

SUNDAY THEOSIS #1-47

Tea with the Theotokos

By Marianne Sailus

Meditation 49

Another Descent of the Holy Spirit

"O Mother who did not know man, who conceived without experiencing corruption, giving flesh to the creating Word: we magnify you, the virgin Mother of God, receptacle of the uncontainable and abode of the infinite Creator." (Irmos of the Feast of Pentecost)

The Theotokos is unique in all creation in many different ways. One is that when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles on Pentecost, it was the first time that they received the Paraclete. St.

Luke tells us, "When Pentecost day came round, they had all met together, when suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a violent wind which filled the entire house in which they were sitting;



and there appeared to them tongues as of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages as the Spirit gave them power to express themselves" (Acts 2:1-4).

It is debatable whether or not Mary was present on Pentecost. Most likely, she was in the Upper Room with the other disciples – men and women alike – waiting for the Promised Consoler. Some icons of the Feast have her seated in the "Empty Chair" – one that would have been for the Teacher – i.e., Christ. But recall, as mentioned in the previous meditation, that icons are not representations of historical events, but rather teach theology through color.

If Mary were present on Pentecost, this would have been the second time that the Holy Spirit came upon her. At the Annunciation, Mary asks the Angel, "But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?" Gabriel's response: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God"

(Luke 1:34-35). Thus, Pentecost would have been her second encounter with the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity! Of this, Father Robert Slesinski writes, "With the outpouring of the Spirit upon her at the moment of the Annunciation, the Maiden Mary truly is granted a personal Pentecost, as it were, truly rendering her 'full of grace.'"¹

Most Holy Mother, through the power of the Holy Spirit you conceived our Lord. You were both His Mother and His first disciple. On this Feast of Pentecost, when we celebrate the birthday of His Church, may we recall your special relationship with that same Spirit. Amen.

1 Slesinski, Robert F. *The Holy Theotokos: In Festal Commemoration*. (Fairfax, VA: Eastern Christian Publications, 2012), p. 73.

Meditation 50

The Inexpressible Proclaimed

"A wonder is Your mother; the Lord entered her and became a servant; he entered able to speak and became silent in her; he entered her thundering and his voice grew silent; he entered Shepherd of all; a lamb he became in her; he emerged bleating."²

Love is expressed ever so sweetly by poets. Sacred poets are no exception. One of the most prolific of the sacred poets is St. Ephrem the Syrian. His name will be

2 Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on the Nativity*, trans. Kathleen E. McVey, CWS, pp. 131-32, found in Gambero, Luigi, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999, p. 118.



familiar to members of certain Eastern Christian Churches for his prayer of repentance that is prayed daily during Great Lent. But his intense love for the Mother of God can be grasped as one reads his verses that praise her role in our salvation.

In Sonnett 43 of her "Sonnetts from the Portuguese," Elizabeth Barrett Browning tells her love, Robert Browning, "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways." St. Ephrem doesn't try to count the ways, but rather tries to express the inexpressible through the vehicle of poetry. What he does see is the role of the Mother in leading us to her Son. He writes:

***"Who will dare
speak to her son
as in prayer,
to the hope of his mother
as God,
to her beloved [child]
and her son
as man. In fear and love
it is right for Your mother to
stand before You. . . ."***³

When we read these hauntingly beautiful words, we are struck with awe! We are drawn to the Son through the Mother. She is tender, yet ever powerful before her Son and our God. With St. Ephrem we humbly sing her praises.

Most Holy Mother, words can never be sufficient to express our love

3 *Hymns of the Nativity 9, 1-4 in Gambero, p. 112.*

for you, who bore Christ, our God and Saviour. Yet, we are confident to approach you in prayer to ask you to take our petitions to Him, where they will be given a fair hearing. Fill us with a desire to draw closer to you each and every day, and to desire to love you ever more as long as breath fills our lungs. Then petition your Son to accept us, sinners though we are, into His Kingdom when we have breathed our last. May we look forward to eternity in His Presence and yours. Amen.

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