

Christians describe the life of salvation as “beholding Christ face to face.” Mary would have done this quite literally numerous times a day for nearly three years as she nursed Him. In St. John’s gospel, at the Wedding in Cana, there is a level of communication between mother and Son that transcends words. At the wedding feast, she comes to her Son and says, “They have no wine.” She does not ask Him anything. His response is frequently misinterpreted. He says, in the Greek: “Τι ἔμοι και σοι,” (Jn. 2:4). (“What is this to me and you?”) It is a very strange phrase in the Greek, but is a direct quote from the widow of Zarephath when she is speaking to Elijah about the death of her son (1 Kings 17:18). Christ is warning His mother that “it is not my time.” But, if He acts in helping with this wedding and its wine, it will set in motion something that cannot be stopped – His *kaïros* – His time. And when His time comes, she will be like the widow of Zarephath, a widow whose son is dead. All of this is contained in this tiny conversation of but a few words. Her response is equally terse, “Do whatever He tells you.” This is similar to her first words to the angel, “Let it be to me according to your word.” She is ready for what will take place, including its most fearful consequences.

But all of this can only be rightly understood if we remember the nature of the union between mother and Son. It is also a union that will be our own salvation. Christ has become what we are by nature, that we might become what he is by grace. This is the great “exchange.”

Orthodox prayer gives expression to this communion. St. Paul says that the Holy Spirit prays within us saying, “Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6). Those words are the words of the Son (the one says, “Abba”). We do not pray as strangers, but as members of the household, now emboldened to speak with the very voice of the Son of God. It is this same voice that speaks of Mary as “Mother,” and gives her honor. That honor, or veneration, is the expression of love. Just as she loves Him, so she loves us.

In my experience, devotion to the Mother of God comes very slowly for converts to the faith. Five hundred years of Protestant thought have created a Christianity in which Mary has little place other than on Christmas cards and in badly produced movies. English translations of the Scriptures often butcher Marian passages conveying false images.

The Wedding at Cana passage cited above is frequently rendered: “What do I have to do with you, woman?” which is simply inaccurate. It gives the impression of disrespect, as though Mary were being a bother to her Son. What is deeply lacking is the spiritual consciousness rooted in salvation through union with Christ. None of the doctrines expressed in the Great Seven Ecumenical Councils make any sense apart from that awareness. Put simply, it is how both the Scriptures and the early Fathers understand our salvation. Union (communion, participation) is the fundamental grammar of Christian teaching.

When this grammar is properly grasped, it becomes clear that we *cannot* speak of Christ apart from Mary (nor Mary apart from Christ). By the same token, we cannot speak of Christ apart from the Church, nor the Church apart from Christ. We are told in 1 Cor. 12:21 that the “head cannot say to the feet, ‘I have no need of you,’” and this in the very passage in which we are told that Christ is the “head of the body (the Church).” We cannot speak of one member of the Body apart from all the others, for the life of each is the life of all and the life of all is the life of each.

In our devotional life, this is expressed in the communion of saints, our prayers that gather all together in union with Christ: Commemorating our most holy, most pure, most blessed lady, Theotokos, and ever-virgin Mary, and all the saints, let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.”

On the personal level, the experience of the Church has taught us private devotions as well. Within those, we begin to discover the mystical bonds that only such devotions reveal. Years ago, in a reference I have long since forgotten, I read a quote in which St. Seraphim of Sarov said, “There are things about Jesus you cannot know until His mother tells them to you.”

This part of the Orthodox life is difficult to describe. It is a perception of Christ, though with a greater fullness, one that extends into the persons of the saints. In Mary, that person encompasses an intimacy with Christ that is without equal. In my

own experience, this intimacy includes the depths of her maternal love, for her Son, and for all creation.

The absence of Marian devotion and awareness has created a Christianity with an absence of the feminine. I do not suggest that Mary is a cipher for an abstract universal, or of a “divine femininity,” but it is simply bizarre to have a Christology that speaks of the “humanity” of Christ that is somehow devoid of a human mother (for all intents and purposes). Orthodox Christology begins its formal expression in the 3rd Ecumenical Council in which the largest and most central question was Mary’s title of “Theotokos” (Birth-Giver of God). Classical Christology began with consideration of Mary.

The most egregious example I have ever encountered of anti-Marian sentiment is a treatment in which she is seen as a mere “container” for Christ. It is an insult to every woman who has ever borne a child.

