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: “Τί ἐχετε μετ’ ὑμῶν;” (“What is this to me and you?”) It is a very large 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 time.” But, if He acts in helping with this wedding and its wine, it will set in motion something that cannot be stopped – His kairos – His time. And when His time comes, she will be like the widow of Zarephath, a widow whose son is dead. All of a sudden, His voice can speak to her. 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 communion (the one and the other). We do not pray as strangers, but as members of the household, now ennobled 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 own 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 Marian sentiment. Today’s Hymns: “Glory to Thy dispensation, O Thou who gavest the Virgin Mary, that person encompasses an intimacy with Christ that is without equal. In my though with a greater fullness, one that extends into the persons of the saints. In 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 own 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.

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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!”

Today’s Scripture Readings:

Tone 3 Prokeimenon
(Lk 1:46–47)
Tone 1
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

v: My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. (Lk 1:46–47)
Tone 1
Amen! Our Lord and God, Jesus Christ our Lord, is praised. (Ps 1:4)

Today’s Kontakion:

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. (Ps 1:4)

Today’s Synaxarion:

Prokeimenon

Today’s Kontakion (Resurrection)

As a branch bearing much fruit upon the earth, propagated by the cutting of tortures, O astonishing one, 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.

Tone 3 Kontakion (Hieromartyr Clement)

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)