



Parish Information Bulletin

SUNDAY 25 OCTOBER

6th Sunday of Luke, Luke 8: 26-39

- 8.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

MONDAY 26 OCTOBER

St Demetrios the Myrrh-Streamers

- 8.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

WEDNESDAY 28 OCTOBER

Holy Protection of the Theotokos

- 8.00am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY 1 NOVEMBER

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 12: 27—13:7
Gospel Reading: Luke 16: 19-31

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Fr Athanasios and
Fr Ephraim are available
at the Church every
Monday to Friday
between 4.00 and 6.00pm
for Holy Confession and
any spiritual need.

The Feast Day of the Protection of the All-Holy Theotokos

The feast of the Holy Protection of the All Holy Theotokos is known throughout the Orthodox world. It is celebrated on October 1st and in the Church of Greece on October 28th, to commemorate the protection of Greece during World War II.

The two words alone, "Holy Protection" bring to our mind the maternal love and shelter that our All Holy Mother gives us in times of danger, as well as the unfailing help that she provides in the difficult moments of our lives.

But how did this feast day come to be established on the 1st of October? The historical event behind it is particularly interesting. At the south side of the St. Mary of Blachernae Church in Constantinople, there was a chapel which possessed a reliquary containing the Gown of the Theotokos. In the beginning of the 10th Century, while an All-night Vigil Service was taking place, a saint named Andrew went to take part. St. Andrew, known as a "Holy Fool for Christ" (because he would act in an unusual and foolish way to hide his sanctity) was accompanied by a young man named Epiphanius, who would later become Patriarch of Constantinople. At midnight, St. Andrew saw the All Holy Theotokos entering the church through the main door towards the Holy Altar. She appeared very tall, and was escorted by a bright company of Angels and Saints, all dressed in white. Among them could be seen St. John the Forerunner and St. John the Theologian, on the right and left side of the Theotokos. Some were leading, and others were following in the procession, chanting hymns.

When the Theotokos and her entourage approached the *ambo* (the pulpit) that was at the center of the church, St. Andrew said to Epiphanius:

– Can you see the All Holy Mother and Lady of the world?

– Yes, honourable father, replied the young man.

While this was taking place, the Theotokos had fallen to her knees and prayed for a long time. She was pleading with her Son to save the world, wetting her holy face with tears. After her supplication, she entered the Holy Altar, where she prayed for the faithful who were keeping vigil. When the All Holy Theotokos finished her prayer, she modestly removed the bright *maphorion* (the red shawl that we see in icons of the Theotokos which cover her head and body) and as it was so large, she spread it over the congregation, sheltering them with her precious hands. This is how the two of them saw it, radiating with divine glory like amber. For as long as the Lady Theotokos was visible, the *maphorion* was also beaming. When the Theotokos returned to Heaven, the Shawl also started slowly shrinking and then disappeared.

It is this and other miracles associated with the holy Shawl of the Theotokos that resulted in the establishment of the feast of the Holy *Skēpe*, the Protection that the All Holy Theotokos provides to all who, with faith, invoke her grace.

The miracles of the Holy Protection of the Theotokos are without number. When Constantinople was once surrounded from the sea by enemy ships, it is said that the Patriarch took from the Blachernae church the holy Shawl of the Theotokos, and dipped it into the sea. This immediately caused a great storm to rise, resulting in the sinking of many enemy ships, with the surviving ships fleeing in panic. In more recent years, during the Second World War, Greek soldiers in their trenches saw many times the Theotokos protecting them from enemy fire.

How often has the Theotokos sheltered and protected us in times of danger and need? It is for this reason that Christians should call upon our All Holy Lady, our affectionate Mother, in every moment of pain and want.

... ..

Never confuse the person, formed in the image of God, with the evil that is in him, because evil is but a chance misfortune, illness, a devilish reverie. But the very essence of the person is the image of God, and this remains in him despite every disfigurement.

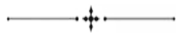


St. John of Kronstadt

Seeking her protection with confidence, and filled with gratitude, making our way to Church on her Feast Day, offering thanksgiving as the hymnographer urges us:

*Come to honour in all devoutness
The Lord's Mother's holy Protection,
The one that provides safe protection to the faithful,
The one which also discharges us of all sufferings and sorrows.
Let us entreat also our All Holy Lady with the words of the hymnographer:
Cover us, Lady, Queen of the world,
With the Grace of Your Protection, the mighty one,
And save from dangers and painful circumstances
Those who honour You devotedly.*

May the Holy Protection of our All holy Lady cover, safeguard and protect all of us, and grant peace to the world. Amen.



