

THE LADDER

of
Divine
Ascent



Volume 11, Issue 2 The Newsletter of St John of the Ladder Orthodox Church

October 2009

October 1: The Feast of the Protection of the Theotokos

The Protection of the Mother of God commemorated on October 1st is one of the most beloved feast days on the Orthodox calendar among the Slavic peoples. This is ironic given that **The Russian Primary Chronicle** noted that the intercession of the Theotokos was needed for the protection of the people of Constantinople when a large fleet of the pagan Rus was threatening Constantinople. The invading fleet was defeated and the event remembered. The Russian chronicle describes the establishment of the intercession as a special feast day honoring the event. Within a few centuries churches began being named in honor of the Protection of the Theotokos.

In most Slavic languages the word *Pokrov* (Ποκροβ), like the Greek *Skepi* (Σκέπη), has a complex meaning of both "veil" and "protection." First of all, it refers to a cloak or shroud, but it also means protection or intercession. For this reason, the name of the feast is variously translated as the Veil of Our Lady, the Protecting Veil of the Theotokos, the Protection of the Theotokos, or the Intercession of the Theotokos.

The feast day celebrates the appearance of the Mother of God at Blachernae in Constantinople in the 10th century. At the end of his life, Blessed Andrew, Fool-for-Christ, together with his disciple St Epiphanius and a group of others, saw the Mother of God, John the Baptist, and several other saints and angels during a vigil in the Church of Blachernae, nearby the city gates. The Blachernae Palace church was where several of her relics were kept --- her robe, veil, and part of her belt that had been transferred from Palestine during the fifth century.

The Theotokos approached the center of the church, knelt down and remained in prayer for a long time. Her face was drowned in tears. Then she took her veil off and spread it over the people as a sign of protection. During this time the people in the city were threatened by the invasion of barbarian Rus. After the appearance of the Mother of God, the danger was averted and the city was spared from bloodshed and suffering.

The Protection is commemorated most fervently in Slavic churches probably because Blessed Andrew was himself a Slav and it was in part because Constantinople was spared that Kieven Rus ultimately was able to accept the Gospel and be baptized. The first celebration of the Theotokos's Protection in the Russian Orthodox Church dates back from the 12th century and today is celebrated throughout the Orthodox Church.

About the Icon of the Protection

Two different events that took place four hundred years apart are combined in this one icon. Both events took place in the Church of Blachernae in Constantinople. The icon of the feast shows the Theotokos standing above the faithful with her arms outstretched in prayer and draped with a veil. On both sides of her are angels. On the lower right of most icons of this feast are saints Andrew and his disciple Epiphanius who saw this vision of the Mother of God, with the twelve apostles, bishops, holy women, monks and martyrs, spreading her veil in protection over the congregation. St Epiphanius is wearing a tunic under his cloak and gestures in astonishment at the miraculous appearance, while Blessed Andrew, Fool-for-Christ, is dressed only in a cloak. Below the Theotokos, in the center of the icon, stands a young man, clothed in a deacon's sticharion. In his left hand, he is holding an open scroll with the text of the Kontakion for Nativity in honor of the Theotokos. This is St Romanos, the Melodist, the famous hymnographer whose feast is also celebrated on the same day. He is with his choir attended by the Emperor Leo the Wise together with the Empress and the Patriarch of Constantinople.

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Fall Camping Trip October 16-18, 2009!

The St John's and Holy Apostles fall camping trip returns to Hot Springs (HS), NC on October, 16-18. Events include Hikes, Campfires, and Liturgy on Sunday morning. Reserve a space [try for campsites 450 - 461: (828) 622-7676] today! Map: <http://nchotsprings.com/camp/map.html>. There are motels available in HS as well. Contact Rick Eich (eich@charter.net) for more details.

