



## *Fire & Light*

### **St. Symeon Orthodox Church**

3101 Clairmont Ave. Birmingham, AL 35205

Church Tel. 930-9681 / 854-4235

Visit [stsymeon.com](http://stsymeon.com)

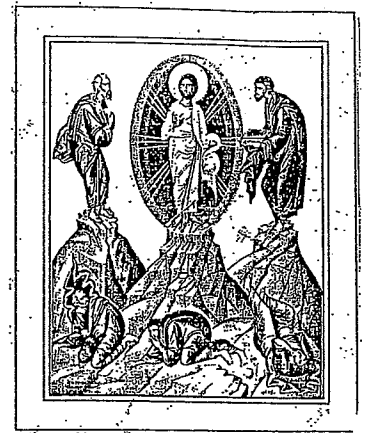
✠ August 12, 2012 ✠

### **Postfeast of the Transfiguration**

**St. Maximus the Confessor (Relics-662)**

**Martyrs Anicetus & Photius of Nicomedia (305)**

**Hieromartyr Alexander of Comana (3<sup>rd</sup> C)**



#### **This Week:**

- ✠ Tomorrow - 6:30pm ~ Memorial: Phillip Poole - 1 Year
- ✠ **Feast of the Dormition of the Most-Holy Theotokos**
- ✠ **Tues. August 14, 6:30pm Great Vespers with Litiya**  
~ Blessing of Flowers & Herbs ~
- ✠ **Wed. August 15, 6:00am Divine Liturgy**

#### **But Thee Alone**

✠ When shall I come and see the One Who for the sake of me the sinner came into the world, bore hardships, suffered and died.. . Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? . . . I desire nothing in Heaven or on earth but Thee alone, the Word of God and the Son of the Virgin, Jesus Christ, my God, God of gods, my Lord.

St. Tikhon of Zadonsk (1783)

#### **The Blessed Yoke of Christ**

✠ "My poor soul! Sigh, pray and strive to take upon you the blessed yoke of Christ, and you will live on earth in a heavenly manner. Lord, grant that I may carry the light and goodly yoke, and I shall be always at rest, peaceful, glad and joyous; and I shall taste on earth of crumbs which fall from the celestial feast, like a dog that feeds upon the crumbs which fall from the master's table."

~ St. Tikhon of Zadonsk (Remembered tomorrow, August 13)

#### **A True Christian**

✠ A true Christian is made by faith and love toward Christ. Our sins do not in the least hinder our Christianity, according to the word of the Savior Himself. He deigned to say: not the righteous have I come to call, but sinners to salvation; there is more joy in heaven over one who repents than over ninety righteous ones. Likewise concerning the sinful woman who touched His feet, He deigned to say to the Pharisee Simon: to one who has love, a great debt is forgiven, but from one who has no love, even a small debt will be demanded. From these judgments a Christian should bring himself to hope and joy, and not in the least accept an inflicted despair. Here one needs the shield of faith. —Letters of St. Herman of Alaska

Come, all ye who love  
to keep the Feasts!  
Come, let us form a choir!  
Come, let us crown  
the Church with songs!  
As the Ark of God  
goes to her rest.  
For today heaven opens  
wide as it receives  
the Mother of Him  
Who cannot be contained!  
~ Vespers - Litiya

*This and That*

## Chick-fil-A

**"We are inviting God's judgment on our nation when we shake our fist at Him and say, 'We know better than you as to what constitutes a marriage,'" said Cathy. "I pray God's mercy on our generation that has such a prideful, arrogant attitude to think that we have the audacity to define what marriage is about."** ~ *Dan Cathy, CEO of Chick-fil-A*

**Speaking of the company his father started after World War II, Cathy went on, "We are very much supportive of the family -- the biblical definition of the family unit. We are a family-owned business, a family-led business, and we are married to our first wives."**

### **Comment:**

The homosexual rights revolutionaries can no longer tolerate the public expression of beliefs, held since the time of Christ, about the immorality of homosexuality -- beliefs still taught in Christian schools and preached in Christian churches. Those who profess or promulgate such beliefs are to be shunned and subjected to social and economic sanctions.

What is astonishing is that we are not talking here about the expression of Nazi ideas, but of teachings about the spiritual and social consequences of homosexuality embedded in our country's own Old-time Religion. In the more progressive precincts of America, the retelling of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the lessons therein, is apparently now a hate crime.

