

The Grandeur of the Mother of God (Monk Arsenios of the Skete of Koutloumousiou, the Holy Mountain)

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When the most glorious and richest kings on earth have in mind to build their throne and their royal palace as a whole, they don't leave a stone unturned until they find the most precious material that nature is able to offer, so that the palace won't lack the slightest thing in terms of luxury goods. And if they themselves were able to make material goods more precious than those which nature has to offer, they'd jump at the chance, with no thought to expense, trouble or anything else. They couldn't do this, of course, because human powers are limited and under the control of our Creator and Maker, the Triune God.

So kings have to be satisfied with whatever precious things are offered by nature in order to erect their royal palace. But for our Holy Triune God, things aren't at all the same as for earthly kings, because when the time had been fulfilled and God was to make a throne for Himself on earth, there were no limitations. He fashioned His throne in exactly the manner His Holy Spirit wished. And God adorned His throne so beautifully that the whole of creation rose up and praised and glorified Him. All the Prophets of the Old Testament had proclaimed and glorified the glorious throne of God. And, of course, this most glorious throne is none other than the Ever-Virgin Mother of God.



But what is it that makes the throne of God incomparably superior to those of kings? Why is the Mother of God so superior to all the rest of creation and the powers of heaven? The priceless quality that Our Lady has within her to a greater extent than any other created being is the raiment of divinity, which according to Abba Isaak the Syrian, is the humility of Christ. The Mother of God was adorned with this blessed raiment of divinity before the creation of the world and it was for her sake that God created us. If we pay careful attention, we'll see that during the six days of creation, God was secretly announcing the Mother of God. This is why no other being in heaven or on earth has the whole raiment of divinity, as Our Lady has, and this is a monumental difference. This blessed raiment of divinity, the humility of Christ, has always been beyond the power of even the saints to explain. In any case, the saints of our Church have this blessed raiment to only the slightest degree. Given that, how could they possibly interpret Christ's humility? And if, as Saint John the Theologian tells us 'No-one has ever seen God' (1 Jn. 4, 12) how could even the saints have the whole raiment of divinity within themselves? And if the sight of God is enough to bring about our death in the body, because the latter would not be able to bear such a vision, how could we bear the whole of His raiment? This is why the Mother of God is hymned above all: because she alone was able to bear the raiment of divinity, the humility of Christ. This is how the Holy

Triune God fashioned His earthly throne, Our Lady, before the creation of the world. And once she had been born, God didn't allow her to stay with her holy and righteous parents, Ioakeim and Anna, for longer than three years before He had her taken into His temple, into the holy of holies. And this was just as it should have been, for how could the throne of God remain outside the sanctuary? And how could God allow His seat to be far way from Him?

When Our Most Holy Lady entered the Holy of Holies, she was just three years old and she lived there for 12 years. This is where reason in the human brain reaches its limits, because enormous questions and queries arise which no one can answer. This is where the life of the Mother of God passes our understanding, because nothing so tremendous has ever happened to anyone else. And why not? What was missing from them? The humility of Christ, the raiment of divinity. Not that there's no humility among our saints- for goodness' sake let's not say that- but the saints have Christ's humility in part, not entirely, whereas Our Lady had the whole of the garment of Christ, she had it all in terms of both quantity and quality. Many of the saints of the Church acquired humility through their frequent falls in a previously sinful life and were thus able, through genuine repentance, to achieve some of Christ's humility. Things were very different for Our Lady, however. The raiment of divinity was given to her even before she was born and there was absolutely nothing for her to repent over, though all of our saints have had cause to do so.

(to be continued)