

**A SERVICE OF PRAYER TO THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FEAST OF HER ENTRANCE INTO THE TEMPLE
(ARRANGED FOR USE IN THE ABSENCE OF A PRIEST)**

Opening Blessing

Senior Reader: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Invocation of the Holy Spirit (sung in Tone 6, or said in unison)

People: Amen. O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who art everywhere and fillest all things, Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life: Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.

Trisagion (Thrice Holy) Prayers

Reader: Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (3x)
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.
O Most Holy Trinity have mercy on us; O Lord, cleanse us from our sins; O Master, pardon our transgressions; O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for your Name's sake.
Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

People: Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

The Canon of the Feast

(This is the Canon of the Feast, which in the full service books of the Feast is listed as "The Second Canon". The various parts of the Canon can be assigned to a number of readers, or split up between two or three readers. If a person feels confident about singing, he or she can be assigned to sing the Irmosi of the Canon, as well as the Kontakion of the Feast. The refrain is said, over and again, between each of the troparia [verses] of each Canticle. If a person is praying this service alone, he or she simply reads/intones all the parts, with piety and gratitude.)

CANTICLE ONE:

TONE 1

IRMOS:

LET US ALL SING A TRIUMPHANT SONG TO GOD
WHO HAS SAVED ISRAEL,
DOING WONDROUS THINGS WITH HIS MIGHTY ARM:
FOR HE HAS BEEN GLORIFIED!

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Together let us hasten today to the Theotokos;
let us honor her in songs and spiritually celebrate
for she is offered in the Temple as a gift to God.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Let us praise the glorious entrance of the Theotokos in songs,
for today she is prophetically offered in the Temple as a precious gift,
being herself a Temple of God.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Anna greatly rejoiced without reproach,
offering her child in the Temple as a precious gift to God,
while Joachim celebrated with her, shining with joy.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

In days of old the forefather David praised you in hymns,
Virgin Bride of God, calling you the daughter of Christ the King.
You have borne Him as Mother, and fed Him as your Child.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

When she was three years old according to the flesh,
the Theotokos was led to the Lord;
and Zachariah, the priest of God,
received her in the Temple with rejoicing
and he established her there.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Rejoice today and begin the song, lamp-bearing virgins;
mothers, join them in praises to the Queen and Mother
as she enters the Temple of Christ the King.

GLORY TO THE FATHER, AND TO THE SON, AND TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Trinity, one in essence,
Father, Word and Holy Spirit:
with faith we glorify You as Maker of all,
and we cry in reverence: Save us, O God!

NOW AND EVER AND UNTO AGES OF AGES. AMEN.

The King and God goes forth,
clothed with purple dyed from your blood, all-undefiled One.
He has renewed all mankind in His compassion.

CANTICLE THREE:

IRMOS:

LET MY HEART BE ESTABLISHED IN YOUR WILL, CHRIST MY GOD,
FOR YOU HAVE ESTABLISHED THE HEAVEN ABOVE THE WATERS,
AND HAVE FOUNDED THE EARTH UPON THE FLOODS,
IN YOUR ALMIGHTY POWER.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Let all of you who love the feasts,
celebrate and rejoice in spirit,
exulting today in the holy feast of the Daughter of the King
and the Mother of our God.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Joachim, be glad today,
and rejoice exceedingly in spirit, Anna,
for now you present your daughter to the Lord
as a three-year old victim of sacrifice,
holy and immaculate.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

The Theotokos Mary, the Dwelling-place of God,
three years old according to the flesh,
is offered in the holy Temple,
and the virgins, her companions,
go before her with lamps in their hands.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

The spotless ewe lamb of God,
the dove without blemish,
the tabernacle that is to hold God,
the sanctuary of glory,
has chosen to dwell in the holy Temple.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Three years old in the flesh;
ancient in spirit,
more spacious than the heavens and higher than the powers above:
let the Bride of God be praised in song.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Let us also celebrate the coming of the Theotokos
into the sanctuary,
carrying lamps today in spirit,
and going in joy with the virgins to the Temple

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Clothe yourselves by grace in righteousness, priests of God,
going in joy to meet the Daughter of the King and God
as she enters the holy place.