I offer no speculation as to the damage done to Western culture by a distorted Christology. Secularists would argue that Christology has nothing to do with our cultural constructs: such is the ignorance of our own foundations. Secular modernity is built on the foundation of a distorted version of Christianity. We are children who deny our parents, imagining that we have created ourselves.

Now that is a cause for panic. Holy Mother of God, pray for us.

UPCOMING SERVICES AND EVENTS

Today CGS for all ages.

This Week>>>

Wednesday, November 28th – Akathist/Moliebin - 5pm

Thursday November 29th – Outreach Team Meeting

Friday, November 30th - Missions Team Meeting

Sunday Dec. 2nd – St. Nicolas Party

Tuesday, December 4th -- Hospitality Team Meeting 12noon

Wednesday, December 5th - Great Vespers - St. Nicholas 6pm

Thursday, December 6th – Divine Liturgy – St. Nicholas 930am

Saturday, December 8th (9th too)– Bake Sale 12-2

Monday, December 10th - LAS Meeting - 11am

Wednesday, December 12th – Vespers/Akathist to St.Herman - 6pm

Friday, December 14, Fr. Mark Leasure from St. George in Taylor, PA

will be bringing the Miraculous Myrrh-Streaming icon of the *Kardiotissa* to St Nicholas in Erie. A Moleben to the Mother of God will be served at 6:00 PM. Following the Moleben, Fr. Mark will give a presentation on the icon and then all in attendance will be able to venerate the icon and be anointed with the Holy Myrrh.

Wednesday, December 19th - Daily Vespers 5:30pm

Parish Council Meeting - 6pm

Nativity Services:

Sunday, December 23rd - Divine Liturgy

Monday, December 24th - Royal Hours - 8am

- **Divine Liturgy of St. Basil - 10am**

- **CGS – 4pm**

- **Holy Supper 5pm**

- **Nativity Vigil Service 6:30pm**

Tuesday December 25th – Divine Liturgy of Holy Nativity 9:30am

Saints Peter and Paul

Orthodox Church

25636 N. Mosiertown Rd Crossingville, PA 1641

Archpriest Fr. Daniel Mathewson – *Rector*

V. Rev. David Smoley - *Retired*

Lord’s Day – *11-25-2018* Parish phone: 814-734-3801

Find us on the Web at: www.orthodoxcrossingville.org

or on Face book: Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church Crossingville

GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST! GLORY FOREVER!

26th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone

1. Leavetaking of the Entry Into the Temple. Holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Clement, Bishop of Ochrid and Enlightener of the Bulgarians (916). Hieromartyr Clement, Pope of Rome (101). Hieromartyr Peter, Archbishop of Alexandria (311). St. Peter Galata of Syria (ca. 429).

PLEASE INCLUDE THESE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

IN YOUR DAILY PRAYERS: Those in need –Fr. Andrew, Fr. David, Fr. Anthony, Mat. Gail, Mat. Donna, Mat. Pirsilla, Pearl, William, Karen, John, Mary, Stavros, Theona, Ann, Timothy, Theresa, Judy, Genevieve, Delani, Jeremiah, Liam*The Homebound...*, Tanya, Richard, Helen, Ruth, Josephine, William, Claudia... Travelers... Newly Illumined Charlotte Catechumens – Grace and Christian ...Our Missionaries Abroad...Fr. David and Mt. Rozanne, Military servers...Greg ...Newly Departed – Marilyn Filipos, Irene Hoovler, Catherine Kirzmanich John B., John S., ...Departed Orthodox Nickoli Emelianow Ann, Katherine, Vernon, Paul, James, Andrew, Peter, Paul, Margaret, Michael Mary Ann, Timothy... Special requests... Anthony, Ian, Paul, Daleen, Penni, James, Sean, Liam, Susan, James, Joel, Jen, Roger, Jasmine, Cassandra, Raquel, Zera Kim, Jim, Margaret, Loren, Nick,

Today’s Hymns Tone 1 Troparion (*Resurrection*)

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, while the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world.

The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver of Life:

“Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ!

Glory to Thy ^Kingdom!//

Glory to Thy dispensation, O Thou who lovest of mankind!”

Troparion Tone 4 (*Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple*)

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 4 Troparion (*Hieromartyr Clement*)

O holy athlete, thou didst gloriously amaze the ends of the earth with the miracles of God.

