The Feasts of the Mother of God
History and Theology of the Most Holy Theotokos

Contents

Preface by the Author to the Greek Edition

Introduction

Part 1

The Conception of the Theotokos by St Anna her Mother

1. Historical and Spiritual Event
2. Marriage Pleasing to God
3. The Names of the Parents of the Theotokos
4. The Successive Purifications of the Virgin Mary’s Forebears
5. Curse and Blessing
6. Conception as the Work of God’s Providence
7. The Soul from the Moment of Conception
8. The Heresy of the Immaculate Conception
9. “The Fragrant Myrrh in the Womb” and “the New Heaven in the Womb”

Part 2

The Birth of the Theotokos

1. The First Feast of the Mother of God in the Church’s Year
2. The Event of the Birth of the Theotokos
3. Universal Joy
4. Joy and Suffering
5. Dawn of the Sun of Righteousness
6. The Feast of Redemption from Guilt
8. Anna’s Sweet Little Daughter
9. “Caressing the Theotokos”
10. The First Seven Steps of the Theotokos
11. “O Small Girl Worthy of God, the Beauty of Human Nature”
12. The Birthday of the Theotokos
13. The Sustainer of our Life
14. The Mysterious Paradise and the New Adam
15. The Book of the Word of Life
16. The Sheep-Gate
17. The City and the Torrents of the River
18. “Your People also Keep the Feast”
19. “Birthday Gift for the Mother of God”

Part 3

The Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple

1. Historical Events and the Transfiguration of the Body and History
2. The Temple, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies
3. The Prelude of the Good Pleasure of God
5. “Seen to be an Infant but Understood to be God’s Workshop”
6. Entering the Divine Sabbath Rest
7. The Living Old Testament
8. The Holy of Holies as a Prefiguration of the Virgin
9. The Fairest of Men and the Glory of the Daughter of the King
10. The All-Holy Virgin’s Beauty Drew God’s Love towards Humankind
11. The Virgin Mary’s Love for God
12. Dwelling in the Temple and Spiritual Ministry
13. The Method by which God is Known
14. Noetic Hesychia and the Vision of God
15. Food from an Angel
16. “The Adornment that is Fairest of the Fair”

Part 4

The Annunciation of the Theotokos

1. The History of the Event of the Annunciation of the Theotokos

a) The Synaxarion of the Feast
b) Patristic Comments on the Event of the Annunciation
c) Iconography of the Event
d) Three Stanzas from Vespers of the Feast
e) The Appearance of the Archangel Gabriel
f) “To his Original Dignity through this Mingling”
g) The Dialogue between the Archangel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary, according to St Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople
h) The Theological Content of the Feast of the Annunciation

2. The Encounter between the Theotokos and Elizabeth

a) The Event of the Meeting of the Theotokos and Elizabeth, according to St Luke the Evangelist
b) Analysis of the Mother of God’s Hymn according to St Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain

3. The Mystery of the Mother of God's Conception and Pregnancy

a) The Annunciation as “an Anticipated Pentecost”
b) The Ineffable and Unknowable Divine Assumption of Human Form by Jesus
c) Supranatural Conception and Natural Pregnancy
d) Conception without Seed or Pleasure, and Birth without Corruption or Pain
e) Perpetual Virginity, Theotokos and All-Holy Mother of God
f) “The Only New Thing under the Sun”
g) The Marriage of God and Humankind
h) St Symeon the New Theologian on the Mystical Marriage of God and Humankind
i) The Three Worlds and the Theotokos
j) Two Arks and Two Paradises
k) “For her Womb is Paradise”
l) The Mystery of the Silence of the Theotokos
m) The Revelation to Joseph

4. Theotokia at Saturday Vespers in the Eight Tones
a) The Theotokos as Universal Glory  
b) The Theotokos in the Old and New Testaments  
c) The Virgin Mother and Sovereign Lady and her Divine and Human Child  
d) The Theotokos as Mother and Source of Life  
e) The Theotokos and the Crossing of the Red Sea  
f) The Theotokos and the Childbirth without Labour  
g) The Theotokos and Victory over the Natural Order  
h) The Theotokos as the Workshop where the two Natures were United  

5. Patristic Comments on the Feast  

a) “Proclaim from Day to Day the Glad Tidings of the Salvation of our God”  
b) Three Annunciations of the Theotokos  
c) The Relationship between Creation, Dispensation and Theology  
d) Eve and Mary  
e) “Homeless” God Finds a Home  
f) “The Saints are Relatives of the Theotokos in Three Ways”  
g) The Freedom of the Human Race  
h) God’s “Let There Be...” and the Virgin Mary’s “Let It Be”  
i) “The Holy and Divinely Perfect Leaven” that Made the Human Race “into Bread”  
j) The Incarnation and Incarnations of the Word  
k) Theotokos and Church
Part 5

The Theotokos in the New Testament

1. Descendant of Abraham and Adam
2. “Joseph the Husband of Mary”
3. The Virgin Mary and the Divine Infant
4. The Mother of the Child
5. The Piercing of her Holy Soul by the Sword
6. In Jerusalem at the Feast of Passover with the Twelve-Year-Old Christ
7. Intervention at the Wedding in Cana
8. The Natural Mother and the Spiritual Mothers of Christ
9. Her Presence on Golgotha
10. First to See the Risen Christ
11. In the Upper Room in Jerusalem

Part 6

The Dormition of the Theotokos

1. The Historical Development of the Feast
2. The Synaxarion of the Feast
3. Events at the Dormition of the Theotokos according to the Fathers of the Church

a) St Dionysius the Areopagite
b) St Modestus of Jerusalem
c) St Andrew of Crete
d) St John of Damascus
e) St Germanus of Constantinople
f) St Gregory Palamas

g) St Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain

4. The Most Holy Mother of God in the Divine Liturgy

a) Reading from the Epistle
b) Reading from the Holy Gospel
c) Mentioning the name of the Theotokos in the Divine Liturgy

5. The Most Holy Mother of God in Hymnography

a) “At your Glorious Dormition”
b) The “New People” of the Theotokos
c) “Let those who are Godly-Minded Keep Festival”
d) “O Theotokos, May you ever Save your Inheritance”
e) “The Mother of Life”
f) “We Magnify you, Theotokos, in an Orthodox Manner”

6. The Most Holy Mother of God in Iconography

a) Depicting Events
b) The Mystery of the Church
c) Analysis of the Icon of Theophanes the Cretan

7. Patristic Teaching on the Dormition of the Theotokos and on the Theotokos in General

a) “What Could be more Sublime than that?”
b) “Hail, Dawn of the Mystical Day”
d) “The Steward of Never-Ending Treasures”
e) “Vast Ocean...and Most Fertile Shady Mountain”
f) “Easter in Summer”
g) “The Effective Eye” and “the New Earth”
h) “It is Customary for those in Love...”
i) “Living Divine Image”, “Sacred Inscription” and “Living Dogma”
j) “She Published the Unutterable Abyss of God’s Love for Humankind”
k) “You Have Motherly Power towards God”
l) “Who Else Changed Everything?”
m) “First and Second Resurrection”
n) “Spiritual Body”
o) “Nothing Equals or Surpasses the Theotokos”
p) “The Seal of the Old and New Covenants”
q) “Through her the Coin of the Human Race was Found”
r) “In Spirit I Know the Most Pure Virgin”
s) “Wonderful Departure...Homecoming to God”
t) “A Life of Extreme Struggle Defeating Thought and Speech”

Instead of an Epilogue: “A Woman Clothed with the Sun”

Prayer to the Most Holy Mother of God

Translator’s Bibliography