GLORY...

The Father is Light, His Son is Light,
and the Spirit, the Comforter, is Light:
for shining forth as from one sun,
the Trinity divinely illumines and preserves our souls.

NOW AND EVER...

The prophets proclaimed you in ages past,
speaking of you as the ark of holiness,
the golden censer, the candlestick and table:
as we sing your praises as the Tabernacle that held God.

CANTICLE FOUR:

IRMOS:

O PROPHET HABAKKUK,
FORESEEING IN SPIRIT THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD,
YOU PROCLAIMED CRYING:
FOR STILL THE VISION AWAITS ITS TIME;

[this Irmos continues on the next page]

IT WILL SURELY COME, IT WILL NOT DELAY.
GLORY TO YOUR POWER, O LORD!

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Prophet Isaiah, prophesy to us:
Who is the Virgin who shall conceive?
It is she who comes forth from the root of Judah
and was born of David the King:
the glorious fruit of a holy seed.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Begin your songs, virgins, and keep feast with us:
with lamps in hand, praise the advance of the pure Theotokos
who now enters the Temple of the Lord.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Rejoice, O Joachim and Anna!
Now you present your daughter to the Lord in the Temple
as a three-year-old victim of sacrifice,
who shall be the pure Mother of Christ our God,
the King of all.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

You delight to dwell in the holy Temple,
yourself the venerable Holy of Holies,
and you abide in converse with the angels, Virgin,
receiving bread most marvelously from heaven, nourisher of our Life.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

When all hope was gone,
Joachim and Anna gave birth to the undefiled Virgin,
and in piety they promised to offer her to God.
Today they fulfill their promise,
giving their child as a sacrifice in the House of God.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

The rod of Aaron once put forth a shoot,
prefiguring your divine childbearing, undefiled Virgin.
For you shall conceive without seed
and not suffer corruption.
And after childbirth you shall remain Virgin,
giving suck to a child who is God of all.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Virgins, hasten with piety to the Virgin,
and mothers as well, to the Mother:
Together let us honor the child born to Joachim and Anna
as a blameless sanctuary,
and the Mother who bore Christ
as a holy tree bringing forth fruit to God.
Let us all joyously keep the feast!

GLORY...

In reverence we glorify the true God,
in three Persons and one nature,
Whose praises the ranks of angels and archangels sing
for He is Master of creation
and we all worship Him in faith forever.

NOW AND EVER...

Pure and undefiled Virgin,
pray without ceasing to your Son and God
Whom you have conceived in the flesh:
that He may deliver all your servants
from the manifold snares of the devil
and from every temptation that assails us.

CANTICLE FIVE:

IRMOS:

CHRIST OUR MASTER AND GOD WHO LOVES MANKIND,
CAUSE THE RADIANT AND EVERLASTING LIGHT TO SHINE ON US,
WHO, COMING EARLY IN THE MORNING,
PONDER THE JUDGMENTS OF YOUR COMMANDMENTS.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Let us, the Orthodox faithful,
hasten to gather with our lamps!
Let us glorify the Mother of God,
for today she is offered to the Lord as an acceptable sacrifice.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Lady, let the forefathers rejoice exceedingly today,
and let her who bore you celebrate with your father:
for their fruit is led to the Lord.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Let us all celebrate in faith,
singing the praises of the glorious and undefiled Maiden of many names
for she conceived in the flesh
the divine victim and sacrificial offering.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

The contract of your betrothal, pure Virgin,
the ineffable divine tokens of your motherhood
are written today by the Holy Spirit
in the House of God.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Let the outer court of the glory of our God be opened,
and let it receive the Mother of God
as a three-year-old victim of sacrifice without blemish
who was never to know wedlock.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Let us sing the praises
of that greatly venerated and over-shadowed mountain:
the ever-virgin who became the Mother of God.
For she has made light to shine
to the ends of the earth.

GLORY...

