



PRAYERS TO OUR LADY EAST AND WEST

DEACON DAVID LOCHBIHLER, J.D.

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by Deacon David Lochbihler, J.D.

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To Lindsay Marie, Patrick, & Maggie



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Every single error in this book is entirely my own. I would love to hear from you, my beloved reader, if any small part of this work touches your heart.

Friends in Jesus and Mary,
Deacon David Lochbihler
Saint Patrick Orthodox Church
The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Sunday 8 September 2019
orthodoxdeacondavid@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

“More honourable than the Cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim, thee who without corruption gavest birth to God the Word, the very Theotokos, thee do we magnify.”¹ These words of veneration for the Blessed Virgin Mary, prayed and sung throughout the Orthodox Church for centuries, epitomize the special love relationship between the Theotokos and the Orthodox faithful.

“Throughout history, and especially during the fourth and fifth centuries, the basic category for thinking about Mary was that of paradox: Virgin and Mother; Human Mother of One who is God, Theotokos.”² A theological understanding of Our Lady is found most readily in the Divine Liturgy. “In Orthodox services Mary is often mentioned, and on each occasion she is usually given her full title: ‘Our All-Holy, immaculate, most blessed and glorified Lady, Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary.’ Here are included the three chief epithets applied to Our Lady by the Orthodox Church: *Theotokos* (God-bearer, Mother of God), *Aeiparthenos* (Ever-Virgin), and *Panagia*

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¹ Holy Transfiguration Monastery, trans., *The Service of the Akathist Hymn: The Salutations to the Most Holy Theotokos*, (Boston, MA: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1991), 79.

² Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 55.

(All-Holy).”³ The veracity of these titles for the Blessed Virgin Mary has been affirmed throughout church history, especially in the ecumenical councils. “The authority for these epithets is to be found in the records of the early ecumenical councils.”⁴ The veneration of Our Lady permeates the life of the Orthodox Church. “Although these titles have never been defined explicitly in an ecumenical council of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, they are used frequently in liturgy and personal prayer.”⁵ Every Orthodox Church features an icon of the Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus near the altar, and our people’s intense love for the Theotokos runs wide and deep. These three titles of the Virgin Mary will be considered in turn.

The Virgin Mary is called the Theotokos or God-bearer from the earliest centuries of the Orthodox faith. Around the year 250 A.D., the term *Theotokos* “was found in a prayer written on a fragment of Egyptian papyrus for use during the Coptic Nativity Liturgy. The prayer is known as the *Sub Tuum Praesidium* (translated into English as, “Beneath Thy Compassion”). The significance of the use of this written word in this prayer indicates that it was in common use during this liturgy and most likely used at least decades prior.”⁶ In addition, as most likely

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³ Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 257-258.

⁴ Andrew Louth, “John of Damascus on the Mother of God as a Link Between Humanity and God,” Chap. 10 in *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Mary Cunningham (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 154.

⁵ Mary Christine Athans, *In Quest of the Jewish Mary* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), 27.

⁶ Andrew Gary Podolak, “*Most Holy Theotokos, Save Us*,” Master’s thesis, Balamand University, 2015, 12.

the oral tradition precedes the written word, it is likely the figure of the Virgin Mary was venerated quite early in church history. “Precisely because the Son of God became incarnate in Mary’s womb, she is rightly called Mother of God.”⁷

Mary also is referred to as *Aeiparthenos*, the Ever-Virgin. “Turning to the Fathers, one of the first proclamations of the doctrine of the virginal conception is by Ignatius of Antioch,”⁸ a saint and bishop living in the first and second centuries. St. Ambrose (340-397) “appreciated how hard it was to maintain Christian virginity, and so he offered Mary as a companion to the celibates who tried. The purity of her body and her decorous comportment were to be emulated by women who strove for virtue, since Mary was a mirror of all virtues.”⁹ Mary as Ever-Virgin cleanses those mired in sin and striving for holiness: “O Pure One without flaw, Holy One without blemish, Cleanse me that I might become pure. Sanctify me and I shall be made holy.”¹⁰ The Virgin Mary inspires all Orthodox Christians, both celibate and married, to live purer and more chaste lives faithful to their calling. “Blessed is she who received the Holy Spirit; He purified and polished her, and He made her a temple, and the

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⁷ Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 153.

