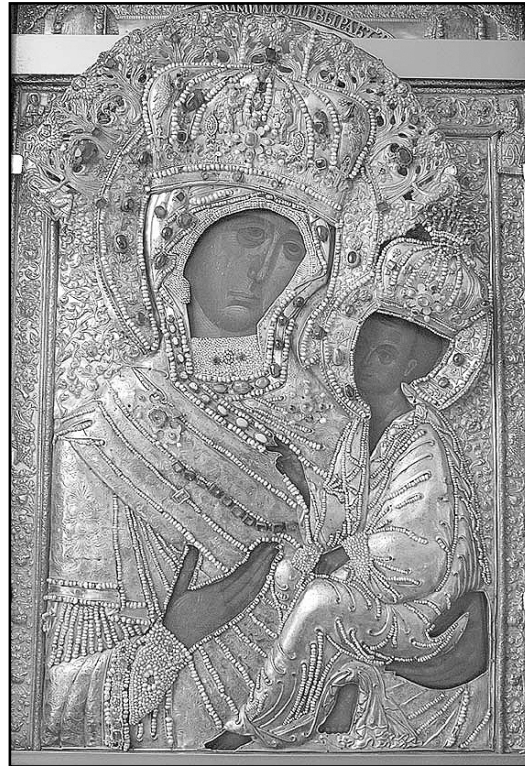


**Akathist to the Wonderworking Icon  
of the Most-Holy Theotokos**



**Our Lady of Tikhvin**

*Includes the History of the Wonderworking Icon*

# Akathist to the Wonderworking Icon of the Most-holy Theotokos, Our Lady of Tikhvin

*Honored on the 26th of June*

*Commemorating the occasion of  
Her historic visit to  
the Monastery of St Tikhon of Zadonsk,  
South Canaan, Pennsylvania, USA  
24 - 26 May, 2003*

## **Kontakion 1 (Tone 8)**

O Victorious Leader, Lady Theotokos  
We offer grateful thanks to you for revealing to us your  
Wonderworking Icon  
For those who come before you are always delivered  
from visible and invisible enemies.  
Therefore, as a merciful Mother, accept our humble  
prayer, O Queen of heaven and earth,  
Grant us your endless mercy and protection  
And defend from all evil and distress those who  
fervently cry out to you: //  
Rejoice, O Lady, our merciful defender before God!

## **Ikos 1**

The ranks of angels serve you with great joy, O Lady!  
They honor you, who bore the Creator of all things,  
visible and invisible, in the embrace of your arms.  
Now the Angels themselves bear this, your holy Icon,  
throughout the world, so that we on earth may be glo-  
riously amazed at the appearance of your holy Image.  
Together with them, we sing:

Rejoice, for you are higher than all the Heavenly Powers.  
Rejoice, for you precede all the ranks of Angels.  
Rejoice, for you are more honorable than the Cherubim.  
Rejoice, for you are more glorious than the Seraphim.  
Rejoice, O Joy of the Angels.  
Rejoice, O Praise of the heavenly hosts.  
Rejoice, O Lady whom the angelic powers glorify.  
Rejoice, for before you the Archangels bend their knees.

Rejoice, O Exaltation of the Cherubim.  
Rejoice, for the powers of Heaven ceaselessly honor you.  
Rejoice, for your Image is beloved by the angelic host.  
Rejoice, for your visible Image is invisibly borne by  
invisible hosts of angels. //  
Rejoice, O Lady, our merciful defender before God!

## Kontakion 2

The fisherman on Lake Ladoga saw the icon of you and  
your pre-eternal Son shining brightly as the midday  
sun, hovering above the waves by an invisible power.  
These same fishermen called to Him Who called the  
fishers of men to draw the world into the net of  
salvation: *Alleluia!*

## Ikos 2

Having been filled with wisdom, the people pondered  
the incomprehensible wonder of the appearance of  
your holy icon. They understood your most-honored  
icon, so greatly revered in Constantinople, was now  
given as an inheritance to the people of the Russian  
lands. Therefore, with grateful thanks for your mercy,  
we sing to you:

Rejoice, O Mother of the True Life.  
Rejoice, for by your obedience the disobedience of Eve  
was annulled.  
Rejoice, for you have opened the gates of Paradise.  
Rejoice, for you brought into the world the One Who  
crushes the head of the serpent.  
Rejoice, O Ark that carried the Salvation of the world.  
Rejoice, O Ark that saves the world from the deluge of  
our sins.  
Rejoice, O Ladder, upon which God has descended to  
the earth.