Remarkable is the change in society we have witnessed. It was not 10 years ago that the Supreme Court declared that states could no longer outlaw private sexual behavior between consenting adults and tossed out the anti-sodomy laws of 17 states.

In his dissent, Justice Antonin Scalia wrote that the court had "taken sides in the culture war" and "largely signed on to the so-called homosexual agenda." This decision "effectively decrees the end of all morals legislation" and makes same-sex marriage a logical result, said the justice.

While homosexual marriage has been rejected by voters in all 31 states where it has been on a ballot, it is being imposed by state legislatures and judges. Now we have the spectacle of a public caning of a private citizen for expressing religious beliefs held by perhaps 100 million American adults.

What is behind the rage, other than a hatred of Cathy's Christian beliefs and a determination to see them stamped out?  
~ Patrick Buchanan

---

⇒ Senator Patrick Moynihan complained nearly 50 years ago, in 1965, that the welfare system was already having the measureable effect of replaced human husbands with the husbandry of the state. The state would be pronounced breadwinner, rule-maker, and guarantor of safety and survival, till death.

⇒ In America, individuals, families, communities came first. Hardworking men and women built the society..... Government does not create wealth. Government collects wealth, redistributes wealth, consumes wealth. "Some people regard private enterprise as a predatory tiger to be shot. Others look on it as a cow they can milk. Not enough people see it as a healthy horse, pulling a sturdy wagon," said Winston Churchill.  
Patrick Buchanan

# The Mother of God ~

## The Most-Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary

In the theology and piety of the Orthodox Church, a special place of honor is given to the Mother of God, the Most-Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, who is revered by the Orthodox as being more honorable than the Cherubim and more glorious, beyond compare, than the Seraphim. As Orthodox we see her as the most exalted among God's creatures; but we do not regard her as some sort of goddess, the 4th Person of the Trinity, as some accuse us; nor do we render her the worship due God alone. Just as with the Holy Icons, the veneration due Mary is expressed in quite different words in the Greek writings of the Fathers than that due God.

At many of the Divine Services, the Deacon exclaims: Commemorating our Most-Holy, Most-Pure, Most-Blessed and Glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary with all the Saints.... And here we can see three basic truths expressed concerning her.

The Virgin Mary is honored because she is Theotokos the Mother of God - not of His divinity, but of His humanity - yet of God in that Jesus Christ is both God and Man, at one and the same time, in the Incarnation. Therefore, the honor given Mary is due to her relationship to Christ. And this honor, rather than taking away from that due God, makes us more aware of God's majesty; for it is precisely on account of the Son (Himself God) that she is venerated. Of times, when men refuse to honor Mary, it is because they do not believe in the cause of her veneration the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity.

We also speak of the Theotokos as being Ever-Virgin, which was officially proclaimed at the 5th Ecumenical Council (Constantinople 553; the dogma concerning Mary as being Theotokos was proclaimed in 431 at the 3rd Ecumenical Council in Ephesus). This notion does not actually contradict Holy Scripture, as some would think. And His mother and His brothers came; and standing outside they sent to Him and called Him (Mark 3:31). Here the use of the word brothers in the original Greek can mean half-brother, cousin, or near relative, in addition to brothers in the strict sense. The Orthodox Church has always seen brothers here as referring to His half-brothers.

If Mary is honored as Theotokos, so too, she is honored because she is Panagia - All-Holy. She is the supreme example of the cooperation between God and Man; for God, Who always respects human freedom, did not become incarnate without her free consent which, as Holy Scripture tells us, was freely given: Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to thy word (Luke 1:38). Thus Mary is seen by the Church as the New Eve (as Christ is the New Adam) whose perfect obedience contrasted the disobedience of the First Mother, Eve, in Paradise. As St. Irenaeus of Lyons says, "the knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed through the obedience of Mary; for what Eve, a virgin, bound by her unbelief, that Mary, a virgin, unloosed by her faith" [Against the Heresies, III, xxii, 4].

As All-Holy and Most-Pure, Mary was free from actual sin, but, in the opinion of most Orthodox theologians, although not dogmatized by the Church, she did bear Original Sin as does all mankind. For this reason by virtue of her solidarity with all humanity the Theotokos died a bodily death. Yet, in her case, the resurrection of the body had been anticipated; and she was assumed body and soul into Heaven; and her tomb was found empty an event celebrated in the Feast of the Falling-Asleep (or Dormition) of the Most-Holy Theotokos (Aug. 15). Thus, as the hymns of that Feast proclaim, she has passed from earth to heaven, beyond death and judgment, living already in the age to come. She enjoys now the same bodily glory all of us hope to share one day.

