

THE PROTECTION

OF THE THEOTOKOS



## THE HOPE & PROTECTION OF ALL PEOPLE

**T**he Virgin Mary is referred to in many beautiful and meaningful ways. She is called the Theotokos - the Mother of God - because she is best remembered for giving birth to Jesus Christ. Another title she is called is "*Protectress of the world.*" In fact, a popular holy day observed by some jurisdictions goes by the graphic title of the Feast Day of the PROTECTION of the Mother of God.

The historical basis for this feast is traced back to the city of Constantinople in the early years of the 10th century. The capital of the Byzantine Empire was under siege. It was only a matter of time until the city would fall to its pagan attackers. The Emperor Leo the Wise called upon his best means of defense: PRAYER.

Believers from all over the city gathered in the Church of Blachernae, dedicated to the Mother of God. Among those present for the all-night vigil was a certain St. Andrew, called a "*fool for Christ,*" and his faithful disciple Epiphanius. While all of the faithful were deeply engrossed in prayer, these pious saints are said to have had a vision of the Mother of God appearing over the people with a veil spread over her outstretched hands in a sign of protection.

Andrew and Epiphanius quickly shared their vision with the rest of the worshippers. Viewing this as a sign of God's favor, they continued to pray with great fervor. At that very moment, the tide of the battle turned, and their enemies were driven back. They had been protected by the Mother of God!

This Feast serves to remind us of Mary's constant role as our "*Protectress.*" We are called upon to always seek her maternal protection.

*Icon by Fr. Paul Drozdowski  
www.pd-icons.com*

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