

**THINK ABOUT IT ... Choose the correct answer:**

1. Which of the following describe Mary?
  - A. Most Holy Theotokos
  - B. Virgin Pure
  - C. Unwedded Bride
  - D. All of the above
2. Who was Mary's mother?
  - A. Saint Elizabeth
  - B. Saint Anna
  - C. Saint Paraskeva
  - D. Saint Xenia
3. Who was Mary's guardian angel?
  - A. Archangel Michael
  - B. Archangel Raphael
  - C. Archangel Gabriel
  - D. Archangel Uriel
4. A day of celebration in our life in the Church is called a:
  - A. Sanctuary
  - B. Psalm
  - C. Vow
  - D. Feast
5. To solemnly promise to do something specific is called a:
  - A. Sanctuary
  - B. Psalm
  - C. Vow
  - D. Feast
6. A female servant of God is called:
  - A. Handmaiden
  - B. Hesychast
  - C. Hymnist
  - D. Handmade
7. Psalms 119 through 133 are called the:
  - A. Psalms of Repentance
  - B. Hymns of Psalm Sunday
  - C. Song of Solomon
  - D. Psalms of Ascent

## Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple



### **Troparion (Tone 4)**

Today is the preview 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,  
Divine Fulfillment of the Creator's dispensation.

## The Feast of the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple

Why this event is important:

- \* It shows **God's love** for those who believe in Him.
- \* It is one of the events that led to **Christ's incarnation**.
- \* It helps explain the **role of the Theotokos** in salvation.
- \* It tells us about the fulfillment of **God's promises**.

The **parents of the Virgin Mary, Saints Joachim and Anna**, had no children. They prayed to God for a child and made a **vow** that if a child were born to them, they would dedicate the child to God. God fulfilled their prayer, and Anna gave birth to a daughter: Mary.

When Mary, the Most Holy Virgin, was three years old, her parents, with all their relatives and friends, brought her to the Jerusalem Temple. At the Temple, the High Priest and several other priests met Mary, the **Handmaiden of God**.

In the Temple, **fifteen high steps** led to the **sanctuary**, which only the priests could enter. The steps were steep and Mary was small, so the people did not at first think that she could make it up this stairway. But she went up the steps all the way to the highest one. Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica, said that this showed that "she herself entered into the service of God of her own accord, as if she had wings."

Because they recited a Psalm on each step, Psalms 119 through 133 (120-134 in Orthodox Bibles) are still today called the "**Psalms of Ascent**."

Then the High Priest led Mary into the **Holy of Holies**, the inner sacred place where only the High Priest was allowed to enter once a year. Everyone in the Temple was amazed, because this was a very unusual thing to do. It showed that the Virgin Mary was the beginning of God's plan and that **Christ God glorifies His Mother**, both before and also after His birth. Mary herself is sometimes called the "Holy of Holies" because she carried Christ our God within her body.

After entrusting their child to the Heavenly Father, Joachim and Anna returned home.

Mary stayed with other virgins in a building near the Temple. Her life at the Temple was a secret known only to God and the **Archangel Gabriel**, who was her guardian angel.

Mary was **pious**; (that means she loved and obeyed God.) She remained without sin, and so she is called "**The Virgin Pure**." When she grew up, she "bore Christ without seed" (without a human father), so we also call her the "**Unwedded Bride**" of God.

From ancient times, the Church has celebrated the Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple. The mother of St. Constantine the Great, Empress Helen (Saint Elena) built a church in Jerusalem at the beginning of the 4th century in honor of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple.

### UNDERSTAND THE WORDS:

FEAST = a day of celebration in the life of the Church

TEMPLE = a building for worship, the "house of God"

INCARNATION = God the Son took on human flesh

VOW = solemnly promise to do a specified thing

SACRED = holy, dedicated to a religious purpose

HANDMAIDEN = a female servant of God

SANCTUARY = the holiest part of a sacred place

ASCENT = to rise, to go upward

DIVINE = of God, heavenly

GLORIFY = to praise as holy

PIOUS = religious, those who love and obey God

TRADITIONS = teachings handed down through generations