



Full
Of
Glory



ΘΗΕΘΜΕΣ

ΝΩΟΥ

St. Mary's Fast 2020

Interactive Online Book

Under Supervision and Revision of:

HG Bishop Daniel

Bishop of Maadi, the Papal Vicar
and Secretary of the Holy Synod

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H.H. Pope Tawadros II
118th Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the
See of St. Mark



Home



Index



Index



[Click to visit the Section](#)

To the Theotokos	4
The Mystery of the Virgin Mary the Theotokos	5
You will find in this book	7
Books & Files suitable for St. Mary's Fast	8
1- A Heavenly Queen or A Royal throne?!	9
2- A woman clothed with the sun	14
3- She shall be called Woman	18
4- The Virgin Eve and the Virgin Mary	23
5- Adam's Prophecy!	27
6- The Fruit of Your Womb	31
7- The New	36
8- The Uniting Place (Laboratory)	42
9- The Grace of Abraham	47
10- The Treasure of the Resurrection	52
11- The Rational hook	58
12- Dwelling Place of the Wisdom of God	62
13- Triads of events during the Transfiguration	66
14- A City that is set on a Hill	73
15- The Mother	78
16- The Virgin, A prototype of the Church	83

To the Theotokos



O you, who offered your life to the Holy Trinity in love, reverence and obedience
O you, who offered to the Lord Jesus your womb to dwell in, and take human flesh
from, through the Holy Spirit

And thus, our blood flowed in His veins and His divine life was poured in us

O you, who became a holy church and a dwelling for the Holy Trinity

O your holy laboratory wherein God united to us for our salvation

O you, the source of immortality, from whom the Life has poured and shone from
you to all the human race

O you, who endured lots of pain and who's heart burned as you looked at His
crucifixion for our salvation

**We present this small book to you, that it may be blessed by your pure hand,
and become a reason and a help for us in our salvation**

That you may awaken our hearts and the hearts of all who read it with the spirit of
perpetual praise for the Holy Trinity

Intercede on our behalf, remember the peace of the world and the salvation of
everyone

Remember the Holy Church in your prayers

Remember all of us before the Lord

We love you, our mother, we love you

Glory to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

Glory be to you, O full of glory, the ever virgin

O Theotokos



Acknowledgements



*Awake, o my harp, your chords,
in praise of the Virgin Mary!
Lift up your voice and sing
The wonderful history of this Virgin,
The daughter of David,
Who gave birth to the Life of the World.*

St. Ephram the Syrian

The Mystery of the Virgin Mary the Theotokos

My Lord Jesus the compassionate, help me to glorify Your mother, the bride.

Oh how marvelous are these moments, in which one will attempt to write or speak of the honor of the Virgin Mary. For without a special grace from the Lord, one would not be able to approach or even think of this wondrous Virgin.

The Virgin Mary is an unutterable mystery in the life of the world.

Without removing every carnal or earthly thought, approaching her is an impossible task just like approaching the burning bush.

She is the high mountain, elevated and inflamed by the presence of the glory of God. We cannot climb it unless we have a special divine calling.

She is the Holy of Holies, to which no one can enter except with a holy and pure soul.

She is the heaven of the Lord of Sabaoth and His glorified dwelling place.

She is an unutterable mystery that we approach while our minds are overflowing with speech. Once we stand in front of it, all the waves of thoughts are suddenly transformed into great silence and our souls ascend joyfully to the mystery of the Theotokos with heavenly praises and veneration in full reverence.

We are here in the presence of a compassionate mother, in whom all human kindness has been transfigured. She is the perfect model of a human as God desired; a pure and holy bride for Him, ever united to Him.

Our beloved reader, we present to you this small book not as a dry, intellectual work that speaks only to the mind, but we hope from the Lord that He permits the words





of this book to bear the fruit expected from it: the sacrifice of praise, prayer and glorification to our Lord Jesus and His mother, the Virgin Mary.

The Virgin is the Church's song and is the secret of joy for every soul. Just as it took away the minds and hearts of the Church Fathers from the beginning, that they could not help but write about her, and their writings were quickly turned into liturgical hymns, praises, and ecclesiastical prayers, therefore, I hope and pray that they may fill my heart and yours now with the wonderful and divine love of our Lord, that it may move our hearts towards prayer and joyful, heavenly praises

We offer our gratitude to **His Holiness Pope Tawadros II**, may the Lord keep his life for us and fill his heart completely with joy.

Likewise, we offer our sincerest gratitude to **H.G. Bishop Danial, the Bishop of Maadi, the patriarchal deputy and the secretary of the Holy Synod** for his offering to review the book and his precious and loving encouragement.

We thank the reverend father **Hegumen Tadros Yacob Malaty** for his love, care, precious fatherhood, and guidance, as well as his permission for us to publish his wonderful writings alongside the accessibility to use all the sources needed for research.

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We hope for a blessed reward for you from the Lord
The 1st of Mesra 1736 (of the martyrs) - The 7th of August 2020 A.D.
The beginning of the fast of the Virgin Mary

The first edition

For the Arabic version: To download the latest version ([click here](#))

For the English version: To download the latest version ([click here](#))

To connect, we welcome any remarks or comments, please email us at:

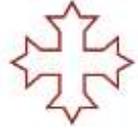
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You will find in this book

Written article:

For H.H. Pope Tawadros II (On the feast of Transfiguration)



Audio Talks:

H.H. Pope Shenouda III

H.G. the late Bishop Gregorius, Bishop of Ecclesiastical Research

H.G. the late Bishop Poemen, Bishop of Malawy

H.G. the late Bishop Youannis, Bishop of Gharbeya

H.G. the late Bishop Reweis, General Bishop

H.G. the late Bishop Makary, Bishop of Sinai

H.G. Bishop Moussa, General Bishop

H.G. Bishop Danial, the Bishop of Maadi

H.G. Bishop Youssef, Southern US

H.G. Bishop Abraham, General bishop (LA)

Hegumen Tadros Yacob Malaty

Hegumen Luke Sidarous

Hegumen Mark Aziz

Fr. Peter Farrington

Fr. Daniel Fanous

Fr. Moses Samaan

Theotokias and Psalis to the Mother of God:

H.G. Bishop Raphael, General Bishop of the Churches of Central Cairo

The Song of Mary

And Mary said: “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name.

His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors”.

(Luke 1:46-55)

Click
on the icon
to hear it 

Short Song

“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, **Luke (1:46-48)**





Books & Files suitable for St. Mary's Fast

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Hegumen
Tadros
Yacoub
Malaty

١- القديسة مريم في المفهوم الارثوذكسي	
٢- أقمني يا ملك الملوك ملكًا	
٣- أخبريني عن ابنك، يا أم القديس	
٤- متى أحمل السماوي في قلبي يا أمي	
٥- القديسة مريم المَعْمَل الإلهي	
٦- ميامر عن والدة الاله - مار يعقوب السروجي	
٧- تكريم السيد المسيح لأمه	
8- SAINT MARY IN THE ORTHODOX CONC	
9- Tell me about your Son O Mother of the Holy One!	
10- The Heavenly Queen	



St. Mary Glorification	
St. Mary Procession	
Theotokias	
St. Mary in Agbeya Prayers	





1

A Heavenly Queen Or A Royal throne?!

Ἰσχυρῶ ἢ τε ἔφε
ἰε Πιθρονος ἄβασιλικον



Click on the icon to download



The Friday Theotokia (PDF)



Listen to the Friday Theotokia



A sermon on "St Mary's Fast"
(English) - H.G. Abraham



A sermon on "the life of the Virgin
after the ascension of the Lord
Jesus" (Arabic) - H.G. the late Bishop
Gregorius



A Heavenly Queen Or A Royal throne?!

In a calm atmosphere, I was sitting with my father, the Bishop, in the dining room. I noticed that he kept his tears back and they were so close to his eyes. I felt that these were tears of joy, because the expression of happiness was on his face, and his face revealed great ecstasy.



My father, the Bishop, pointed with his hand to a beautiful icon of the Virgin Mary, as her cheek leaned towards her child Jesus, as He had His hand stretching out towards her face in love and affection!

Then, my father, the Bishop, told me the following story:

"A certain person went into his friend's house in England, and there were signs on the guest's face that he was amazed..."

The owner of the house smiled and said to him: "I know what you want to ask about."

The guest stood silently for a little while, and he was gazing at the ceiling in astonishment from what he saw! He saw a chair hanging from the ceiling of the room, which didn't appear to be any different from the other chairs there.

When the owner of the house found him silent and confused, he said to him: "Do you want to ask why I hang this chair like that?"

The guest replied: "Perhaps it's something personal to you and I should not ask about it, but I am really confused, since I have never seen anyone do this before."

The owner said: "I will tell you the reason why I hang it here and the story of this chair..."

A few years ago, on a very cold night, a simple old lady knocked on my door, so I opened and welcomed her in and she sat down. She asked for a warm cup of tea to





drink, and I prepared it quickly. After she was done, she thanked me fervently and revealed to me that she was Queen Victoria, the Queen of England. It was habitual for her to stop her royal parade in the middle of her journey, to get down from her car and knock on the closest house that she finds, to enter and ask the owners of the house to make her a cup of tea to drink, so that her people would feel her affection towards them.

As she spoke, I observed her facial expressions closely and noticed her royal parade outside, away from my house!

Puzzled, I did not know what to do, so I hung the chair on which she sat, on the ceiling of the room. I said to myself: "if the queen humbled herself to come into my house, I think no one should be allowed to sit on this chair which she sat on, and that's why I hung it."

Then, the Bishop continued, "if this man refused to let anyone sit on the chair after the queen sat on it, then how much more glorious is St. Mary after the King of kings has dwelt within her, was incarnate from her, and after she became a throne for Him?!"

If these are just mere feelings of a person who loves his queen, then how much more should we glorify the Saint whose bosom became a throne to Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords?"

The Prophet Isaiah has seen her 700 years before her birth and called her "the virgin'" saying, "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel [God with us]" (Isaiah 7:14). He realized her glory after the Logos had dwelt in her and took flesh from her. He felt that no man would ever approach her, and no one can occupy the place of her Son in her womb, which the Holy Spirit sanctified specially for the incarnation.





She is not merely a throne on which the Divine Logos sits upon, but she is also a mother, from whom He took flesh: His body, blood and bones!"¹

As we mention that Christ is the true king (Πορρο), we also mention that the virgin is the true queen (Πορρω ὑμμη).

For the mother of the King is a Queen, but she is a heavenly queen. Her reign is not of this world, for it does not cease or change, as she is a queen in the Kingdom of God. Therefore, beloved reader, you will find the title, "Queen," repeated in the doxologies of the Virgin: "Hail to you, O Virgin, the right and true Queen"; it is also found in the hymn of the procession: "Hail to Mary the Queen"; and also in the litanies of the Agpeya, which is originally an expression coined by David the prophet, who saw her as a queen standing on the right-hand of the king: "At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir (Psalm 45:9). The Virgin Mary is the mother of the King. She is, also, the daughter of the King, as David says: "The royal daughter is all glorious within the palace; Her clothing is woven with gold (Psalm 45:13).

She is the bride of the king as David says: "Listen, O daughter, Consider and incline your ear; Forget your own people also, and your father's house; So, the King will greatly desire your beauty; Because He is your Lord, worship Him." Above all, she is the heavenly queen.

For you became a **royal throne** for the One, who is carried, by the cherubim (The Adam Lobsh on the Tuesday Theotokia).

Hail to the royal throne of Him, who is carried by the Cherubim (Adam Morning Doxology).