Let us glorify and worship the one Godhead in three Persons,
undivided by nature and equal in glory,
Which was before the beginning
and shall ever be.

NOW AND EVER...

We have your intercession, Mother of God,
as a fair haven and unassailable rampart in times of trouble,
and we are ever delivered from danger and affliction.

CANTICLE SIX:

IRMOS:

I SHOUT WITH THE PROPHET JONAH:
DELIVER MY LIFE FROM CORRUPTION, GOOD ONE,
AND SAVE ME, SAVIOR OF THE WORLD,
AS I CRY: GLORY TO YOU!

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Faithful, let us celebrate the Mother of God in spirit,
singing her praises with goodness
for she is indeed more holy than the heavenly powers.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Faithful, let us praise the Mother of Light in spiritual songs,
for today she is manifested to us
entering the Temple of God.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

The ewe-lamb without blemish,
the pure dove is brought as an offering to dwell in the House of God:
the undefiled Virgin who was fore-ordained to become the Mother of God.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

The Temple of God,
the heavenly Tabernacle,
fulfilled her entry into the Temple of the Law,
and from her the Light has shone on us who are in darkness.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

A child in the flesh but perfect in soul,
the holy Ark enters the House of God
where she is nourished on divine grace.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

By your intercessions set us free
from every temptation and danger of soul,
for we run to you,
far-famed Mother of Christ our God.

GLORY...

Father, Son and Spirit of righteousness,
Unity in three Persons and undivided Trinity,
have mercy on those who worship Your divine power.

NOW AND EVER...

He whom nothing can contain was contained in your womb,
undefiled Theotokos,
and He has come forth from you in two natures,
both God and man.

THE MOST PURE TEMPLE OF THE SAVIOR;
THE PRECIOUS CHAMBER AND VIRGIN,
THE SACRED TREASURE OF THE GLORY OF GOD,
IS PRESENTED TODAY TO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD
SHE BRINGS WITH HER THE GRACE OF THE SPIRIT,
WHICH THE ANGELS OF GOD DO PRAISE.//
TRULY THIS WOMAN IS THE ABODE OF HEAVEN!

IKOS

Seeing the grace of the secret mysteries of God made manifest and clearly fulfilled in the Virgin, I rejoice, and I do not know how to understand the strange and secret manner in which the undefiled One has been revealed as alone chosen above all creation, both visible and spiritual. Therefore, while I want to praise her, I am struck dumb with amazement in both my thoughts and my speech. Yet still I dare to proclaim and magnify her:// TRULY THIS WOMAN IS THE ABODE OF HEAVEN!

CANTICLE SEVEN:

IRMOS:

THE FURNACE WAS SPRINKLED WITH DEW, O SAVIOR,
AND THE CHILDREN DANCED FOR JOY AS THEY SANG:
BLESSED ARE YOU, THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Let us exult today in the joy of the feast;
let us rightly honor Joachim and Anna,
and let us sing the praises of the undefiled Virgin.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Let David prophesy, saying in the spirit:
Virgins shall be brought after you;
they shall be brought into the Temple
to the Queen and Mother.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

The ranks of angels exceedingly rejoiced
and the souls of the righteous were glad
as the Mother of God was led into the Sanctuary.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

The all-pure Mary rejoiced in body and spirit,
dwelling as a sacred vessel in the Temple of the Lord.
Receiving heavenly food, she increased in wisdom and grace:
the one who was to become Mother of Christ the Savior according to the flesh.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Your parents led you into the inner part of the Temple,
undefiled Virgin,
there to be brought up in a wonderful fashion
and prepared as the dwelling place of Christ our God.

GLORY...

Let us glorify the undivided Trinity,
let us sing the praises of the one Godhead:
the Father, Word, and Most Holy Spirit!

NOW AND EVER...

Theotokos, pray to the Lord whom you have borne,
that He may save the souls of those who sing your praises,
for He is the compassionate One.