Rejoice, O Ladder, through which we ascend to Heaven.  
Rejoice, for you drown evil thoughts like Pharaoh in the  
sea.  
Rejoice, O Burning Bush not consumed by the Flame of  
divinity that dwells in you.  
Rejoice, O Tablet inscribed with the Covenant of the  
Law of God.  
Rejoice, O Stone that pours forth the Water of Life for a  
thirsty people. //  
Rejoice, O Lady, our merciful defender before God!

## Kontakion 3

The might and power of the Most High descended upon  
the Tikhvin lands when this Icon of the most pure  
Mother of God appeared and blessed them as her  
earthly abode. Therefore, the name of our Lady is  
exalted in many churches and temples, to the glory of  
the One God in three Persons, to Whom we sing:  
*Alleluia!*

## Ikos 3

Since it was your good will that the people of Tikhvin  
should be blessed by your presence and ceaselessly  
honor your holy Protection; you often appeared to  
them in this, your holy icon. You revealed to them the  
place God chose as your earthly habitation. Therefore,  
with wonder in our hearts, we sing to you:

Rejoice, O Tabernacle wherein God dwelt in the flesh.  
Rejoice, O Holy of Holies into which only the Eternal  
High Priest can enter.  
Rejoice, O Ark of the Covenant, filled with the Spirit  
that bore the Giver of the Law.  
Rejoice, O Candlestand aflame with the fire of Divinity.  
Rejoice, O Vessel that carried Christ, the Manna of Life.

Rejoice, O Banquet Feast, feeding us with the Bread of Life.  
Rejoice, O Censer, radiant with the warmth of God, filling the world with sweet smelling incense.  
Rejoice, O Stem, from which Christ the Flower blossomed.  
Rejoice, O Pillar of Fire which leads us to the Promised Land.  
Rejoice, O Pillar of Cloud that hides us from all visible and invisible enemies.  
Rejoice, O Promised Land.  
Rejoice, O Fleece upon which Christ descended as dew from the heavens. //  
Rejoice, O Lady, our merciful defender before God!

#### **Kontakion 4**

Desiring to calm the storm of doubt and sorrow, the pious people cried to the Lord: "Reveal to us the divine gift that you bestowed in your loving kindness upon our suffering land. Do not keep this treasure hidden from us, for through it we hope to heal our spiritual poverty; to change our sorrow into joy, and to wipe away our tears." And having received the answer to their prayers the faithful cried: *Alleluia!*

#### **Ikos 4**

Archbishop Alexis heard the joyous news from his flock that the Mother of the First Shepherd had found a new home among the meadows of the Tikhvin lands. He, together with the pastors, built and consecrated a new temple in honor of her appearance, wherein they ceaselessly glorify the Theotokos and sing:

Rejoice, O Daughter who inclined her ear to the voice of the Heavenly Father.

Rejoice, for the sorrow of Eve was assuaged by the birth of your Son.  
Rejoice, O Bride, desired for your goodness by the King of Heaven.  
Rejoice, O Queen who stands at the right hand of the King.  
Rejoice, for you are clothed with golden robes and adorned with inner glory.  
Rejoice, for you lead the faithful into the mansions of the Heavenly Kingdom.  
Rejoice, O Apple whose fragrance fills the whole world.  
Rejoice, O Blossom of Purity that sparkles with brilliance.  
Rejoice, O Sweet-smelling Chrism, whose streams cover the earth.  
Rejoice, O Royal Porphyry that brought forth God in the flesh from your virginal womb.  
Rejoice, O Living Fountain from which springs the Water of Life.  
Rejoice, O Vineyard of the Lord in which the Vine of Divinity has blossomed. //  
Rejoice, O Lady, our merciful defender before God!