⁸ Brian K. Reynolds, *Gateway to Heaven: Marian Doctrine and Devotion Image and Typology in the Patristic and Medieval Period*, vol. 1 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012), 54.

⁹ Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009), 27.

¹⁰ John Anthony McGuckin, *The Harp of Glory: Enzira Sebhat* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2010), 63.

Lord Most High dwelt in her abode.”¹¹ Mary’s virginity makes her uniqueness as the Mother of God even more pronounced, as only a pure and holy woman would be able to bear the Son of God in her virginal womb.

Besides being the Mother of God and pure virgin, Mary is called *Panagia*, the All-Holy. “Mary became ‘all holy’ as a result of the process of *theosis* (deification or divinization), and this was the result of both ‘her free will and consent and ... of the grace of the Logos of God.”¹² After Mary assents to become the Mother of Jesus, the Holy Spirit “sanctified her, purified her and made her blessed among women... She was summoned that she might be the Mother of the Son of God; the Holy Spirit had sanctified her and so dwelt within her.”¹³ How was Mary, born of a man and a woman, able to overcome the corruption of the human propensity to sin? “The Son of God wanted to be related to her, and first He made her body without sin.”¹⁴ The glorification of Mary resounds from the angelic hosts in heaven: “The heavenly company performed their ‘Holy, Holy, Holy,’ unto the glorious soul of this Mother of the Son of God.”¹⁵

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¹¹ Jacob of Serug, *On the Mother of God* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998), 41.

¹² Robert L. Fastiggi “The Immaculate Conception: Historical and Ecumenical Perspectives,” in *De Maria Numquam Satis: The Significance of the Catholic Doctrines on the Blessed Virgin Mary*, ed. Judith Marie Gentle and Robert L. Fastiggi, 1-16. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2009, 9.

¹³ Jacob of Serug, *On the Mother of God*, 34.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 98.

St. Ambrose “places his Mariology firmly within the Christological context.”¹⁶ Specifically, for St. Ambrose, “the Virgin Birth is closely related to the divinity of Christ.”¹⁷ Mary’s status within the Orthodox Church exists primarily because of her pivotal role in the mystery of the Incarnation. “Anyone who thinks out the implications of that great phrase, *The Word was made flesh*, cannot but feel a profound awe for her who was chosen as the instrument of so surpassing a mystery.”¹⁸ The essence of the Incarnation is remembered and recited at the end of every Western Rite Mass, as the priest reads about the Incarnation of Jesus from John 1:1-18 in the Last Gospel after the Final Blessing of the people. In addition, just prior to the singing of the closing recessional hymn, the priest and people pray the Angelus together. The Theotokos is immersed in the mystery of the Incarnation, next to the Trinity the most profound mystery of our faith. “She gave flesh to her Son, and she is this God-bearing and theophoric flesh through which the flesh of the world is brought to Him for salvation.”¹⁹ Her unique role in the Incarnation is both essential and indispensable.

This book will compare and contrast two devotional prayers venerating the Theotokos, the Blessed Virgin Mary: *The Prayer Rule of the Theotokos* and the Rosary. At the heart of each prayer, a special tribute to Our Lady is spoken most often. First,

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¹⁶ Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, vol. 1 (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 78.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁸ Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 258.

¹⁹ Sergius Bulgakov, *The Burning Bush: On the Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdsman Publishing, 2009), 111.

from *The Prayer Rule of the Theotokos*, the following prayer to the Theotokos is said: “Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with You. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of Your womb, for you have born Christ, the Savior of our souls.”²⁰ Second, the “centerpiece of the Rosary”²¹ is the Hail Mary: “Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.”²² The history and devotion underlining these two prayers within the context of the Western Rite Rosary will be considered in turn.

