

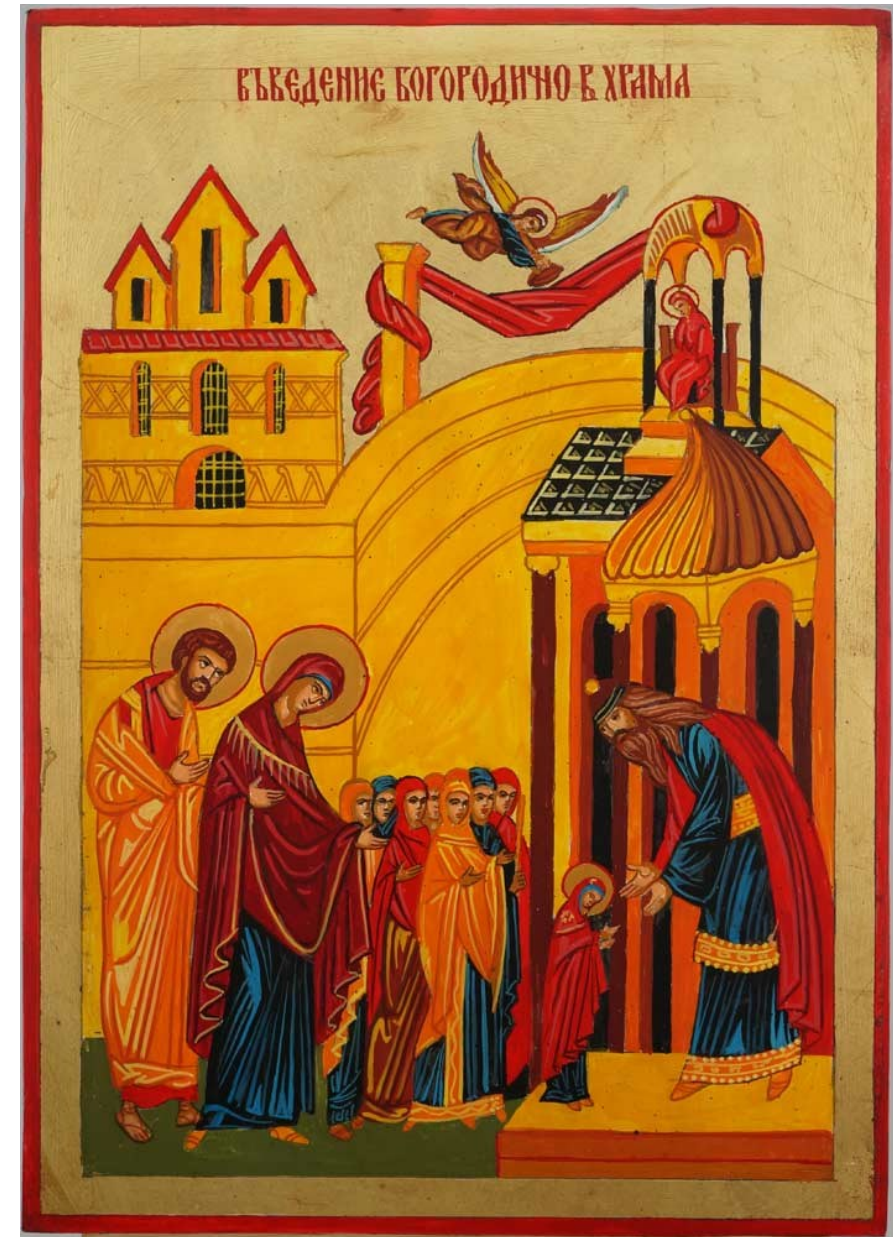
From the Divine Office for Gregory the Wonderworker (Nov. 17)

O Gregory, what shall I call you? The determined destroyer of impiety? The definer of the Faith and teacher of the nations? The invincible champion of peace and unperturbed arbiter of conflicts? A hermit who, from the mountains where you dwelt, saw what occurred in the cities. Intercede for the salvation of our souls! (Vespers)

