



The Prayer Rule of the Theotokos

According to St. Seraphim of Sarov

*Contented collected and edited by Michael Bracelin
Email wacobyzantine@gmail.com with any updates.*

About the Prayer Rule of the Theotokos

Tradition holds that the Prayer Rule was given to the Eastern Church by the Blessed Theotokos in the 8th Century. Some traditions hold it was eventually discovered by the Western Saint Dominic, the founder of the Dominican Order of Preachers. Through the guidance of the Holy Theotokos he brought it to the Western Church and adapted it to Western usage. There, it became known as the Holy Rosary. Meanwhile, the Prayer Rule had inconstant usage over the centuries in most of Eastern Europe. However, it was “rediscovered” in the East by St. Seraphim of Sarov in its traditional format. It is that format that is adapted to Ruthenian usage below. The Prayer Rule uses the ancient form of the Angelic Salutation (Hail Mary). However, the modern Roman version (which, according to tradition, was adapted to ask for Mary’s intercession during the European plagues) may be substituted if the devotee is Roman Catholic.



How to Pray the Rule of the Theotokos

Step 1 – Understand the Structure

The Prayer Rule begins with the Trisagion Prayers, which, according to the Rule of St. Pachomius, should be memorized by all Eastern Christians along with the Jesus Prayer, Psalm 50 (51), and the Creed.

Each “decade” (taking only a few minutes) identifies a part of the life of Mary and Christ to meditate on while praying 10 “Hail Mary’s” verbally (see below), and subsequently offers a petitionary or intercessory prayer and an “Our Father.”

Byzantine Angelic Salutation/Hail Mary (Ruthenian)

*Theotokos Virgin, rejoice! (or: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos)
Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,
For thou hast borne Christ the Savior, the Deliverer of our souls. Amen.*

**The Roman Catholic Hail Mary may be said if the children are canonically Roman Catholic

Step 2 – Select an option that fits your and your family’s needs

Option 1 (Best for balance):

Each day, 5 decades are prayed, similar in length/time to the Roman Rosary. **During the Dormition Fast (August 1-15), each may be prayed sequentially for each respective day.*

Monday: Decades 1-5
Tuesday: Decades 4-8
Wednesday: Decades 6-10
Thursday: Decades 4-8
Friday: Decades 6-10
Saturday: Decades 11-15
Sunday: Decades 11-15

Option 2 (Best for time limitations)

Each day, a single decade is prayed. The family keeps track of which decade they are on and starts over after progressing through all 15 decades.

Option 3 (Best for thoroughness of prayer)

Each day, the family completes all 15 decades, either all at once or broken up throughout the day.

Step 3 – Pick a time, and start praying as a family!

The Prayer Rule of the Theotokos

Trisagion Prayers

God be merciful to me, a sinner. - (Pause briefly)

Glory to you, our God, glory to you!

Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth, everywhere present and filling all things, treasury of blessings and Giver of Life, come and dwell within us, cleanse us of all stain, and save our souls, O gracious One.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us;

Lord, cleanse us of our sins;

Master, forgive our transgressions;

Holy One, come to us and heal our infirmities for your name's sake.

Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Lord, have mercy (12x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Come, let us worship our King and God (bow)

Come, let us worship Christ our King and God (bow)

Come, let us worship and bow before the only Lord Jesus Christ, the King and our God (bow)

Psalm 50(51)

Have mercy on me, O God, in your kindness. In your compassion, blot out my offense.

O wash me more and more from my guilt and cleanse me from my sin.

My offenses truly I know them; my sin is always before me.

Against you, you alone, I have sinned; what is evil in your sight I have done.

That you may be justified when you give sentence, and be without reproach when you judge.

O see, in guilt I was born. A sinner was I conceived.

Indeed, you love truth in the heart; then in the secret of my heart teach me wisdom.

Sprinkle me with hyssop, then I shall be clean; O wash me, I shall be whiter than snow.

Make me hear rejoicing and gladness, that the bones you have crushed may thrill (rejoice).

