

Mariology Outline & Quotations

Introduction: Our Lady's Presence in the Church

The Blessed Virgin Mary is an all pervading and undeniable presence in the life of the Orthodox Church and she is loved more than all the saints. As we worship Christ and the Holy Trinity, we never fail to venerate the Virgin Mary.

Who is Mary in the Scriptures?

Mary in the New Testament

- “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” (Gal 4:4--5)
- While some passages like Luke 11:28 might at first seem to downplay Mary's importance, the Church actually reads this passage on Marian feast days, interpreting the one who hears and obeys the word of God as Mary. In other words, Jesus points to Mary's spiritual qualities which ground her fittingness to also be his mother in the flesh. Other passages which at first seem to downplay her role are traditionally interpreted similarly.
- “In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Hail, O full of grace, the Lord is with you!” But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” And Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.” (Lk 1:26--38)
- In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechari'ah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!

And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” (Lk 1:39--45)

- And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. (Lk 1:46--49)

Marian Symbolism & Typology

- Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant, the Temple, the Church, the Burning Bush
- Mary is the New Israel that receives the greeting, “Hail!” which means “Rejoice!”
- The Woman of the Apocalypse
- Mary is so much more. See the Akathist Hymn.
- “The hypostases of the one nature of the Church are human persons. That is why, in their commentaries on the Song of Songs, the Fathers see in the figure of the Bride not only the Church, but also every person entering into union with God. But, as St Paul says... ‘this is a great mystery’. It belongs to the age to come, when the Church will be perfected... and uncreated fullness will be united in human persons who will become deified human hypostases, in the face of Christ, the incarnate divine Hypostasis. Thus it would seem that until the consummation of the ages... the Church will have no hypostasis of her own, no created hypostasis, no human person having attained to perfect union with God. And yet, to say this would be to fail to perceive the very heart of the Church, one of her most secret mysteries, her mystical centre, her perfection already realized in a human person fully united to God, finding herself beyond the resurrection and the judgment. This person is Mary, the Mother of God.” (Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 193.)
- “It is hard to speak and not less hard to think about the mysteries which the Church keeps in the hidden depths of her inner consciousness. Here every uttered word can seem crude, every attempt at formulation can seem sacrilegious.... The Mother of God was never a theme of the public preaching of the apostles. While Christ was preached from the housetops... the mystery of the Mother of God was revealed only to those within the Church, to the faithful who had received the message and were pressing towards ‘the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14). More than an object of faith, this mystery is a foundation of our hope, a fruit of faith, ripened in Tradition.” (Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 208--209.)

Our Praise of Mary: Orthodox Mariological Concepts

Orthodox Christians lovingly confess Mary to be the following:

- Theotokos/Meter Theou (Mother of God)
 - “The name of the Mother of God contains all the history of the divine economy in this world” (St John Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa II, 12*).
- Ever-Virgin
 - Ezekiel 44: 1-3 “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."
 - St Ambrose: “Who is this gate (Ezekiel 44:1-4), if not Mary? Is it not closed because she is a virgin? Mary is the gate through which Christ entered this world, when He was brought forth in the virginal birth and the manner of His birth did not break the seals of virginity."
- Most Blessed, All Holy (Panagia/Iper-Agia), & Immaculate
 - “All the sacred tradition of the Jews is a history of the slow and laborious journey of fallen humanity towards the ‘fulness of time,’ when the angel was to be sent to announce to the chosen Virgin the Incarnation of God and to hear from her lips human consent, so the divine plan of salvation could be accomplished.... This divine economy, preparing human conditions for the Incarnation of the Son of God is not a unilateral one.... In this saving economy, the Wisdom of God is adapted to the fluctuations of human wills, to the different responses of men to the divine challenge. It is thus that, through the generations of Old Testament righteous men, Wisdom ‘has built her house’: the all-pure nature of the Holy Virgin, whereby the Word of God will become connatural with us. The answer of Mary... resolves the tragedy of fallen humanity. All that God required of human liberty since the Fall is accomplished.” (Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 202.)
 - “Sin, acting as a force in her nature, and as impurity could find no place in her. St Gregory Palamas in his homily on the Presentation to the temple, explains this sanctity of the virgin by the successive purifications which have taken place in the nature of her ancestors, as well as in her own nature from the moment of her conception.” (Vladimir Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 140--141.)
 - “Orthodoxy does not admit in the All-pure Virgin any individual sin, for that would be unworthy of the dignity of the Mother of God.” (Fr Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 117.)