#### **Kontakion 5**

Your holy icon has appeared as a brightly shining star, O Theotokos. It sheds its rays on all the land, illuminating those in darkness with the light of divinity. It enlightens those who sorrow with the joy of life. And it guides the lost to follow the commandments of your Son and God. Therefore, with thankfulness we sing to Him: *Alleluia!*

## Ikos 5

Beholding you, O Lady, bearing a royal staff, shining with inexpressible light, and conversing with a saintly hierarch, the pious George perceived the fragrance of your grace. He recognized your material appearance, and that of Saint Nicholas, as he stood before you. Therefore with trembling he cried out to you:

Rejoice, O Abode that the Wisdom of God fashioned as His dwelling place.

Rejoice, O Virgin who gave birth to Emmanuel.

Rejoice, O Staff of Jesse, from which Christ God, the Flower, blossomed.

Rejoice, O Unwedded Bride who conceived the Son by the descent of the Spirit.

Rejoice, O Scroll upon which the Word Himself was inscribed by the hand of the Father.

Rejoice, O Treasury of Virginitly, entrusted for safekeeping to Joseph.

Rejoice, O Vessel that accepted the burning coal of divinity in your womb.

Rejoice, O Exalted Throne upon which Christ descended in the flesh.

Rejoice, O Billowing Cloud upon which the King of Glory enters.

Rejoice, O Sealed Chamber from which Christ alone came forth.

Rejoice, O Mount unhewn from which the Cornerstone was fashioned.

Rejoice, O Fiery Furnace, filled with dew that was not consumed by the Fire of Divinity. //

Rejoice, O Lady, our merciful defender before God!

## Kontakion 6

The honorable and blessed George was the herald of your physical appearance and of your merciful loving-kindness toward the northern land of Tikhvin. He announced your will to the people, O Lady, that they might behold your wonders and glorify you by singing to God: *Alleluia!*

## Ikos 6

By revealing the light of the knowledge of God through the revelation of your wonder-working image, O Theotokos, you have kindled a beacon that calls to all who seek the angelic life. Now the choirs of monastics ceaselessly sing to you:

Rejoice, O Blossom that flowered in the fullness of time.

Rejoice, for as a child you dedicated your life to God.

Rejoice, for you were raised in the Holy Temple of God.

Rejoice, for you were chosen as the Bride of God.

Rejoice, for adorning yourself with the jewels of virtue.

Rejoice, O light-bearing Chamber, prepared for the King.

Rejoice, for you were purified by God.

Rejoice, for you were chosen before all ages as the fountain of our salvation.

Rejoice, O Bride of the Master Builder of the Universe, entrusted to care for a carpenter on earth.

Rejoice, for you exalted the humility of lowly Nazareth.

Rejoice, O Praise of the powers on high.

Rejoice, O Glory of those born on earth. //

Rejoice, O Lady, our merciful defender before God!

## Kontakion 7

You showed the way to the venerable Martyrius and Cyrill, who sought a place of solitude in which to labor in the monastic life and become pleasing unto God. As a pillar of fire, you led them to the place chosen for their ascetic labors. As the blessed Directress showed them their way, they sang to God: *Alleluia!*

## Ikos 7

Your blessed icon of Tikhvin, O Most-Holy Theotokos, is a new fountain of miracles in the northern lands. Through it, countless healing streams flow forth, healing those who come to you with faith. The blind receive their sight. The mute receive their speech. The deaf receive their hearing. The lame receive use of their limbs. And the possessed are freed from the bonds of demons. Therefore with thankfulness we cry to you:

Rejoice, for the Will of the Father has descended on you.  
Rejoice, for the Holy Spirit has spread His Grace on you.  
Rejoice, for the Son of God, the Savior of the world, took flesh from you.  
Rejoice, O Repository of the ineffable Mysteries of God.  
Rejoice, for the Angel announced the glad tidings to you.  
Rejoice, for the angelic salutation made the entire world joyful.  
Rejoice, for the Lord is with you.  
Rejoice, for through you the human race draws near to God.  
Rejoice, for you are blessed among women.  
Rejoice, for all women are blessed through you.  
Rejoice, for in giving birth you remained a virgin.  
Rejoice, O Model of Chastity and Glory of Virginity. //  
Rejoice, O Lady, our merciful defender before God!

