

JULY/AUGUST

I S S U E 1 7 1

The Shepherd

Saint Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church of San Diego



One man gives
freely, and grows
all the more
richer; while
another withholds
what he should
offer, and only
suffers more want
(PROVERBS 11:24).



From the desk of

F A T H E R A N D R E W

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On Monday, August 2nd at 10:00am we will once again begin our corporate prayer to the Theotokos. It is once again a time to fast as we prepare to mark the season and significance of the Theotokos in the life of the Orthodox Church. Our fast and our prayer will culminate on Sunday morning, August 15th with the celebration of a Divine Liturgy beginning at 10:00 am. Also, following the Divine Liturgy a meal has been scheduled and will be offered in our hall by the Dance and Choral School of St. Spyridon (more information enclosed).

The *Fifteen Days of August* reminds Orthodox Christians about the place and honor that the Theotokos has in our theology. As truly the *Mother of God* (Theotokos) through her intercessions, and on our behalf, she is seen as *protectress and healer*. It is interesting to note that in the 5th Century there was a fierce debate about her title: Theotokos. Also interesting to note, is that the title Theotokos was an acceptable one, used by the faithful for many centuries up until the 5th century debate.

It was Saint Cyril of Alexandria, opponent of Nestorius, backed by the Ecumenical Council held at Ephesus in 431 AD who proclaimed the correct title for the holy virgin, who could be no less than Theotokos: *Birth giver of God*. Bishop Kallistos Ware, from his book *The Orthodox Church* puts it this way: *What Mary bore was not loosely united to God, but a single and undivided person, who is God and man at once. The name Theotokos safeguards the unity of Christ's person: to deny her this title is to separate the Incarnation into two, breaking down the bridge between God and humanity and erecting within Christ's person a middle wall of partition. Thus, we can see that not only titles of devotion were involved at Ephesus, but the very message of salvation. The same primacy that the word homoousios (essence) occupies in the doctrine of the Trinity, the Theotokos holds in the doctrine of the Incarnation.*

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as we ponder the awesomeness of the Incarnation, we cannot discredit or downplay the role that the Virgin Mary was called upon to carry out as she *gave birth to God the Word*. Through her free will consent, she brought forth our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity. It is with this correct understanding therefore, that throughout the ages the Theotokos has been sought after and prayed *through* for protection and healing, blessings that have no doubt come by Him whom she brought forth, her beloved Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Therefore, keeping with the Holy Tradition of the Church, seeking divine help *through* the intercession of the Theotokos, we will once gather for corporate prayer as we lift up our voices to her for health and well being. Please mark your calendars from now as the Paraklesis services will be offered at the following times on the following days: Monday morning, August 2nd, at 10:00am; Wednesday evening, August 4th, at 7:00pm; Monday morning, August 9th, at 10:00am; Wednesday evening, August 11th, at 7:00pm; and Friday morning, August 13th at 10:00am. Please make every effort to be prepared and present to help pray for *the sick, the suffering and for those held in captivity.* ❀