, the serpent, who dragged us into the abyss. Many reasons impelled him to rise up against us, and there are many ways by which he enslaved our nature: envy, rivalry, hatred, injustice, treachery, slyness, etc. In addition to all this, he also has within him the power of bringing death, which he himself engendered, being the first to fall away from true life.

The author of evil was jealous of Adam, when he saw him being led from earth to Heaven, from which he was justly cast down. Filled with envy, he pounced upon Adam with a terrible ferocity, and even wished to clothe him with the garb of death. Envy is not only the begetter of hatred, but also of murder, which this truly man-hating serpent brought about in us. For he wanted to be master over the earth-born for the ruin of that which was created in the image and likeness of God. Since he was not bold enough to make a face to face attack, he resorted to cunning and deceit. This truly terrible and malicious plotter pretended to be a friend and useful adviser by assuming the physical form of a serpent, and stealthily took their position. By his God-opposing advice, he instills in man his own death-bearing power, like a venomous poison.

If Adam had been sufficiently strong to keep the divine commandment, then he would have shown himself the vanquisher of his enemy, and withstood his deathly attack. But since he voluntarily gave in to sin, he was defeated and was made a sinner. Since he is the root of our race, he has produced us as death-bearing shoots. So, it was necessary for us, if he were to fight back against his defeat and to claim victory, to rid himself of the death-bearing venomous poison in his soul and body, and to absorb life, eternal and indestructible life.

It was necessary for us to have a new root for our race, a new Adam, not just one Who would be sinless and invincible, but one Who also would be able to forgive sins and set free from punishment those subject to it. And not only would He have life in Himself, but also the capacity to restore to life, so that He could grant to those who cleave to Him and are related to Him by race both life and the forgiveness of their sins, restoring to life not only those who came after Him, but also those who already had died before Him. Therefore, Saint Paul, that great trumpet of the Holy Spirit, exclaims, "the first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45).

Except for God, there is no one who is without sin, or life-creating, or able to remit sin. Therefore, the new Adam must be not only Man, but also God. He is at the same time life, wisdom, truth, love, and mercy, and every other good thing, so that He might renew the old Adam and restore him to life through mercy, wisdom and righteousness. These are the opposites of the things which the author of evil used to bring about our aging and death.

As the slayer of mankind raised himself against us with envy and hatred, so the Source of life was lifted up [on the Cross] because of His immeasurable goodness and love for mankind. He intensely desired the salvation of His creature, i.e., that His creature would be restored by Himself. In contrast to this, the author of evil wanted to bring God's creature to ruin, and thereby put mankind under his own power, and tyrannically to afflict us. And just as he achieved the conquest and the fall of mankind by means of injustice and cunning, by deceit and his trickery, so has the Liberator brought about the defeat of the author of evil, and the restoration of His own creature with truth, justice and wisdom.

It was a deed of perfect justice that our nature, which was voluntarily enslaved and struck down, should again enter the struggle for victory and cast off its voluntary enslavement. Therefore, God deigned to receive our nature from us, hypostatically uniting with it in a marvelous way. But it was impossible to unite that Most High Nature, Whose purity is incomprehensible for human reason, to a sinful nature before it had been purified. Therefore, for the conception and birth of the Bestower of purity, a perfectly spotless and Most Pure Virgin was required.

Today we celebrate the memory of those things that contributed, if only once, to the Incarnation. He Who is God by nature, the Co-unoriginate and Coeternal Word and Son of the Transcendent Father, becomes the Son of Man, the Son of the Ever-Virgin. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8), immutable in His divinity and blameless in His humanity, He alone, as the Prophet Isaiah prophesied, "practiced no iniquity, nor deceit with His lips" (Is. 53: 9). He alone was not brought forth in iniquity, nor was He conceived in sin, in contrast to what the Prophet David says concerning himself and every other man (Ps. 50/51: 5). Even in what He assumes, He is perfectly pure and has no need to be cleansed Himself. But for our sake, He accepted purification, suffering, death and resurrection, that He might transmit them to us.

God is born of the spotless and Holy Virgin, or better to say, of the Most Pure and All-Holy Virgin. She is above every fleshly defilement, and even above every impure thought. Her conceiving resulted not from fleshly lust, but by the overshadowing of the Most Holy Spirit. Such desire being utterly alien to Her, it is through prayer and spiritual readiness that She declared to the angel: "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord; be it unto Me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38), and that She conceived and gave birth. So, in order to render the Virgin worthy of this sublime purpose, God marked this ever-virgin Daughter now praised by us, from before the ages, and from eternity, choosing Her from out of His elect.