¹ "This took place in Geneva, in Switzerland, where the members of the meeting between the two families of Orthodoxy took place. During breakfast in the morning, Fr. Tadros Yacoub Malaty noticed that H.G. bishop Gregorious, bishop of Coptic studies, had his eyes fixed on the wall next to him, gazing in silence and reverence on the icon of the Theotokos, which sparked this spiritual conversation between them."





She is the royal throne! This expression is accurate theologically, because as a heavenly queen, she did not sit alone on a throne, but she herself became a royal throne for God, whom the chariot of the cherubim carries, and in front of whom, thousands of thousands and myriads of myriads of angels and archangels stand. Mary, the simple girl, has become greater than all of those and became a royal throne for Christ. She is indeed the pride of our race! The power of her intercessions stems from her being the Mother of God, His royal throne, clothed with light and glory, for she is the woman clothed with the sun.

In every day of the days of this fast:

- Place a beautiful icon of the Mother of God with a candle in front of it, and encourage your family to pray the veneration of the Virgin Mary together at home.

Pray and read together The Song of Mary (Luke 1: 46-55).

- Gather together to pray and be filled with the word of God in the gospel, in the presence of the Lord Jesus and our lady the Virgin Mary

- Individually during the day, speak often with the Virgin in spontaneity and simplicity using expressions from the litanies of the hours pertaining to her, do the same also in your personal prayers from the heart asking for her help and intercession in all that concerns your life.

- Be focused while praying the daily Theotokias for it is the greatest reading on the divine incarnation and on the Mother of God

you will find all of this prayers compiled in PDF files inside this book on page (8).





2

A woman clothed with the sun

Οἴκιον ἐκπολεῖ ἄφρη

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The Saturday Theotokia



Listen to the Saturday Theotokia



A sermon on "On Saint Mary"
(English) - H.G. Bishop Moussa



A sermon titled: "The Virgin
Mother of Light" (Arabic) - H.G. the
late Bishop Poemen



A woman clothed with the sun

"Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.

Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth."
(Revelation 11:19-12:1-2)

At the end of the seventh trumpet, St. John directed our attention towards a vision of the Virgin Mary, the heavenly queen. He describes her in beautiful and wonderful expressions. The Coptic Church was extremely moved by the symbols of St. Mary, that she turned them into a hymn to praise the Virgin Mary, that is sung on every morning and evening of each Thursday. Moreover, there is a complete passage dedicated to this symbol, in the Thursday Theotokia (The Ninth Part) which is the last passage of that Theotokia, in order to correlate with the position of the book of Revelation, the last book in the Bible.

This passage consists of seven consecutive verses. The Church illustrates this vision in the first two verses of the passage, and explains it in the three following verses. The last two verses are a veneration for the Virgin Mary and for the incarnation of our Lord.

I will leave you, beloved, to read it attentively, and then we will comment on it:

"I saw a miracle that appeared in heaven, a woman is clothed with the sun, and the moon also, was under her feet.

Upon her head was a crown of twelve stars, she being with child, cried out in labor, and travail to give birth.

This is Mary, the new heaven on earth, the Sun of Righteousness, shines upon us from her.





For the Sun that is clothing her, is our Lord Jesus Christ, and the moon under her feet, is John the Baptist.

For the crown of twelve stars, upon her head, are the twelve apostles, who surround her and honor her.

Wherefore all you nations, let us glorify the Virgin, for she gave birth to God, and her virginity remained sealed.

He did not cease to be divine, He came and became the Son of Man, for He is the true God, who came and saved us."

In this praise, we see the entire church; our Lord Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, St. John the Baptist, the holy Apostles, and the nations that glorify the Virgin.

With respect to nature, we see heaven, the sun, the moon, and the planets as an elevated backdrop that point towards the heavenly Church. This beautiful passage gives a simple, yet beautiful, commentary on this heavenly and joyful vision.

It is impossible for us to imagine the honor of the Virgin, who is surrounded by the infinite, divine light. St. John saw her as a woman clothed or surrounded by the sun! The first one to see this heavenly queen in her glory was St. John the beloved who was worthy to be entrusted by Christ to take care of His mother. Therefore, he became a faithful son to her, and served her until the end of her earthly life. He was filled with her gentleness, compassion and love, while his soul was attached to her. Many years after her departure and her body being lifted to heaven, the Lord desired to make him joyful so he saw her in heavenly glory as a woman clothed with the sun. How great was St. John's joy with this great vision! For he had seen his mother in glory, and also saw the entire Church represented by the Apostles like twelve crowns on her head, glorifying her.

Also, David saw her in the past as a Queen standing on the right-hand of the King, "clothed in a vestment wrought with gold work, and adorned in diverse manners" (Psalms 45). In fact, the Coptic congregation used to call her the Mother of Light, which is the same expression used in the introduction to the Orthodox Creed, in the





Morning Doxology, and in the First hour of the Agpeya, where we call her, "the bright flower".

The term "The Mother of Light" is an authentic Coptic expression that the Coptic congregation used to refer to St. Mary, and it became one of the most well-known titles of the holy Virgin that Copts use in their daily lives. We recite it almost automatically as we believe and feel her presence with us and her readiness to help us quickly, as soon as we call her.

For we are her children, as the Lord told her, when He was hung on the Cross: "Woman, behold your son!" Thus, we became partakers in St. John's sonship to her, for we are also members of her beloved son's body, our Lord Jesus Christ. However, you may ask, why did the Lord call His mother: "woman"?





3

She shall be called Woman

ܩܘܡܝܢܐ

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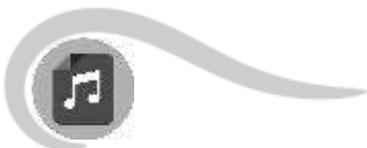
The first Sunday Psali - (Ai-nahti)



Listen to the first Sunday Psali



A sermon on "Holy Theotokos as the Mother of Sorrows" (English) - Fr. Moses Samaan



A sermon on "The Virgin Mary" (Arabic) - Hegumen Tadros Yacob Malaty



She shall be called Woman

Whenever we read this expression, multiple situations where this word was said comes to mind. I hope we can read them, with concentration, so that the Holy Spirit can reveal to us the secret of repeating this word multiple times in the following specific locations (two of them are in the book of Genesis and two from the Gospel Saint John) and they are:

1. In the creation of the woman as a companion to Adam,

"And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him" (Genesis 2:18)

"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."" (Genesis 2:21-23)

2. In the conversation between Adam and God after Adam's fall,

"Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." (Genesis 3:12)

3. In the miracle of the wedding in Cana of Galilee,

"And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."(John 2:3-5)

4. At the Cross

"When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman behold your son!" Then He said





to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home." (John 19:26-27)

The First Instance: When the Lord said: "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a **helper** comparable to him," and the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on him, and He created a woman out of his side. This was a mystical sign pointing towards the Virgin Mary, whom God would offer to mankind on the Cross to be a bride and a mother to every pure soul. She became the **helper** to mankind that we may reach the eternal kingdom. She prays for us, intercedes for us, and supports us, for she is a "capable, compassionate, and helpful mother," as we call upon her in the litanies of the 12th hour (compline).

On this note, the scholar Tertullian says: "God knew that it is not good for man to be alone, and He knew how good it would be for him to have a woman with him, first Mary and then the Church"

The Second Instance: When the Lord searched for Adam in Paradise, in the evening (according to the Coptic translation), and called on him with deep love, saying: "Adam...Where are you?" For the first time, the son would hide from his father, and he would lose the grace of his sonship, and start to feel the shame and disgrace of sin. Terror and fear penetrated his depth instead of love and joy.

He said: *"I heard your voice in paradise, and I was afraid, for I was naked, so I hid."* How did the joyful voice of the Lord become a source of terror to you, Adam?"

Nevertheless, the Lord looked at him with all love and said: *"Who told you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"* Adam said, *"The woman whom you put with me was the one to give me from the tree, so I ate."*

However, at the Cross, God offered us the Virgin Mary as the new woman, the true helper for all humanity. She stretches out her hands to the tree of life (ie. the Cross), and offers us the fruit of life, that we may be covered by His righteousness. Hence, we are no longer naked after we receive Him, as we dwell in Christ and Christ dwells in us, and, in turn, He fills us with infinite joy and love towards the Holy Trinity.





Father Tadros Yacoub Malaty comments on our state after redemption saying: "Now, O Lord, I can say to You with Adam: the woman whom You gave me as a helper, the new Eve, has granted me to eat from the Tree of Life, which is the Cross of her beloved Son, and I was filled with life."

The Third Instance: In the wedding of Cana of Galilee, when He took His pure mother, St. Mary, with Him to the wedding along with some of His disciples, from among whom was John. There, He addressed her as, "woman," using the same expression that Adam used to call Eve, after God created her from his side, and thus, Christ was describing St. Mary as His true bride for Him and us. This happened at a joyful wedding celebration: "for we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones." Therefore, St. Mary His mother, became our mother through Him. She loves us and watches over us, for we are brothers of Christ, her Son. He is our brother, if we do His will. "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother." (Matthew 12:50) That's why the only commandment St. Mary ever told us was, which she said during this instance: "Whatever He says to you, do it." (John 2:5)



The Fourth Instance: This instance occurred during the crucifixion, as a brief conversation between the Savior and St. John, the beloved, in the presence of the silent virgin. It was at the peak of His passion and the very last moments of His life before He delivered up His spirit into the hands of the Father, as He was carrying the sins of all humanity. This was also during the evening (and therefore the sun darkened, and there was darkness over all the earth), ie. in the same place and at the same time when He searched for Adam in the past, and Adam told Him: "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."



(Genesis 3:12). Here, the Lord Christ offered humanity a new woman, His mother and beloved the Virgin Mary, that she may embrace humanity and become for them a





guardian, helper, and compassionate mother; and for humanity to embrace her and enjoy her deep love towards them. Her love would soften their lukewarm hearts, that they may acknowledge the value of salvation, love, purity and chastity in the eyes of God. For through the Cross, we received our new Eve from the hands of God.

Origen sees that every perfect Christian can, like St. John, receive from the Crucified Son, St. Mary as his own mother. He explains the words "Behold, Your Son!", "Whoever is perfect, no longer lives only himself, but Christ also lives in him. Since Christ lives in him, it is said to Mary of him: "Behold, Your Son, Christ!"

Saint Augustine was amazed by St. John (for he especially felt the value of motherhood), remembering what the Lord told the disciples one day: "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life." (Matthew 19:29) So, he comments: "This disciple received hundredfold, more than what he had left behind, for he received the mother of Him, who has given us all things." (Saint Augustine).

The celibate St. John received her to take care of her, and become for him a model and example in his life of celibacy which he chose. Thus, celibacy is no longer shameful like it used to be in the Old Testament, for the celibate Virgin Mary became pregnant with the Messiah, and celibacy became a sign of attachment between God and man. Because He is the true bridegroom of every true soul. With this example, the Virgin Mary becomes a mother to all monks and nuns, and to all who live the life of righteousness in the Lord. Spiritual Celibacy (virginity) has a more profound and extensive meaning than physical celibacy or virginity.