From my sins, turn away your face and blot out all my guilt.

A pure heart create for me, O God, put a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence nor deprive me of your Holy Spirit.

Give me again the joy of your help; with a spirit of fervor, sustain me, that I may teach transgressors your ways and sinners may return to you.

Deliver me from blood-guilt, O God, my saving God, and my tongue shall ring out your goodness.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

For in sacrifice you take not delight, burnt offering from me you would refuse.

My sacrifice, a contrite spirit, a contrite humbled heart, you will not spurn.

In your goodness, O Lord, show favor to Zion; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

Then you will be pleased with the lawful sacrifice, burnt offerings wholly consumed; then you will be offered young bulls on your altar.

Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, the only begotten, born of the Father before all ages.

Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in essence with the Father; through whom all things were made.

For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man.

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried.

He rose on the third day according to the scriptures.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he is coming again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Creator of Life, who proceeds from the Father. Together with the Father and the Son, he is worshipped and glorified; he spoke through the prophets.

In one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

I profess one baptism for the remission of sins.

I expect the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

Decade 1 - The Birth of the Theotokos

Let us remember the birth of the Theotokos. Let us pray for mothers, fathers, and children.

Optional Scripture Readings

Genesis 3.15	Judith 13.18	Luke 1.28
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Your nativity, O Mother of God, has brought joy to all the inhabited earth. For from you has shone forth the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God. He freed us from the curse and gave the blessing. He has made death of no effect and bestowed on us eternal life.

Theotokos Virgin, rejoice! (or: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos)

Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,

For thou hast borne Christ the Savior, [and] the Deliverer of our souls. Amen. (x10)

Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

It is truly proper to glorify you, O Theotokos, the ever blessed, immaculate, and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim; who a virgin, gave birth to God the Word, you truly the Theotokos, we magnify.

Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Decade 2 - The Presentation of the Theotokos

Open unto us the door of your lovingkindness—O most Blessed Mother of God. As we set our hope in you, let us not be confounded, but through you may we be delivered from all adversities. For you through Christ are the advocate of the Christian people.

Optional Scripture Readings

Genesis 18.14	Judith 11.17	Judith 16.6-17
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Today is the foreshadowing of the good pleasure of God and the herald of the salvation of men. The Virgin is revealed in the temple of God, and beforehand she announces Christ to all. Let us therefore cry to her with a mighty voice: “Hail, fulfillment of the Creator’s dispensation!”

Theotokos Virgin, rejoice! (or: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos)

Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,

For thou hast borne Christ the Savior, [and] the Deliverer of our souls. Amen. (x10)

Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

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Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Decade 3 – The Annunciation of the Lord’s Birth

Let us remember the Annunciation of the blessed Mother of God. Let us pray for the soothing of sorrows and the consolation of those who grieve.

Optional Scripture Readings

Isaiah 7.14	Isaiah 9.2	Luke 1.26-1.38
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Today is the crown of our salvation and the manifestation of the mystery that is from all eternity. The Son of God becomes the Son of a Virgin as Gabriel announces the good tidings of grace. Therefore, let us also join him and cry aloud to the Birthgiver of God: “Rejoice, you who are full of grace, the Lord is with you!”

Theotokos Virgin, rejoice! (or: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos)

Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,

For thou hast borne Christ the Savior, [and] the Deliverer of our souls. Amen. (x10)

Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

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Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Decade 4 – The Visitation of the Theotokos and St. Elizabeth

Let us remember the meeting of the Blessed Virgin with the righteous Elizabeth.
Let us pray for the reunion of the separated.

Optional Scripture Readings

Isaiah 49.13	Jeremiah 31.13	Luke 1.39-41
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When the Messiah was already incarnate, we listened to you, His first herald, when, with awe, you said to the divinely chosen Maiden who embraced you: "Why is this granted to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" Therefore, praising you, we cry aloud: Rejoice, O Theotokos who reveals the mysteries of God to us!

