

PROTECTION OF THE THEOTOKOS AND EVER VIRGIN MARY

(Pokrov)

April 3rd 2022

Fifth Sunday of the Great Fast

Tone 4

Venerable Mary of Egypt

Menologion

St. Nicetas, the Great-Martyr, was a Goth and a victim of the fury of King Athanaric, ruler of the nations settled about the Danube. He was a disciple of the celebrated Ulphilas (Theophilus). He was burned to death about A.D. 78.

The Akathist Hymn to the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary, is one of the most beloved services of devotion that we have in the Eastern Church. Tradition tells us that the Akathist was written in Constantinople, "the city of the Virgin," by St. Romanos the Melodist. The structure and format of the Akathist Hymn is so popular that many other Akathists have been written using its format. These include Akathists to Our Lord Jesus Christ, to the Cross, to various saints, etc.

The word "akathistos" translates as "not sitting," i.e., standing; normally all the faithful stand while it is being sung. The hymn has 24 stanzas, which alternate between long and short. Each kontakion ends with the singing of "Alleluia." While each longer ikos ends with the refrain: "Rejoice, O Bride and Maiden Ever Pure."

Most of the hymn is made up of praises directed to the Theotokos, beginning with the salutation of the Archangel Gabriel: "Rejoice." In each of the verses, the events related to our Lord's incarnation are remembered for our contemplation. In Ikos 1, the Archangel Gabriel marvels at the Divine self-emptying and the renewal of creation which occurs when Christ comes to dwell in the Virgin's womb. In Ikos 3 the unborn Forerunner and Baptist John prophetically rejoices. Then in Ikos 4 shepherds recognize Christ as a blameless Lamb, and rejoice that in the Virgin "the things of earth join chorus with the heavens." In the 5th Kontakion,

the pagan Magi, following the light of the star, praise the Theotokos for revealing the light of the world.

Throughout the hymns progression, various people or groups encounter Christ and the Theotokos. Each bringing their own need; their own desire or expectation, and each finds his or her own spiritual need satisfied and fulfilled in Our Lord and in the Theotokos. Just as each generation of Orthodox, and each particular person who has prayed the Akathist, has also found in this hymn the inspired means of expressing gratitude and praise to the Theotokos for what she has accomplished for their salvation.

Ask a priest anything question:

What are the grounds for denying Communion to someone?

Publicly denying the Eucharist to someone is something that is done rarely. Usually a bishop or pastor tries to resolve this quietly through one-on-one meetings.

The Eastern Code says in Canon 712 "Those who are publicly unworthy are forbidden from receiving the Divine Eucharist."

A priest can ask someone who is known to be in that state, whether it is because they are a pro-abortion politician, somebody in an invalid marriage, or some highly public sinner to step aside and see him later.

The problem today is that some Catholics use Communion as an opportunity to be public "victims" when they are denied the Eucharist, rather than seriously examine their own beliefs.