

The Veneration of the Mother of God During Her Earthly Life

By Saint John of Shanghai & San Francisco

FROM APOSTOLIC TIMES and to our days all who truly love Christ give veneration to Her Who gave birth to Him, raised Him and protected Him in the days of His youth. If God the Father chose Her, God the Holy Spirit descended upon Her, and God the Son dwelt in Her, submitted to Her in the days of His youth, was concerned for Her when hanging on the Cross, then should not everyone who confesses the Holy Trinity venerate Her?

Still in the days of Her earthly life the friends of Christ, the Apostles, manifested a great concern and devotion for the Mother of the Lord, especially the Evangelist John the Theologian, who, fulfilling the will of Her Divine Son, took Her to himself and took care for Her as for a mother from the time when the Lord uttered to him from the Cross the words: Behold thy mother."

The Evangelist Luke painted a number of images of Her, some together with the Pre-eternal Child, others without Him. When he brought them and showed them to the Most Holy Virgin, She approved them and said: "The grace of My Son shall be with them, " and repeated the hymn She had once sung in the house of Elizabeth: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and My spirit hath rejoiced in God My Saviour."

However, the Virgin Mary during Her earthly life avoided the glory which belonged to Her as the Mother of the Lord. She preferred to live in quiet and prepare Herself for the departure into eternal life. To the last day of Her earthly life She took care to prove worthy of the Kingdom of Her Son, and before death She prayed that He might deliver Her soul from the malicious spirits that meet human souls on the way to heaven and strive to seize them so as to take them away with them to Hades. The Lord fulfilled the prayer of His Mother and in the hour of Her death Himself came from heaven with a multitude of angels to receive Her soul.

Since the Mother of God had also prayed that She might bid farewell to the Apostles, the Lord gathered for Her death all the Apostles, except Thomas, and they were brought by an invisible power on that day to Jerusalem from all the ends of the inhabited world, where they were preaching, and they were present at Her blessed translation into eternal life.

The Apostles gave Her most pure body over to burial with sacred hymns, and on the third day they opened the tomb so as once more to venerate the remains of the Mother of God together with the Apostle Thomas, who had arrived then in Jerusalem. But they did not find the body in the tomb and in perplexity they returned to their own place; and then, during their meal, the Mother of God Herself appeared to them in the air, shining with heavenly light, and informed them that Her Son had glorified Her body also, and She, resurrected, stood before His Throne. At the same time, She promised to be with them always.

The Apostles greeted the Mother of God with great joy and began to venerate Her not only as the Mother of their beloved Teacher and Lord, but also as their heavenly helper, as a protector of Christians and intercessor for the whole human race before the Righteous Judge. And everywhere the Gospel of Christ was preached, His Most Pure Mother also began to be glorified.