Theotokos Virgin, rejoice! (or: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos)

Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,

For thou hast borne Christ the Savior, [and] the Deliverer of our souls. Amen. (x10)

Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

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Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Decade 5 – The Nativity of the Lord

Let us remember the Birth of Christ. Let us pray for the rebirth of souls and a new life in Christ!

Optional Scripture Readings

Isaiah 9.6	Jeremiah 23.5	Luke 2.6-7
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Your nativity, O Christ our God, has shown forth the light of knowledge to the world: for through it, those who studied the stars learned from a star to worship You, the Sun of Truth, and to acknowledge You, rising from on high; O Lord, glory to You.

Theotokos Virgin, rejoice! (or: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos)

Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,

For thou hast borne Christ the Savior, [and] the Deliverer of our souls. Amen. (x10)

Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

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Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Decade 6 – The Prophecy of St. Simeon

Let us remember the words spoken to St. Simeon: “Yes, a sword shall also pierce through your own soul.” Let us pray that the Mother of God will meet our souls at the hour of death and accompany and lead us to her Son.

Optional Scripture Readings

Isaiah 49.6	Daniel 7.13	Luke 2.25-35
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Hail Theotokos, Virgin full of grace. From you has shone forth the light of Righteousness, Christ our God, giving light to those in darkness. Be glad, also, righteous Elder, for you have received in your arms the Deliverer of our souls, who bestows upon us resurrection.

Theotokos Virgin, rejoice! (or: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos)

Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,

For thou hast borne Christ the Savior, [and] the Deliverer of our souls. Amen. (x10)

Lord, have mercy (3x)

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Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Decade 7 – The Flight into Egypt

Let us remember the flight of the holy family to Egypt. Let us pray that Christ have mercy on us by the intercession of Mary and Joseph, as well as guide and protect those fleeing persecution.

Optional Scripture Readings

Jeremiah 31.15	Matthew 2.1-12	Matthew 2.13-18
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Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.” God, who has been born of the Virgin, has appeared to those who sit in the shadows that He may save us.

Theotokos Virgin, rejoice! (or: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos)

Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,

For thou hast borne Christ the Savior, [and] the Deliverer of our souls. Amen. (x10)

Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

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Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Decade 8 – The Christ among the Temple Elders

Let us remember the young 12-year-old Christ Jesus in Jerusalem teaching the Elders, and the sorrow of Mary in this account. Let us pray that the Mother of God pray to her Son for our own trust in his providential plan for our lives and steadfast commitment to prayer.

Optional Scripture Readings

Psalm 26.4 (27.4)	2 Maccabees 3.30	Luke 2.42-50
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Receive me who sighs, O Lord, since You are merciful, and have mercy on us sinners, through the intercession of Your Mother.

Theotokos Virgin, rejoice! (or: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos)

Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,

For thou hast borne Christ the Savior, [and] the Deliverer of our souls. Amen. (x10)

Lord, have mercy (3x)

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Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Decade 9 – The Wedding at Cana

Let us remember the miracle performed in Cana of Galilee when the Lord turned water into wine at the words of the Mother of God when she petitioned: “They have no wine.” Let us ask the Mother of God for help in our affairs and deliverance from need.

Optional Scripture Readings

Zechariah 8.12	Jeremiah 13.12	John 2.1-11
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Prompting Christ to begin his salvific works, Mary’s words spoken to the servants: “Do whatever he tells you.” Pray O Theotokos, even in great adversity that we may do all things Christ commands with joy and humility.

Theotokos Virgin, rejoice! (or: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos)

Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,

For thou hast borne Christ the Savior, [and] the Deliverer of our souls. Amen. (x10)

Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

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Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Decade 10 – The Crucifixion of the Lord

Let us remember the Mother of God standing at the Cross of the Lord, when grief pierced through her heart like a sword. Let us pray to Mary for the strengthening of our souls and the banishment of despair.

Optional Scripture Readings

Isaiah 53.12	Luke 23.32-33	John 19.26-27
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O Virgin all-immaculate, Mother of Christ God, a sword pierced your all-holy soul when you saw your Son and God willingly crucified. Therefore, O Blessed One, never cease to pray to Him that He may grant us forgiveness of our sins.