Whereas the Church has officially proclaimed as dogmas the doctrines concerning the Trinity and the Incarnation, the glorification of the Mother of God belongs to the Inner Tradition of the Church.

As the noted Orthodox theologian, Vladimir Lossky writes:

"It is hard to speak and not less hard to think about the mysteries which the Church keeps in the hidden depths of her inner consciousness.... The Mother of God was never a theme of the public preaching of the Apostles; while Christ was preached on the housetops, and proclaimed for all to know in an initiatory teaching addressed to the whole world, the mystery of His Mother was revealed only to those who were within the Church.... It is not so much an object of faith as a foundation of our hope, a fruit of faith, ripened in Tradition. Let us therefore keep silence, and let us not try to dogmatize about the supreme glory of the Mother of God" [Panagia, in *The Mother of God*, ed. E.L. Mascall, p.35].

---

## Appellations of the Theotokos

### **Ark**

The Theotokos is often called an Ark, for the Glory of God settled on her, just as the Glory of God descended on the Mercy Seat of the Old Testament Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 25:10-22).

### **Aaron's Rod**

Just as Aaron's Rod sprouted miraculously in the Old Testament, so too, the Theotokos has budded forth the Flower of Immortality, Christ our God (Num. 17:1-11).

### **Burning Bush**

On Mt. Sinai, Moses saw the Bush that was burning, but was not consumed. So too, the Theotokos bore the fire of Divinity, but was not consumed (Ex. 3:1-6).

### **(Golden) Candlestick**

In the Old Testament Tabernacle, there were found in the Sanctuary golden candlesticks. The Theotokos is the Candlestick which held that Light that illumines the world (Ex. 25:31-40).

### **(Golden) Censer**

Just as the censer holds a burning coal, so too, the Theotokos held the Living Coal. In the Apocalypse, there stands an Angel before the Throne of God, swinging a censer, representing the prayers of the Saints rising up to God. This is also seen as a symbol of the Theotokos, for it is her prayers that find special favor before her Son.

### **Cloud**

In the Exodus, the Israelites were led out of Egypt by a Cloud of Light, symbolizing the presence of God in their midst. So too, the Theotokos is a Cloud, bearing God within.

### **Fleece**

In the book of Judges we read the account of the dew which appeared miraculously on Gideon's fleece (Judges 6:36-40). So too, the Dew Christ, appeared miraculously on the Living Fleece the Theotokos.

### **Holy of Holies**

Into the Holy of Holies only the High Priest could enter. So too, the Theotokos is the Holy of Holies into which only the Eternal High Priest Christ entered (Heb. 9:1-7).

## **Ladder**

In a dream Jacob saw a ladder ascending to Heaven, with Angels ascending and descending on it. The Theotokos is a Ladder, stretching from earth to Heaven, for on It God descended to man, having become incarnate.

## **Mountain (from which a Stone was cut not by hand of man).**

The Prophet Daniel saw a mountain, from which was cut a stone, not by the hand of man (Dan. 2:34, 45). This is a reference to the miraculous Virgin Birth which was accomplished without the hand of man.

## **Palace**

The Theotokos was the Palace within which the King Christ our God dwelt.

## **Rod of Jesse**

In the Nativity Service, the Lord is referred to as the Rod from the Stem of Jesse (Is. 11:1), indicating His lineage from David, which was fulfilled through the Theotokos, who was a scion (or stem) of the line of David, the son of Jesse.

## **Tabernacle**

The Tabernacle was the place where the Glory of God dwelt. So too, the Glory of God dwelt in the Theotokos the Living Tabernacle (Ex. 40:34).

## **(Holy) Table**

This refers to the Holy Table (Altar Table) on which, at the Divine Liturgy, the Divine Food is offered. So too, the Theotokos is the Holy Table which bore the Bread of Life.

## **Temple**

The Prophet Ezekiel speaks of the Temple whose East gate remains sealed, through which only the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered. This clearly prophesies the Virgin Birth of the Theotokos (Ez. 44:1-3).

## **Throne**

The Theotokos is the Throne upon which Christ, the King of All, rested.