Turn your attention then, to where this choice began. From the sons of Adam God chose the wondrous Seth, who showed himself a living heaven through his becoming behavior, and through the beauty of his virtues. That is why he was chosen, and from whom the Virgin would blossom as the divinely fitting chariot of God. She was needed to give birth and to summon the

earth-born to heavenly sonship. For this reason also all the lineage of Seth were called “sons of God,” because from this lineage a son of man would be born the Son of God. The name Seth signifies a rising or resurrection, or more specifically, it signifies the Lord, Who promises and gives immortal life to all who believe in Him.

And how precisely exact is this parallel! Seth was born of Eve, as she herself said, in place of Abel, whom Cain killed through jealousy (Gen. 4:25); and Christ, the Son of the Virgin, was born for us in place of Adam, whom the author of evil also killed through jealousy. But Seth did not resurrect Abel, since he was only a type of the resurrection. But our Lord Jesus Christ resurrected Adam, since He is the very Life and the Resurrection of the earth-born, for whose sake the descendants of Seth are granted divine adoption through hope, and are called the children of God. It was because of this hope that they were called sons of God, as is evident from the one who was first called so, the successor in the choice. This was Enos, the son of Seth, who as Moses wrote, first hoped to call on the Name of the Lord (Gen. 4:26).

In this manner, the choice of the future Mother of God, beginning with the very sons of Adam and proceeding through all the generations of time, through the Providence of God, passes to the Prophet-king David and the successors of his kingdom and lineage. When the chosen time had come, then from the house and posterity of David, Joachim and Anna are chosen by God. Though they were childless, they were by their virtuous life and good disposition the finest of all those descended from the line of David. And when in prayer they besought God to deliver them from their childlessness, and promised to dedicate their child to God from its infancy. By God Himself, the Mother of God was proclaimed and given to them as a child, so that from such virtuous parents the all-virtuous child would be raised. So in this manner, chastity joined with prayer came to fruition by producing the Mother of virginity, giving birth in the flesh to Him Who was born of God the Father before the ages.

Now, when Righteous Joachim and Anna saw that they had been granted their wish, and that the divine promise to them was realized in fact, then they on their part, as true lovers of God, hastened to fulfill their vow given to God as soon as the child had been weaned from milk. They have now led this truly sanctified child of God, now the Mother of God, this Virgin into the Temple of God. And She, being filled with Divine gifts even at such a tender age, ... She, rather than others, determined what was being done over Her. In Her manner She showed that She was not so much presented into the Temple, but that She Herself entered into the service of God of her own accord, as if she had wings, striving towards this sacred and divine love. She considered it desirable and fitting that she should enter into the Temple and dwell in the Holy of Holies.

Therefore, the High Priest, seeing that this child, more than anyone else, had divine grace within Her, wished to set Her within the Holy of Holies. He convinced everyone present to welcome this, since God had advanced it and approved it. Through His angel, God assisted the Virgin and sent Her mystical food, with which She was strengthened in nature, while in body She was brought to maturity and was made purer and more exalted than the angels, having the Heavenly spirits as servants. She was led into the Holy of Holies not just once, but was accepted by God to dwell there with Him during Her youth, so that through Her, the Heavenly Abodes might be opened and given for an eternal habitation to those who believe in Her miraculous birthgiving.

So it is, and this is why She, from the beginning of time, was chosen from among the chosen. She Who is manifest as the Holy of Holies, Who has a body even purer than the spirits purified by virtue, is capable of receiving ... the Hypostatic Word of the Unoriginate Father. Today the Ever-Virgin Mary, like a Treasure of God, is stored in the Holy of Holies, so that in due time, (as it later came to pass) She would serve for the enrichment of, and an ornament for, all the world. Therefore, Christ God also glorifies His Mother, both before, and also after His birth.