St John of the Ladder Orthodox Church
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**Schedule of Services**  
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October 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Α Word from the Desert "An old man was asked, 'What is humility?' He replied, 'It is when your brother sins against you and you forgive him before he comes to ask for forgiveness.' "			30 <i>fast</i> <i>Confessions</i> 5:00 pm <i>Great Vespers</i> 6:00 pm	01 Divine Liturgy 7:00 am Protection of the Theotokos <u>Lecture</u> <i>Fr Daniel Byantoro</i> 7:00 pm @ Daniel Chapel	02 <i>Fast</i>	03 <u>Guest Speaker</u> Fr Daniel Byantoro <i>'Indonesian</i> <i>Convert to</i> <i>Orthodox Xian'</i> 4:00 pm Great Vespers 6:00 pm
04 17th Sunday after Pentecost <i>Church School</i> 9:00 am <i>'Ask the Priest'</i> <i>w/ Fr Daniel</i> Divine Liturgy 9:30 am	05 <i>OCF</i> <i>at Clemson</i> <u>Lecture</u> <i>Fr Daniel</i> <i>Byantoro</i> 7:00 pm	06	07 <i>Fast</i> <u>No Adult Class</u> Daily Vespers 6:00 pm	08	09 <i>Fast</i> <i>Spartanburg</i> <i>Area</i> <i>'Small Group'</i> <i>Fellowship</i> 7:00 pm	10 <i>Baptism of</i> <i>Elizabeth Marta</i> <i>Kasemann</i> 3:00 pm Great Vespers 6:00 pm
11 18th Sunday after Pentecost Fathers of the 7th Ecumenical Council <i>Alms Collection</i> Divine Liturgy 9:30 am	12 <i>OCF</i> <i>at Furman</i> <i>University</i> 7:45 pm	13	14 <i>Fast</i> <u>No Adult Class</u> Daily Vespers 6:00 pm	15 <i>OCF</i> <i>at Clemson</i> <i>University</i> 7:00 pm	16 <i>Fast</i>	17 Great Vespers 6:00 pm
18 19th Sunday after Pentecost Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke <u>No Church School</u> Divine Liturgy 9:30 am	19 <i>OCF</i> <i>at Furman</i> <i>University</i> 7:45 pm	20	21 <i>Fast</i> <u>Adult Class</u> 7:00 pm Daily Vespers 6:00 pm	22 <i>OCF</i> <i>at Clemson</i> <i>University</i> 7:00 pm	23 <i>Fast</i>	24 <i>Confessions</i> Great Vespers 6:00 pm
25 20th Sunday after Pentecost <i>Church School</i> 9:00 am <i>Slavonic Molioben</i> 12:00 noon Divine Liturgy 9:30 am	26 Great Martyr Demetrius <i>OCF</i> <i>at Furman</i> <i>University</i> 7:45 pm	27	28 <i>Fast</i> <u>Adult Class</u> 7:00 pm Daily Vespers 6:00 pm	29 <i>OCF</i> <i>at Clemson</i> <i>University</i> 7:00 pm	30 <i>Fast</i>	31 <i>Baptism of Nicole</i> <i>Sofia Cherednyk</i> 4:00 pm <i>Confessions</i> Great Vespers 6:00 pm

Fellowship and Goffee Hour: Sundays immediately following Divine Liturgy.

Church School: Continues on Sundays before Divine Liturgy at 9:00 am prompt (no church school on Oct 18th)!!!

Confessions on Saturdays following Great Vespers (as noted above) and before Wednesday Great Vespers at 5:00 pm