[Your virginity must be spiritual... Truly, not many can be celibate according to the flesh, however, every believer must be spiritual according to the spirit. Therefore, awake my soul and guard your virginity! The mother of the Lord Jesus is a virgin, and His bride the church is a virgin also] - St. Ambrose





4

The Virgin Eve and the Virgin Mary

† παρθενοσ Ευα
Πευ † παρθενοσ Μαριαυ

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The Monday Theotokia



Listen to the Monday Theotokia



A sermon on "The Annunciation"
(English) - Fr. Moses Samaan



A sermon on "the Annunciation to
the Virgin" (Arabic) - H.G. the late
Bishop Gregorius



The Virgin Eve and the Virgin Mary

There were two events that dominated the writings of the Fathers. They beautifully compared them and revealed the mystery of salvation, which God has granted us through this simple virgin. Let's read them together:

The first event is in Genesis 3:1-7 (The Fall of Eve by the deception of the serpent):

"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' "

Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings."

The second event is in Luke 1:26-38 (The Annunciation):

"Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"

But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He





will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible."

Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her."

The first scene is the **fall and destruction** of humanity by the devil, death and sin **through Eve**

The second scene is **resurrection and life** for humanity by the incarnation of the Lord **through Mary**

The Virgin Eve and the Virgin Mary!

St. Irenaeus of Lyon (172 A.D.) evolved this comparison and added a theological aspect to it:

"Just as Eve, while wife of Adam, was still a virgin.... and became by her disobedience the cause of death of herself and of the whole human race; so Mary too, espoused yet a virgin, became by her obedience the cause of salvation of both herself and the whole human race.... The knot of Eve's disobedience was loosened by Mary's obedience. For what the Virgin Eve had bound in unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened through faith..."

St Irenaeus also calls her: "Eve's intercessor" or "Eve's Lawyer" for he says: "Whereas Eve had disobeyed God, Mary was persuaded to obey God, that the Virgin Mary might become the Advocate of the Virgin Eve..."





St. Jacob of Serugh beautifully comments:

"Two virgins received two messages from two messengers
The devil sent a cunning message to Eve, through the serpent
And God sent the glorious annunciation to Mary, through the angel

A virgin was deceived by the evil-doer in Eden
She listened to the great decievement
Instead of her, another virgin was chosen
She listened to the truth from the Most High
From the same door, from which death entered, Life also entered
And she loosed the great knot that the evil one tied us with

The serpent did not greet Eve when she spoke to her
For there is no peace on the way that is full of death
On the other hand, Gabriel, the archangel, greeted Mary with peace
He planted life in her and greeted her with love
The serpent and Eve were both replaced by Archangel Gabriel and Mary"

Many prophets prophesied about salvation, coming from the offspring of the woman through the incarnation of the Word of God. The shortest prophecy ever was the one spoken by the first ever prophet, the prophecy of Adam!





5

Adam's Prophecy!

† προφητῖα ἰτε Ἀδάμ

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Watos Psali to the Virgin Mary



Listen to Watos Psali to the Virgin Mary



A sermon on "Behold Your Mother" (English) – Hegumen Tadros Y. Malaty



A sermon on the Virgin Mary in daily life (Arabic) – Dr. Mina Medhat



Adam's Prophecy!

St. Jacob of Serugh contemplates on the name Adam gave to his wife, when he called her "Eve", meaning "the mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20). It is strange that this name came after the fall, after they separated themselves from God and received the penalty of expulsion from the garden,



and after death and corruption started to take over them. She became a mother for every dead, for death and corruption will pass from them to all their offspring.

Thus, according to St. Jacob of Serugh, Adam spoke at this particular time and gave Eve her name as a double prophecy about the birth of Christ and the Virgin Mary His mother. For He is the living, but life itself and the life-giver to all humans who have died. Likewise, she is the only one who became the true mother of life and the mother of all the living, as we call her in the Tuesday Theotokia: *"Hail to the saint, the Mother of all the living, you are the one we pray to, intercede for us."*

It is as if while Adam was looking at his wife at that very moment (as he had not yet called her Eve), saw in it with the eyes of prophecy the Virgin, the Mother of Christ, so he called his wife: "Eve," because she is the mother of all living, pointing through prophecy towards the Virgin, the mother of Christ.

"Adam looked at the Virgin Eve in purity, and named her, "the mother of all living", and **so he was prophesying**. In prophecy, Adam envisioned our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the true life, and His mother, is the Virgin Mary. He called Eve, the mother of all living, and prophesied that she gave birth to the Life, who is our Lord Jesus".

St. Jacob of Serugh





St. Mary understood this truth very well and mentioned it in her praise to the Lord saying: "For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed." With her spiritual eyes, she foresaw the generations and generations filling the church and joyfully venerating her while celebrating the salvation of the human race. They bless her as the Theotokos as they see in her the mystery of the love of God, which is beyond humanity.

"Mary beheld Eve and her name (Mother of all living) as a mystical sign foreshadowing the events to come. For Life Himself was born from Mary, and thus, she became "Mother of all living." St. Epiphanius of Salamis

Again, St. Jacob of Serugh looks at the Theotokos and cannot help but venerate her in all joy saying: "The Father chose her to be a mother for His only Son, and thus, she is blessed more than any of those who were born. Because of the Fruit of her womb, she declared, "all generations will call me blessed." She beheld her esteemed status and found the world in awe, calling her "blessed." She has seen the future and said that those who inhabited earth will bless her virginity. By the Spirit, she knew that her Son is the King of all nations.

Let us bless her!

Wherefore, we magnify her as blessed for she is truly blessed, and her greatness is beyond comprehension.

Blessed! For she received the Holy Spirit, who sanctified her, made her beautiful, and transformed her to a temple, where the Most High may dwell.

Blessed! For the beauty of her virginity is unceasing and her name shines greatly forth forever.

Blessed! Because of her, joy has entered into the race of Adam, and the fallen and banished have risen who were expelled from the house of the Father.

Blessed! For her body was not blemished with lust. Look at her, for it glows with the fruit of her beloved virginity.

Blessed! For The Great One, The Uncontainable, has dwelt in her small womb who fills heaven which is merely fitting for Him.





Blessed! For she has given birth to the One who is before time; Him who created Adam and through Him renewed the dead creation.

Blessed! For she fed Him her milk from her breasts; to whom the waves of the great seas obey.

Blessed! For she held, embraced and gently played with Him as a baby; the Great Everlasting God, who with His hidden mysterious power, carries the world (Col 1:17).

Blessed! From whom the Saviour has shone to those in bondage, who in zealously, confined the one who put them in bondage, and gave the earth calmness.

Blessed! For she placed her pure mouth on The Son's lips; Whose fire the fiery Seraphim hid their faces from (Isaiah 6:2).

Blessed! For her Son is the One who blesses all the blessed.

Blessed is Him, who has shone to us in the flesh from her purity in Holiness.

St. Jacob of Serugh

Blessed are you, O Mary and blessed is your Fruit





6

The Fruit of Your Womb

ΠΟΡΤΑΖ ἸΝΤΕ ΤΕΝΕΧΙ

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The Wednesday Theotokia



Listen to the Wednesday Theotokia



A sermon on "The Virgin Mary Teaches Us Holiness" (English) - Fr. Mark Aziz



A sermon on "The Virgin and the life of joy" (Arabic)- H.G. the late Bishop Rewis



The Fruit of Your Womb

We read in the third chapter of the book of *Genesis* and in the first chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke about two fruits: the fruit of death and the fruit of life.

The first fruit:

"So when the women saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate." (**Genesis 3:6**)

The Second fruit:

"Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" (**Luke 1:42**)

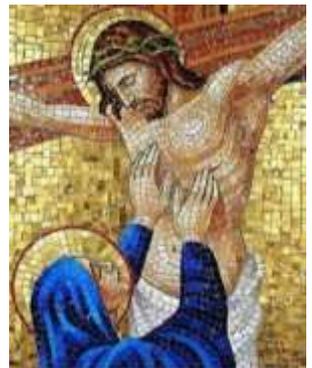
The devil presented the first fruit to Eve and she took it, ate it, and presented it to humanity. Thus, we ate it and separated ourselves from God and died an eternal death.

The Holy Trinity presented the second fruit to the Virgin Mary, and she hid it inside her, and presented it to humanity carrying it on her arms. Thus, we ate it and united with God, and we lived forever.

St. Jacob of Serugh talks about the fruit of St. Mary:

"She presented to us a fruit full of life, that we may eat from it and live eternally with God. The great Sun of Righteousness shone from her, and a glorious light eliminated darkness from the world"

In the book of Proverbs, we read a beautiful, short prophecy about St. Mary: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life" (Proverbs 11:30).



However, from where can we eat this life-giving fruit now?





Contemplate with me, my beloved, about these three verses from the daily midnight praises in the Coptic Church, to discover together an important truth:

We chant in the Monday Psali these beautiful words that point to Christ as the real food, for He is the fruit of Tree of Life:

"God is Immanuel, the True Food, the Immortal, Tree of Life."

And we joyfully chant in the Thursday Theotokia, for our heavenly Father made us worthy to partake from the body and the blood of his beloved Son:

"We have become worthy to have, the Tree of Life to eat from, which is the Body of God, and His true Blood."

And in the Sunday Theotokia, St. Mary steps into this beautiful picture, for she carried the Lord Jesus in her womb, and presented Him to the world as a Eucharist for the life of the world.

"You too, O Mary, have carried in your womb, the rational Manna that came from the Father."

You bore him without blemish, He gave unto us, His honoured Body and Blood, and we live forever."

Hence, we notice St. Mary's relationship with the Eucharist, for she experienced the power and glory of the descent of the Word in her womb. Furthermore, as a faithful servant of Christ, she desires for all humanity to enjoy the gift of unification with God, in order to receive eternal life and experience the beauty of the eternal presence with God.



In fact, the Virgin Mary experienced the meaning of the Eucharistic life the most, for she was the first person to taste the presence of the incarnate Word in her and his unification with her being. She felt the power of life filling her, and the dwelling of the eternal life deep inside her; not just as feelings or mere emotions, but as a personal active presence that





transformed her entire earthly being into a joyful heavenly being. Thus, she became a heaven and a moving church. Just by standing in front of Elizabeth and greeting her, John leaped in Elizabeth's womb, moving with joy, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit! At this moment, Elizabeth said "why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43). Elizabeth was the first to whom the Holy Spirit proclaimed that the Virgin Mary is the mother of God, "The Theotokos".

The Saturday Theotokia starts with the following wonderful words, in which it clarifies how St. Mary offers to us her beloved Son. Read it carefully and focus on the word choice that is filled with the motherly kindness and the true spirit of service, for she is the first servant of the church.

*"O Virgin Mary, the undefiled virtuous,
and holy in everything, who carried God to us"*

The greatest gift that a creator can give to His creation is to grant them Himself. This is the greatest gift that St. Mary received when the Son of God, the Word, accepted to take flesh in her womb. However, she is not the only one that received this gift, but she was a representative for all humanity in accepting this gift. She did not keep Him for herself, but **she presented God to us, carried on her arms**. It is as though she was telling us, "accept Him from me, take Him from my arms and embrace Him with your own arms, and not just that but place Him into your hearts.

This is a wonderful imagery, it's like St. Mary is stretching out her arms for us, to take the Son of God from her and unite with Him. The hidden mystery, here, is extremely deep. It's as though the Church is trying to remind us in the beginning of the Saturday Theotokia, that the mystery of the incarnation is all about the unification of the divine nature with the human nature, which occurred in St. Mary's womb. "This unification was the beginning of us accepting the Word of God in us and uniting with Him", as St. Cyril the Great puts it.

The most important word in that verse is: "to us" or "nān" (in Coptic), which is used repeatedly in the Theotokias, to affirm that the birth of Christ from St. Mary was for us. She gave birth to Him for us, and from her, the Sun of Righteousness shone





for us. She presented Him for us, carried on her arms in order for us to take Him from her, embrace Him and unite with Him that we may become "One Spirit" with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17).