Saint Demetrios, The Myrrh-Streamer

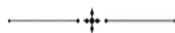
Saint Demetrios was born in Thessaloniki, Greece in 270 AD. He came from a wealthy family and because he was athletic in appearance and heroic in spirit, he became a high-ranking officer in the Roman Army at a very young age. (This is why he is depicted in Byzantine icons in military dress, either standing or riding a horse.) He considered himself a soldier of Christ first, and a military soldier second. He spent most of his time as a devout missionary, preaching the Gospel at secret meetings and converting pagans to the Christian faith.

At one of these meetings, he was captured and placed in front of the Emperor Maximian, who wanted to learn the truth about the conversions. Saint Demetrios proclaimed his faith by saying: "...only in Christ do I believe." With that proclamation, Maximian ordered that Saint Demetrios be sent to prison and subjected to the cruelest tortures.

Even though Saint Demetrios was imprisoned, he did not stop preaching the gospel to those who came to see him. In jail, he was visited by his follower, Nestoras. Nestoras was a man of small stature and had come to ask for his beloved teacher's blessing to fight in the upcoming gladiator games. The emperor had decided to use the games as a duel between Christianity and paganism by challenging any Christian to a fight against the athletic giant, Leo.

With the blessing of Saint Demetrios, Nestoras fought and killed Leo. Enraged at the loss of his favorite gladiator, the emperor commanded that Nestoras be beheaded on the spot. Recognizing that Saint Demetrios was the inspiring power behind Nestoras, the emperor ordered that Saint Demetrios be executed by spear on October 26, 306 AD. Christians buried the body of Saint Demetrios at the place of his execution and because of the beautiful scent that emanated from his tomb, he was named *Mirovritis* or "The Myrrh Gusher".

The most ancient icons of Saint Demetrios may be found in his temple in Thessaloniki where he is the patron saint. This is not just because he was born and died there, but because the people believe it was his intervention that saved the city during many attacks by Slavic nations, the Bulgarians, Arabs, Saracens and others. Even the liberation of Thessaloniki during the Balkan wars of 1912 coincide with the feast day of Saint Demetrios on October 26th.



St. Theophan the Recluse: Why is it, you ask, that one can pray for so many years with a prayer book . . .

Why is it, you ask, that one can pray for so many years with a prayer book, and still not have prayer in his heart? I think the reason is that people only spend a little time lifting themselves up to God when they complete their prayer rule, and in other times, they do not remember God. For example, they finish their morning prayers, and think that their relation to God is fulfilled by them; then the whole day passes in work, and such a person does not attend to God. Then in the evening, the thought returns to him that he must quickly stand at prayer and complete his evening rule. In this case, it happens that even if the Lord grants a person spiritual feelings at the time of the morning prayer, the bustle and business of the day drowns them out. As a result, it happens that one does not often feel like praying, and cannot get control of himself even to soften his heart a little bit. In such an atmosphere, prayer develops and ripens poorly. This problem (is it not ubiquitous?) needs to be corrected, that is, one must ensure that the soul does not only make petition to God when standing in prayer, but during the whole day, as much as possible, one must unceasingly ascend to Him and remain with Him.

In order to begin this task, one must first, during the course of the day, cry out to God more often, even if only with a few words, according to need and the work of the day. Beginning anything, for example, say 'Bless, O Lord!' When you finish something, say, 'Glory to Thee, O Lord', and not only with your lips, but with feeling in your heart. If passions arise, say, 'Save me, O Lord, I am perishing.' If the darkness of disturbing thoughts comes up, cry out: 'Lead my soul out of prison.' If dishonest deeds present themselves and sin leads you to them, pray, 'Set me, O Lord, in the way', or 'do not give up my feet to stumbling.' If sin takes hold of you and leads you to despair, cry out with the voice of the publican, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' Do this in every circumstance, or simply say often, 'Lord, have mercy', 'Most Holy Theotokos save us', 'Holy Angel, my guardian, protect me', or other such words. Say such prayers as often as possible, always making the effort for them come from your heart, as if squeezed out of it. When we do this, we will frequently ascend to God in our hearts, making frequent petitions and prayers. Such increased frequency will bring about the habit of mental conversation with God.

— St. Theophan the Recluse, *On prayer*, Homily 2