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²⁰ Anthony Stehlin, *The Prayer Rule of the Theotokos as Prayed by Saint Seraphim of Sarov* (Middletown, DE: Chi Rho Publishing, 2015), iv.

²¹ Patricia Ann Kasten, *Lining Your Beads: The Rosaries History, Mysteries, and Prayers* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2010), 48.

²² *Ibid.*, 52-53.



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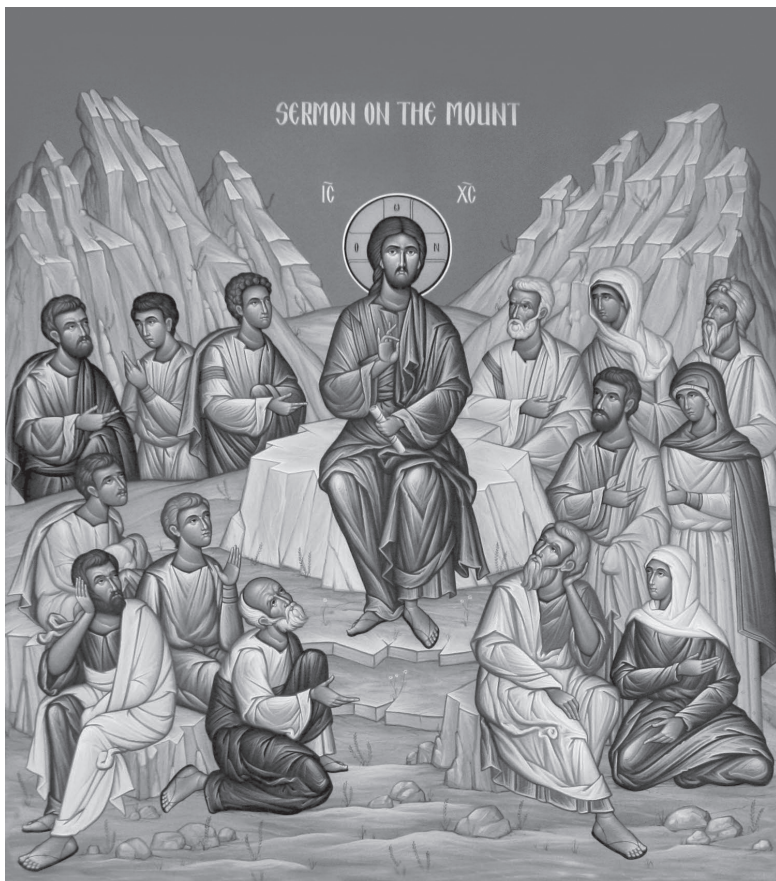
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I learned about the Blessed Virgin Mary as a child attending a superb Roman Catholic grade school and as a teenager studying at an excellent Catholic high school. My friendship with Our Lady was nurtured at the University of Notre Dame and deepened throughout my adult life. Later as a Wesleyan pastor, I missed the Virgin Mary as an intimate and important part of my life. Finally coming home, called in significant part by my yearning for Our Lady, I fell in love with the Theotokos as a Deacon in the Orthodox Church. This book offers a researched comparative analysis of the Eastern Prayer Rule of the Theotokos and the Western Rosary.

Deacon David Lochbihler currently serves at Saint Patrick's Orthodox Church in Bealeton, Virginia. He teaches fourth grade at The Fairfax Christian School in Northern Virginia. After graduating *summa cum laude* from the University of Notre Dame and *cum laude* from the University of Texas School of Law. Deacon David worked as a Chicago attorney for three years before becoming a teacher and coach. He also earned Master's degrees in Elementary Education, Biblical Studies, and Applied Orthodox Theology. His varsity high school basketball and soccer teams captured four N.V.I.A.C. conference championships.