The Adam Psali which the church praises during the fast of the Theotokos summarizes this meaning with clear and amazing expressions. For it says to the Lord Jesus:

*"As a true physician, through the counsel of the Trinity,
You healed our sicknesses, through Mary.*

*You have shone in the flesh, without the seed of man,
from the Virgin, because of Your love for man."*

Thus Malachi the prophet in his prophecy links between the Sun of Righteousness and the action of healing when he said: "But to you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings..." (Malachi 4:2). The church has borrowed this expression to sing it in this psali, and also in the two Theotokias of Monday and Friday. So the Lord Jesus is the Sun of Righteousness who has shone upon us from the Virgin Mary, for she is our **new** heaven.





7

The New

Πίσρη

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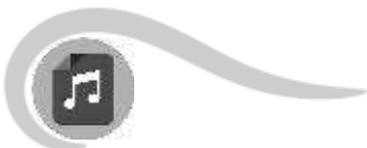
The Thursday Theotokia



Listen to the Thursday Theotokia



A sermon on "St. Mary - The Consecrated Virgin" (English) - Fr. Daniel Fanous



A sermon on the virtues of The Virgin Mary (Arabic) - H.H. Pope Shenouda III



The New

One of the most beautiful titles for the Virgin is the "new one."

We can see this title repeated many times in the Theotokias and in the liturgical prayers and praises that are directed to the Theotokos. For example, in the Thursday Theotokia and in the Morning Doxology, we call her: "The New Heaven."

What do we make out of this title? Why do we call her: "the new one"?

Let's read together from 2 Kings 2:

"Then the men of the city said to Elisha, "Please notice, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the ground barren."

And he said, "Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it." So they brought it to him. Then he went out to the source of the water, and cast in the salt there, and said, "Thus says the Lord: 'I have healed this water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness.' " So the water remains healed to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke." (2 Kings 2:19-22)

We understand the resemblance through the liturgical prayers of the Syrian Orthodox Church:

Your mysteries, O daughter of David, are inscribed in the ark
Your type was drawn by the prophecy in the books
The new bowl was likened to you, for your Son became salt
And He seasoned those who had no taste
And through Him, the dead world was made alive
(The Syrian Book of Hours)

St. Jacob of Serugh describes the human nature created by God, as a city with a strategic location, which should have been a fruitful paradise, but Satan poured, through the serpent, a flow of unclean water, that was accepted by Eve and then Adam her man, which ruined its nature and made it unfruitful. It was impossible to





re-establish this city except by the Creator Himself, the Word of God, who is symbolized by salt. He was incarnate in the womb of the Virgin as in a new bowl, and dwelt among us as the salt that renews our nature and strips away its corruption. He also sees that, as the water was saturated with salt, so did Our Lord Jesus Christ, the divine salt, granted us to partake in His Body and Blood to be healed from the corruption which fell upon us.

St. Jacob of Serugh emphasizes that the new bowl did not contain anything but salt, which directs us to the miraculous birth of the Word of God from St. Mary, while her virginity is sealed. He also references the location of the city, Jericho, whose walls have fallen when Joshua entered the promised land after crossing the Jordan. He says: "This city was under condemnation but Christ came to bless it and lift away its curse".

"Thus all of the beautiful creation was full of death, until the Son shone from Mary and healed the living.

If the new bowl didn't pour salt on the spring of diseased water, it would not have been healed, and if the Virgin didn't give birth to the Son of God, humanity would not have risen from its fall.

He stirred the salt in water, for everyone to drink, just as the Son united with humanity so that we may live because of Him.

Come and behold, the salt is consumed by the unclean water, and the dead eat the Son of God to live.

By salt, the water was made well and the people with the body were also made well. And the earth, like Jericho, lived again after sickness...

Elisha, through the mystery of the Son, threw salt in the unclean water to purify it, and to remove the curse.

At the beginning, God cursed the earth because of Adam, and so did Joshua curse Jericho when he destroyed it. But through this salt, Jericho's curse was removed and through Elisha, the power of death which came upon her was abolished.

Similarly there, a great symbolism was manifested of the Son of God who took away the curse and prohibited death from mankind." **St Jacob of Serugh**





This title is famous in the Syrian Church, as they call the Virgin, “**The New Bowl of Elisha**” or “**The New Bowl.**”

In the Coptic Church, however, we call her in the 8th Part of the Sunday Theotokia, “**The Grace of Elisha.**”

The word “new” is repeated multiple times in both the Old and New testament to indicate the new creation and the new life that can be found in Christ.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 corinthians 5:17)

The first to receive this new life is the Virgin, for she became herself new, and this renewal happens due to the power of the Holy Spirit and His dwelling in us.

Isaiah the prophet prophesied about this renewal, which will happen to the Virgin as an example to the church saying:

*For Zion's sake I will not hold My peace,
And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
Until her righteousness goes forth as brightness,
And her salvation as a lamp that burns.
The Gentiles shall,
see your righteousness,
And all kings your glory.
You shall be called by a new name,
Which the mouth of the Lord will name.
You shall also be a crown of glory
In the hand of the Lord,
And a royal diadem
In the hand of your God.
(Isaiah 62: 1-3)*

This idea was confirmed by St Jacob of Serugh, when he said “He made her new” after the descent of the Holy Spirit on her in order to sanctify her. He also draws





a beautiful comparison between the creation of Eve from Adam and the birth of Christ from St. Mary. He says about the Virgin Mary:

"As our mother Eve came out of our father Adam without marriage,
She too (the Virgin Mary) gave birth to Christ,
The Holy Spirit that hovered over Adam and created Eve,
She also received Him and gave birth to a son.
He made her new, and the Lord saw that she was extremely beautiful,
For this reason, the angel said that the Holy Spirit will descend on Mary before the
Word comes down to her womb." **Jacob of Serugh**

David, the Psalmist, sang many songs about the Virgin Mary. Also the church, inspired by the Holy Spirit, focused on the most important 10 prophecies that David said about the Mother of God and the incarnation of the Word in her womb. The Church sings them in two important hymns: the Kiahk Ode (Hos), which is said by the church with it's long brilliant tune during the praising vigils on the Sundays of the Month of Kiahk, and the hymn of 'Atai Pathenos" - This Virgin today attained greatness - which is sung with a joyful spirit during the veneration of the Mother of God.

Why did the church choose these 10 prophecies specifically?

It was this beautiful verse that was the source of inspiration for this marvelous arrangement in praising the Mother of God; that which is mentioned in Psalm 143 according to the Coptic translation (See also Psalm 91: 4 and Psalm 32: 2), in which David, the Prophet, talks about the incarnation and then sings this new hymn to the Lord on a harp of ten strings.

"Bow down Your heavens, O LORD, and come down;

Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.

I will sing a new song to You, O God; On a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to You," **Psalms 144:5, 9**





The Church Fathers noticed that the first letter in the name: "Jesus," is the tenth in the Alphabet in many ancient languages (Hebrew, Greek, Coptic, English, and many others).

The Iota letter (I) in the word "Ιησους", meaning Jesus in Greek, is the the first letter in the name and is also the tenth in the Greek and Coptic Alphabet.

The letter J in "Jesus", is also the tenth letter in the English alphabet. That's why number 10 refers to the Lord Jesus, and also because number 10, according to the explanation of St. Augustine, is the completion of any numerical unit in all languages, which resembles the perfection of our Lord Jesus.

It is as if David saw his harp as a symbol of the ten-stringed Mother of God, who presented to us the Lord Jesus, the incarnate God, in her womb. He also saw the music of these strings as the symphony of the harmonious prophecies that the Holy Spirit proclaimed on the mouths of the holy prophets as a declaration of this joyous gospel; the glad tidings of salvation for all humanity.

This is the new and appropriate praise for the new creation, which is leading a new life in Christ Jesus, after it became one with Him in the divine Laboratory.





8

The Uniting Place (Laboratory)

Περσακτηριον ἡνωρῆ

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The hymn of Are-presvavin



Listen to the hymn of Are-
Presvavin



A sermon on "St Mary Theotokos"
(English) - Fr. Moses Samaan



A sermon on "The fast of the Virgin
Mary" (Arabic) - H.G. the late Bishop
Youannis, Bishop of Gharbeya



The Uniting Place (Laboratory)

St. Basil the great likes to give St. Mary a unique title that cannot be used to describe anyone else in heaven or earth: "The Uniting Place (or Laboratory)."

Or the "The laboratory of the divine economy"

St. Basil calls St. Mary's womb, a Lab. The Virgin Mary was called to cooperate with the power of God by offering her body and thus, in this unique lab, the following was accomplished:

1. The Holy Trinity is at work in her

In the Annunciation, the angel told St. Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35) How great is this lab! In this very lab, the power of God the Father overshadows her, the Holy Spirit comes upon her, and the Word of God takes flesh from her. **St. Basil the Great**

2. The greatest Divine Economy is accomplished; Emmanuel: God with us!

In this lab, the Word of God became in her womb! God became with us! How great is this gift! He became one of us, one of the sons of our race and we have become His friends and His very own companions.

In Psalm 45 (*God is our refuge and strength in the Coptic translation*), David the psalmist, sees the incarnate Word in the womb of the Virgin, united to our nature. God is with us and we are in Him!

For this reason, he cries out:

"There is a **river whose streams** (the Holy Spirit) shall make glad the **city of God** (the Virgin) The holy place of the tabernacle (the Virgin) of the **Most High** (the Father).

God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved (the Son)

The Lord of hosts is with us (= Emmanuel); The God of Jacob is our refuge.

Come, behold the works of the Lord, who has made desolations in the earth...





The Lord of hosts is with us (= God with us); The God of Jacob is our refuge."

In other words, David is saying:

The Holy Spirit fills the Virgin Mary with joy. The heavenly Father sanctifies her, that Christ may dwell in her midst (in her womb); Emmanuel, God with us! Come behold the marvelous works of God that He performed in His incarnation; Emmanuel, God with us!

My beloved reader, read again the words of the psalm and, meanwhile, think of the words of Gabriel, the Archangel, to the Virgin Mary:

*"Rejoice, O full of grace, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"
Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.
He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.
And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."*

The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. (Luke 1: 28-35)

Thus, the mystery that was planned from before all ages was fulfilled, and was proclaimed by the prophets: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14)

In the praises of the Coptic Church, we use this term (the Lab) to venerate St. Mary in the Wednesday Theotokia:

***"Hail to the Laboratory (ie. of the unparted natures,
that came together in one place, without ever mingling."***





This verse very precisely describes what happened in the womb of the Virgin, where the Divine nature, fully and uniquely, united with the human nature without mingling, alteration, confusion, or separation of any kind. (Throughout history, the heretics were all trampled by these previous various expressions, while they explained the incarnation without reverence, fear or humility).

The unity of the two natures in the womb of the Virgin is a mystery, for the one who praises saw in St. Mary a lab in which both natures were united without mingling. If anyone contemplates on this wondrous mystery, they would keep silent, for this mystery must be praised in silence, and in praise, they will discover its spiritual truth.

This unity was for us and for our salvation. Its result was our unity with God! He did not need us but we were the ones in need of Him. By His unity with us, He took what is ours and gave us what is His. He took our body and gave us His Holy Spirit, and made us one with Him, through His goodness (as we sing in the Friday Theotokia).

