

THE TITLES OF THE HOLY VIRGIN SAINT MARY

References:

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Notes For Servants:

- 1.
- 2.

Objectives:

General:

Specific:

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- 2.
- 3.

Instructions:

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- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Bible Verse:

“Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”

(Luke 1:48)

Lesson:

See Attached Sheets.

The Titles of The Holy Virgin Saint Mary

On the occasion of the fast and feast of our Lady, the Mother of God, the Virgin Saint Mary, we would like to present some of her many titles which are used by the Coptic Orthodox Church, and these are:

1. The 'Theotokos'

This is a Greek word composed of two syllables: 'Theo,' meaning 'God', and 'tokos' meaning 'bearer'; that is, 'she who bore God in her womb. This Theological term has its origins in the Bible, in the following places:

- a) The archangel Gabriel announced to Saint Mary saying, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).
- b) Elizabeth said to Saint Mary, "But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43)
- c) Isaiah prophesied concerning Saint Mary and said "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. " (Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23)

2. The 'Second Heaven'

According to Acts 7:49, "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool", God dwells in heaven, and therefore we call Saint Mary the 'second heaven' because God descended and dwelt within her.

3. The 'Golden lampstand' and The 'Mother of True Light'

Saint Mary carried our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the True Light of the world (John 8:12), and for this reason, we give her this title. In the introduction to the creed, we also say 'We exalt you the Mother of the true Light...

4. The 'Golden Censer'

Saint Mary bore our Lord Jesus Christ, the 'Sweet Aroma.' On another point, the union, within the censor, of charcoal and fire, symbolises the unity between the Divinity and Humanity of our Lord, and thus we call her the '*golden censor*' because she carried the incarnate God in her womb.

5. The 'Burning Bush'

Moses saw a burning bush which was not consumed, "And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, but the bush was not consumed" (Exodus 3:2). The fire is a symbol of God, "For the Lord your God is a consuming fire" (Deuteronomy 4:24), and the burning bush, which was not consumed by fire, is a symbol of Saint Mary, who carried the fire of the Divinity in her womb and was not consumed by it.

6. 'Aaron's Rod'

This rod sprouted, put forth buds, produced blossoms, and yielded ripe almonds, without being planted nor watered (Numbers 17:1-11), and for this reason, it is a symbol of Saint Mary, who, being virgin, gave birth to God the Logos.

7. The 'Ever-Virgin'

In the fraction of advent, the priest says 'She, being virgin, gave birth to Him, and her virginity is sealed.' We believe that Saint Mary's virginity existed before, during and after the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ezekiel prophesied regarding her virginity and said "Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east,

but it was shut. And the Lord said to me; this gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the Lord God of Israel has entered by it, therefore it shall be shut." (Ezekiel 44:1 & 2) This closed gate is a symbol of Saint Mary's perpetual virginity.

Saint Mary was not married, as is apparent from her answer to the Archangel Gabriel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" (Luke 1:34) At that time, she was betrothed to Saint Joseph, and if she was planning to get married to Joseph, she would not have asked this question and said "Since I do not know a man..." This answer is a declaration that she vowed herself to God.

8. 'Jacob's ladder'

"Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it." (Genesis 28:12) This ladder is a symbol of Saint Mary, because our Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven to earth by taking flesh through her, and thus she was the junction between heaven and earth.

9. The 'Manna Pot'

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the 'True Manna,' Who descended from heaven and gave life to the world - "This is the bread which came down from heaven-not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever." (John 6:58), and thus, Saint Mary is the 'golden pot' who carried the 'True Manna' in her womb (Exodus 16:32 & 33).

10. The 'Ark of the covenant'

"...and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat." (Hebrews 9:3-5)

This Ark:

- i) was overlaid on all sides with gold, and this is a symbol of Saint Mary's purity which is like the pure gold.
- ii) contained the manna, which is a symbol of Jesus Christ, the 'Living Bread', and the tablets of the covenant, which are a symbol of Jesus Christ the Word (John 1:1).
- iii) had placed above it the cherubim of glory, overshadowing the mercy seat, and that is why in the icon of Saint Mary, we see angels overshadowing her.

Conclusion:

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