

Readings & Hymns for the Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple



Troparion, Entry - Tone 4

Today is the prelude of the good will of God,
of the preaching of the salvation of mankind.

The Virgin appears in the Temple of God,
in anticipation proclaiming Christ to all.

Let us rejoice / and sing to her: //

“Rejoice, O Fulfillment of the Creator’s dispensation!”

Kontakion, Entry - Tone 4

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,
 therefore, the Angels of God praise her: //
 "Truly this woman is the abode of Heaven!"

Old Testament Readings for the Feast, Great Vespers

The reading from Exodus.

Exodus 40: 1-5, 9-10, 16, 34-35 (Composite 17)

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "On the first day of the first month thou shalt set up the Tabernacle of the Testimony. and thou shalt put in it the Ark and cover it with the veil. Thou shalt bring in the table and the candle stand; and thou shalt set there a golden altar to burn incense before the Ark of the Testimony. And thou shalt put a covering on the door of the Tabernacle of the Testimony. "Then thou shalt take the oil of anointing and anoint the Tabernacle and all that is in it, and consecrate it and all its vessels; and it shall be holy. And thou shalt consecrate the altar of Burnt Offerings; it shall be most holy." And Moses did all that the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel had commanded him. And a cloud covered the Tabernacle of the Testimony and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the Tabernacle of the Testimony, because the cloud overshadowed it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.

The reading from the Third book of Kings.

III [I] Kings 7:51; 8:1, 3-4, 5,6-7,9-11 (Composite 18)

And it came to pass when Solomon had finished building the house of the Lord, he assembled all the elders of Israel in Zion, to bring the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord out of the City of David, which is Zion. And the priests took up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, the Tabernacle of the Testimony, and all the holy vessels that were in the Tabernacle of the Testimony. And the King and all Israel went before the Ark. And the priests brought the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord to its place, into the Oracle of the Temple - into the Holy of Holies, under the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the Ark so that the cherubim made a covering above the Ark and its holy things above. There was nothing in the Ark except the two tablets of the Covenant which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord had made a Covenant. And when the priests came out from the holy place, a

cloud filled the house. And the priests were unable to stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord God Almighty filled the house.

The reading from the Prophecy of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 43:72, 44:1

Thus says the Lord: It shall be from the eighth day onward the priests shall offer upon the altar your burnt offerings and your peace offerings; and I will accept you, says the Adonai the Lord."

Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces east; and it was shut.

And he said to me, "This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it; for the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall remain shut.

Only the prince may sit in it to eat bread before the Lord; he shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gate, and shall go out by the same way."

Then he brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple; and I looked, and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple of the Lord.

Matins Gospel

§ 4; Luke 1: 39 - 49, 56

³⁹ AT THAT TIME MARY AROSE, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;

⁴⁰ And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.

⁴¹ And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit:

⁴² And she spake out with a loud voice, and said,

"Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

⁴³ And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

⁴⁴ For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

⁴⁵ And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord."

⁴⁶ And Mary said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord,

⁴⁷ And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

⁴⁸ For he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden:

for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

⁴⁹ For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name."

⁵⁶ And Mary abode with her about three months,
and returned to her own house.

The Prokeimenon

The Prokeimenon in the 3rd Tone, the Song of the Theotokos: **My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.** (*Entry*) (Lk 1: 46-47)

For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden, for behold, all generations will call me blessed! (*Lk 1: 48*)

The Epistle

§ 320: Hebrews 9: 1 - 7 (*Entry*)

The reading from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Hebrews.

BRETHREN: even the first covenant had justifications of divine service and an earthly sanctuary.

- ² For there was a tabernacle prepared,
in the first part of which were the candlestick and the table
and the setting forth of loaves, which is called "the Holy";
- ³ and behind the second veil,
the part of the tabernacle which is called the "Holy of Holies",
- ⁴ which had the golden censer,
and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold,
in which were the golden pot that had the manna,
and Aaron's rod that had blossomed, and the tablets of the covenant;
- ⁵ and over it were the Cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat;
of which we cannot now speak in detail.
- ⁶ Now when these things had been thus ordered,
the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle,
accomplishing the service of God.
- ⁷ But into the second part the high priest went alone once every year,
not without blood
which he offered for his own and the people's ignorance.

