

not abandon the world."<sup>277</sup> Her constant intercession before the Creator is celebrated by the Church in the feast of the Protection of the Most Holy Mother of God [October 1/14]: "Today the Virgin stands before us in the church, and together with the choirs of saints invisibly prays to God for us."<sup>278</sup>

***b. Veneration of the Most Holy Mother of God in the Kyivan Tradition***

314 Devotion to the Mother of God has deep roots in the Kyivan tradition. Grand Prince Yaroslav the Wise consecrated Rus-Ukraine to the Protection of the Most Holy Mother of God. Many churches were built, and many icons written in her honour. The most famous icons of the Kyivan princely period, written in the Byzantine tradition, are the following: the Vyshhorod Icon (today known as the Vladimir Icon), and the Belz Icon (known today as the Czestochowa Icon). From this tradition, the unique form of Ukrainian iconography developed. The facial characteristics of the Mother of God on Ukrainian icons are kind and gentle; her gaze is warm and heartfelt.

315 Devotion to the Mother of God spread widely, especially after the miraculous lifting of the Turkish siege of the monastery in Pochaiv. This miracle was attributed to the icon of the Mother of God, today preserved in the church of the Pochaiv monastery. Additional sites of pilgrimage to miraculous Marian icons are: Zarvanytsya, Univ, Hoshiv, Stradch, Zhyrovycsi, Yaroslav, Kholm, Mariapoch, and many others. Particular reliance upon the protection and assistance of the Mother of God has become a devotional tradition among the Ukrainian people.

***c. Saints of Christ's Church***

316 Holiness is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Through this gift, as we become Christ-like we become children of our heavenly Father. The Lord, who alone is holy, grants his own holiness to humankind and comes to dwell within: "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them" (Jn 14:23). Christian holiness is the manifestation of humankind's divinization. "All you saints who rejoice with a splendour that surpasses every

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<sup>277</sup> Menaion, Dormition of our Most Holy Lady, the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary (August 15/28), Vespers, Troparion.

<sup>278</sup> Menaion, Protection of the Most Holy Mother of God (October 1/14), Kontakion.

spirit, the psalmist calls you gods because you dwell close to God receive the deifying rays from his light."<sup>279</sup>

317 In Christianity, holiness is connected with witnessing to the faith, often expressed through martyrdom. The word *martyr* (from the Greek, *martys*, meaning *witness*) emphasizes not so much the fact of suffering testifying to Christ. "The choirs of saints have shown youthfulness fortitude in suffering. They have accepted painful wounds for the of incorruptible crowns of glory and beauty."<sup>280</sup>

318 The Church also recognizes as saints the faithful who have chosen way of ascetical struggle. They are called *venerable ones* (in Slavonic *prepodobni*, meaning *most like*) for in their ascetical way of life they have obtained the gift of God's likeness, having made the journey from "image" to the "likeness" of God: "All you venerable ones, who lived holiness, you vanquished the demons; and extinguishing torments of conscience, you valiantly endured the burning of the passions."<sup>281</sup>

319 The Church sings the praises of the struggles of the holy hierarch the bishops—who by the ministry of the Word and the celebration of the Holy Mysteries strengthened and nurtured the Church of Christ: "Taught by the word of God, the holy hierarchs became divine mouthpieces."<sup>282</sup> The struggle of confessors is the fight for truth and its defence against various heresies, as well as the courageous profession of faith in Christ in times of persecution. Yet another manifestation of holiness recognized by the Church is selfless social service to the disadvantaged and the infirm. Thus, the Church also venerates unmercenary wonderworkers, selfless physicians who took no money.

320 At the head of the choir of saints is the most holy Mother of God "More honourable than the cherubim and by far more glorious than the seraphim." Together with her the Church venerates the apostles of Christ, the evangelists and preachers—those who have proclaimed the Gospel. The Church also venerates the Old Testament righteous ones—the patriarchs and prophets—as well as the invisible world—angels and archangels. This is because the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit embraces the entire history of salvation.

321 The struggles of the Church's saints are described in the texts of lives of the saints as word-icons of these holy people, written in the light

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<sup>279</sup> *Floral Triodion*, Sunday of All Saints, Matins, Canon, Ode 8.

<sup>280</sup> *Octoechos*, Tone 7, Saturday, Matins, Canon for the Departed, Ode 3.

<sup>281</sup> *Octoechos*, Tone 6, Saturday, Vespers, Stichera at Psalm 140.

<sup>282</sup> *Octoechos*, Tone 1, Saturday, Matins, Canon for the Saints, Ode 4.