

## WEEKLY MEDITATION

### THERE ARE NO STUPID QUESTIONS

- Q.** What is our Cathedral feast day? What is a parish feast day?
- A.** All Orthodox churches are dedicated to the worship of God, of course, and when Christians first became able to build churches they built them on holy sites associated with events in scripture, the life of Christ, or over the tombs of the martyrs. And if there was no holy site at hand, nonetheless a church would be dedicated in the name of a person or an event marked on the church calendar. We continue this tradition. It is interesting to reflect how our church calendar is a sort of memory system, keeping the rich and growing history of God's self-revelation before our eyes.

In short, our churches always have their own special feast day. This is sometimes called the altar feast or the feast of dedication or the patronal feast. Churches specifically dedicated to the Holy Trinity, for example, have their feast day at Pentecost. A church dedicated to St. Nicholas might celebrate its feast on December 6 - or, since this date falls in the Nativity Fast, on the 'summer feast' of St. Nicholas in May. Churches dedicated to the Resurrection do not celebrate their parish feast at Pascha, but on the September feast commemorating the dedication of the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. Some churches, especially Cathedral churches, have double dedications. For example, the famous Russian Cathedral in London, the long-time home of the famous Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom), is dedicated to the Mother of God and has its altar feast on the Dormition, but it also has a further dedication to All Saints, and so the Sunday of All Saints is a special day. It is known as the Cathedral of the Dormition and All Saints. In Ottawa I served at the Cathedral of the Annunciation & St. Nicholas for eleven years before moving to Minneapolis.

Our Cathedral is dedicated to the Mother of God, which is why it is known as St Mary's. Strictly speaking we could call our church the Cathedral of the Protection of the Mother of God, or even the Cathedral of the Protecting Veil of the Mother of

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God, since our particular altar feast is the commemoration of the miraculous vision of the Mother of God spreading her veil over the city of Constantinople, which inspired the Christians of the city who were besieged by pagan Slav tribes.

This feast of the Mother of God is very popular among Russian and other Slavic people, and there are countless churches with this dedication in the Russian lands and in the immigration. It is interesting that our first parish here in Minneapolis, with its wooden church building on this site - and which burned down in 1904 - was dedicated not to the Mother of God but to St. John the Baptist. When the cornerstone of the new building was blessed by St. Tikhon in 1905, however, the new church was dedicated the Mother of God and this particular feast. I do not know why this was the case. I think it safe to say that our faithful have over the decades always felt the heavenly intercessions and protection of the Mother of God in a special way.

The celebration of a parish feast ought to be something special, full of prayer and good fellowship. It is kind of like a birthday party. It is something that every parishioner should participate in, giving thanks to God for our place of worship, for His innumerable mercies to us, for the intercession and protection of the Mother of God on our walk through life, for our parish family and our fellowship.

*Fr. Andrew*