Hail, O you who give light by your holy theology, pillar of the Church, its firm teacher, wondrous instrument of the Paraclete, heavenly spirit, lyre of the Spirit, sublime shepherd and yet gentle lamb, sheep cherished by the supreme Shepherd, fountain flowing with teachings and streams of healing. O hierarch Gregory, pray to Christ to grant our souls great mercy. (Orthros)



**NINTH SUNDAY AFTER THE HOLY CROSS
NOVEMBER 17, 2024**



**ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS IN THE TEMPLE
NOVEMBER 21**

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church

256 Hamilton St.

Worcester, MA 01604

Rectory: (508) 752-4174 Hall: (508) 755-2199

Email: olphmelkite@gmail.com

Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor

Rev. Deacon Elias Bailey

Email: fr.bryan.mcneil@melkite.org Cell: (774) 502-8547

Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

Antiphon (1st)

1: Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth, and sing praise to His name.

Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Savior, save us.

2: Say to God: How awesome are Your deeds! So great is Your power that Your enemies cringe before You.

Be shafa'ati Walidatil Eelah, ya Mukhallisu, khallisna.

3: Let all the earth worship You and sing praises to You; let it sing praises to Your name, O Most High!

Through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Savior, save us.

Entrance Hymn

Priest: Come let us worship and bow down before Christ

People: *O Son of God Who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You: Alleluia!*

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 1) Pg. 38

After the stone was sealed by the Jews and the while the soldiers were watching your spotless body, You rose, O Savior, on the third day, bestowing life to the world. Therefore, the heavenly powers cried out to You, O Giver of Life: “Glory to your resurrection, O Christ! Glory to your kingdom! Glory to your economy, O You who alone are the lover of mankind!”

Patronal Troparion (Tone 1) Pg.15

In giving birth, you have preserved your virginity and in falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Mother of God. You have passed to life being the Mother of Life. Through your intercession, save our souls from death.

Kontakion Presentation of the Blessed Virgin (4th Tone)

The most pure Temple of our holy Savior, His most precious bridal chamber, the Virgin, sacred treasure of the glory of God, openly appears today in the Temple of the Lord, bringing with her the grace of the most Holy Spirit. Wherefore the angels of God are singing: “This is the heavenly tabernacle!”

On this feast in the Christian East, Mary’s coming into the temple is portrayed as an “Entrance” rather than as a “Presentation” as in the West. This term puts us in mind of things like the “Great Entrance” at our Divine Liturgy or the Entrance Procession in the Western rites. Her coming is not the blessing of an insignificant child given in a “side chapel,” as it were, but a festive “prelude” or “overture” inaugurating the main event, the New Testament itself.

Our celebration of this feast focuses on Mary as the temple of the incarnate God, the one for whom the Jerusalem temple was only a prefiguration. After their entry with Christ into Jerusalem, His disciples came up to Him to call His attention to the temple and the buildings in its compound. Jesus replied, “‘Do you see all these things?’ he asked. ‘Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down’” (Matthew 24:2).

This feast celebrates the fulfillment of His prophecy. God’s people will no longer reach heaven via Jerusalem; rather the heavens have been opened to us and God’s temple, the Theotokos, is become for us the way to heaven through her childbearing.

“Hail, Full of Grace”

Perhaps the most popular hymn of this feast is the kontakion, *O katharotatos naos*, which summarizes in a few lines the theology we have been presenting. It reads: “The most pure Temple of the Savior, the most precious and bright bridal chamber – the Virgin, sacred treasury of the glory of God – enters today into the Temple of the Lord, bringing with her the grace of the Most Holy Spirit. Wherefore, the angels of God are singing: “This is the heavenly Tabernacle!”