These highly precious terms cannot be taken lightly without understanding their importance... God made us one with Him! In Coptic "αϕαιτεν νουαι νεμαϕ" or in another Theotokia, "ντεϕροπτεν εροϕ ειτεν τεϕμετασταθος "

In other words, He united us with Him through His goodness.

We cannot unite with God by our own efforts. He has to humble Himself and unite us with Him. This is God's wondrous love! And why does He love us? The Theotokia answers this question; it's because He is good.

The "Good Lover of Mankind" is one of the most beautiful terms that is used repeatedly by the Church. In the Midnight Prayers alone, we repeat it 41 times (in the Thanksgiving prayer, Arise O Children of the Light, and in Psalm 118).

"For the words of God are of course true, and in no manner whatsoever can they be false: for even though we understand not in what way God works acts such as these, yet He Himself knows the way of His works. For when Nicodemus could not





understand His words concerning holy baptism, and foolishly said, "How can those things be?" he heard Christ in answer say, "Verily I say to you, that we speak that which we know, and testify that which we see" - St. Cyril of Alexandria (Sermon 142 on Luke 22)

God's love for us is infinite, for He offered us Himself. If we say that He has given us everything, our words would be incomplete and would not represent the truth in its fullest! He has given us the most precious thing that ever existed, He has given us Himself! His Holy Spirit! Our sonship to the heavenly Father! Eternal Life! St. Basil (330-379) says it beautifully: "Because of His abundant gifts, we cannot comprehend His goodness anymore!"

However through faith we understand and believe like Abraham believed in God, and it was counted to him as righteousness. Also Sarah believed because she judged Him faithful who had promised. But without faith *it is* impossible to please Him. The Virgin believed and she received Christ Himself and became **the Grace of Abraham**.





9

The Grace of Abraham

ΠΙΣΜΟΤ ἸΤΕ Ἀβραάμ



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The hymn of Shere Maria Ti-ouro



Listen to the hymn of Shere Maria Ti-ouro



A sermon on "Submission" (English)
- Fr. Daniel Fanous



A sermon on "The song of the Virgin Mary" (Arabic) - H.H. Pope Shenouda III



The Grace of Abraham

The same way Abraham - the Patriarch - started and inaugurated the Old Testament with an act of faith, St. Mary appeared at the dawn of the New Testament echoing the same Orthodox faith, yet in a stronger manner. Here, we will focus on two very important events in Abraham's life; the promise of Isaac's birth and offering Isaac as a sacrifice.

The promise of Isaac's birth and the Annunciation of Jesus' birth

God promised Abraham future descendants, when he was an old man and his wife Sarah was an old woman too and has been infertile all her life. "*[Abraham] believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.*" (Genesis 15:6)

St. Paul describes him, using very strong expressions of faith,

"Who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be." And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness." (Romans 4:18-22)

Archangel Gabriel put St. Mary in a very similar situation to the one Abraham and Sarah were in, when they heard the word of God from the three men by the terebinth trees of Mamre. (Genesis 18:1-15). Let us compare both scenes side by side.

Archangel Gabriel told the Virgin about the pregnancy of Elizabeth, who was infertile, and she believed. Similarly, the three men told Abraham about his wife Sarah's pregnancy, who was also infertile, and he believed as well.

The angel tells St. Mary: "For with God nothing will be impossible." (Luke 1:37) And the three men tell Abraham: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14) It's the same subject, the same faith, and almost the same words!





Virgin Mary was immersed in God's way of thinking from the books of the Old Testament, and she actually remembered God's promise to Abraham, when she answered the angel in solid faith saying: "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38) At the end of her praise, she remembered her forefather Abraham and said: "He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever." (Luke 1:54-55) St. Mary believed without hesitation or doubt, so her faith gave her strength and she glorified God who promised and is able to fulfill as well. The Virgin Mary, in the church, is a model for pure faith, that is rooted in the land of grace and the word of God.

St. Mary and Mount Moriah

On this mountain, Abraham presented his son, Isaac, as an offering of love, and on the same mountain, king Solomon built the temple.

In Genesis 22, we read about when God tested Abraham by asking him to offer his dear son as a burnt offering on the top of mount Moriah, and in complete faith, Abraham obeyed. He woke up early, took his son Isaac and went up the mountain, leaving his two servants at the foothill.

Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." (Genesis 22)

But at the foothills, Abraham said a strange thing to his two servants: "stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you." He told them that he's going to return with Isaac! How is that possible?!

St. Paul clarified this in his epistle to the Hebrews in the chapter of faith, when he wrote: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said: "In Isaac your seed shall be called," **concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead**, from which he also received him in a figurative sense."





(Hebrews 11:17-19) He believed that God was going to raise Isaac from the dead, after he presented him as a burnt offering! Abraham's faith was marvelous and strong. He totally believed God, because He promised him that his seed will be from Isaac, despite the fact that God now asked him to present Isaac as a burnt offering. Abraham obeyed in full and pure obedience, without questioning, bewilderment or complaining.

This is why the result was that God said to him: *"Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."* Then, Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So, Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, *"The-Lord-Will-Provide"*; as it is said to this day, *"In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided."*

Even the Lord Jesus Christ Himself told the Jews: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." (John 8:56) repeating the verb "to see" twice, which Abraham used in naming the mountain. When responding to Isaac who asked about the lamb for the burnt offering, he said to him: "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." Abraham saw the day of the Lord; he symbolically lived through the mystery of the sacrifice on the Cross and saw the mystery of Christ's resurrection from among the dead. He saw and rejoiced as the Lord Jesus Christ said about him. Are not these the same words of the psalm that talks about the Lord's resurrection day: "This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalm 118)

On the same top of this mountain, where Abraham's faith was manifested, Solomon built the temple. The Old Testament Church was founded on the mystery of the cross and resurrection, in addition to the "The Lord's Revelation" mountain, where we see the Lord and the Lord sees us.

"Now Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite." (2 Chronicles 3:1)





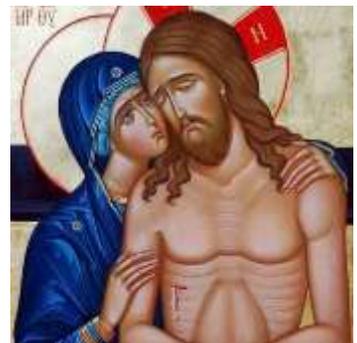
He inaugurated it with glory and great magnificence; and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house. (2 Chronicles 6-7)

The Church Fathers saw the virgin Mary in both events clearly. The Virgin Mary is the temple made of flesh that God chose to be His dwelling, which was founded on the mystery of faith, exactly like Mount Moriah that witnessed Abraham's faith and love. Hence, the Lord Jesus Christ declared to Peter and the disciples that the Church is built on the rock of faith.

The Virgin Mary is the real temple of the Lord of hosts, founded by the mystery of death and resurrection. Simeon the righteous declared this in his prophecy about the day of Christ's circumcision, when he said to Mary His mother: "Behold this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against. Yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." (Luke 2:34-35)

Just like Abraham gave up his only beloved son as an offering - but God stopped him and showed him the ram - the Virgin Mary also followed her crucified Son to Mount Calvary (Golgotha), enduring all His aches and pains, listening to the people humiliating Him, watching as they spat on His face and slapped Him. We cannot possibly imagine the magnitude of pain she experienced, this affectionate mother, when she watched the nails being hammered into her Son's body and Him extreme agony. In addition to the masses of people mocking Him, unaware that He is dying for them to live, to offer them forgiveness and the glorious eternal life!

The Virgin Mary could not possibly have endured all this pain, that pierced her heart like a sword and flamed her insides, if it wasn't for her faith in Christ's resurrection. She fully believed with all her heart in Christ's resurrection and His great salvation, this is why the church described her as, **"the treasure of the resurrection"**.





10

The Treasure of the Resurrection

ΠΙΛΟ ΝΤΕ ʒΑΝΑΚΤΑΚΙ



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The Sunday Theotokia



Listen to the Sunday Theotokia



A sermon on "Veneration of St Mary" (English) - Fr. Moses Samaan



A sermon on "The Virgin Mary and the life of praise" (Arabic) - Hegumen Tadros Yacob Malaty



The Treasure of the Resurrection

*"You are the treasure that Joseph bought,
and he found the pearl, hidden in its midst.*

*Our Savior Jesus was found in your womb,
you gave birth to Him for the world, so He might save us."*

This excerpt is one of the most beautiful parts of the Tuesday Theotokia. I have often paused before it, fascinated by the magnificence of the expressions used, with the genuine feeling that the Virgin Mary is truly a treasure! This righteous man, Joseph the Carpenter, bought the treasure and he found the very expensive pearl hidden in its midst; Christ, who was found in her womb. How beautiful is this family! A righteous man, a pure virgin girl, and the Lord Jesus in her womb!

But how did the author of this Theotokia formulate these wonderful expressions?

The authors of the praises of our Church were holy fathers, who were filled with the Spirit of the Gospel, and the Church's life, until it became their language and the source of their expressions in formulating the various praises and hymns. For example, the excerpts that we are currently discussing have been formulated by the author based entirely on one of the parables of the Kingdom of Heaven that the Lord Jesus once said,

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Matthew 13: 44-46)

The Lord Jesus said those two parables to His disciples, from among the collection of parables that He has given them in the house, when He was alone with them, as said before both parables, "Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house." (Matthew 13:36) Then, His disciples asked Him to explain to them the parable





of the wheat and the tares, and so He did. After that, He gave them the former two parables which we will now elaborate on.

The First Parable: a man sold all that he had and bought a field which has a hidden treasure.

The Second Parable: a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

The author of the former verses of the Theotokia brilliantly mixed both parables together, which the Lord Christ told consecutively. Joseph, the carpenter, is that man who sold all that he had, and because of his joy, he bought that field with the hidden treasure in its midst. Likewise, we are also called to obtain this treasure, which contains the pearl of precious price. Therefore, we realize that the closer we become to the Virgin Mary, the closer we are to Christ, who is in her bosom. The opposite is also true, the closer we become to Christ, carrying with Him the Cross, the closer we become to His mother, for He immediately offers us His mother as a helper and protector. Fr. Pishoy Kamel writes, **"Whoever walks with Christ until the Cross, deserves to have the Virgin as a mother."**

This wonderful explanation reoccurs also in the psalmody during the hymn of the Resurrection, "Ten-nav," (We look at the Resurrection of Christ), which the church traditionally sings during the entire duration of the holy fifty days and during midnight praises every Sunday (except for the period of the month of Kiahk and until the end of the Sundays of Lent).

***"And we, too, let us glorify you as a treasure of the Resurrection
. Hail to the sealed treasure through which we were given life.***

Hail to her who gave birth to Christ, our God who gave us life through His Resurrection."

Thus, in our Coptic tradition, the glorification of our Saviour's Resurrection is inseparable from the glorification of His incarnation from the Theotokos and His death on the wood of the cross. Moreover, the Virgin Mary is the only person who is inseparable from Christ in any ecclesial occasion. During the Holy Pascha week, we





cease to mention any saints or martyrs, except for the Virgin Mary, to the extent that in the prayers of the Holy Pascha and the hymns of Good Friday, we continually honour her (such as in the hymns of the 6th and 9th hours, the hours of crucifixion and death of our Saviour, respectively).

According to the tradition of our Coptic church, we celebrate the three major feasts of the Lord (the Annunciation, the Nativity and the Resurrection) on the 29th day of every Coptic month, during the 9 months of her pregnancy starting from the 29th of Baramhat to the 29th of Kiahk.

