

UNDERSTANDING THE WORDS OF THE LESSON

THEOTOKOS = “Mother of God,” the Virgin Mary, who was the Mother of Christ, our God.

VEIL = a head covering made of a long piece of cloth.

MIRACULOUS = a miracle, a wonderful act of God.

PROTECTION = keeping someone or something safe from harm.

ALL NIGHT VIGIL = an evening service that includes Vespers, Matins, and the prayers that are called the First Hour.

FOOL-FOR-CHRIST = a person who gives up everything and usually becomes a homeless wanderer in order to live only for Christ and challenge people who are living sinful lives to repent. In Russia they are called “yurodivy.”

INTERCESSOR = Saints who pray to God for us. Saints, who are already with God in heaven, care about us who are on earth, and they pray to God for us. The Theotokos is our greatest intercessor.

PAGANS = persons who do not worship the true God but instead worship idols (statues), trees, or imaginary gods.

MERCY, MERCIFUL = kindness, love, forgiveness, and help.

TRANSPIRED = came to be, made to happen.

FESTAL CELEBRATION = a “Feast,” which in the Church is a Holy Day that honors and celebrates a Saint or a miraculous event.

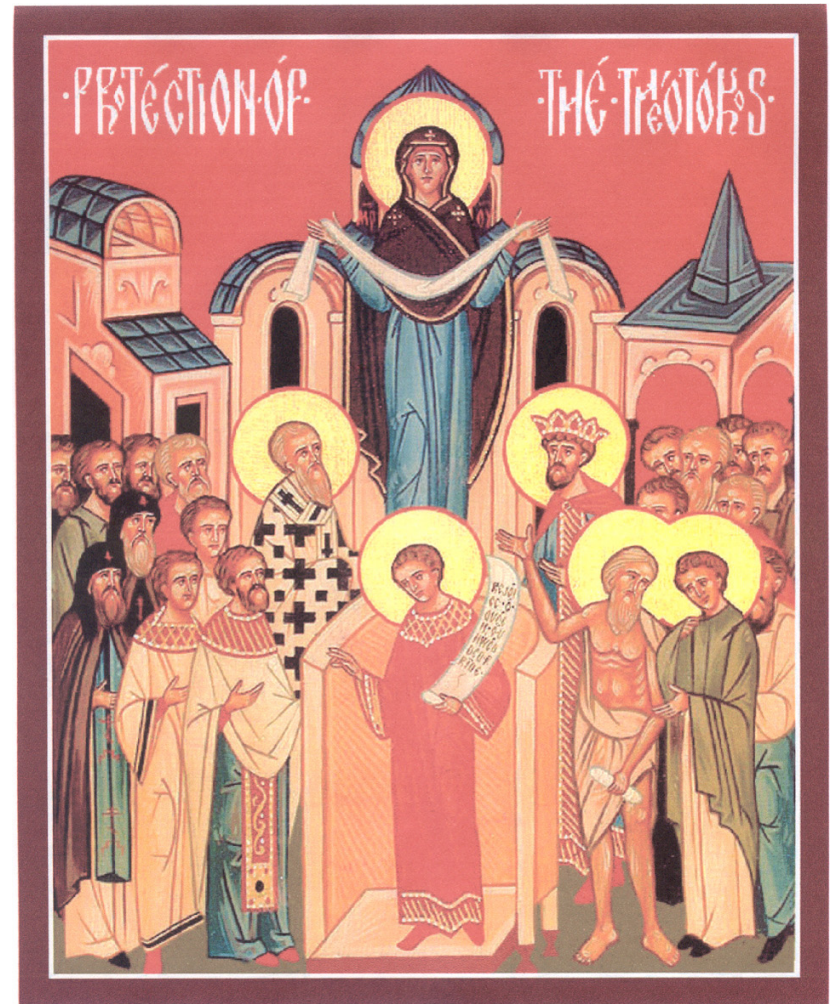
PERISH = to die with no hope of Eternal Life.

WOES = sadness, difficulties, sickness, accidents, wars, and other unhappy events.

VENERATE = to honor, to respect as Holy. In the Church, we venerate Saints, relics of Saints, the Cross, icons, the Holy Bible, and other Holy objects.

MAGNIFY = to praise with great honor.

The Protection of the Theotokos (Pokrov)



Troparion for the Protection of the Theotokos

Today the Virgin stands in the midst of the Church,
and with choirs of Saints she invisibly prays to God for us.
Angels and Bishops venerate Her,
Apostles and prophets rejoice together,
Since for our sake she prays to the Eternal God!

PROTECTION OF THE THEOTOKOS (Pokrov)

A miraculous appearance of the Theotokos (the Virgin Mary) happened in the 10th century. It was in Constantinople, in the Blachernae church where her robe, veil, and part of her belt were preserved.

On October 1, during an All Night Vigil, the Fool-for-Christ St. Andrew (who is commemorated on October 2) looked up and saw the Holy Theotokos. She was shining with heavenly light and surrounded by Saints. St. John the Baptist and St. John the Theologian were with her. She was kneeling and praying and crying. She stayed for a long time and everyone saw her.

She then took her veil and spread it over the people in the church, protecting them from enemies both visible and invisible. Her protecting veil shone “more than the rays of the sun.”

The Theotokos prayed to her Son (Christ) to accept the prayers of all the people who call on His Name, and to respond quickly to her intercession, “**O Heavenly King, accept all those who pray to You and call on my name for help. Do not let them go away from my icon unheard.**”

According to the a Russian historian, she also appeared on June 18, 860, to protect the city of Constantinople from an invasion by a pagan fleet of warships. This miracle also followed an All-Night Vigil and the dipping of her robe into the waters of the sea.

Churches and monasteries honoring the Protection of the Theotokos, the Mother of God, were built in Russia and in other places beginning in the 12th century.

A Prince by the name of Andrew Bogoliubsky, who became a Saint, established the **Feast of the Protection of the Mother of God**, about the year 1164. His name (Bogo-lyub-sky) means “the man who loves God.”

The “Prologue,” a Russian book written in the 12th century, tells us, “For when we heard, we realized how wondrous and merciful was the vision ... and it transpired that Your holy Protection should not remain without festal celebration, O Ever-Blessed One!”

At Novgorod in the 12th century one of the earliest monasteries there was the Monastery of the Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos (Zverin Monastery).

In Moscow, the cathedral of the Protection of the Mother of God was built as part of the church of the Holy Trinity (known as St. Basil’s, the church complex that is most well-known when we see pictures of Russia).

On the Feast of the Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos we ask her to help us: “**Remember us in your prayers, O Lady Virgin Mother of God, that we not perish by the increase of our sins. Protect us from every evil and from grievous woes, for in you do we hope, and venerating the Feast of your Protection, we magnify you.**”

“O Holy Theotokos, pray unto God for us.”