On the day of thy honored memorial, beyond nature, thou didst cause the waters of the sea to withdraw for those who came earnestly to the divinely-built church holding thy precious relics.

After the people left, thou didst wondrously cause the sea to return to the shore.//

All-wondrous Clement, entreat Christ God that our souls may be saved!

Tone 1 Kontakion (*Resurrection*)

As God, Thou didst rise from the tomb in glory, raising the world with Thyself.

Human nature praises Thee as God, for death has vanished.

Adam exults, O Master!

Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage and cries to Thee://

“Thou art the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ!”

Tone 8 Kontakion (*Hieromartyr Clement*)

As a branch bearing much fruit upon the earth, thou didst put forth ripe bunches of grapes ever distilling the sweet-new vine of salvation, gladdening the hearts of the faithful.

Therefore, as we gather to keep thy holy memorial, we rejoice and magnify Christ.

O greatly-suffering hierarch, intercede with Christ God//

that remission of sins may be granted to those who celebrate the feast of thy memorial with love!

Tone 4 Kontakion (*Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple*)

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 1 Prokeimenon

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have set our hope on Thee! (Ps 32/33:22)

v: Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous! Praise befits the just! (Ps 32/33:1)

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 1**

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

v: God gives vengeance unto me, and subdues people under me.

(Ps 17/18:47)

v: He magnifies the salvation of the King and deals mercifully with

David, His anointed, and his seed forever. (Ps 17/18:50)

Tone 8

v: Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear! (Ps 44/45:10)

Today’s Scripture Readings:

Ephesians 5:9-19 (Epistle)

(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: “Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.” See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

Luke 13:10-17 (Gospel)

Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, “Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.” And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, “There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.” The Lord then answered him and said, “Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound – think of it – for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?”

And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.

Don’t Panic – It’s just the Mother of God

The first time I offered prayers to Mary I had a panic attack – literally. I was in college and my best friend had become Roman Catholic. We argued a bit, and he won (mostly). It resulted in my return to Anglicanism, to the “high” side. So, like a good high churchman, I got a rosary and a book, and started my prayers. Then came the panic attack.

Many Protestants are viscerally opposed to Catholicism. It’s in their heart and bones. I had no idea at the time that my bones (and heart) were as firmly *orange* as they seemed to be (let the Irish explain). My experience showed me otherwise. But, theology wins. I spent the next nine months reading about Marian devotion and early Christian practice. After that long “cooling-off” period, I picked up my rosary and gave it another try. No panic. I’ve never looked back.

Western devotions to Mary have forms that differ from Orthodox practices, and I’m not at all sure that the Western, Catholic understanding is the same (I’ll admit that I don’t know). My Anglican use of the rosary and devotion to Mary, which largely followed Catholic practice, certainly made my conversion to Orthodoxy ever so much easier. Indeed, her presence in the text of an Orthodox service far exceeds anything you’ll ever see in Rome. The Orthodox veneration of the Mother of God is grounded in its understanding of salvation. As such, the veneration of Mary is an expression of the most foundational doctrine of the faith. This is generally misunderstood by the non-Orthodox for the simple reason that they do not understand salvation itself. Salvation is about a *union* or *communion* with God. It is a participation in the very life of God. We were created for this communion, breathed into us in the act of our creation. Through sin, we have broken that communion and become subject to death and disintegration.

Christ, in becoming a human being, united Himself to our human nature.

He suffered death and was buried. But in His death, because He is also God, He tramples down death and rises from the tomb. Our human nature is raised with Him. When we are Baptized, the Scriptures say we are Baptized “into His death and raised in the likeness of His resurrection.” In Holy Communion, we eat His very Body and drink His Blood, a true communion and participation in His life.

When this fundamental doctrine is understood, Mary’s role in history and her place in the Church become clear. Christ does not enter her womb as though it were a borrowed space. The Creed says, “He *took flesh* of the Virgin Mary.” Christ’s humanity is not a separate creation, but “bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh.” She is truly His mother.

The Scriptures recognize this in various ways. In particular, when Mary brings the Christ Child to the Temple on the 40th day, the Prophet Simeon prophesies the coming sufferings of Christ and adds, “...and a sword will pierce your soul as well.” This is far more than saying, “It will make you unhappy.” In Christ’s suffering on the Cross, Mary suffers as well. This is because of the peculiar union that was their relationship from the beginning.