On the 29th of Baramhat, Archangel Gabriel announced the birth of our Saviour to the Virgin Mary. On the 29th of Kiahk, the Lord Jesus was born of the Virgin in Bethlehem of Judea, as the angel announced. In addition, the divine economy arranged for Christ to rise from the dead on the same day, on which the Annunciation occurred, which is the 29th of Baramhat! Certainly, it is a divine mystery in front of which we pause in silence, reverence and awe, praising our King Emmanuel, who saved us.

In his sermon on Joyous Saturday, St. Epiphanius links the Annunciation, Nativity and Resurrection together, saying,

"An angel announces to St. Mary, the Mother of God, the birth of Christ, and another angel announces to Mary Magdalene the resurrection of Christ from the tomb.

In the former, the angel said to the virgin, "rejoice", and in the latter, Christ Himself asked Mary Magdalene, "why do you weep?" and He declared to her the joy of the resurrection.

In the evening, Christ is born in Bethlehem, and in the evening also, He is born again anew from the dead in Zion.

He is wrapped in cloth at His birth and is wrapped in linen at His death.

At His birth, He receives the gifts (Myrrh, Gold and Frankincense) from the Magi, and at the tomb, the perfumes are placed on his body.





Here, Joseph the carpenter serves Him, and at the Cross, Joseph of Arimathea volunteers to bury Him while He is the giver of life to all.

His birthplace was in a manger in Bethlehem, and the tomb was like a manger, in which He was born anew.

The first people to be preached about the birth of Christ were the shepherds, and the first to be preached about His new birth (His resurrection from the dead) were the disciples, the shepherds of the church.

After forty days of His birth, Christ entered the earthly Jerusalem, which was the temple, and because He was the firstborn, He offered to God a pair of turtledoves.

After forty days from His resurrection, Christ entered the heavenly Jerusalem - which He never left - to the Holy of Holies, and because He is the firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep, He offered to the Father a pair of undefiled turtle doves, which are the human soul and body.

In the earthly Temple, Simon the elder held Him in his arms in awe and reverence, and in the heavenly one, the eternal Father accepted Him in His bosom, in an indescribable way.

And as Christ was born of the virgin and her virginity remained sealed, He likewise rose again from the tomb and the seal of the tomb was not loosened."

The 29th of Baramhat had a great divine significance in the mind of the virgin, for it was the date on which the angel announced to her the news of salvation. The days then pass by and her Son, Jesus, is crucified and He dies on Friday, the 27th of Baramhat. The 28th of the month passes by and Christ is in the tomb (Joyous Saturday), and the Virgin waits for the 29th of Baramhat patiently, for she knew that Her son would rise from the dead, as He is the savior of the world, as the angel had told her on the same day, thirty three years and nine months earlier.





The 29th of Baramhat is the day, on which Christ entered into the world in the flesh through the Virgin Mary, to save the world, which He has created. On this same day, He dwelt in her womb, and likewise on this day, He broke out of it alive from the tomb, after raising those who were in the shadow of death.



He entered into her womb without the seed of man and likewise, rose from the dead with His own authority and with the power of His divinity.

The Holy Spirit came upon the Virgin, the power of the Father overshadowed her, and she gave birth to Christ. Likewise, the Father raised the Son with the Holy Spirit (the work of the Holy Trinity in the incarnation and the resurrection).

Therefore, the Church calls the Virgin Mary in the Sunday Midnight Praises, "the treasure of the Resurrection", for she was the one who hid Christ - who conquered death - inside of her since the Annunciation, for He is the eternal life.

The Midnight Praises remains a witness to both elements: the praise of Christ's Resurrection, and the veneration of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, the treasure of the Resurrection.



This expression could be daily felt in our relationship with the Theotokos, for she tasted the resurrected life in Christ. She helps us in our life of repentance and prepares us for it, as we tell her in the 11th hour of the Agpeya, "prepare for me the ways of repentance, O Lady the Virgin," and in the 12th hour, "keep the waves of evil thoughts away from me, and raise up my ailing soul for prayer and vigil" and in the prayer of Veil, "We ask and entreat you, crying, O Theotokos, to save us by your intercessions, and raise us up from the dark sleep, in order to powerfully glorify God." The Virgin is a capable, compassionate mother and she lifts us up from drowning in the waves of evil thoughts, for she is the "Rational hook."





11

The Rational hook

†ΩΩΩ ΝΝΟΗΤΗ

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The hymn of Atai Parthenos



Listen to the hymn of Atai Parthenos



A sermon on "The Virgin Mary in the Hymns of St Severus" - Fr. Peter Farrington



A sermon on "The Virgin Mary and her motherhood towards humanity" (Arabic) - Hegumen Tadros Yacob Malaty



The Rational hook

***"You are the Rational hook that catches Christians,
and teaches them to worship the life-giving Trinity"
(Watos Lobsh on the Friday Theotokia).***

The Virgin Mary does not attract anyone to herself, she outreaches humanity, serves, attracts and urges us to be in unity with Christ, her beloved Son. She is the greatest theological teacher in the church, for she teaches humanity the mystery of the Holy Trinity, not as some dry, theoretical facts, but as an action of prayer, worship, and life of fellowship. For the theologian is the one who prays (*According to the expression of St. Evagrius*).



The pure Virgin is an exemplary model for humanity that is united with God. She is the icon of Christian righteousness. Her silence is reverent and balanced, declaring her everlasting awareness of God's presence inside of her. She is the silent and calm church, the ship sailing from place to place in the midst of a raging sea, saving those who are drowning and battling death. She picks them up to live within her. Truly, she is silent from the outside, but from inside, the voices of praise and glorification echo, as well as her unceasing intercession for humanity. For if the Apostles and the shepherds of the church are fishers of men, then the Virgin Mary is the net. However, she is not an ordinary, inanimate net, but she is the rational/ speaking net.

In the Sunday Theotokia we pray,

"You too, O Mary, are clothed with the glory, of the divinity, within and without.

For you have brought, unto God your Son, many people, through your purity."





These verses declare to us an important truth, which is that the secret of purity and chastity is clothing oneself with the glory of the divinity. For holiness and purity - which we dream of having - are themselves Christ who dwells within us, through His Holy Spirit. It's not merely a virtue that we gain with our own strength, but is a fruit of the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. When the Spirit overshadowed the Virgin Mary, He sanctified her and filled every part of her soul and body. She became full of Grace and a saint in every way (the title that is repeated extensively in the Theotokias); "ⲫⲁⲧⲟⲩⲗⲉⲃ" which means without corruption or ⲫⲁⲧⲁⲃⲛⲓ which means without blemish. These Coptic expressions were written by the fathers, while being fully aware of the truth of the Virgin Mary. They did not write it to exaggerate or compliment her unnecessarily. They genuinely meant their expressions and repeated them very often when praising her, or when preaching about her. They were completely aware of the magnitude of grace, which she received from the Holy Spirit. We also have to realize that these expressions did not mean that she was without sin or that she was infallible since birth from St. Hanna, her mother, or during her life. She witnessed herself that God was her Savior, when she proclaimed in front of Elizabeth saying: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior... For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name... (Luke 1: 46-55). Thus, the Church distinguishes between her life before the incarnation (as Adam's daughter inheriting condemnation) and after (after the Holy Spirit sanctified her). This is beautifully described in the Thursday Theotokia,

*"O the depth of the riches, and wisdom of God,
for the womb under punishment, bore children with deep pain.*

*He became the source of immortality, she gave birth to Emmanuel,
without the seed of man, to revoke the corruption of our race."*

How many nations has the Virgin attracted and caught as a Rational hook, and joyfully offered them to her Son? She is a true mother. Her heart is always yearning with desire for humanity to taste the grace of Christ, her son, and to live in His righteousness. She knows Him well and knows His capabilities (if one can say so). She knows that He can save all humanity, to purify it from all defilement with one drop of His precious blood, only if humanity would offer itself to Him and does His will.





Therefore, her only commandment to us in the entire Bible is made up of five words: "Whatever He says to you, do it."

In Egypt, we have experienced this through her frequent apparitions and her miracles which do not cease. In so many tribulations, she has caught a large number of Egyptians and foreigners who have become believers in the Holy Trinity and lived in Christ.

The Virgin Mary's attractiveness stems from her holiness and purity. This is the bait in the net. The World, today, needs people who truly live in purity and chastity. True holiness is a great light that can never be hidden as it is the light of the Trinity. It is a clear declaration of the presence of God, for she has become a **dwelling place for the wisdom of God!**





12

Dwelling Place of the Wisdom of God

ΘΥΑΝΩΠΙ ΝΤΕ ΨΟΦΙΑ ΝΤΕ Φ†

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The hymn of Rashi Ne



Listen to the hymn of Rashi Ne



A Sermon on "St Mary The New Ark" (English) - Fr. Moses Samaan



A sermon on "The Virgin is full of Grace" - H.G. the late Bishop Reweis



Dwelling Place of the Wisdom of God

Moses the prophet, concludes the book of Exodus with five beautiful verses, in which he describes the Tabernacle. He speaks about the glory of God that filled the Tabernacle as a cloud that completely covered it inside and outside during the day and as a pillar of fire during the night.

"Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle...For the cloud of the Lord was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys." (Exodus 4:34-38)



This beautiful scenery was breathtaking to the Church Fathers as they saw in it St. Mary, during the Annunciation. What the Archangel Gabriel told her is very much connected to when the glory of God used to fill the Tabernacle through a pillar of cloud.

"And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35)



In Exodus, the cloud covered the Tabernacle, and the glory of God filled it. In the gospel of Luke, the power of the Highest overshadowed the Virgin, the Holy Spirit filled her and the Lord dwelt in her womb. As a result, we sing in the Sunday Theotokia concerning the Tabernacle:





"Who can speak of, the honor of the tabernacle, which Moses had made, on Mount Sinai?

They likened it to you, O Virgin Mary, the true tabernacle, wherein dwelt God."

The Fathers, however, linked both events (the Annunciation and the Tabernacle) with the Transfiguration of our Lord on the mountain. In order for us to understand this spiritual mystery, I will leave you, my dear reader, to read the following verses first, but read in the spirit of prayer:

"Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said.

While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen."
(Luke 9:28-36)

They are the same events repeated in three different places: the Tabernacle, the Annunciation, and the Transfiguration and the same signs of the presence of God occur: the overshadowing cloud and the glory that fills it.

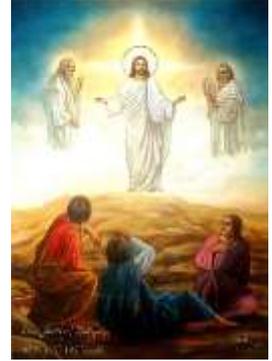
In the Tabernacle: The cloud overshadows and the glory of God fills the Tabernacle from inside.





In the Annunciation: The power of the Highest overshadows the Virgin and the Holy Spirit comes down upon her and at this very moment, she conceives the Holy Son of God. Thus, her womb becomes the new dwelling place of God with His people.

In the Transfiguration: The voice of God comes out of the overshadowing, bright cloud, while the beloved Son is in the utmost glory on the mountain.



The Virgin Mary is the holy Tabernacle on Mount Sinai as well as the holy mountain of God. She is the mystery by which God was manifested to humans and His dwelling place.

The last two feasts in the Coptic calendar are: the Transfiguration Feast and St. Mary's Feast.

We celebrate the feast of the Transfiguration on (13th of Mesra - August 19th), in which the Lord Jesus, the heavenly Bridegroom, was transfigured by His divine glory on Mount Tabor, so that the Church (the Bride) may acknowledge the truth about her groom that she may long for Him and be united with Him.