## **(Golden) Urn**

In the Old Testament, the Ark of the Covenant contained within itself a golden urn filled with the heavenly manna. The Theotokos is the Urn which contained Christ, the Divine Manna (Heb. 9:1-7).

## **Vine**

The Theotokos is the Vine which bore the Ripe Cluster (of Grapes), Christ our Lord.

---

*Excerpt taken from "These Truths We Hold - The Holy Orthodox Church: Her Life and Teachings".  
Compiled and Edited by A Monk of St. Tikhon's Monastery.*

## Dormition of the Theotokos

Celebrated August 15

The dominions and the thrones, the rulers, the principalities and the powers, the cherubim and the fearful seraphim glorify thy Dominion (Vespers Sticheron, Tone 1).

The sacred Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos marks her repose, which was followed by the translation of her sacred body three days later into heaven. This feast, therefore, marks her soul being commended into her Son's hands and the short sojourn of her body in the tomb. Unlike the Resurrection of Christ, the mysterious character of her death, burial, resurrection and ascension were not the subject of apostolic teachings, yet they were recorded by the tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church and writings of the Church Fathers.

The Dormition of the Theotokos took place while Apostle Thomas was preaching the gospel in India. The other Apostles had been caught up from various lands on the clouds of heaven, and were transported to Gethsemane, to the bier of the all-blessed Virgin. This was permitted by the will of God, so the faithful might be assured that the Mother of God was bodily assumed into heaven. For just as they were more greatly assured of the Resurrection of Christ, through the disbelief of Thomas, so did they learned of the bodily assumption into heaven of the all-pure Virgin Mary through the delay of Thomas.

On the third day after the burial St. Thomas was suddenly caught up in a cloud in India and transported to a place in the air above the tomb of the Virgin. From that vantage point, he beheld the translation of her body into the heavens, and cried out to her, "Whither goest thou, O all-holy one?" She

removed her girdle and gave it to him saying, "Receive this, my friend." And then she was gone.

He then descended to find the other disciples keeping watch over the sepulchre of the Theotokos. He sat down beside them, with the girdle in his hand, greatly saddened that he had not been there when she reposed, as had been the other Apostles. Hence, he said, "We are all disciples of the Master; we all preach the same thing; we are all servants of the one Lord, Jesus Christ. How, then, is it that ye were counted worthy to behold the repose of His Mother, and I was not? Am I not an Apostle? Can it be that God is not pleased with my preaching? I beseech you, my fellow disciples: open the tomb, that I also may look upon her remains, and embrace them, and bid her farewell!"

The Apostles took pity on St. Thomas and opened the tomb. All were aghast when they found it empty, not realizing that moments before she had been bodily transported to paradise to be the mediatrix of Christians. All that remained were her burial clothes, which emitted a wonderful unearthly fragrance.

The Feast's kontakion speaks of her as an unflinching hope and mediation, reminding us of her intercessory role in paradise. Neither the tomb nor death had power over the Theotokos, who is ever watchful in her prayers and in whose intercessions lies unflinching hope. For as the Mother of Life she has been translated unto life by Him Who dwelt in her ever-virgin womb.

Reference: *The Life of the Virgin Mary, The Theotokos published by Holy Apostles Convent and Dormition Skete*

## Lifelines:

**“The most important person on earth is a mother.** She cannot claim the honor of having built a great Cathedral. She need not. She has built something more magnificent than any cathedral—a dwelling for an immortal soul, the tiny perfection of her baby’s body.”

- Cardinal Joseph Mindszenty

“Mothers are closer to God the Creator than any Life, than any other creature. God joins forces with mothers in performing this act of creating a human being. The angels have not been blessed with such a grace. Only a human mother is.” - Cardinal Joseph Mindszenty

As this nation continues to tolerate the dehumanizing evil of abortion, what will history think of this era? Many history experts agree that abortion clinics will be noted in history with the same significance as Nazi concentration camps. A prediction worthy of reflection.

Two days in American history that will live in infamy are December 7, 1941 and September 11, 2001. Another infamous date in which a war was launched - a war against the unborn is January 22, 1973. As we remember the countless men and women who have given their lives to defend us, let us pledge again to defend the right to life of the unborn and remember the more than 50 million nameless children who have died since 1973.

A veteran researcher into post-abortion trauma, David Reardon, writes that some abortionists readily admit feelings of guilt. “I do feel you’re an abnormal person if you could really honestly say that abortion didn’t bother you at all,” said one abortionist he interviewed. “It goes against all things which are natural. It’s a termination of life, however you look at it.”