The Alleluia - Tone 8

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

verse: **Hear, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear!** (*Entry*) (Ps 44 [45]: 10)

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

verse: **Before thy face, the richest of the people will pray.** (Ps 44 [45]: 12)

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

The Gospel

§ 54; Luke 10: 38 - 42; 11: 27 - 28 (*Entry*)

AT THAT TIME JESUS entered into a certain village:

and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet,
and heard his word.

⁴⁰ But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said,
"Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?
bid her therefore that she help me."

⁴¹ And Jesus answered and said unto her,
"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

⁴² But one thing is needful:
and Mary hath chosen that good part,
which shall not be taken away from her."

^{11:27} And it came to pass, as he spake these things,
a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him,
"Blessed is the womb that bare thee,
and the breast at which thou hast nursed."

²⁸ But he said,
"Yea indeed, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

Hymn to the Theotokos - Tone 4

Instead of "It is truly meet ...," we sing:

The Angels beheld the Entrance of the Pure One and were amazed.
How has the Virgin entered into the Holy of Holies?

Irmos: As Thou art a living Temple of God,
let no impure hand touch thee, O Theotokos!
But let the lips of all believers sing,
constantly magnifying thee in joy with the angelic salutation:
"Truly, thou art above all creatures, O Pure One!"

Communion Hymns

I will receive the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. (*Theotokos*)

(*Ps 115 [116]: 13*)

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Magnification
On the Entry into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos
with the verses selected by Nicephorus Blemmydes (†1272)

We magnify thee, O most holy Virgin, Maiden chosen by God, and we honor thine entrance into the temple of the Lord.

A: Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, His holy mountain, (Ps 47 [48]: 1)

B: well-rooted, the joy of all the earth. (Ps 47 [48]: 2)

A: Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God. (Ps 86 [87]:3)

B: the city of the great King. (Ps 47 [48]: 3b)

A: As we have heard, so have we seen (Ps 47 [48]: 8a)

B: in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God, (Ps 47 [48]: 8b)

A: which God established for ever. (Ps 47 [48]: 8c)

B: The Most High has hallowed his habitation. (Ps 45 [46]: 4b)

A: Holiness and majesty are in his sanctuary. (95 [96]:6b)

B: Holy is Thy temple, and wonderful in righteousness. (Ps 64 [65]: 5-6)

A: This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it. (Ps 117 [118]: 20).

B: The Queen stood on Thy right side, (Ps 44 [45]: 9b)

A: arrayed in golden robes, all glorious. (Ps 44 [45]: 9c)

B: The rich among the people shall pray before thy face. (Ps 44 [45]: 12b)

A: Kings' daughters are among thine honorable women. (Ps 44 [45]: 9a)

B: All glorious, the King's daughter enters, (Ps 44 [45]: 14a)

A: her robes are of cloth of gold, clad in many colors, (Ps 44 [45]: 14b)

B: the virgins after her are led to the King: (Ps 44 [45]: 15a)

A: her companions, are brought to Thee. (Ps 44 [45]: 15b)

B: They are led in with rejoicing and gladness; they enter the temple of the King. (Ps 44 [45]: 16)

A: Hear, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear; (Ps 44 [45]: 16)

B: forget thy people and thy father's house; (Ps 44 [45]: 10b)

A: then the King will desire thy beauty (Ps 44 [45]: 11a)

B: I will remember thy name from generation to generation. (Ps 44 [45]: 17a)

A: We have thought on thy mercy, O God, in the midst of thy temple. (Ps 47 [48]: 9)

B: Therefore the peoples shall praise thee forever and ever. (Ps 44 [45]: 17b)

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
 now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Glory to Thee, O God.
 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Glory to Thee, O God.
 Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Glory to Thee, O God.

