

SOPHIA!

A PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH AMERICAN BOARD OF THE ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

SUMMER 2009

DIANNE O'REGAN, EDITOR



DID YOU KNOW . . . that in honor of their 35th anniversary, the Antiochian Women have released a CD-ROM devoted to “Holy Women of the Orthodox Christian Church”? This resource contains over 500 saints (with icons, troparia & kontakia), major feast days, and miracle-working icons devoted to the Theotokos. They will be on sale at the Archdiocesan Convention, but after August 1, they may be ordered via www.antiochian.org.

TOPIC OF THE MONTH . . . SAINTLY WOMEN

(also refer to the Summer 2008 edition of Sophia for more information on this topic)

PRAYER OF THE DAY (from the Red Prayer Book):

Pray unto God for us, O Holy Saint (Name), well-pleasing to God:
For we turn unto thee, who art the speedy helper and intercessor of our souls.

DISCUSSION TOPICS:

Name as many women saints from the Bible that you can recall.
In what book(s) of the Bible are these women referenced? Read from these passages.
Now, name as many non-Biblical saints (hint: go to www.antiochian.org/women)
Give a brief summary of at least three of these saints.
Who are the women in your life that are not “saints,” but who are “holy”?
What can each of US do to make our lives a little more holy?

BIBLICAL REFERENCES:

For discussions on saintliness, go to your *Orthodox Study Bible* and look for the following passages (also look in the footnotes for references to women saints):
Luke 1:38, 42, 43, 8:3; John 11:5, 20:2; Acts 9:36-43, 12:13-15, 16:12; 1 Cor. 12:4-5.

RECOMMENDED READING:

“Holy Women of Russia,” by Brenda Meehan.
“St. Mary of Egypt,” St. Nectarios Press.
“Saints and Sisterhood,” Light & Life Publishing.

POINTS TO PONDER:

“The greatest saints have always shown the perfect combination of nearness to our Lord on the one hand, and a deep sense of their own unworthiness and weakness on the other.” (Abbe de Tourville, *Letters of Direction*)

“The tears of saints are more sweet by far than all the songs of sinners are.” (Robert Herrick, *Tears*)

“Know, Holy Father, that I am only a sinful woman, though I am guarded by Holy Baptism. And I am no spirit but earth and ashes, and flesh alone.’ And with these words, she guarded herself with the sign of the Cross on her forehead, eyes, mouth and breast . . .” (*St. Mary of Egypt*, St. Nectarios Press)

TOPIC OF THE MONTH . . . THE THEOTOKOS

PRAYER OF THE DAY (from the Red Prayer Book):

Forasmuch as thou art a well-spring of tenderness, O Theotokos, make us worthy of compassion;
Look upon a sinful people;
Manifest thy power as ever, for hoping on thee we cry aloud unto thee:
Hail! As once did Gabriel, Chief Captain of the Bodiless Powers.

DISCUSSION TOPICS:

What does "Theotokos" mean?
What about the Theotokos would you like to emulate?
Is it possible to be like Her today, in the 21st century?
Do Orthodox Christians WORSHIP the Virgin Mary?
What is your reply to those faiths who say otherwise?
What is the Orthodox and Scriptural position on the birth of the Virgin Mary?

BIBLICAL REFERENCES:

The Gospel of Luke, Chapter 1, is an important reference (including the footnotes).

RECOMMENDED READING:

"The Little Compline with the Akathist Hymn" (Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese)
"Mary: The Birthgiver of God" (St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood)
"Life of the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos – Volume 4" (Holy Apostles Convent)
"Most Holy Theotokos," (by Archim. L. Puhalo – Light & Life Publications)
"The Ever-Virginity of the Mother of God," by Fr. John Hainsworth
"Veneration of the Virgin Mary," by Protopresbyter Michael Polsky
"Facing Up To Mary," by Fr. Peter Gillquest

POINTS TO PONDER:

"Every time that we come to church to worship, the Theotokos, with Christ in her bosom, asks the same question of each of us, 'The Christ Who lived in me, does He live in you?'" (*Sacred Symbols that Speak*, by Fr. Anthony Coniaris).

"If anyone shall not confess that the Word of God has two nativities, the one from all eternity of the Father, without time and without body; the other in these last days, coming down from heaven and being made flesh of the holy and glorious Mary, Mother of God and always a virgin, and born of her: let him be anathema." (Second Council of Constantinople).

"Some dare to claim that Mary became fully Joseph's wife after the Savior's birth. How could she who was the dwelling-place of the Spirit, who was overshadowed by the divine power, ever become the wife of a mortal and bear children in pain, according to the ancient curse? It is through Mary, 'blessed among women,' that the curses uttered in the beginning have been removed according to which a child in such torments cannot be called blessed. Just as the Lord entered through all closed doors, so He came out of an original womb, for this virgin bore Him truly and really without pain." (St. Ephrem, 4th century).