Theotokos Virgin, rejoice! (or: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos)

Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,

For thou hast borne Christ the Savior, [and] the Deliverer of our souls. Amen. (x10)

Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

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Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Decade 11 – The Resurrection of the Lord

Let us remember the Resurrection of Christ and ask the Mother of God in prayer to resurrect our souls and give us new courage to be a living icon of Christ to a broken world.

Optional Scripture Readings

Psalm 67.1 (68.1)	Matthew 28.1-6	Hebrews 12.11
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The angel exclaimed to her, full of grace: Rejoice, O pure Virgin. Again I say: Rejoice, your Son is risen from His three days in the tomb, and He has raised all the dead. Let all people rejoice. O shine, O shine, O New Jerusalem; for the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. O Zion, sing with joy and rejoice. And you, pure Mother of God, rejoice in the Resurrection of your Son!

Theotokos Virgin, rejoice! (or: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos)

Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,

For thou hast borne Christ the Savior, [and] the Deliverer of our souls. Amen. (x10)

Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

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Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Decade 12 – The Ascension of the Lord

Let us remember the Ascension of Christ, at which the Mother of God was present. Let us pray and ask the Queen of Heaven to raise up our souls from earthly and worldly amusements, and direct them in Christ-like humility and service to neighbor for the salvation of souls.

Optional Scripture Readings

Matthew 28.18-20	Hebrews 4.14-16	1 Timothy 2.1-2
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You ascended in glory, O Christ our God. You delighted the disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit. Through this blessing, they were assured that You are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

Theotokos Virgin, rejoice! (or: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos)

Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,

For thou hast borne Christ the Savior, [and] the Deliverer of our souls. Amen. (x10)

Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

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Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Decade 13 – The Descent of the Holy Spirit

Let us remember the upper room and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles. Let us pray: “Create for me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.”

Optional Scripture Readings

John 14.16-17;15.26	Acts 2.1-13	Galatians 5.22-23
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Blessed are You, O Christ our God. You filled the fishermen with wisdom, sending down upon them the Holy Spirit. Through them and your servants, You have caught the whole world in Your net. O Lover of mankind, glory to You!

Theotokos Virgin, rejoice! (or: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos)

Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,

For thou hast borne Christ the Savior, [and] the Deliverer of our souls. Amen. (x10)

Lord, have mercy (3x)

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Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Decade 14 – The Dormition of the Theotokos

Let us remember the falling asleep of the Mother of God, and ask for a peaceful and serene end to a life of loving service to Christ the Messiah and neighbor.

Optional Scripture Readings

Genesis 3.15	Luke 1.46-48	Revelation 11.19
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O Blessed Theotokos, in giving birth, you retained virginity, and in your falling-asleep, you did not forsake the world. You are the Mother of Life and have passed into life, and by your prayers have delivered our souls from death through Christ our Lord.

Theotokos Virgin, rejoice! (or: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos)

Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,

For thou hast borne Christ the Savior, [and] the Deliverer of our souls. Amen. (x10)

Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

It is truly proper to glorify you, O Theotokos, the ever blessed, immaculate, and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim; who a virgin, gave birth to God the Word, you truly the Theotokos, we magnify.

Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Decade 15 – The Crowning of the Theotokos

Let us remember the glory of the Mother of God, with which the Lord crowned her after her Dormition. Let us pray for her advocacy and defense from every evil.

Optional Scripture Readings

Psalm 44.10-15 (45.10-15)	Sirach 24.2	Revelation 12.1
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O wondrous miracle! The source of Life is laid in a tomb, and the grave becomes a ladder to heaven! Be glad, O faithful, let us cry aloud with Gabriel as our leader: Rejoice, O full of grace! The Lord is with you, granting great mercy to the world through you!

Theotokos Virgin, rejoice! (or: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos)

Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,

For thou hast borne Christ the Savior, [and] the Deliverer of our souls. Amen. (x10)

Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

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Lord, have mercy (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