The Feast of St. Mary (16th of Mesra - August 22nd) reveals the character of the Bride, for she includes in her membership the people of God from the Old and New Testaments. St. Mary is considered the perfect model for our lives. Everytime we celebrate her feast, our hearts long for the grace of God to work within us, that we follow her example. For her feast is the feast of the mother who remained a virgin, which became a heaven thus her body was lifted to the heavens, while being crowned with glory, honour, and the heavenly light, for this is **the glory of Transfiguration**.





13

Triads of events during the Transfiguration

Πρωαι Ἰτε Ἰμεταμορφωσις



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An improvised prayer for the feast of Transfiguration - Hegumen Tadros Yacob Malaty



A complete recording of Midnight Praises for the feast of Transfiguration - H.G. Bishop Raphael



A sermon on "Transfiguration" (English) - H.G Bishop Abraham



A sermon on "Contemplations on the feast of Transfiguration" (Arabic) H.G. the late Bishop Makary, Bishop of Sinai



Triads of events during the Transfiguration

H.H. Pope Tawadros II

In the beginning, I would like to send you, beloved, my best wishes for the celebration of the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus, which is the last feast in our Coptic calendar. We celebrate this feast on the 13th of Mesra or August 19th during St. Mary's fast.

Let's read together the story as it came in Luke 9:

"Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His [c]decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three [d]tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said.

While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen." (Luke 9:28-36)

The Transfiguration main features:

- 1) A Mountain
- 2) An Ascension
- 3) A Light





An Oral Test before the Transfiguration:

After the disciples have seen the miracles that Christ did and they listened to His teachings, Christ took them to Caesarea Philippi and He wanted to test them:

The test consisted of two questions.

The first question: "Who do the crowds say that I am?"

Their answer: "John the Baptist, but some say Elijah; and others say that one of the old prophets has risen again."

The second question: "But who do you say that I am?"

"Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven."

Then, Christ chose three disciples: Peter, James, and John, to go up the mountain with Him.

The Mystery of the Holy Mountain:

The mountain has three hidden meanings: steadfastness, height, and greatness.

Going up the mountain requires effort, and when we reach the summit, we see the Light, who is Christ Himself. Transfiguration occurred in the daylight, but Christ's light was stronger than that of the Sun.

The mountain represents: our faith.

Going up the Mountain: requires effort and exhaustion.

Seeing the Light: requires from us love, thus, our hearts must be full of love to see Christ's glory.





As a Christian, every time you stand for prayer, you are going up the mountain to see Christ's Light.

Christ's Light

Why did Christ choose to transfigure in light?

The reason is that the beam of light travels in straight lines, so when Christ commanded us to be the light of the world, He was asking us to shine to the world with behaviour that reflects the same straightness.

When we live with orthopraxis², this is evidence for our enlightenment, and our hearts start to experience spirituality, and our lives are extended to heaven.

In every prayer, we stand in reverence, ready to receive the Light and Grace of Our Lord Jesus.

There are four ways to receive Christ's Light:

1. The Bible: Christ reveals His face upon you
2. The Agpeya: reveal His face upon you, as we say (In Your light we shall see light.)
3. The Holy Psalmody: Through hymns and praises, we receive Christ's light.
4. The Synaxarium: The life of the saints.

Therefore, every time we receive light through these four sources (which can be likened to the four arms of the Cross), Christ reveals His light upon you, and you acquire His personality and countenance. This is the greatness of prayer!

Why?

Question: Why did You, Lord, only choose the three disciples: Peter, James and John?

² Orthopraxis literally means, "correct practice" or "correct conduct"





In those three, there are hidden symbolic meanings that describe our relationship with Christ.

Peter: represents faith. He is the one who confessed the faith and said: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"

James: represents struggle. He is the first disciple to receive martyrdom.

John: represents love, and thus, we call him "John the beloved".

So, Christ chose to take with Him: Faith, Struggle and Love, or faith working through love.

Every time we stand for prayer, we need to acquire those three virtues.

Standing for prayer, Midnight Praises, or fasting are all exhausting acts but they are sweet and joyful exhaustion.

In the transfiguration, we obtain three privileges:

1. Seeing God through light:

Every time we stand for prayer, we are at the transfiguration, and receiving Christ's light, that fills our hearts.

2. Joy:

As the disciples said, when they saw the transfiguration: "Lord, it is good for us to be here", and the disciples heard the voice: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!".

We hear God's voice in the Bible, and thus, we are filled with gladness.

The bible has to be clear in our everyday life, "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." (Revelation 22:7). Therefore on this note, I advise my brothers and sisters, the servants, to enter their Sunday school classes, with their paper-copy Bibles.





We receive the joy of transfiguration, through our commitment to the word of God, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good".

The word of God is like honey and as precious as gold.

3. Meeting Christ alone:

This is the experience of seeing Christ alone, this what differentiates the successful monk or servant from the unsuccessful one. The former focuses his eyes on Christ alone, while the latter is disturbed by many other things.

In your prayers focus on Christ alone, ask only for His countenance to shine upon you. Only in those prayers will you feel His presence in your heart and His companionship.

Finally, we experience the Transfiguration feast in the Church through:

1. **The White Tonia:** representing heaven.
2. **The Candles:** representing the light of the Transfiguration.
3. **Raising our hands in Prayer:** This reminds us of the transfiguration mountain, where we wait for God's grace to cover us. It also represents struggle and exhaustion, because transfiguration needs the three: faith, struggle and love as aforementioned.

Notice that the transfiguration incident was mentioned in the first three gospels in detail, while in the gospel of John, he summarized it in: "And the Word became flesh...and we beheld His Glory" (John 1:14).

The Transfiguration is not merely a feast that we celebrate for one day, but it's a beautiful life that we experience every time we stand for prayer or read the word of God, when we feel His light shining upon us, which we call "enlightenment".



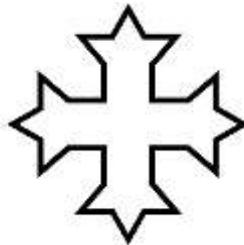
H.H. Pope Tawadros II





A Church on the top of the mountain

Transfiguration connects the earthly Church to the heavenly Church, through Christ Himself. This is the scene of transfiguration: Moses, Elijah, the three disciples and Christ, in their midst. On top of the mountain of Transfiguration, we see the church gathered together with its two Testaments in the presence of the Holy Trinity, in great honour and light. We see the greatest heavenly liturgy, the inhabitants of God's city gathered together on top of the holy mountain (God, the prophets, and the apostles). The church is that holy city of God like the Virgin Mary, the bride of the church who is shining with His light and glory, the city of God in which God meets man and unites with him. Thus in the Virgin, all the prophets of the Old Testament gathered together with their prophecies with the fathers the apostles, who are the preachers of the gospel and witnesses of the fulfillment of the prophecies, and the cornerstone of the two testaments coming together was the person of the Lord Christ, for she is **the city that is set on a hill**.





14

A City that is set on a Hill

ΟἰΒΑΚΙ ΕΣΥΗ ΣΙΞΕΝ ΟΥΤΩΟΥ

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The hymn of "Who am I the weak?"



Listen to the hymn of "Who am I the weak?"



A sermon on "St. Mary's Intercession" (English) - Fr. Daniel Fanous



A sermon on "the Virgin Mary being the city of God" (Arabic) - Hegumen Tadros Yacob Malaty



“A City that is set on a Hill”

In His Sermon on the Mount, our Saviour told the people that were crowded there: “A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matthew 5:14), after He had already told them “You are the light of the world.” Who is this city that is set on a hill, except the person, whom the Holy Spirit carries to the Lord Himself, that He may sit with Him on the hill. There, he will listen to His commandments, sit at His feet, and stick to Him, and thus, he becomes a holy city, where God, Himself dwells within. The Lord joins with it His Kingdom comprised of angels and saints, and this city becomes filled with the voices of praise and becomes a city of light that can never be hidden. of The Virgin Mary is the “Mother of Light” and she is the city that is set on a hill that can never be hidden.

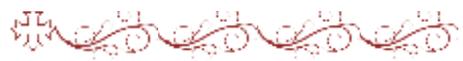
Whoever prays the psalms will find specific terms that are repeated over and over again such as: (the city of God/ the city of our God/ the Lord's city/ the city of the great king/ city of the Lord of hosts/ city of Zion/ Jerusalem). Altogether, these terms point towards St. Mary and the Church. Let's read together this beautiful psalm that is used in the Church in the praises of the Theotokos (like the Kiahk Ode), in which the psalmist does not just speak of a city, but of a city that is set on a hill, and everytime he mentions the word, “city” or refers to it, understand it in your mind as a symbol of St. Mary so that we may understand the words of this psalm...

Psalm 48 (or 48 Agpeya)

“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised In the city of our God, In His holy mountain.

Beautiful in elevation, The joy of the whole earth, Is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, The city of the great King.

God is in her palaces; He is known as her refuge. For behold, the kings assembled, They passed by together. They saw it, and so they marveled; They were troubled, they hastened away. Fear took hold of them there, And pain, as of a woman in birth pangs, As when You break the ships of Tarshish With an east wind.





As we have heard, so we have seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, In the city of our God: God will establish it forever. Selah, we have thought, O God, on Your lovingkindness, In the midst of Your temple.

According to Your name, O God, so is Your praise to the ends of the earth; Your right hand is full of righteousness.

Let Mount Zion rejoice, Let the daughters of Judah be glad, Because of Your judgments. Walk about Zion, and go all around her. Count her towers; Mark well her bulwarks; Consider her palaces; That you may tell it to the generation following.

For this is God, Our God forever and ever; He will be our guide Even to death." Alleluia

The best place to praise the Lord in, is when He is in St. Mary's womb. In her womb, He united with humanity. In the first Paradise, man fell, was cast away from the presence of God, lost his unity with God, became corrupt, and died. On the other hand, St. Mary's womb became the new and true Paradise, the place of reconciliation and the laboratory of unity in which God came and united with man, in the person of the Lord Jesus. Thus, the psalmist says: "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised In the city of our God."

Just as we heard the many prophecies, so we have seen the incarnate Logos from the Virgin Mary, the city of the Lord of hosts. This city was established by God. He made her and chose her as a place of rest and His dwelling place. He did not, however, dwell in her alone, for she became the tabernacle of God with man. Thus, he asks us to consider her palaces which means to dwell in her, to go all around her and praise within her towers, placing our hearts in her strength, that we may tell it to the generations following: "for this is God, Our God forever and ever."

In the sixth hour, we see the Virgin Mary standing next to the feet of the Cross of her beloved Son on Golgotha, as a city that is set on a hill. Thus, the Church ordered for us to pray this beautiful psalm (His foundations are in the holy mountains) as one of the psalms of this holy hour.





In this next prophecy, St. Mary is referred to by many names: the holy mountains/ Zion/ the city of God.

Psalm 87 (86 Agpeya):

His foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loves the gates of Zion More than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God! Selah "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to those who know Me; Behold, O Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia: 'This one was born there.' " And of Zion it will be said, "This one and that one were born in her; And the Most High Himself shall establish her."

