

may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pt 1:4).

1. The Incarnation of the Son of God

182 The Incarnation of the Son of God is the eternal divine plan for salvation: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). Precisely this love towards humanity—his love for humankind (in Greek, *philanthropia*)—brought about the coming of God into the world. The Fall of the human race did not put a stop God's love: "Merciful Saviour, you loved me much when I was at enmity with you; in strange self-emptying, you came to earth ... While remaining still upon the heights of your ineffable glory, you glorified me, formerly so disgraced."¹⁴⁶

183 In the Incarnation, Christ united divine and human natures:

With one voice [we] teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ ... consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity ... in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation ... [He is] not parted or divided into two persons, but is one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁷

Christ is true God and true man:

As a man, he grew in his mother's womb, and as God he departed from it without staining her virginity. As a man, he sucked his mother's milk, and as God he set the angels to sing amongst the shepherds: "Glory to God in the highest!" As a man he was wrapped in swaddling clothes, and as God he led the magi with a star. As a man he lay in a manger, and as God he received gifts and homage from the magi. As a man he fled into Egypt, and the graven images of Egypt worshipped him as God.¹⁴⁸

a. The Annunciation to the Virgin Mary

184. The Lord God chose the Virgin Mary from Nazareth and through the Archangel Gabriel he announced to her that she would become the mother of the Son of God: "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will

¹⁴⁶ Octoechos, Tone 8, Sunday Matins: Canon of the Resurrection, Canticle 4.

¹⁴⁷ COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON, Session V.

¹⁴⁸ ILARION, METROPOLITAN OF KYIV, Sermon on Law and Grace, 26.

be called the Son of the Most High" (Lk 1:31-32, ksv-CE). Giving her consent—"I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38, ksv-cE)—Mary offers herself to God, and the Holy Spirit descends upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadows her (see Lk 1:35). "We confess the holy Virgin to be Mother of God [Theotokos]; because God the Word was incarnate and became human."¹⁴⁹

185 Comparing Mary with Eve, Church tradition highlights the obedience of the Virgin Mary in contrast with the disobedience of our fore-mother Eve. Eve is the mother of all the living; Mary (the new Eve) is the Mother of the Source of life. Eve lost life (dying in death); Mary accepted and offered the Life, who in the Resurrection overcame death. Eve listened to the serpent and lost Paradise for humankind; Mary listened to God and returned Paradise in Christ. Adam was before Eve, but Mary, the New Eve, was before the New Adam, the Christ:¹⁵⁰

While Mary hymned praise to the one whom she bore, and caressed the babe whom she alone brought forth, Eve, who had given birth in pain, heard her, and rejoicing, said to Adam: "A virgin has given birth to the Redemption of the curse; who has caused this hoped-for news to ring out in my ears? Her voice alone has released me from my torment. Her childbirth has wounded the one who wounded me. She is the one whom the son of Amos prophesied as the rod of Jesse. It has brought forth a branch on which I shall feed and not die, Mary, full of grace."¹⁵¹

186 The conception of the Son of God in the womb of the Virgin is the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive" (Is 7:14). The Church contemplates this sign in the icon of The Mother of God of the Sign. "he Son of God comes to dwell within a virginal womb; and the Virgin Mary (in her person the Church), raises her hands and prayerfully contemplates the Child, hidden for the time being from the outside world.

187 The Church of Christ, teaching about the Mystery of the Incarnation, focuses on the Person whom Mary conceived, and to whom she gave birth. Therefore, at the Council of Ephesus in the year 431, Mary was solemnly proclaimed to be the God-Bearing One (in Greek, Theotokos) [often translated in English simply as Mother of God]. "For this name embraces the whole mystery of the dispensation."¹⁵² The title Theotokos

¹⁴⁹ CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, Letter 39, To John of Antioch [The Formula of Reunion]: PG 75, 156 IRI 177.

¹⁵⁰ See IRENAEUS OF LYONS, Against Heresies, III, 22, 4: PG 7, 958-959. —

¹⁵¹ ROMAN THE MELODIST, Second Kontakion on the Nativity, 3.

¹⁵² JOHN OF DAMASCUS, Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, III, 12: PG 94, 1029.