

St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology

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The Most Rev. Metropolitan PHILIP, Primate

The V. Rev. Fr. Jack N. Sparks, PhD, Dean

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Dear Friend of St. Athanasius Academy,

In August, the last month of the Church year, we honored the Dormition of Mary, the Mother of our Lord. In September, we start the new year by celebrating the great joy of the Birth of the Theotokos, the virgin and first-fruits foreshadowed in the Old Testament by type, the Prophets, and promise. She who would choose to become the God-bearer. She who is to hold in her own womb, the very One who gave her life – the uncontainable Creator of all. Therefore let us rejoice with awe, in the mystery and anticipation surrounding this new life and its hope of fulfillment. Truly, the Theotokos is our window of new Hope; the door and the ladder to our return to eternal Paradise. And it is her son Jesus, and our Christ and Savior, Who leads us as our Good Shepherd, on this straight and narrow path. The Church sings:



*Your birth, O Theotokos, pure,
Brought joy to all the earth;
From you has shone the Righteous Sun,
The Savior of the earth.*



*For Christ our God is born of you,
And frees us from the curse;
The one true Blessing He bestows,
Which heals the universe.*

*For Christ has trampled death by death,
Removed sin's heavy load;
And in his love for all our race,
Eternal life bestowed.*

WE ALSO SING:

**The Virgin Mary magnify,
My soul, give praise and lift her high,
The maiden born of barren womb,
The desert flower brought to bloom.**

**Virginity and motherhood,
Are never joined, as understood;
A child a virgin never bears,
But God a Virgin-womb prepares.**

**In you, O Virgin, join the two,
And now on earth is something new,
A virgin Mother now we see,
The Word in flesh has come to be.**

**All nations join, and we with them,
To sing to you a joyful hymn,
And call you blessed on the earth,
Who gave our Savior human birth.**

May God continue to bless and keep you,


Fr. Jack

An Academic Community of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

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