

OCTOBER 1

PROTECTION OF THE THEOTOKOS



The name of the feast—Protection—is a translation of the Ukrainian word, *pokrov*. However, “protection” does not convey the full significance of *pokrov*, which has several meanings. First, of all, it refers to a cloak or shroud; it also means protection or intercession. For this reason, the name of the feast is also translated as the Veil of Our Lady, the Protecting Veil of the Theotokos, or the Intercession of the Theotokos. Indeed, it would take a rather long English language

sentence to express the full meaning. We are given the mental image of a caring and loving mother, spreading her cloak to shelter her children from harm. It is an image to which any child can relate.

In Byzantine iconography, the Mother of God is most often depicted with her Son, our Lord. Commonly, she is holding Him as any loving mother would. In other icons, she appears alone, interceding before Jesus on our behalf. As early as the third century, Christians were turning to the Theotokos, as evidenced in this Coptic prayer of that time. “Under your protection we seek refuge, holy Mother of God.” In various icons we see her with the palms of her hands turned upwards towards heaven. In icons of the Protecting Veil, she retains this pose, while holding her veil or *prokov* spread between her outstretched arms, even as she did for the people of Constantinople.

On the Feast of the Protection, like those ancient Christians, we once again pray to the Theotokos for her motherly intercession, in the Kontakion:

*“Today the Virgin stands in the midst of the Church, and with choirs of saints she invisibly prays to God for us. Angels and bishops worship, apostles and prophets rejoice together, since for our sake she prays to the pre-eternal God”.*

*Cfr. [www.royaldoors.net](http://www.royaldoors.net)*