

THE ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE (November 21)

Here we have the feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos (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 illuminating them from within through the light of higher experience. We call this same custom Churching of the child and we also continue to do so.

But on this occasion, as the service for day recounts, they led 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. God’s son himself came into the world to join the human race to share its life and reveal its divine content.

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 – his soul, body, and life are the sacred and divine heart of the world made so by Jesus Christ in Baptism. One temple, **Mary** – living and human, is led into the temple made of stone and from within brings to completion and its significance and meaning. Nothing stands over him, for the very world is a gift from God to fulfill his divine destiny. Mankind 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 history.

In Archbishop Raya's book **Theotokos** (p. 96) he says: *We are totally convinced that Mary's supreme dignity as future Bearer of God (Theotokos) merits her not only to enter the Temple but to penetrate to the most sacred place in the Temple, the "Holy of Holies." This part of the Temple is called the "Holy of Holies" because it contained the "Shekhina," the glory of God, with the Manna, the Rod of Aaron, and the Tablets of the Ten Commandments. Mary was no mere receptacle of signs and symbols, as was the Temple. She was more sacred and holier because she was to contain Glory Himself.*