

# PROTECTION OF THE THEOTOKOS AND EVER VIRGIN MARY

(Pokrov)

March 27th

Feast of the Annunciation The beginning of our salvation – What a wonder! God is come among men; He who cannot be contained is contained in a womb; the timeless enters time. A great mystery! His conception is without seed, his emptying past telling! So great is this mystery! For God empties himself, takes flesh and is fashioned as a creature, when the angel tells the pure Virgin of her conception: “Rejoice, you who are full of grace; the Lord who has great mercy is with you!” (Stichera of Annunciation, St. John the Monk)

The morning prayer of the Byzantine Church includes nine biblical odes or songs which came to be replaced by new poetic Canons based on these nine odes. Except that the ninth biblical ode actually includes two distinct songs (making ten), and the second ode is omitted except during the Great Fast (making nine, or seven, depending on how you count). Leave it to Byzantines to complicate simple arithmetic!

God can do whatever He wants, and overturn evil. The incarnation of Christ in the womb of the Virgin Mary takes place as a fulfillment of the promise made to our physical ancestors Adam and Eve, and to our spiritual ancestors the Jewish patriarchs from Noah to Zechariah, that a messiah would come to build the new Israel, the new people of God, and reopen the gates of heaven to the souls of all those waiting to enter into God’s presence.

It's terrifying in Ukraine, but God is giving daily miracles that lift people's spirits

We have heard of bombs dropping out of the sky and not exploding, stories of tanks running out of fuel that had fuel.

They are talking about how eight kilos of macaroni is feeding 150 people - food is being multiplied.

*4th Sunday of the Great Fast*

*Memory of Our Holy Father John Climacus*

*Tone 3*

*Menologion*

*Our holy mother, Matrona of Seluna, Martyr, was imprisoned and cruelly tortured with fire to death. Byzantine Catholic*

March

27 Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast (St. John of the Ladder)

31 Canon of St. Andrew of Crete

The Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete A basic distinguishing feature of the Great Canon is its extremely broad use of images and subjects taken both from the Old and New Testaments. As the Canon progresses, the congregation encounters many biblical examples of sin and repentance. The Bible (and therefore, the Canon) speaks of some individuals in a positive light, and about others in a negative one—the penitents are expected to emulate the positive examples of sanctity and repentance, and to learn from and avoid the negative examples of sin, fallen nature and pride.

The Canon is written in such form that the faithful identify themselves with many people and events found in the Bible. The Canon is a dialogue between Andrew and his own soul, and is a call to change one’s life. Andrew used the biblical images to inspire himself to greater repentance and sorrow for his failings. It is a mix of sorrow, humility, hope in God, praise to the Holy Trinity, and devotion to Our Lady, the Mother of God

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War is unnecessary, and this war especially is unnecessary. War is dangerous, particularly when we remember that Russia has nuclear and chemical weapons and that Putin is himself already guilty of who knows how many crimes as a KGB agent as well as president of Russia. The devil himself must rejoice at the hatred that is being unleashed by this war and the horrors inflicted upon tens of thousands of innocent citizens of Ukraine.

Who knows how this war will go? Who knows how long Putin will be around? We do know that God keeps his promises. The pope pointed out that the world has forgotten the horrors of the twentieth century, and in his sermon, he pointed out that the consecration is not a magic formula, but a “call to pray for peace even as bombs are destroying the

**J**ohn came to Saint Catherine's Monastery, at the foot of Mount Sinai, and became a novice when he was about 16 years old. He was taught about the spiritual life by the elder monk Martyrius. After the death of Martyrius, John, wishing to practice greater asceticism, withdrew to a hermitage further up the mountain. He lived in isolation for some twenty years, constantly studying the lives of the saints and thus becoming one of the most learned Church Fathers. When he was about seventy-five years of age, the monks of Sinai persuaded him to become their hegumen (superior or abbot). He served as abbot with the greatest wisdom, and his reputation spread so far that, according to the Life, Pope St. Gregory the Great wrote to recommend himself to his prayers, and sent him a sum of money for the pilgrim hospice of Sinai, in which pilgrims from all over the Christian world would lodge. Of John's literary output we know only the Ladder of Divine Ascent, composed at the request of John, Abbot of Raithu, a monastery situated on the shores of the Red Sea, and a shorter work To the Pastor (Latin: Liber ad Pastorem), most likely a sort of appendix to the Ladder

homes of many of our Ukrainian brothers and sisters.” As Christians we believe in the power of prayer, and the reality that God will keep his promises.

**Slava Isusu Christu!**

**Slava Ukraini**

**I**t goes without saying that the past two-plus years have been arduous, perhaps even impossible at times. While yes, we might feel drained physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, the Great Fast is upon us nonetheless. This year, maybe more so than others, poses a specific challenge in that so many of us are tired in so many ways. While many have “returned to normal,” there are also many who struggle to find meaning and normalcy in the ups and downs of the age. In what has been dubbed as a “pandemic weary” state, it may be very easy, and even inviting, to throw our hands up and simply give up on the Fast either by reducing our participation to the bare minimum, or perhaps even less. While this temptation may exist, and may be great, rest assured that our Lord is giving us a wonderful opportunity.

**I**n the Our Father, we pray, “Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” In the garden of Gethsemane, Our Lord prayed, “nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done.” Even the passion and death of Christ, the greatest crime ever committed, happened only by the “determined plan and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). Christ offered Himself as a “ransom for many” to atone for all the sins of the world (Mt. 20:28). In trial and hardship, pray, “Father, not my will, but Your will be done.” In times of loss, say with righteous Job, “The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. As it has pleased the Lord, so it is done. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” What happens to us is decreed by Him for His honor and glory, for our highest good and eternal salvation. “God works all things together for good” (Rm. 8:28). With Saint John Chrysostom, let us continually say, “Glory to God for all things!”