CANTICLE EIGHT:

IRMOS:

PRIESTS, PRAISE HIM
BEFORE WHOM THE ANGELS AND ALL THE HOSTS OF HEAVEN ARE AFRAID!
CHILDREN, GLORIFY THEIR CREATOR AND LORD!
ALL PEOPLE, BLESS AND EXALT HIM ABOVE ALL FOREVER!

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Joachim is bright with joy today, and celebrates,
and without reproach Anna offers to the Lord
the sacrifice given her according to the promise: Her holy daughter.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

The saints David and Jesse exult today
and Judah is filled with pride.
For from their root a branch has sprung:
the pure Virgin from whom the pre-eternal God is to be born.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Today Mary, the undefiled and living Tabernacle,
is offered up in the House of God,
and Zachariah receives her in his hands
as a holy treasure of the Lord.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

As a gate of salvation, spiritual mountain and living ladder,
let us faithful honor the true Virgin and Theotokos
who is blessed by the hands of the priests.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Prophets, apostles and martyrs of Christ,
ranks of angels and all who dwell on earth,
let us honor the pure Virgin with hymns,
for she is the blessed Mother of the Most High.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

The ones who divinely bore you, undefiled and pure One,
offered you in the Temple as a spotless sacrifice,
and you live in a wondrous way in the Sanctuary of God,
to be prepared there as a dwelling-place for the Word.

LET US BLESS THE FATHER, AND THE SON, AND THE HOLY
SPIRIT: THE LORD!

Let Holy, Holy, Holy! be sung
to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit:
Indivisible Unity, one Godhead
holding creation in the palm of His hand throughout all ages.

NOW AND EVER...

He who is without beginning now begins to be:
according to His good pleasure
the Word is born in the flesh from a Virgin Maid,
both God and mortal man,
and in His extreme compassion
He refashions us who had fallen.

WE PRAISE, BLESS AND WORSHIP THE LORD,
SINGING AND EXALTING HIM THROUGHOUT ALL AGES!

CANTICLE NINE:

THE MEGALYNARION:

MAGNIFY, O MY SOUL, THE ONE WHO WAS LED INTO THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD,
AND BLESSED BY THE HANDS OF THE PRIESTS!

IRMOS:

LET US ALL MAGNIFY THE RADIANT CLOUD
IN WHICH THE MASTER OF ALL DESCENDED,
AS DEW FROM HEAVEN UPON THE FLEECE
IN WHICH HE WHO IS WITHOUT BEGINNING TOOK FLESH FOR OUR SAKE AND WAS MADE MAN,
FOR SHE IS THE PURE MOTHER OF OUR GOD.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

A fruit came forth according to the promise
from the righteous Joachim and Anna:
Mary, the child of God.
A young girl according to the flesh,
she is offered as acceptable incense in the Holy Temple,
that she who is herself holy may dwell in the holy place.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Let us praise in hymns the child by nature,
who was manifested as the Mother beyond nature.
For today she is offered to the Lord
as a sweet-smelling savor in the Temple of the Law:
the spiritual fruit of her righteous parents.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Faithful, let us raise our cry,
and offer the angelic salutation to the Theotokos:
Rejoice, most beautiful Bride!
Rejoice, shining cloud!
The Lord has shown forth from you upon us
sitting in the darkness of ignorance.
Rejoice, O hope of all!

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

All creation joins the angel Gabriel,
crying out to the Theotokos in fitting song:
Rejoice, undefiled Mother of God!

[This hymn continues on the next page]

Through you we have been delivered from the ancient curse
and become partakers of incorruption.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

Mary, the Holy of Holies and pure Theotokos,
at your intercessions, set us free from the snares of the enemy
and every heresy and affliction
as we venerate with faith the icon of your holy form.

Refrain: MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS, SAVE US!

You are manifested as far greater than the cherubim,
and higher than the seraphim.
You are more spacious than the heavens, Virgin,
for you have contained the uncontainable God in your womb.
Entreat the One whom you bore on our behalf.

MAGNIFY, O MY SOUL,
THE POWER OF THE INDIVISIBLE GODHEAD IN THREE PERSONS!