The Lord will record, When He registers the peoples: "This one was born there." Selah Both the singers and the players on instruments say, "All my springs are in you." Alleluia

The Lord chose the Virgin from among the dwellings of Jacob, for the Father looked from heaven and found no one like the Virgin Mary, as a holy city for Him. The heavenly Father chose her and overshadowed her with His might. He sanctified her by His Holy Spirit that the Son may dwell in her forever. She is the mountain, on which God was pleased to dwell in forever. (C.f Psalm 68:17)

And of the Virgin Mary (Zion), it was said that the one who took flesh from her and became man was the Most High Himself who established her (or created her). He was incarnate without alteration and did not cease to be divine, as He is God, the incarnate Logos, and since we became members in the body of Christ, we too became citizens of this holy city. The psalmist, then, refers to those citizens as **singers**, for the nature of those who are in Christ is joy.

The beautiful thing about this psalm is that the citizens of this holy city are all sinners from Babylon, Tyre and Ethiopia pointing towards the New Testament Church, that gathered many of the pagan Gentiles through faith to the unity with the Lord Jesus.

Rahab resembles all who became in Christ, after a sinful and lustful life.

Babylon resembles the confusion of the prodigal life, away from God.





Tyre resembles the pagan city, which is located in the heart of the sea, and now has a congregation dwelling in the city of God, on the holy mountains.

Ethiopia resembles the dark, evil souls.

The Psalm says that they came to know God or have been known by God counting them as His chosen ones, after they were snatched by this holy city, from death to the pure and calm life established in Christ Jesus. The Virgin Mary is that holy city which is a great mother that accepts everyone as the Psalm calls her: "**Mother Zion**".





15

The Mother

✠ϩⲁⲣ



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The hymn of Fai Pe Eflemen



Listen to the hymn of Fai Pe Eflemen



A sermon on "the Assumption of the Body of the St Mary" (English) - Father Moses Samaan



A sermon on "The Virgin Mary is my Mother" (Arabic) - Hegumen Luke Sidarous



The Mother

The two titles that the Lord Jesus used to describe St. Mary are: woman and mother.

In the house, while He was teaching the multitudes, He called her: **"My Mother"** (Matthew 12:49, Mark 3:33, Luke 8:21).

At the wedding of Cana, He called her: **woman** (John 4:2).



And at the cross (John 19:26,27), He used both titles: **woman** and **mother**, when He entrusted her to John.

We previously explained the title, woman, as it has a wonderful mystical meaning, but now we will talk about the motherhood of St. Mary.

St. Ambrose said: "The Lord Jesus Christ, opened the treasure box of the holy church, that silent treasure box, which is without blemish, full of fruits, from where the people of God are born".

Two Deeds were done by Our lord Jesus Christ, that link us to the Theotokos in a firm manner:

1. In the Incarnation, when He united with our nature in St. Mary's womb.
2. On the Cross, when He told St. Mary that we are her children (behold your son), and He told us that she's our mother (behold your mother).

And so we realize that being members of Christ's body, so Christ's mother became our mother, for her Son has made us one with Him through His goodness. St. Mary has presented us to God as we say in the Thursday theotokia:

***"She gave all the form (dough) of humanity,
with perfection to the Lord, the Creator, the Word of the Father."***





Someone might ask: why did the Word of God choose to be born of a woman? (Galatians 4:4) Why did He not descend from heaven in any other form than a human body, or why didn't He at least assume a human flesh made by God, without being born of a woman?

Father Tadros Yacoub Malaty answers that beautifully:

1. Not only did The Word of God become man, as He took flesh from St. Mary, but He became also a member of the human race, a descendent of Adam, Abraham and the royal lineage of David.
2. Being a true son for St. Mary, He assumed our humble existence, or in other words, through the motherhood of St. Mary, our blood ran in His veins to be shed for the forgiveness of our sins.

St. Mary's Countenance:

In the world, one looks for the resemblance of a child to his mother, but when we look to St. Mary, we see her son, Jesus, the perfect model for all creation, and thus the icon of the Theotokos became a subject for meditation for many people, as there is a clear resemblance between the glorious face of our Lord and that of His mother and handmaiden, at the same time. It is the divine icon shining through the one full of grace.

"Who is My mother, and who are My brothers?"

"While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You. "But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother." (Matthew 12:46-50)





The Lord Jesus asked and answered for Himself a great question, about His mother and our mother as well, St. Mary. He venerated her in His answer that she always does the will of God, and so she deserved to be called mother of Christ.

St. Ambrose comments on that verse:

"Be vigilant to always fulfill the will of the Father, to be the mother of Christ"

The Lord Jesus emphasized this once more, when a woman praised St. Mary, so He responded, showing the glory of His mother, and in the same way, opening the door for whoever associates himself with the Lord, through listening to the word of God,

"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 11:27-28)

Those two incidents, inspired the fathers all through the ages, such as Pope Gregory (the Great) when he comments:

"Whoever is brother or sister of Christ by faith, becomes His mother by preaching. For he is so to speak the birth of the Lord when he introduces Him into the heart of him who listens to him; and he becomes His mother, if his voice begets the love of the Lord in the heart of the neighbor."

For whoever sows the seeds of truth or love in the other people's hearts, begets Christ in them, as St. Augustine says: "Every true Christian conceives God in his heart"

And that's what St. Paul realized, preached and lived with, when he taught the Galatians saying: "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you."(Galatians 4:19)

So the church is in a continuous state of labour, until Christ is formed and born in us, so every saint in communion with Christ, has Christ is born in him again. (St. Methodius)





The fathers realized that St. Mary was the door through which Christ entered our world, so they called her: the door to the east. The best description, used by the church to describe St. Mary was: *"the new heaven on earth, from which the Sun of Righteousness, shines upon us"* (Cf. Thursday Theotokia)

As the Sun doesn't keep the light to itself, but shares it with the whole earth, so also is St. Mary, the pure heaven, full of righteousness and beauty.

On this note, Origen emphasizes the dwelling of Christ in us: "It would be wrong to proclaim the Incarnation of the Son of God from the Holy Virgin without also admitting His Incarnation in the Church.... Everyone of us must, therefore, recognize His coming in the flesh by the pure Virgin; but at the same time we must recognize His coming in the spirit of each one of us."

St. Ephraim the Syrina beautifully explains this Orthodox concept:

"The Word of the Father came from the bosom of the Father, and in another bosom, He took flesh, He went from a bosom to a bosom.

Both pure bosoms were filled with Him. Blessed is He who dwells in us."

Here, He clearly states that God who rests in the bosom of the Father, was incarnate of the Virgin, for our salvation. Both bosoms were filled with Him at the same time, for He dwells in us, we the weak and sinful, by the Eucharist, **for the Virgin Mary is a type of the Church.**





16

The Virgin, A Prototype of the Church

† παρθένος

οὔτῳπος πε ἴτε † ἐκκλησία

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The hymn of "You O Mother of Light"



Listen to the hymn of "You O Mother of Light"



A sermon on "the humility of St. Mary" (English) - H.G. Bishop Youssef



A sermon on "the pure turtledove" (Arabic) - H.G. Bishop Danial



The Virgin, A Prototype of the Church

Hegumen Tadros Yacob Malaty

"Mary was the mother earth that brought forth the Church". That's how St. Ephraim the Syrian cried out as he meditated on the Virgin and the Church.



St. Ambrose also adds: "For when God desired to save the world, He started His work through Mary, so that she might be the first to enjoy the fruits of His salvation, which was prepared for all"

It is not meaningless that the Church praises St. Mary with so many hymns, Theotokias, doxologies, and Agpeya litanies for whatever St. Mary received, was for the edification of the whole Church.

St. Ephraim the Syrian attributes to the Church that belongs to the Virgin, saying: "Blessed are you, O Church. Isaiah spoke of you in his prophetic, joyful song saying: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son. How great is the hidden mystery of the Church!"

St. Cyril of Alexandria links St. Mary with the Church when he says: "Let us praise with joyful songs, Mary, the ever-virgin, who herself is the holy Church. Let us praise her together with the Son, the perfectly pure Bridegroom! Glory be to God forever!"

St. Ambrose asserts that she is "a type of the Church", and St. Augustine states that, "Mary is a part of the Church, a holy member, an excellent member, the most eminent member, whilst still a member of the whole body [i.e. she is not separate from the rest of the members]".(2)

In fact, St. Mary's whole life is a beautiful icon of the Universal Church. According to St. Irenaeus, St. Mary's joy and praise at the Annunciation were prophetic actions that she practiced in the name of the Church. St. Jacob of Serugh (446 A.D.)





presents the same idea in other words: "The wise Virgin was the mouth of the Church. She heard about the mystery of the incarnation from Archangel Gabriel for the salvation of the whole world".

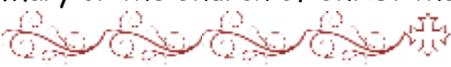
Mary's visit to her cousin, Elizabeth, was a symbol of the Church missionaries throughout the whole world. For the Church is like St. Mary; the Daughter of Zion, a poor Virgin, a maidservant of the Lord, full of grace, and bearing the Word of God. Therefore, she is consumed with the desire to preach to the entire human race, proclaiming God's salvation. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace.... who says to Zion: Your God reigns" (Isaiah 52:7). According to St. Ambrose, St. Mary sang her own praise ("The Magnificat") as she was hastening on the hills of Judea, resembles the Church hastening on the hills of the centuries. That was before she sang her beautiful praise, in the presence of Elizabeth.

St. Mary is the perfect model for any member in the Church, and because she is the pride of the Church, there are many similarities between them. These similarities concern us for they urge us to kindle the work of the Trinity within us that we may partake in the same virtues, common to the Church and the Virgin. The most important similarities are:

First: St. Mary and the Church are both mothers and virgins at the same time. Each of them conceived, by the Holy Spirit, without the seed of man, and gave birth to the Son of God. St. Mary is the mother of the Word of God, whom she gave birth according to His humanity, and the Church is the mother of her members, whom she gives birth through baptism in order for them to partake in Christ's life.

Second: The Church holds the same title as St. Mary, "The New Eve", the mother of all the living. St. Mary gave birth to the "Incarnate Son," who bestows life on the believers, while the Church is the mother of those believers who receive "Life" through unity with the Head, the Incarnate God.

It is befitting for us to be the new Eve, who does not listen to the deception of the serpent like the first Eve, but instead continually walks in newness of life, like St. Mary or the Church of Christ that never grows old or weary.





Third: Similar to St. Mary, the Church is “the maidservant of the Lord”. Like a humble maidservant, she refuses all human interventions and efforts, for she is reliant on the grace of God, who works in the humility of our human condition in order to lead us to the glory of His Kingdom.

The uniqueness of St. Mary and the Church is their humility, along with their chastity and purity. For this reason, pride never finds a way to their hearts. Let us then cry out with the Virgin Mary, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.”

Fourth: Both St. Mary and the Church are called: “holy one”. St. Hippolytus interprets the blessing offered by Moses, “Blessed of the Lord is his land, With the precious things of heaven, with the dew” (Deut. 33:13). He sees this as a prophecy of St. Mary’s holiness; for she is the blessed land, which received the Word of God coming down like heavenly dew. He also states that this prophecy refers to the Church’s holiness, when he says: “It can also be said of the Church, for she is blessed by the Lord as a holy land and as a Paradise of bliss. The dew is the Lord, the Savior Himself.”

Fifth: The main work of the Church and St. Mary is prayer and practical love to God and the world. When prayer is mingled with true love, the believer stands in front of God as an intercessor for all sinners.

The intercessions of St. Mary is a great model for the Church and for all the believers. All the faithful follow the example of the Virgin, praying unceasingly for the renewal of the whole world in Christ Jesus.

**“But now, Mary’s life is a perfect model that you must follow
From her, the beauty of chastity
and the example of every virtue shines forth”
St. Ambrose of Milan**

