

## PROTECTION OF THE THEOTOKOS AND EVER VIRGIN MARY (Pokrov)

May 5, 2024

### The Symbol of Faith The Ascension

He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father ...

After His resurrection from the dead Jesus appeared to men for a period of forty days after which He "was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mk 16.19; see also Lk 24.50 and Acts 1.9-11).

The ascension of Jesus Christ is the final act of His earthly mission of salvation. The Son of God comes "down from heaven" to do the work which the Father gives Him to do; and having accomplished all things, He returns to the Father bearing for all eternity the wounded and glorified humanity which He has assumed (see e.g. Jn 17).

The doctrinal meaning of the ascension is the

Man was created with the potential to be a "partaker of the divine nature," to refer to the Apostle Peter once more (2 Pet 1.4). It is this participation in divinity, called theosis (which literally means deification or divinization) in Orthodox theology, that the ascension of Christ has fulfilled for humanity. The symbolical expression of the "sitting at the right hand" of God means nothing other than this. It does not mean that somewhere in the created

glorification of human nature, the reunion of man with God. It is indeed, the very penetration of man into the inexhaustible depths of divinity.

We have seen already that "the heavens" is the symbolical expression in the Bible for the uncreated, immaterial, divine "realm of God" as one saint of the Church has called it. To say that Jesus is "exalted at the right hand of God" as Saint Peter preached in the first Christian sermon (Acts 2.33) means exactly this: that man has been restored to communion with God, to a union which is, according to Orthodox doctrine, far greater and more perfect than that given to man in his original creation (see Eph 1-2).

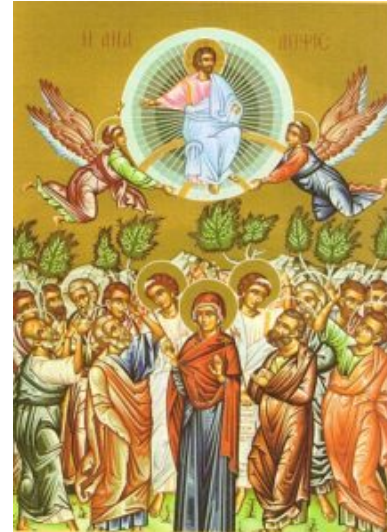
universe the physical Jesus is sitting in a material throne.

The Letter to the Hebrews speaks of Christ's ascension in terms of the Jerusalem Temple. Just as the high priests of Israel entered the "holy of holies" to offer sacrifice to God on behalf of themselves and the people, so Christ the one, eternal and perfect High Priest offers Himself on the cross to God as the one eternal, and perfect, Sacrifice, not for Himself

but for all sinful men. As a man, Christ enters (once and for all) into the one eternal and perfect Holy of Holies: the very "Presence of God in the heavens."

... we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God ... (Heb 4.14)

For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the



"I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God, and Your God" (John 20:17).

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heavens. ... He has no need like those high priests to offer sacrifice daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did this once and for all when he offered up himself.

Now, the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tabernacle which is set up

not by man but by the Lord (Heb 7.26; 8.2).

For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf (Heb 9.24).

... when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, then to wait until his enemies

should be made a stool for his feet (Heb 10.12-13; Ps 110.1).

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### Colors of vestment and altar cloths.

(continued)

White: All Sundays and throughout the Easter season.

Gold: Can be a substitute for white and worn on feast days other than Easter.

Green: Pentecost, feasts of prophets, Tuesdays (devoted to John the Baptist) and Palm Sunday. Green symbolizes new birth. During Pentecost, spring flowers have blossomed, and trees will have sprouted their leaves.

Red: Lent, Holy Week except for Holy Thursday, the Beheading of John the Baptist (August 29), the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14), the Procession of the Cross (August 1) and Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Bright red tends to be worn on the Exaltation of the Cross, while a darker red is used on the other days mentioned.

Blue: Feasts of the Virgin and the Dormition Fast (August 1-14)

Orange  
or Rust: The Feast of Saint Peter and Paul, feasts of the Apostles, and Thursdays. This color is used infrequently and other bright colors are worn instead.

Black vestments are generally not worn as it is the absence of color. However, its use has seeped into liturgical usage during Lent and especially on Good Friday.

Purple is also not a prescribed color, as it is the color of royalty and reserved for bishops. Again, some churches use a bright purple on Sundays in Lent and a darker purple for other days in Lent. Churches that do not use purple use white for Sundays in Lent and red on other Lenten days.

Again, this is only a rough guide since the guiding principle for liturgical colors is still "bright" and "dark".