Let us glorify the one Nature in three Persons:
The one indivisible glory,
the undivided Trinity in one Godhead,
unceasingly praised in heaven and on earth.
Let us worship in piety the Father, with the Son and the Spirit!

MAGNIFY, O MY SOUL,
THE ONE WHO IS GREATER IN HONOR AND MORE GLORIOUS THAN THE HOSTS ABOVE!

Virgin Theotokos,
intercede for those who seek refuge with faith beneath your compassion,
and who piously worship your Son as God and Lord of the world,
that they may be delivered from corruption and danger
and from manifold temptations.

THE ANGELS BEHELD THE ENTRANCE OF THE PURE ONE AND WERE AMAZED!
HOW HAS THE VIRGIN ENTERED INTO THE HOLY OF HOLIES?

IRMOS (Repeated as the KATAVASIA):

LET US ALL MAGNIFY THE RADIANT CLOUD
IN WHICH THE MASTER OF ALL DESCENDED,
AS DEW FROM HEAVEN UPON THE FLEECE
IN WHICH HE WHO IS WITHOUT BEGINNING TOOK FLESH FOR OUR SAKE AND WAS MADE MAN,
FOR SHE IS THE PURE MOTHER OF OUR GOD.

A Synaxarion (a bringing together of words) about the Feast

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

According to Holy Tradition, the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple took place in the following manner. The parents of the Virgin Mary, Saints Joachim and Anna, praying for an end to their childlessness, vowed that if a child were born to them, they would dedicate it to the service of God.

When the Most Holy Virgin reached the age of three, the holy parents decided to fulfill their vow. They gathered together their relatives and acquaintances, and dressed the All-Pure Virgin in Her finest clothes. Singing sacred songs and with lighted candles in their hands, virgins escorted Her to the Temple (Ps. 44/45:14-15). There the High Priest and several priests met the handmaiden of God. In the Temple, fifteen high steps led to the sanctuary, which only the priests and High Priest

could enter. (Because they recited a Psalm on each step, Psalms 119/120-133/134 are called "Psalms of Ascent.") The child Mary, so it seemed, could not make it up this stairway. But just as they placed Her on the first step, strengthened by the power of God, She quickly went up the remaining steps and ascended to the highest one. Then the High Priest, through inspiration from above, led the Most Holy Virgin into the Holy of Holies, where only the High Priest entered once a year to offer a purifying sacrifice of blood. Therefore, all those present in the Temple were astonished at this most unusual occurrence.

After entrusting their child to the Heavenly Father, Joachim and Anna returned home. The All-Holy Virgin remained in the quarters for virgins near the Temple. According to the testimony of Holy Scripture (Exodus 38; 1 Kings 1: 28; Luke 2: 37), and also the historian Josephus Flavius, there were many living quarters around the Temple, in which those who were dedicated to the service of God dwelt.

The earthly life of the Most Holy Theotokos from Her infancy until She was taken up to Heaven is shrouded in deep mystery. Her life at the Jerusalem Temple was also a secret. "If anyone were to ask me," said Saint Jerome, "how the Most Holy Virgin spent the time of Her youth, I would answer that that is known to God Himself and the Archangel Gabriel, Her constant guardian."

But there are accounts in Church Tradition, that during the All-Pure Virgin's stay at the Temple, She grew up in a community of pious virgins, diligently read the Holy Scripture, occupied Herself with handicrafts, prayed constantly, and grew in love for God. From ancient times, the Church has celebrated the Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple. Indications that the Feast was observed in the first centuries of Christianity are found in the traditions of Palestinian Christians, which say that the holy Empress Helen (May 21) built a church in honor of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa, in the fourth century, also mentions this Feast. In the eighth century Saints Germanus and Tarasius, Patriarchs of Constantinople, delivered sermons on the Feast of the Entry.

The Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple foretells God's blessing for the human race, the preaching of salvation, the promise of the coming of Christ.

Most Holy Theotokos, save us!

Dismissal

Reader: More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, without defilement you gave birth to God the Word, true Theotokos, we magnify you.

Reader: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy.

Senior Reader: Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, O Lord, Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us and save us.

People: Amen.

