

\* On Oct 13th, 1917, just outside the village of Fatima in central Portugal, the all-holy Theotokos appeared to three small children. It was the day before the Byzantine-Slav feast of her Holy Veil or Protection (*св. Покрова*). A throng of at least 70,000 people from all over Portugal and beyond had gathered at Fatima, for the All-Immaculate One had promised that a great miracle would take place that day. Dark heavy clouds hung over the village from the previous evening, and on the promised day sheets of rain, swept by a chilly autumn wind, poured down on the throng, soaking them to the bone. Then, at noon by the sun, lightning flashed in the eastern sky, signaling the onset of the apparition. The rain stopped and the sun began to appear, bathed in a pale blue that could be looked at without strain. Gradually the sun changed into a brilliant silvery orb. Growing larger as it broke through the clouds, it radiated rays of various coloured light in every direction. The silvery sun began an eccentric movement, at the same time wandering like a wheel of fire within the circle of receding clouds. Three times it completed its wandering circuit. Then, to the terror of the many thousands who witnessed this miracle (and it was reported in the secular press of the time), the sun came hurtling towards the earth. Throughout the area of Fatima people cried out, falling in prayer on the rain-drenched ground. After some minutes the sun resumed its normal place in the sky, and there was an outburst of joy as the multitudes spontaneously began singing praise to the Theotokos. The people noticed that their clothes, which only a short while before had been soaked through by the rain, were now completely dry. So occurred the miracle of the sun. While this prodigy was taking place, the Mother of God appeared to the three children: Lucia Santos, aged 9 years, and her two cousins, Blessed Francisco Marto, 8 years, and his sister Blessed Jacinta Marto, 6 years. She told them, "People must amend their lives and ask forgiveness for their sins. They must not further offend our Lord, for He is already much offended." She had appeared to these God-favoured children five times before, beginning on May 13th, 1917. In the course of these six apparitions she urged the following. As a condition for eternal salvation and for peace in the world, humanity must embrace prayer and penance. She exhorts us to interior conversion, that is, to a radical personal rejection of sin and an identification with God's holy will, and asks that we be selfless in offering daily sacrifices for the conversion of sinners. The All-Immaculate One manifested herself as the true Protectress of the world and of peace, and teaches us to have filial recourse to her compassionate intercession and help. All this is the theme of the feast of the Holy Protection. It is through her intercession that the ancient land of Rus will turn to God and that a period of peace will be given to the world. In the end her powerful protection will triumph. As a sign of our dedication to her, the most blessed Theotokos asked that on first Saturdays a rule of prayer be observed in her honour. She said, "I promise to assist at the hour of death with the graces necessary for salvation all those who on the first Saturdays of five consecutive months confess and receive Holy Communion, pray the rosary and keep me company for a quarter of an hour while meditating on the mysteries with the intention of offering me reparation." Those who

follow this prayer rule have experienced great consolation and peace. She also asked that the Pope of Rome, simultaneously with all the bishops in communion with him, consecrate Russia to her Immaculate Heart, that is, to her maternal protection and care. The feast of the Fatima Mother of God, observed on May 13th, was added to the general calendar of the Latin rite in 2002. Until then it had been observed locally in various countries. In the Byzantine rite, if the presider (*настоятель*) wishes to observe this feast, it would be better to do so on Oct 13th, the day of the final apparition and of the miracle of the sun. In this way the manifestation of the Mother of God at Fatima and the message she delivered there would be seen as being related to the feast of her Holy Protection, a feast which is fervently celebrated by faithful in the countries descended from old Rus, namely, Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. This was prayerfully recommended by His Grace, the former administrator of the Eparchy of Toronto and Eastern Canada, Bishop Roman (Danylak), who, out of devotion to the Fatima Mather of God, was ordained priest on Oct 13th, 1957, and celebrated her feast on that day each year. Bishop Roman reposed on Oct 7th, 2012.

\* The tropars provided in the above service text were chosen because, while entreating divine mercy in the face of humanity's sinfulness, recognizing God's most justified indignation, and professing the necessity of our repentance, they confidently plead the powerful advocacy of the Theotokos, the help of the world. This is the message of Fatima in a nutshell. These tropars are from *Послѣдованіє молебнаго пѣнія... во время безведрія...*; see **Книга Молебныхъ Пѣній** (*Recensione Rutena*, Rome, 1952, the Monastery of Grottaferrata), pp. 225-226. The Apostle assigned above, Eph 1:16-23, is here proclaimed as if in the person of the all-holy Theotokos who prays for us that we be given wisdom to grasp the hope and inheritance we have in Christ and the great working of God's power that raised Christ from the dead, seated Him at the right hand and put all things under His feet. The alleluia was chosen with reference to the miracle of the sun. The Gospel, the usual one for feasts of the Theotokos, contains at the end the benediction, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts that nursed You," and the Lord's reply, "Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it" (Lk 11:27-28). These readings reflect the Fatima message of constant personal conversion to Christ and identification with the divine will.

*Devout soul, the Mother of God of Fatima requests of us that, as we fulfill the duties of our particular state in life, we offer deliberate personal sacrifices each day for the conversion of sinners. Say often, especially while making some sacrifice:*

**O**ut of love for You, my Jesus, in honour of Your most pure Mother and for the conversion of sinners.