2nd Sessional Hymn - Tone 4

Before thy conception, O pure Virgin, thou wast consecrated to God:
 and now after thy birth thou art offered as a gift to Him,
 in fulfilment of thy parents' promise.
 To the divine temple thou art brought,
 thyself a Temple truly divine,
 innocent from the time thou wast a babe;
 thou hast appeared in the sanctuary accompanied by brightly burning lamps,
 who art the Receiver of the Divine Light that no man can approach. //
 Magnificent in truth is thine entry, O only Bride of God and ever-Virgin.

From the Praises of the Feast:

Tone 1 Podoben: "*Rejoicing of the Heavenly Ranks ...*"

The virgins bearing lamps,
 who with their light accompany the ever-Virgin,
 verily prophesy the future in Spirit.
 For the Temple of God, the Theotokos, / with virginal glory //
 enters as a little child into the temple.

The Theotokos, glorious fruit of a sacred promise,
 is truly revealed unto the world as higher than all creation.
 Piously led into the house of God, / she fulfils the vow of her parents //
 and she is preserved by the Holy Spirit.

O Virgin, fed in faith by heavenly bread in the temple of the Lord,
 thou hast brought forth unto the world the Bread of life that is the Word;
 and as His chosen Temple without spot,
 thou wast betrothed mystically through the Spirit,
 to be the Bride of God the Father.

Let the gate of the temple wherein God dwells be opened:
 for Joachim brings within today in glory
 the Temple and Throne of the King of all,
 and he consecrates as an offering to God //
 her whom the Lord has chosen to be His Mother.

*On "Glory ..." of the Praises of the Feast, by Leo the Master***Tone 2**

Today the Virgin without blemish is led to the temple,
to become the habitation of God the King of all, who sustains our life.
Today as a three-year-old victim of sacrifice
the most pure Sanctuary is led into the Holy of Holies.
To her let us cry out with the angel:
Rejoice! thou who alone art blessed among women.¹

**Homily on the Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple***Fr Alexander Schmemmann*

It seems thousands of years removed from us, but it was not so very long ago that life was marked out by religious feasts. Although everyone went to church, not everyone, of course, knew the exact contents of each celebration. For many, perhaps even the majority, the feast was above all an opportunity to get a good sleep, eat well, drink and relax. And nevertheless, I think that each person felt, if not fully consciously, that something transcendent and radiant broke into life with each feast, bringing an encounter with a world of different realities, a reminder of something forgotten, of something drowned out by the routine, emptiness and weariness of daily life. Consider the very names of the feasts: Entrance into the Temple, Nativity, Epiphany, Presentation, Transfiguration. These words alone, in their solemnity, their unrelatedness to daily life and their mysterious beauty awakened some forgotten memory, invited, pointed to something. The feast was a kind of longing sigh for a lost but beckoning beauty, a sigh for some other way of living.

Our modern world, however, has become monotonous and feastless. Even our secular holidays are unable to hide this settling ash of sadness and hopelessness, for the essence of celebration is this breaking in, this experience of being caught up into a different reality, into a world of spiritual beauty and light. If, however, this reality does not exist, if fundamentally there is nothing to celebrate, then no manner of artificial uplift will be capable of creating a feast.

Here we have the feast of the Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple. Its subject is very simple: a little girl is brought by her parents to the temple in Jerusalem. There is nothing particularly remarkable about this, since at that time it was a generally accepted custom and many parents brought their children to the temple as a sign of bringing them into contact with God, of giving their lives ultimate purpose and meaning, of illumining them from within through the light of higher experience.

¹ Luke 1: 28.

But on this occasion, as the service for the day re-counts, they lead the child to the "Holy of Holies," to the place where no one except the priests are allowed to go, the mystical inner sanctum of the temple. The girl's name is Mary. She is the future mother of Jesus Christ, the one through whom, as Christians believe, God himself came into the world to join the human race, to share its life and reveal its divine content. Are these just fairy tales? Or is something given to us and disclosed here, something directly related to our life, which perhaps cannot be expressed in everyday human speech?

