



Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

**22nd Sunday after Pentecost; Entry of the
Most-Holy Theotokos into the Temple**

Lord's Day - 11-21-2021 Glory to Jesus Christ!

Tone 5 Troparion (Resurrection)

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.

Tone 4 Troparion (Feast)

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!"

Tone 5 Kontakion (Resurrection)

You descended into hell, O my Savior,
shattering its gates as Almighty, resurrecting the dead as Creator,
and destroying the sting of death. You have delivered Adam from the
curse, O Lover of man, // and we cry to You: "O Lord, save us!"

Tone 4 Kontakion (Feast)

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!"

Tone 5 Prokeimenon (Resurrection)

You, O Lord, shall protect us / and preserve us from this generation
forever. (Ps. 11:7)
V. Save me, O Lord, for there is no longer any that is godly! (Ps. 11:1a)

Tone 3 Prokeimenon (Song of the Theotokos)

My soul magnifies the Lord, / and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
(Lk. 1:46-47)

Tone 5

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

V. I will sing of Your mercies, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will
proclaim Your truth from generation to generation. (Ps. 88:1-2)

V. For You have said: Mercy will be established forever; Your truth will
be prepared in the heavens. (Ps. 88:3)

Tone 8

V Harken, O daughter, and see, and incline your ear! (Ps. 44:9a)

Holy Scripture:

Heb 9.1-7 (Epistle—Entrance)

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 lampstand, 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, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance.

Gal 6.11-18 (Epistle)

Brethren, see with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Luke 10.38-42, 11.27-28 (Gospel—Entrance)

At that time, Jesus 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!"

Luke 12.16-21 (Gospel)

The Lord said this parable: "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."

Pray with out ceasing...

PLEASE INCLUDE

THESE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN YOUR DAILY

PRAYERS: Those in need - Fr. Andrew, Fr. Isaac, Fr. David, Fr. Anthony, Fr. Joseph, Fr. Zachariah, Iguman Patrick, Hieromonk Herman, Fr. Dusan, Fr. Christopher, Prez. Alexandria, Mat. Gail, Mat. Donna, Mat. Pirsilla, Mat. Trudi, Tamara, Olga, Susan, Karen, Mary B. Margret, Bill S., Lexi, John, Nickolas, Timothy, Preston, Olivia, Delani, Jeremiah, Valentina, Sandy, William, Steve A., Anna, Sally, Noah
The Homebound Tanya, Mary G
Catechumen- Christian... Military servers...Greg
Special requests... Paul, Gilbert, Joanne, Phyllis, Anthony, Ian, Paul, James, Sean, Liam, Bill, Wesley, Kim, Margaret, Loren, Julia, Shelby, Janet, Lynn, Margret. Helen, Dan, Jonathan, Donna, Nicholas, Maya, Mia, Charles, Gregory, Donna, Don. Laura, Brenda Laken, Bob...
Departed : Priest Anastacy, Marie Guidus, Vincent, Richard, George, Ruth, Pearl, Jim(Grace's Dad), Ann, Lillian, Alice, William, Claudia, Theona, Helen, Ann, Katherine, Vernon, Paul, James, Nikolai, Andrew, Peter, Paul, Margaret, Michael Mary Ann, Timothy...

Services and Activities (Calendar changes see website)

www.orthodoxcrossingville.org

Today Divien Liturgy - Coffee Hour and Parish Education

Nov. 24th -Akathist - Glory to God for all things - 10am

Vepseral Liturgy -6pm

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!

Nov. 27th - Great Vespers - 4pm

Nov. 28th - Divine Liturgy - Coffee Hour and Parish Education

Dec. 5th - St. Nicholas Day Celebration following Coffee Hour

Dec. 12th - Parish Annual Meeting

Missions

For our **Nativity Missions Project**, we are sponsoring Christmas gifts for 3 youth from Bethesda. The signup sheet is on the bar in the hall. All Christmas gifts must be unwrapped and in the hall by Sunday, December 12th. See Anna Rachocki for more information.

Bookstore & Gift Shop

We would like to also support our own parishioners art and crafts this holiday season. If you are interested in putting yours on display for sale, see Anna Rachocki or Kyra Mathewson.

Hope

The virtue of hope goes together with the power of faith. The patriarch Abraham “in hope believed against hope that he should be the father of many nations” (Rom 4.18). And hope, like faith, is in that which is not seen.

For in this hope we are saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience (Rom 8.24–25).

Hope is the assurance of the good outcome of our lives lived by faith in God. Hope is the power of certain conviction that the life built on faith will produce its fruits. Hope is the confidence that, despite all darkness and sin, the light of the loving forgiveness of God is upon us to do with us and for us what we ourselves cannot do.

Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and shield. Yea our hearts are glad in Him, because we trust in His holy name. Let Thy steadfast love, O Lord be upon us, even as we hope in Thee (Ps 33.20–22).

The opposite of hope is despondency and despair. According to the spiritual tradition of the Church, the state of despondency and despair is the most grievous and horrible condition that a person can be in. It is the worst and most harmful of the sinful states possible for the soul.

The loss of hope is the worst possible state because without hope, nothing else is possible; certainly not faith. If a person is faithless, he can be chastised and convinced. If a person is proud, he can be humbled; impure, he can be cleansed; weak, he can be strengthened; wicked, he can be made righteous. But if a person is despondent and despairing, the very condition of his sickness is such that his heart and soul are dead and unresponsive to the grace of God and the support of his brothers.

... the force of despondency ... overwhelms him and oppresses his soul; and this is a taste of hell because it produces a thousand temptations: confusion, irritation, protesting and bewailing one's lot, wrong thoughts, wandering from place to place, and so on (Saint Isaac of Syria, 6th c., *Directions on Spiritual Training*).