Α Word from the Desert

"If I were to pray unto God that all people might learn through me,
 I should be found in deep penitence at the door of each."

~~~ *Amma Sara of Gvot*

*Continued from page 1*

It was the day before the Feast of the Lord's Nativity and Saint Romanos was assigned to lead the singing that evening at the All-Night Vigil. He was responsible not only for the singing but also for the text of the hymns. After everyone had left, he remained in the Blachernae Church and tearfully entreated the Mother of God to help him. Exhausted, he fell asleep with his sorrow. In answer to his prayer, the Mother of God appeared to him in a dream. She handed him a scroll and said to him gently, "Here, eat this." Romanos did so and awoke, overcome with joy and the lingering presence of the heavenly visitor.

When it came time that night for him to sing, St Romanos received the patriarch's blessing and, vested in a special garment reserved for the principal singer, he stepped onto the ambo. He began to sing: "Today the Virgin gives birth to the transcendent One. . ." The emperor, the patriarch, the clergy, and the entire congregation listened in wonder at the profound theology and the clear, sonorous voice which issued forth. They all joined in the refrain, "...since for our sake the eternal God was born as a little child!" Later, St Romanos told the patriarch about his vision and the singers who had made fun of him prostrated themselves in repentance and humbly asked the Saint's forgiveness.

**Reflections on the Veneration of the Saints**

... Calling on the saints, through communion in prayer, deepens the consciousness of the catholicity of the Church. In our invocation of the saints our measure of Christian love is exhibited, a living feeling of unanimity and of the power of Church unity is expressed; and, conversely, doubt or inability to feel the intercession of grace and the intervention of saints on our behalf before God witnesses not only to a weakening of love and of the brotherly and Church ties and relationships but also to a decrease in the fullness of faith in the value and power of the Incarnation and Resurrection....

One of the most mysterious anticipations of the Orthodox Church is our contemplation on the "Protection of the Theotokos," of her constant standing in prayer for the world, surrounded by all the saints, before the throne of God. "Today the Virgin stands in the Church and with hosts of saints invisibly prays to God for us; angels and bishops worship [God]; apostles and prophets embrace each other - it is for us that the Mother of God prays unto the Eternal God!" Thus the Church remembers the vision which was once seen by St Andrew, the fool-for-Christ's sake. And that which was then visibly revealed remains now and will stand for all ages. The Protecting Veil of the Mother of God is a vision of the celestial Church, a vision of the unbreakable and ever-existent unity of the heavenly and the earthly Church. And it is also a foreseeing that all existence beyond the grave, of the righteous and the saints, is one untiring prayer, one ceaseless intercession and mediation. For love is the "union of all perfection." And the blessedness of the righteous is an abiding in love....

From Fr Georges Florovsky, "On the Veneration of the Saints"

**'Treasury of Wisdom!' Group**



A fall afternoon 'small group' gathering of some of the St John of the Ladder members and friends.

**Schedule for Fr Daniel Byantoro  
Indonesian Convert to Orthodox  
Christianity**

Thursday, October 1<sup>st</sup>

Lecture: Islam and Christianity  
7:00 pm @ Daniel Chapel, Furman University

Saturday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>

Talk: Personal Testimony  
4:00 pm @ St John of the Ladder Orthodox Church

Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup>

Guest Celebrant and Homilist at Divine Liturgy  
9:30 am @ St John of the Ladder Orthodox Church

'Ask the Priest': Questions and Answers  
12:00 pm @ St John of the Ladder

Monday, October 5<sup>th</sup>

Lecture: Islam and Christianity  
7:00 pm @ Clemson University

**Please Note**

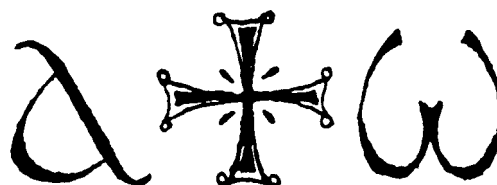