- Lutherans for Life newsletter, Spring, 1998

On December 2, 2009, the Obama Administration approved the first use of human embryonic stem cells for experiments by federally funded researchers, using our tax dollars for an unethical destruction of human life at its early stage. Richard Doerfinger of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops told the New York Times (12/3/09) that, “the tragedy of this is multiplied by the fact that no one can think what the problem is that can only be solved by these cells, in light of the amazing progress that has been made with adult stem cell research.”

Pam Tebow, mother of the celebrated football star, Tim Tebow, shared the story of her decision against abortion at the Save A Life Ministries annual banquet. She told how she first reported the story in an interview at the 2007 Heisman Trophy award for Tim. “God was so gracious,” she said. “I didn’t have to give up my life, and he didn’t take the life of my son.” Life News, 3/3/10

Using brain scans, an international team of scientists has taken a look inside the brains of patients diagnosed as being in a “vegetative state.” These patients, the images clearly showed, were living silently—their minds apparently active, the scans showing brain activity like that in any healthy conscious person. (New York Times, 2/4/10) This counteracts the arguments that such patients are “in a vegetative state,” and can be starved to death as Terry Schiavo was in 2005.

God says to each mother of an unborn child of, “Blessed are you among women,” because motherhood is truly one of God’s greatest gifts. Blessed are the mothers who choose to give birth to mentally or physically challenged babies, blessed are those who choose life in extremely difficult circumstances, and blessed is each woman who carry an unborn child for nine months and allow a childless couple the joy of adoption.

## **Pearls of the Holy Fathers 7:1**

✠ The Lord does not force us to be saved for fear that an enforced salvation might become repulsive; because we appreciate and love only that which we have grown to love, for which we have fought, with which we have become intimate, which has become our treasure, our nature. And such are the Christian virtues, such is the Kingdom of God; we have to become acquainted with it, to learn to love it wholeheartedly, to assimilate it here on earth, to implant it in our hearts in such a way that it should penetrate entirely into our soul and leave no room for all-destructive and all-flattering sin.

**St. John of Kronstadt**

✠ The Lord rejoices with the incomprehensible joy of God at the success of men. He declares that the mysteries of the Christian faith are revealed not to the wise and exalted of the world, but to those who are children as regards civil affairs, such as were the Lord's disciples, taken from among the simple people, unlearned, illiterate.

**St. Ignatius Brianchaninov**

✠ It is a marvelous thing that God rained manna on the fathers, and that they were fed by daily nourishment from Heaven. Therefore, it is said 'Man hath eaten the bread of Angels' (Ps. 77:25). Yet all those who ate that bread died in the desert but this food which you receive, this 'living bread, which came down from Heaven,' furnishes the substance of eternal life, and whoever eats this bread 'will not die forever'; for it is the Body of Christ.

**St. Ambrose of Milan**

✠ What good is a soldier without battle? He remains inexperienced and cowardly. Similarly, without struggle a monk cannot gain his soul in patience and be crowned by the Setter of the contest.

**St. Moses of Optina**

✠ If we are concerned with our salvation, there are many things the intellect can do in order to secure for us the blessed gift of humility. For example, it can recollect the sins we have committed in word, action and thought; and there are many other things which, reviewed in contemplation, contribute to our humility. True humility is also brought about by meditating daily on the achievements of our brethren, by extolling their natural superiorities and by comparing our gifts with theirs. When the intellect sees in this way how worthless we are and how far we fall short of the perfection of our brethren, we will regard ourselves as dust and ashes, and not as men but as some kind of cur, more defective in every aspect and lower than all men on earth.

**St. Hesychios the Priest**

✠ Let us behold only our sins, repenting of them daily and taking care that they may be forgiven.

**St. Moses of Optina**

✠ Ever watch over your field, my dear one, and clear it of thorns, and take heed as a true Christian to labor for that which abides unto eternal life.

**St. Moses of Optina**

✠ Guard your conscience from all evil with regard to your neighbor and you will be saved.

**St. Joseph of Optina**

✠ Our prayer begins to be of value only when grace comes. As long as we have only the natural fruits of prayer, what we achieve is valueless, both in itself and in the judgment of God. For the coming of grace is the sign that God has looked on us in mercy.

**St. Thalassius of Libya**