The demon of despondency, which is called the “noon-day demon” (Ps 91.6) is more grievous than all others. ... It arouses in him vexation against the place and mode of life itself and his work, adding that there is no more love among the brethren, and no one to comfort him. ... Then it provokes in him a longing for other places ... (Evagrius of Pontus, 4th c., *To Anatolius: On Eight Thoughts*).

The only remedy for despair is humility and patience, the steadfast holding to the life of faith, even without conviction or feeling. It is the simplification of life by going through each day, one day at a time, with the continual observances, however external, of scriptural reading, liturgical worship, fasting, prayer, and work. In the advice of Saint Benedict (6th c), it is to remain stable in one's place, and to “do what you are doing” as well as you can, with all possible attention. In the advice of Saint Seraphim (19th c.), it is to visit with spiritual friends, with those who are hopeful, merciful, joyful and strong. It is to stand fast to the end while passing through aridity and darkness, until the light of blessed hope and comfort are found. There is no other way, and “those who find it are few” (Mt 7.14). But when one “fights and conquers against despondency and despair, this struggle is followed by a peaceful state and the soul becomes filled with ineffable joy” (Evagrius, *To Anatolius: On Eight Thoughts*).

When we are attacked by the demon of despondency—the most grievous of all, but who more than all makes the soul experienced—let us divide our soul in two, and making one part the comforter and the other part the comforted, let us sow seeds of good hope in ourselves, singing with David the psalmist: “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I will again praise Him, my help and my God” (Ps 42.5; Evagrius of Pontus, *To Anatolius: Texts on Active Life*).

Sometimes people think that a certain “lack of hope” is a Christian virtue. They think that by proclaiming that “all is lost” they please God by their humility and sorrow over sins, their own and those of the world. They think that the more they concentrate on the evils of men, the more they exalt the strength of the wicked, the more they sigh and say, “There is no help for us in God!”, the more righteous and pious they become. But this is all wrong. It has nothing to do with the patient suffering at the hands of the wicked, and the patient struggle against the powers of evil that the righteous must endure, being

absolutely certain of their ultimate and total victory in God, the source of their strength and their hope.

It is no virtue to feel weak and helpless in the presence of the wicked. It is no virtue to consider oneself totally at the mercy of evil and sin. It is a virtue rather to be always “rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation” knowing and believing that the final victory is God's (Rom 12.12). –Fr. Thomas Hopko

Sinlessness of Mary

Question

How exactly does the Orthodox Church view the sinlessness of Mary? In the Liturgy it is said, “One is Holy, One is Lord, Jesus Christ, to the Glory of God the Father” and in other places that Jesus is the only sinless one. Also, in reference to 1 John 1:8 where it says, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” How can these be reconciled? Is the Theotokos all-pure, all-holy, all-blameless because of her deification through her Son, so that she is those things because her Son is, as we are holy, pure, etc. through our union to Christ?

Also, how is it that she is referred to as the only refuge for sinners, and various phrases like this? Isn't Christ our only refuge and the salvation of sinners?

This is the main stumbling block I have with Orthodoxy right now. There seems to be varying beliefs within the Orthodoxy on the Theotokos. Didn't St John Chrysostom teach that Mary had sinned at least once? When I read the earliest Church Fathers there seems to be little focus on Mary apart from the Christological issue of whether she was the Mother of God, or only of Christ. Doesn't the teaching that Mary was sinless from birth state the same general concept, that Mary is more than the rest of humanity, as the Immaculate Conception (apart from the idea of original sin) except that it moves the moment of the supernatural grace of God to birth from conception?

I am not trying to answer my own questions, but am simply not understanding how these contradictions, at least seemingly, can be resolved.

Answer

While I would love to be able to fully answer your question, it is far beyond the scope of an email, especially because full understanding of the Orthodox position, based on the tenor of your question, on the Virgin Mary requires a thorough explanation of some of the secondary issues to which you refer, such as original sin, the Immaculate Conception, supernatural grace, etc. As such, I would highly recommend that you meet in person with the parish priest at the Orthodox Church you have been visiting—he will no doubt be glad to answer the question at some depth.

I can say, in short, that the Orthodox Church believes that Mary, as a human being, could indeed have sinned, but chose not to. In the Roman Catholic understanding, it seems that Mary, who according to Roman doctrine had been exempted from the guilt of original sin [the Orthodox do not accept that humans share the guilt of the first sin but, rather, only the consequences] before all eternity, and thus could not have sinned. This is where the complexity comes in on a number of levels and which puts your question beyond the scope of an email. Jesus Christ is Mary's Savior, as well as ours, as testified in her own statement in St Luke—the Magnificat—where she says, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” If Mary had been “sin-proofed,” so to speak, from all eternity, the Orthodox would argue as to why she would need a Savior.

Mary is the “new Eve” who said “yes” to God where the first Eve said “no.” She did have a choice, and you may wish to ask your local parish priest to share with you the text of the Kanon from Matins for the Great Feast of the Annunciation, in which you will see a beautiful dialogue between Mary and the Archangel Gabriel in which she debates whether or not to accept the archangel's news, only in the end accepting that which he announced.

While much that the Orthodox say of Mary “sounds” similar to that which is taught by Roman Catholicism, there are serious differences on many levels. You are correct in saying, however, that the Orthodox Church does not seem to have such a highly developed mariological tradition as the Christian West; it is, at least in my experience, only in recent times, with the growing interest in Orthodoxy especially among many evangelicals, that we have had to delve so deeply—and sometimes deeper than we should—into the role of Mary. Sometimes our answers seem somewhat lame, but in reality there is only so much one can say before one must acknowledge that, while there are certain things we simply cannot fully understand about this, reasoned faith, as defined in St James, becomes the only recourse.