In this hymn two teachings are affirmed. Mary is proclaimed by the angels as “the heavenly tabernacle.” The tabernacle, we know, was the portable holy place which the Hebrews brought with them in the desert until they reached the promised land. It was rendered into a more permanent form as the temple. She, not any building, is the holy place where God dwelled.

Secondly we are told that Mary entered the temple “bringing with her the grace of the Most Holy Spirit.” People went to the temple to encounter God, to receive His blessings. Mary, instead, brings God’s grace with her. She is proclaimed as “full of grace,” even as a child, by the angels themselves. This feast is thus for the Eastern Churches what the Immaculate Conception is to the West: a celebration of the holiness of Mary, sanctified from her earliest days by the Most Holy Spirit who dwelt in her.

As we have said, it was unthinkable that a child, or anyone for that matter, should enter the Holy of Holies. But it is Mary’s rightful place as the woman full of grace who would contain within the Platytera between earth and heaven, the foremost worshipper of the Lord whom she bore.

Mary at Work

Icons of the annunciation often show the Holy Virgin weaving when the angel appeared to her. This vignette, too, is drawn from the *Protoevangelion*, which describes Mary as weaving a curtain for the Jerusalem temple with several other girls. The temple veil was like a giant patchwork quilt with each girl assigned by lots to weave a portion, each using different colors. The Virgin was given the most precious colors, scarlet and true purple.

Our iconography designates these colors to represent divinity. Christ wears a scarlet or purple tunic with a blue cloak over it. This symbolizes that His divinity (scarlet) put on His humanity (blue) in the incarnation. In icons of the Theotokos the colors are reversed. Her humanity (a blue tunic) took on divinity (a scarlet cloak) when she conceived the Lord.

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today +George & Alice Joseph. Requested by Marilyn & Zenon Tencza and family

This morning's Coffee Hr. is hosted by Marilyn & Zenon Tencza

Next Sunday's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by the Dumont family

Please remember in your prayers: George Arraj ,Jr., Peter Abraham, Mark Bashour, Robert Ghiz, Sadie Mirante, Charlotte Stockhaus, Richard Abraham, Sr., Frank Boyda, Carol Boyda, Bob Lynch, Joe Najemy, Michael Mooradian, Dennis Desplaines, Thomas Houde, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Jeannine McNeil, Linda Gartner, Billy Rahall, Dan Rahall, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Nicholas Halal, Elaine Foley, David Ahlin, Elio Kanaan, Susan Bailey, Jacqueline Ventriglia, Thomas Houde, those affected by the natural disasters throughout the world, the people of Gaza, and for peace in Ukraine & the Middle East.

If there are people for whom you would like me to pray, please reach out and give me their names. Part of our vocation as Christians is to pray for each other, especially when someone is sick or suffering in any way.

Last Week's Collection

Weekly	\$ 1,131
Candles	\$ 36
Coffee Hr.	\$ 122
Dividends	\$ 75
Memorials	\$ 125
TOTAL	\$ 1,489

FINANCIALS

<u>10.2024</u>		<u>YTD (10.2024-10.2024)</u>	
Income	\$7,856	Income	\$7,856
Expenses	-\$9,373	Expenses	-\$9,373
Net	-\$1,517	Net	-\$1,517

Welcome to any visitors we have with us this morning! We are happy to have you worship with us.

Please join us downstairs in the church hall for the coffee hour so that we can get to know each other better and answer any questions you may have about the parish or the Melkite Church.

BISHOP'S APPEAL UPDATE

We seem to be stuck at \$2,790 of our \$8,000 goal. If you have already made a donation to the Bishop's Appeal, thank-you! If not, please prayerfully consider doing so. There are envelopes and reply cards available at the rear of the church. You may also donate online at: melkite.org/appeal or scan the QR code below.

Your donations help the Diocese fulfill the mission of the Church. Like the Good Samaritan, who tends to the injured man, we are called to do what we can to help. Your gift to the Appeal helps struggling parishes, our seminarians and our retired priests, among other things.