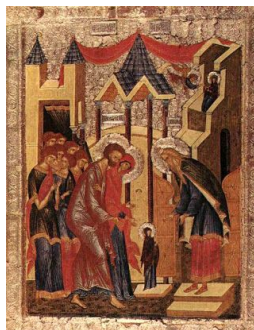
Here was this magnificent, massive, solemn temple, the glory of Jerusalem. And for centuries it was only there, behind those heavy walls, that a person could come into contact with God. Now, however, the priest takes Mary by the hand, leads her into the most sacred part of the Temple and we sing that "The most pure Temple of the Savior is led into the temple of the Lord." Later in the Gospels Christ said, "destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up," but as the Evangelist added, "he spoke of the temple of His Body" (Jn 2:19, 21).

The meaning of all these events, words and recollections is simple: from now on man himself becomes the temple. No stone temple, no altar, but man - his soul, body and life - is the sacred and divine heart of the world, its "holy of holies." One temple, Mary - living and human - is led into a temple made of stone, and from within brings to completion its significance and meaning.

With this event religion, and life even more so, undergoes a complete shift in balance. What now enters the world is a teaching that puts nothing higher than man, for God himself takes on human form to reveal man's vocation and meaning as divine. From this moment onward man is free. Nothing stands over him, for the very world is his as a gift from God to fulfill his divine destiny.

From the moment the Virgin Mary entered "the holy of holies," life itself became the Temple. And when we celebrate her Entrance into the Temple, we celebrate man's divine meaning and the brightness of his high calling. These cannot be washed away or uprooted from human memory.

Celebration of Faith, vol. 3.



Homily on the Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh - 7 November, 1972

Since early days the Church has given to the Mother of God titles of holiness greater than those which are given to any saint. She is called the All-holy, Panagia. We venerate Her as One who is greater and holier than the Cherubim and the Seraphim, greater than the angels of God who, endowed with vision, can see, contemplate and adore, greater than the angels of God who are, as it were, the throne of the Most High. Because the ones as the others see, worship, serve God as their Lord, as their Master, and yet somehow they remain farther from Him than She, who in Her exceeding holiness has become the kin of God, has become the Mother of the Incarnate Word, who is the Bride, the perfect revelation of what the whole creation is called to be and to become.

The Feast of the Presentation of the Mother of God to the Temple quite obviously raises historical problems. We know that in Israel no one was allowed into the Holy of Holies, that the High Priest entered it only once a year after having undergone purification by sacrificial blood. What the feast stands for primarily is described, enlarged on, in a sermon on prayer written in the 19th century by Theophane the Recluse. The Holy of Holies, he says, is the heart of hearts of human worship. It is the place where men in the Old Testament can meet God to the extent to which God can be met. It is the heart of the mystery of Israel. It is also the point which somehow is beyond the point of the sacrificed. The sacrifice opens the door to it. The sacrifice somehow remains this side of it. And to enter into the Holy of Holies means first and foremost to enter into that depth of adoration, into that depth of prayer which makes one present to the living God, which makes one stand face to face with the living God. The presentation of the Mother of God, apart from historical features, is extolled by the Church because it indicates to us where She stands in the whole of Her life, in the divine presence in complete surrender, in complete adoration.

Tradition has it that she was brought by Joachim and Anna. On the icons you can see young girls with candles bringing her to the temples. She was handed over to the high priest, who took Her into the place to which he had no access himself. Now I don't think there is any advantage in discussing the possible historicity of an event of that kind. From a purely historical point of view it is unlikely that it could have happened. But what matters is what it stands for, and it stands for a moment when, having reached the maturity of a young child, but the maturity of one who can already worship, serve, lend an ear, be ready to respond and to obey, She chose all that and went into that depth of obedience, of listening, of attention to what was God's will. By what I say I do not mean to say that it did or did not happen. But

what matters as far as She is concerned is obviously this aspect of the thing much more than the historicity of the event as described in icons or in folkloric tradition.

The Entry Into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos is the Entrance into Paradise of All Mankind

Bishop Ilariy (Shishkovsky)

The feast of the Entrance is very interesting. On the one hand, it something we seemingly understand and are accustomed to. But on the other hand, we do not always recognize the depth of meaning that the Church has given it.