**All collections placed during Fr Daniel's visit in the basket in the vestibule marked 'Special Collections' will go to Friends of Indonesia.**

**For more info about Friends of Indonesia:**

[www.friendsofindonesia.org](http://www.friendsofindonesia.org)

**2009 Financial Snapshot**

|                          | <b>Income</b> | <b>Expenses</b> |
|--------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| <b>YTD (thru August)</b> | \$92,353      | \$96,458        |
| <b>August</b>            | \$11,880      | \$11,307        |
| <b>YTD Charity</b>       | \$9,144       | \$10,075        |



**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

▪ **ALMS SUNDAY**

October 11<sup>th</sup> is our Alms Collection Sunday. Please remember to bring foodstuffs and personal items. Baskets are in the vestibule as you enter the church. These items and money collected support the following (among other occasional) charitable needs: **United Ministries, OCMC Missionaries Floyd and Ancutsa Frantz, two St Vladimir's Seminarians, the Carolinas Deanery fund, a widowed priest's wife and her two children.** Thanks to all who continue to give so generously to our outreach efforts!

▪ **UPCOMING ---'SMALL GROUP' MEETING & CHURCH SCHOOL**

\* A 'Small Group' Fellowship is meeting monthly in the Spartanburg area for those parishioners interested. It is a time for fellowship, food, and spiritual growth, and to encourage and strengthen community. The group meets once a month on Friday evenings from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. All members are participate by hosting, leading, and discussion. Come and see if it is for you. The next meeting will be held on October 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at the home of Brent and Shannon Kasemann, whom you may contact for more info (864 578 8821).

\* **CHURCH SCHOOL CONTINUES!!!**

Church School continues in October at 9 am (immediately preceding Divine Liturgy --- no church school on October 18<sup>th</sup>). Church school is offered in 3 classes: preschool, elementary, middle school and high school. This year's theme is Church History (beginning with the Acts of the Apostles). For more details, or if you have any questions or concerns, email or contact Mat Barbara ([blburch@greenwood.net](mailto:blburch@greenwood.net) or 864 554 5292).

**Δ Reminder and a Hearty 'Thank You'!  
October Fellowship and Goffee Hour**

|                          |        |
|--------------------------|--------|
| October 4 <sup>th</sup>  | Team 1 |
| October 11 <sup>th</sup> | Team 2 |
| October 18 <sup>th</sup> | Team 3 |
| October 25 <sup>th</sup> | Team 4 |

**Celebrating Anniversaries and Birthdays in September**  
Tori Gich (1<sup>st</sup>), Samuel Gich (2<sup>nd</sup>), Jaye Levitsky (5<sup>th</sup>), George and Helen Kaminsky (5<sup>th</sup>), Deb Goyle (8<sup>th</sup>), Tikhon and Sharon Pichai (8<sup>th</sup>), Liza Godonoaga (9<sup>th</sup>), Ed Webb (11<sup>th</sup>), James Riddle, Sr (13<sup>th</sup>), Kyra Zhang (16<sup>th</sup>), Andrew O'Shaughnessy (23<sup>rd</sup>), Sharon Pichai (24<sup>th</sup>), Tikhon Pichai and Danny Gooper (28<sup>th</sup>), Mira Pichai (29<sup>th</sup>)

**From the Feast of the Protection**  
Heaven and earth are sanctified, the church is radiant and all the people celebrate, for behold, the Mother of God enters invisibly with the armies of the angels, the Forerunner and the Theologian, the prophets and the apostles! She prays to Christ for Christians and entreats Him to have mercy on this land and people who glorify the feast of her protection.  
*(from the Stichera of the Feast)*

**St. John of the Ladder**



**Orthodox Church in America**

701 Augusta Arbor Way, Piedmont [Greenville], SC 29673  
(864) 299-1140

[www.stjohnoftheladder.org](http://www.stjohnoftheladder.org)

Rev Fr Marcus C Burch, Rector  
Rev Fr Nikolay Miletkov, Assistant

**ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED**

**Schedule of Services**

Vespers, Wednesday, 6:00 pm  
Great Vespers, Saturday, 6:00 pm  
Divine Liturgy, Sunday, 9:30 am

**"Whatever is obtained as a result  
of long and persistent prayer will remain."**

~~~ St John of the Ladder, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* ~~~



PLACE
POSTAGE
HERE

October 2009