We who understand the salvation begun for our sake through the Most Holy Virgin, give Her thanks and praise according to our ability. And truly, if the grateful woman (of whom the Gospel tells us), after hearing the saving words of the Lord, blessed and thanked His Mother, raising her voice above the din of the crowd and saying to Christ, “Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps Thou hast sucked” (Luke 11:27), then we who have the words of eternal life written out for us, and not only the words, but also the miracles and the Passion, and the raising of our nature from death, and its ascent from earth to Heaven, and the promise of immortal life and unailing salvation, then how shall we not unceasingly hymn and bless the Mother of the Author of our Salvation and the Giver of Life, celebrating Her conception and birth, and now Her Entry into the Holy of Holies?

Now, brethren, let us remove ourselves from earthly to celestial things. Let us change our path from the flesh to the spirit. Let us change our desire from temporal things to those that endure. Let us scorn fleshly delights, which serve as allurements for the soul and soon pass away. Let us desire spiritual gifts, which remain undiminished. Let us turn our reason and our attention from earthly concerns and raise them to the inaccessible places of Heaven, to the Holy of Holies, where the Mother of God now resides.

Therefore, in such manner our songs and prayers to Her will gain entry, and thus through her mediation, we shall be heirs of the everlasting blessings to come, through the grace and love for mankind of Him Who was born of Her for our sake, our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom be glory, honor and worship, together with His Unoriginate Father and His Coeternal and Life-Creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Epistle: Ephesians 2:14-22

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Gospel: Luke 12:16-21

Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Service Schedule for the week of November 22 – services will be streamed live

Today – MASKS REQUIRED 9:45 AM Hours, 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy

Saturday November 28 – MASKS REQUIRED 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy and 5:00 PM Vespers

Sunday November 29 – MASKS NOT REQUIRED 9:45 AM Hours, 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy

Weekly Giving

November 14 & 15 – 45 adults, 16 youth, \$2,480

Parish Announcements

Masks will be required at all Holy Day services.

Upcoming service schedule (Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM):

Saturday November 21 – Masks required

Sunday November 22 – Masks required

Saturday November 28 – Masks required

Sunday November 29 – Masks not required

Saturday December 5 – Masks not required

Sunday December 6 – Masks required

Saturday December 12 – Masks required

Sunday December 13 – Masks not required

Saturday December 19 – Masks not required

Sunday December 20 – Masks required

Thursday December 24 – Masks required

Friday December 25 – Masks required

Saturday December 26 – Masks required

Sunday December 27 – Masks not required

Saturday January 2 – Masks not required

Sunday January 3 – Masks required

There will be a Panikhida today after Divine Liturgy for Anthony Kasmer – Memory Eternal.

There are still some pierogies for sale - \$8/dozen. If you are interested please see Nina Laushell or Nadja Nowicki.

There will be a Senior R Club meeting today in Daria Hall after the Panikhida – Masks are required.

It is important to partake in the sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion during the Nativity Fast. The Diocese has indicated that it is okay to partake of turkey on Thanksgiving even though it is a fast day.

Next Sunday November 29 is the last day the Senior R Club will be collecting gift cards for the St. Nicholas Project. The following gift cards in any denomination are requested: Amazon, Target, Walmart, Kohls. Gift cards may be given to either Ludwig or Darice at the candle desk, or any other member of the Senior R Club. Thank you for your generosity in helping a Seminarian family!

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Parish Council, please speak to Father Volodymyr before December 31.

Nativity Services will be as follows:

Thursday December 24 – **Christmas Eve – MASKS REQUIRED** 7:00 PM Vespers with Litya

NOTE: The parish will not have a Christmas Eve supper this year due to the Covid pandemic.

Friday December 25 – **NATIVITY – MASKS REQUIRED** 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy

Saturday December 26 – **Synaxis of the Holy Theotokos - MASKS REQUIRED** 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy and
5:00 PM Vespers with Litya

Sunday December 27 – **First Martyr Stephen - MASKS NOT REQUIRED** 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy

In order to prevent the spread of germs, the Communion prosphora and prosphora after Divine Liturgy will be handed out by an Altar server. We ask that you receive the prosphora in your hand and not reach for the prosphora on the tray or bowl.

The church has been set up for appropriate social distance seating. However, if you are feeling ill, please stay home. Also, those age 65 and over are still considered high risk and should make careful decisions about attending services. Father Volodymyr will continue to stream live Vespers and Sunday Divine Liturgy.

During the pandemic we are grateful that our parishioners have continued to contribute every week so the church can remain operational. Please continue to pray for everyone's health and well-being!