

Pokrova – The Protection of the Mother of God Our Lady of Pochaiv

Youth Group Session Eight (Final)

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Session

We now understand why Mary the Mother of God intercedes for us. There are many ways in which she not only intercedes for us but also protects us! Here are two stories of how the faithful called upon her to intercede for them, and she came to their aid.

The Protection of the Mother of God or Pokrova is a very special event and feast of the Orthodox Church – it takes place on October 14/27. On this day we remember the appearance of the Mother of God in Constantinople in the 10th century. The people of Constantinople were afraid because they believed their city was going to be attacked. St. Andrew, known as the Fool for Christ, and St. Epiphanius were in church for services. They were all praying for God’s help with the attack and in particular for the Theotokos to intercede on their behalf and well-being.

It was then that they saw the Mother of God approach the altar, supported by St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist (Remember that all three of them had been dead for many years). She knelt and prayed with tears in her eyes. Then she took the veil she was wearing and extended it over her arms as a sign of protection. Constantinople was attacked, but the arrows bounced off of the city! They were saved by her protection.

There are many icons depicting this event, but in every one Mary is shown with the veil over her arms as a sign that she will always protect us. She is never alone but always with Christ. Today, with her veil (omophor) she stands in our church along with the saints. She is always ready to hear our prayers and to take them to the Throne of God. We pray: “Remember us in your prayers, O Birth-Giver of God.”

Do you know of anywhere within our Ukrainian Orthodox Churches that we often use veils or cloths?

These cloths hang over our icons in our church or at home to help us remember the protection of the Mother of God.

The second story of the Mother of God protecting Christians is very special to Ukrainian Orthodox believers because it happened in Ukraine.

In the year 1340, two monks settled on the hill where the Pochaiv Monastery is now located. One day a monk from the monastery climbed to the top of the hill after he finished his daily prayers. Suddenly he saw the Most Holy Birth-giver of God standing upon a rock, surrounded by flames. He called his brother to see this miracle. A third witness was a shepherd, John (Ivan) Bosoy. He ran up the hill, and together the three men glorified God. On the rock upon which the Most Holy Bearer of God had stood remained a permanent imprint of her right foot! Today, this rock is enshrined within the Holy Dormition Church at the Monastery. The Monastery was built around her footprint.

A stream of Holy Water trickles out of the rock where Mary's footprint is. It continues to bring healing of body and soul to people who visit there. Mary's footprint reminds us that our footsteps are guided on the path of righteousness and salvation by her intercessions for us.

In the year 1559, a Greek Bishop, Metropolitan Neophytus from Constantinople, traveled through the region of Volyn, Ukraine (very close to the monastery). He blessed a local woman named Anna Hoyska by giving her a gift. The gift was an icon of the Theotokos holding Christ. They were surrounded by saints in the frame. Soon miracles began taking place around the icon. The woman gave this miraculous icon to the monks at the monastery. The holy image was placed in the church built in honor of the Dormition of the Holy Birth-giver of God. You can still see this icon today!

Do you know of any miraculous icons? Why were they miraculous?

In the 1700's, during an attack by an enemy army, the monks carried the icon in a procession around the church. The Mother of God appeared above the main cupola (dome) of the Pochaiv Monastery and sent the cannon-balls hurling backwards toward the people who fired them. This is just like the protection of Constantinople!

These are just two examples of the Mother of God protecting us. She protects us every day, and all we have to do is ask! Mother Mary is always there for us! O Holy Birth-Giver of God, Save Us!