Children feel that the Entrance is their own feast day

We know that in recent times, the feast of the Entrance into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos has been seen as a feast of all Christian children. The God-Chosen Virgin herself was brought into the temple as a three-year-old child, and so all children should feel that this is their own feast day. This is appropriate. But it is not entirely bound up with the Theotokos's childhood alone, because the mystical content of this feast day, or the vector that leads us to the next event, is the Nativity of Christ. And it is no coincidence that it is always celebrated at the beginning of the Nativity fast.

Why did the high priest Zachariah break the Law?

Ancient people, or rather, the people of the Bible, had a special kind of intuition, a spiritual inspiration, that we would now call charisma. After all, modern man is in a certain sense programmed; he acts according to the external norms of etiquette. But the heart of ancient man was always open to revelation, hidden from contemplative perception.

Let us recall the moment when Balaam went to curse the Israelite people, but suddenly the donkey stopped and spoke with a human voice. Instead of a curse he came and pronounced a blessing. Only saints and people of profound spiritual praxis are able to see manifestations such as this. High Priest Zacharias, who met the Most Holy Theotokos, was just such a man. He saw with his spiritual eyes in this little girl the Great Maiden, who will give birth to the Messiah of the Israelite people – the Savior. And the high priest, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, committed an act that according to the Law amazed, perhaps even scandalized many. But we know that all events that happen according to God's inspiration do not have an ordinary, systematic meaning. They are out of the box, but they are justified because that is how God wishes it to be.

The Child-Virgin comes into direct contact with God...

Through the Entrance into the Temple, the Virgin as a child showed all the pagan peoples that there is salvation, that it is prepared not only for Israel. God wants to

restore His covenant with man, and call him to this. And this threshold, this point of return to the covenant with God was the Most Holy Theotokos.

According to Old Testament understanding, women were in general considered weak, infirm, and not quite perfect beings. And here God shows that through Her, through this little girl, the Savior will come into the world; that She is the embodiment of all mankind, which will be saved. Moreover, the three-year-old Virgin is the main personage acting in all these events.

The Entrance of the Theotokos into the Holy of Holies is the beginning of man's salvation, and the Child Mary is its direct participant. The first person to recognize this was High Priest Zacharias. At the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he took in the hidden mystery and showed it to those standing in the temple, while to the Mother of the whole world was revealed the reception of divine grace.

And thus, the Theotokos herself enters into the Holy of Holies – where God-Shekhina is present. In translation from the Hebrew, this term means “the presence of the Most High”. God is everywhere, all around, but there is a place of His particular presence. The Theotokos comes into direct contact with God, Who will act directly through her in the future: The Father will bless, the Holy Spirit will sanctify, and the Son of God will come down and be born. Three persons of the Holy Trinity come together in the Holy of Holies, the history of mankind is changed, and God's promise is fulfilled; here God's Chosen One is manifested to the world – she who will become the cause of mankind's salvation. Through her will come Christ. And the high priest is only the accompanier, the conduit, who gives others the opportunity to see what is already taking place.

In entering the Holy of Holies, as if the Theotokos brings all people in after her

The event itself of the Entrance into the Temple of the Child-Virgin shows that she is consecrated to God; she is the pre-chosen vessel that will become the bearer of the Son of God. And in entering there, the Theotokos as if brings all people in after her; she shows that through her all mankind can be saved and enter into Paradise, that it will return to that sacred, ancient sphere that it lost through the original sin of its first parents.

At the services for the Feast of the Entrance, we also partake of the grace of Divine revelation

The divine services reveal to us the mystery of God's Economy, which has not only begun to come into reality – it is already prepared and needs to be received. We could say that through the present, the past and the future are met. This meeting as it shows what God has conceived – the mystery of salvation. Therefore, the Entrance is a mystical feast, which must be perceived as an event that very directly related to us. For those people standing at the divine services on the Feast of the Entrance, God

gives a living revelation; that is, we partake of this grace. By this God again gives us hope, firm assurance and conviction of the fact that salvation and Economy continues, it moves forward, and the promises He gave us in the Scriptures are not empty noise. They are coming to pass.

The Entrance into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos gives us the opportunity to vividly feel the close presence of the Messiah. As it is written in the Scriptures, He is not yet visible, He is somewhere there, beyond the hills; but His presence is already near, and His rays already shine...



