

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



**“We who understand the salvation begun
for our sake through the Most Holy Virgin,
give her thanks and praise.”**

(St. Gregory Palamas)

THE ENTRY OF THE THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE

We celebrate the the **Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple** because this event shows:

- * **God's love** for those who believe in Him
- * the events that led to **Christ's Incarnation**
- * the **role of the Theotokos** in God's blessing of salvation
- * 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 the service of God. God fulfilled their prayer, and Anna gave birth to a daughter: Mary.

When Mary, the Most Holy Virgin, reached the age of three, her parents called all their relatives and friends together. They dressed her in her finest clothes. Singing **sacred** songs and with lighted candles in their hands, other virgins escorted 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 and High Priest could enter. 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**."

The steps were steep and Mary was very small, so the people did not at first think that she could make it up this stairway. But when they placed her on the first step, she went up the remaining 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, striving towards this **sacred and divine love**."

Then the High Priest, through inspiration from God, led Mary into the **Holy of Holies**, the inner sacred place where only the High Priest was allowed to enter once a year to offer a purifying sacrifice. All those present in the Temple were amazed, because this was a very unusual thing to do. It showed that the Virgin Mary was the beginning of God's plan for salvation of the human race 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 the Christ God within her body.

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

The All-Holy Virgin remained in a building set aside for virgins near the Temple. Her life at the Jerusalem Temple was a secret known to God Himself and the **Archangel Gabriel**, who was her constant guardian. She grew up in a community of **pious** virgins, read the Holy Scriptures, prayed constantly, and grew in love for God. Mary remained virtuous and without sin, and is therefore called "**The Virgin Pure**." When she grew up, she "bore Christ without seed" (without a human father), so we also refer to her as 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. Proof that this Feast was observed in the first centuries of Christianity are found in the **traditions** of Orthodox Christians in Palestine, which say that the mother of St. Constantine the Great, Empress Helen (Saint Elena) built a church there at the beginning of the 4th century in honor of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple.

UNDERSTAND THE ORTHODOX USE OF 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