- “The work of the New Adam presupposes the work of the New Eve.... According to the saintly Nicholas Cabasilas, the great 14th century theologian, had the Panagia, in her obedience, not offered her freedom to God – had she not said ‘yes’ to God – God would not have been able to incarnate....This is why St. Gregory Palamas, summarizing Patristic theology, says that our Panagia holds the second place after the Holy Trinity... [she is] the borderline between the created and the uncreated. ‘She leads those being saved’, according to another fine expression by a theologian of our Church. And St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, the steadfast luminary and teacher of the Church, pointed out that the angelic ranks themselves are illumined by the light they receive from the Panagia.” (Abbot George of St Gregorios on Mt Athos, *Theosis: The True Purpose of Human Life*.)
- Mediatrix & Queen of Heaven
 - “If she submitted to the conditions of human life, even to the acceptance of death; it was by virtue of the perfect will whereby she reproduced the voluntary κένωσις of her Son. But death had no more dominion over her. Like her son, she was raised from the dead and borne up to heaven--the first human hypostasis in whom was fulfilled the final end for which the world was created.... She has crossed the frontier which separates us from the age to come. This is why, freed from the limitations of time, Mary can be the cause of that which is before her; can preside over that which comes after her. She obtains eternal benefits. It is through her that men and angels receive grace. No gift is received in the Church without the assistance of the Mother of God, who is herself the first-fruits of the glorified Church. Thus, having attained to the limits of becoming, she necessarily watches over the destinies of the Church and of the universe, still unfolding in time.” (Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 194--195.)
 - “She alone is not only the protector of the treasury of all the riches of the Godhead, but she is the distributor to all angels and men, all those gifts from God to the supernatural creation, illumination and divine and spiritual gifts.” (St Nikodemos the Hagiorite)
 - We praise thee, who art the Mediatrix for the salvation of our race, O Virgin Theotokos! For in the flesh assumed from thee, after He had suffered the passion of the cross, thy Son and our God delivered us from corruption because He is the lover of mankind. (Tone 3 Resurrectional Theotokion)
 - O protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the Creator most constant, O despise not the suppliant voices of those who have sinned; but be thou quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession, and

speed thou to make supplication, thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honor thee. (Ordinary Sunday Kontakion)

- “To the degree that she is closer to God than all those who have drawn nigh unto Him, by so much has the Theotokos been deemed worthy of greater audience. I do not speak of men alone, but also of the angelic hierarchies themselves.... She alone has received the all-pervading fulness of Him that filleth all things, and through her all may now contain it, for she dispenses it according to the power of each, in proportion and to the degree of the purity of each. Hence she is the treasury and overseer of the riches of the Godhead. For it is an everlasting ordinance in the heavens that the inferior partake of what lies beyond being, by the mediation of the superior, and the Virgin Mother is incomparably superior to all. It is through her that as many as partake of God do partake, and as many as know God understand her to be the enclosure of the Uncontainable One, and as many as hymn God praise her together with Him. She is the cause of what came before her, the champion of what came after her and the agent of things eternal. She is the substance of the prophets, the principle of the apostles, the firm foundation of the martyrs and the premise of the teachers of the Church . She is the glory of those upon earth, the joy of celestial beings, the adornment of all creation. She is the beginning and the source and root of unutterable good things; she is the summit and consummation of everything holy.” (St Gregory Palamas, On the Dormition)
- “Living in a state of glory the Virgin remains the mother of the human race for which she prays and intercedes. This is why the Church addresses to her its supplications, invoking her aid. She covers the world with her veil weeping for the sins of the world; at the Last Judgment she will intercede before her Son and ask pardon from Him. She sanctifies the whole natural world; in her and by her the world attains transfiguration. In a word, the veneration of the Virgin marks with its imprint all Christian anthropology and cosmology and all the life of prayer and piety.” (Fr Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 118.)
- “When we turn to the Mother of God in prayer, we should realize more than we do that any prayer we offer [to her] means this: ‘Mother, I have killed thy Son. If you forgive me, I can be forgiven. If you withhold forgiveness *nothing* can save me from damnation.’... [In the Theotokos] in a peculiar way, we see the Word of God spoken by Paul who says ‘My power is made manifest in weakness.’ We can see this frail virgin of Israel, this frail girl, defeating sin in her, defeating hell, defeating everything by the power of God which is in her. And this is why at moments like persecutions, when indeed the power of God is made manifest in nothing but weakness, the Blessed Virgin stands out so miraculously, so

powerfully in our eyes. If she could defeat earth and hell then we have in her a tower of strength and one who can intercede and save, and we mark the fact that in her there is no discrepancy with the will of God, that she is in perfect harmony with Him, by using the formula of prayer which we use only for God and for her, 'Save us.' We don't say, 'Pray for us.'" (Anthony Bloom, *Beginning to Pray*, 110--112.)

Marian Piety: "All generations shall call me blessed!"

- "Love and veneration for the Virgin is the soul of Orthodox piety, its heart, that which warms and animates its entire body. A faith in Christ which does not include His virgin birth and veneration of His Mother is another faith, another Christianity from that of the Orthodox Church. Protestantism is this other sort of Christianity, with its strange and deeply-rooted lack of feeling for the Mother of God.... Protestant comprehension of the Incarnation loses some of its fulness and power." (Fr Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 116.)
- "Prayers addressed to the Virgin occupy a large place in the Orthodox service. Besides the feasts and the days specially consecrated to her, every office contains innumerable prayers addressed to her and her name is constantly spoken in the temple together with the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Her icons are found before us... in the church and in the houses of the faithful. There exist numerous types of these icons, the originals of which are considered as miraculous. This warmth natural to the cult of the Virgin comes from her humanity and her feminine nature. I sometimes think that the coldness of atmosphere of some Protestant churches results from the absence of just this warmth. In her and by her the feminine receives a place in piety, in connection with the Holy Spirit." (Fr Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 118.)