



Entry of the Holy Theotokos Into the Temple

Today the Church celebrates the Most-holy Virgin Mary's glorious entry into the temple. This event was foreseen and predestined by God before the ages – before the creation of the angelic world, before the existence of heaven and earth, – as was the fall of one third of the angels and of all mankind foreseen by God and allowed to happen, for – as the Apostle says – *all God's deeds are known to Him from the beginning of the ages*. Through God's infinite goodness and by His word countless bright angels, of various ranks and orders, were brought out of nothingness into being, were endowed with wondrous, God-like beauty and immortality, and one of them was distinguished from all the others by a greatly superior mind, brightness (for this reason he was called Lucifer, i.e. morning star), power and beauty; because he was especially close to God, this bright angel began to think too highly of himself and of his perfections, and instead of being grateful to God, from Whom he had received everything he had, – he fell into great pride and desired to be equal to God and to establish his own renegade kingdom, enticing one third of the angelic world to follow in his wake.

He was blinded by pride: he became resolved and unrepentant in his intent, as were those whom he had lured along with him, and so God's grace left him and all the renegades, and they turned into a force of evil, pride, and eternal rebellion, and declared war on – whom? – on God Himself and on all the other faithful and good angels; and when man was created and was subjected to a test of loyalty and obedience to God, – the fallen Lucifer, appearing to the first woman, Eve, in the form of a serpent, tempted her and her husband, and made them rebel against their Creator and Benefactor. Thus through the first people occurred the fall of the entire mankind.

God is true to Himself and remains eternal and immutable in His holiness, truth, and goodness, while His loyal, God-like and blessed creation was transformed into a willful, disloyal, malicious and evil entity, which turned away from Him and for this became subject to God's wrath, damnation, and death.

Man was pitifully robbed by the serpent, deprived of his divine image, left with only some poor, distorted, and pitiful remnants of God's likeness, and became a slave to the devil, being subjected to all manner of depravity, especially paganism. But even in the fallen mankind, in its subsequent generations, there were concealed great treasures, as witnessed in some of its future descendants, such as Enoch, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, Moses, Elijah, Elisha, David, and first and foremost among them – the Virgin Mary, whom God foresaw from eternity and whom He chose to accomplish His divine plan for the salvation of mankind.

What does God's grace do for the salvation of perishing mankind? To save man, one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity Himself became man, in order to fulfill the obedience of Adam, Eve, and all of mankind, in order to satisfy God's justice, to take upon Himself all of mankind's sins, damnation, and death, in order to trample upon death by means of His own divine death, to overcome death's sting, arise from the dead, and grant resurrection and eternal life to all. Wondrous are Thy deeds, O Lord, our Saviour!

Thus it was decided in God's pre-eternal council that the Son of God Himself would become man without ceasing to be God, and would fulfill the will of His Father concerning the salvation of mankind. But who could serve as the means of incarnation? All people were sinful, while the All-just could not be born from sin. *What communion is there between light and darkness, between truth and iniquity?*

The incarnation takes place supernaturally, for wherever God so desires – the order of nature is superseded. According to the will of God the Father, a Most-pure Virgin, purified by the Holy Spirit, is chosen for the incarnation of the Son of God, is brought up from childhood in the Holy of Holies, and upon Her coming of age a messenger is sent to Her – a holy Archangel – to give Her glad tidings of the conception of the Son of God in Her virginal womb. The Holy Virgin accepts the tidings with obedience, – and so the Son of God is conceived within Her and in due time is born.

Here is the miracle of miracles, – the supreme, unfathomable, salvific, and at the same time awe-inspiring sacrament of the incarnation of God the Word, Who still continues to create mankind with His Word.

It is for this that out of all generations a pure Virgin was chosen, was ceremoniously brought into the temple as a three-year-old child, and was brought up by the Holy Spirit to be the Mother and the abode of God the Word.

Rejoice, faithful Christians, in such leniency on the part of God towards fallen mankind! Let all celebrate with a pure heart the entry of the Mother of God into the temple, and let all glorify and laud the Theotokos, Protector of all faithful Christians, and our Intercessor before Her Son and God!

Be loyal to God's Church and come to it to be reared for the Heavenly Kingdom. Take into abhorrence all sin, which is the cause of both temporary and eternal perdition, and instead do deeds of truth and holiness, walking in the fear of God. Amen.

~ **St. John of Kronstadt**

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