

and defined their behaviour led to God's punishment—the Flood: "You alone, my soul, have opened the windows of the wrath of your God, and you have flooded, as the earth, all your flesh and deeds and life; and you have remained outside the Ark of salvation."¹³³

158 However, God did not turn away from humankind, but continued to abide with it, granting it hope for salvation: "Before his visible advent in the flesh, the Logos [i.e., Word] of God dwelled among the patriarchs and prophets in a spiritual manner, prefiguring the mysteries of his advent."¹³⁴ The source of humankind's hope is the love of God the Father, who grants his promise of salvation.

I believe in the Holy Spirit ... He has spoken through the Prophets.

(Symbol of Faith)

For You did not utterly turn away from your creature, O Good One, nor did you forget the work of your hands, but you visited us in diverse ways through your compassionate mercy. You sent Prophets, you performed deeds of power through your saints, who have been well-pleasing to you in every generation; You spoke to us through the mouths of your servants, the Prophets, announcing to us beforehand the salvation that was to come; you gave the law as a help; you appointed angels as guardians. (Anaphora of the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great)

c. The Promise of the Messiah's Coming

159 The fall of Adam did not turn away the love of God for humanity. God shows mercy to the fallen human race: "And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them" (Gn 3:21). By offering the promise of salvation, God assures us that with respect to our growth in God-likeness, divine adoption, and divinization, God's plan remains immutable. The power of God's promise is stronger than the weakness of human sin: "[We] have gained still greater things through Christ's unspeakable grace than we had lost through the devil's malice."¹³⁵ In the Old Testament preaching of the prophets, God's promise is gradually associated with the figure of God's Anointed One, the Messiah, who "in the fullness of time" (see Gal 4:4) appears as the incarnate Word of God.

¹³³ Lenten Triodion, Fifth Thursday of the Great Fast, Matins: Great Canon of Repentance by Saint Andrew of Crete, Ode 2.

¹³⁴ MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, On Theology and the Incarnation of the Son of God, II, 28: PG 90,1137.

¹³⁵ LEO THE GREAT, Homily 73, For the Feast of Ascension, 4: PL 54, 396.

1) *The Protoevangelium*

- 160 Immediately after their fall, God announces to Adam and Eve his promise of salvation. Inasmuch as the human race was deceived by the tempter by trusting in him, God sets enmity, a struggle between them, to safeguard humanity from total subordination to evil: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers" (Gn 3:15). In this struggle, God promises humanity the ultimate victory: "He [i.e., the offspring of the woman] will strike your [i.e., the serpent's] head" (Gn 3:15). In the contest between good and evil, in the end, good shall overcome, as personified by the offspring of the woman. The assurance of this victory emerges not from human efforts, but from the very Word of God, given in the promise. This first proclamation of the Good News about the salvation of the human race is what the Church calls the Protoevangelium.
- 161 In the Protoevangelium, God reveals that the plan of salvation will be fulfilled through the cooperation of humankind (see Gn 3:15). The fulfilment of the promise granted in the Protoevangelium drew closer and closer throughout the entire history of salvation, up to the time of the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: "The child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God" (Lk 1:35). "He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Lk 1:33).
- 162 The road from the Protoevangelium to the Gospel has been travelled by humankind—through people chosen by God who believed and accepted God's promise. The words of the Protoevangelium were being realized in the course of salvation history. The prophet Isaiah unveils the image of the woman and her offspring: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel" (Is 7:14). The virgin's conceiving and giving birth to Emmanuel is the prophetic sign pointing to the fulfilment of the promise. The name Emmanuel (from the Hebrew God is with us) reveals the mystery of the newborn Child, in whom the Divine and the human are perfectly united.
- 163 God's promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ through the Virgin Mary: "The angel Gabriel was sent from God ... to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary" (Lk 1:26-27, R5V-CE). It is precisely to Mary that the archangel addresses the same words of Isaiah's prophecy: "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus" (Lk 1:30, ksv-cE). In the name Jesus (from the Hebrew, meaning