Remember that for every dollar we raise above our goal, 50 cents comes back to the parish.

God bless you for your generosity!

Fr. Bryan



PRELUDE TO THE BENEVOLENCE OF GOD

NOVEMBER 21

IT IS PROBABLY SAFE TO SAY that most people would prefer to read a story than an academic treatise. Both forms might be conveying the same point, but a narrative is likely to be more compelling – and more memorable – than a dissertation.

The Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple, the Great Feast we celebrate today, rests on such a narrative. The story is found in *The Protoevangelion of James*, a second-century telling of the birth and infancy of the Theotokos. We know that in the first and second centuries a number of books were written about Christ and His Mother. Some were accepted by all the local Churches as presenting a true portrait of the Messiah. Others were rejected because the Christ they portrayed was not the one who had been preached by the Apostles. In some He was a Gnostic philosopher, in other a magician. We call these “apocryphal gospels” and do not see them as the voice of the Holy Spirit to us.

Still other books, *The Protoevangelion of James* among them, were revered by the Christians of their day but not considered canonical Scriptures because their content was not at the heart of the apostolic proclamation or the early Creeds. Their subject matter treated things like Jesus’ physical appearance or the early periods of Christ’s life not covered in the Gospels. They may be true but not central to our faith.

The Source of This Feast

The prayers and icon of this Feast focus on two elements of the Protoevangelion story. In the first, Mary at the age of three is presented to God in the temple at Jerusalem accompanied, as the text reads, “by the daughters of the Hebrews that are undefiled.” There “the priest received her, kissed her and blessed her.”

After describing the scene, the *Protoevangelion* continues: “And Mary was in the temple of the Lord like a dove that is being nurtured: and she received food from the hand of an angel” (8:1). The image of the Virgin receiving food from an angel, often represented in our icon of the Feast, points to the spiritual environment in which Mary was raised and which would prepare the holy Virgin for her future role as Theotokos.

The second vignette is shown in the upper right hand corner of this icon. There Mary sits in the innermost sanctuary of the temple, the Holy of Holies, ministered to by an angel. According to Jewish Law, no one entered the Holy of Holies: “only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance” (Hebrews 9:8). It is unthinkable that a child would be not only allowed there but actually live there as the *Protoevangelion* avows.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we are given a reason why no one was allowed into the Holy of Holies: “The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning” (Hebrews 9:9). By placing Mary in the Holy of Holies, the *Protoevangelion* is saying that the way into the Holy Place – the presence of God – now is disclosed. It is Christ, who would be incarnate in the womb of this same Mary, the Theotokos. For this reason the story and its celebration have been embraced by the Tradition as affirmations of the Gospel.

Prokimenon

Reader: May your kindness, O Lord, be upon us, for we have hoped in You.

People: May your kindness, O Lord, be upon us, for we have hoped in You.

Reader: Exult, you just, in the Lord; praise from the upright is fitting.

People: May your kindness, O Lord, be upon us, for we have hoped in You.

Reader: May your kindness, O Lord, be upon us,

People: For we have hoped in You.

Epistle: Eph 5:8-19

Alleluia

O God, You granted me retribution and made peoples subject to me, and saved me from my raging enemies.

Verse: Therefore, I PRELUDE Twill proclaim You, O Lord, among the nations, and I will sing praise to Your name.

Gospel: Lk 12:16-21 & 8:8

UPCOMING LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Thur 11/21 6PM—Divine Liturgy for the Entrance of the Theotokos in the Temple

THANKSGIVING FOOD DRIVE

Thanks to all who donated to our Thanksgiving food drive. We were able to deliver eight turkeys plus many side dishes to Pernet Family Health Services.

Your continued generosity will make it possible for Worcester families experiencing food insecurity to have a delicious Thanksgiving dinner!

God Bless You!