## Kontakion 8

Wondrous is the defense of your monastery from those who had threatened to destroy your earthly abode. O Lady, the glorious appearance of your icon has amazed the heavenly powers and filled those on earth with awe, for it radiates the grace of Christ our God, Who was born of you. Therefore we cry aloud to God: *Alleluia!*

## Ikos 8

Though abiding in the heavens, you have not abandoned us on earth, O Lady. Your most honorable image protected your monastery. As you have said, "When the enemy comes against you, take my image in procession around the walls, and you shall see the Mercy of God." Having been delivered from our enemies, we cry out to you:

Rejoice, O Mother of your Lord and Creator.  
Rejoice, for the infant Forerunner rejoiced with you while he remained in Elizabeth's womb.  
Rejoice, for your humility has exalted you.  
Rejoice, for all generations call you Blessed.  
Rejoice, for the heavens rejoice and the earth is glad at the birth of your Son.  
Rejoice, for you received the glory of angels, the praise of the shepherds, and the honor of the Magi.  
Rejoice, for you nourished the Nourisher of all with the milk of your grace.  
Rejoice, for you clothed the One Who clothes Himself with light in swaddling clothes.  
Rejoice, for you carried in your arms the One Who carries the whole world in the palm of His hand.  
Rejoice, for you brought to the temple the Source of all Holiness.  
Rejoice, for you were blessed by Simeon.

Rejoice, for you were magnified by the Prophetess  
Anna//  
Rejoice, O Lady, our merciful defender before God!

### **Kontakion 9**

When the monastery founded in honor of your blessed appearance was under attack and near destruction because of our wretched sins, you revealed yourself as Intercessor for the Christian people. You delivered us from our foes who, like filthy animals, were burrowing in the ground. Truly you are most pure and more honorable than the angelic hosts, O Lady! Therefore we cry out to God: *Alleluia!*

### **Ikos 9**

O Lady, the heralds of the ages are unable to praise the multitude of your miracles or to praise worthily your role in the plan for our salvation. By wise instruction and discerning reprimand, you guide us on the path of salvation. Seeing your strong defense of your habitation from the visible enemy and the righteous fire with which you chastised the unseen foe, you taught us that purity, chastity and heartfelt prayer are more pleasing to you than praises from our unworthy lips. Therefore we cry out to You:

Rejoice, for you sanctified Egypt by seeking refuge in her.  
Rejoice, for you glorified Galilee by finding shelter there.  
Rejoice, for you honored Jerusalem by searching for your beloved Son.  
Rejoice, for you found Him in the House of His Father.  
Rejoice, for you kept all things concerning Him secret in your heart.  
Rejoice, for you were the first to know Him as your God.  
Rejoice, for you dedicated your earthly life to Him.

Rejoice, for you suffered passion in His Passion.  
Rejoice, for you adopted the Apostle John and us the faithful while standing at the Cross of your Son.  
Rejoice, for shedding forth your maternal love on us through His Redeeming Blood.  
Rejoice, for first discerning the Divine Mystery of His Resurrection.  
Rejoice, for joyously witnessing His Ascension into Heaven. //  
Rejoice, O Lady, our merciful defender before God!

### **Kontakion 10**

Your wonderworking icons have visited many cities, monasteries and Orthodox lands, saving many people from the sorrows and illnesses assailing them. You confirmed their faith in your all-powerful intercession, O Lady. Beholding your compassion and love, the faithful lovingly cry: *Alleluia!*

### **Ikos 10**

You were a fortress and a shield, O Lady, for you protected the Orthodox soldiers who stood beneath the standard bearing your image against the arrows of the invading army of twenty nations. Likewise, be for us a wall and a fortress against the assaults of all visible and invisible enemies. Seeking protection before this, your holy icon, we sing to you with faith and love:

Rejoice, O Comfort of the faithful at the Ascension of your Son.  
Rejoice, O Instructor and Teacher of the holy apostles.  
Rejoice, for the apostles rejoiced when they heard of your departure to God.  
Rejoice, for you recalled them to your burial by appearing in a cloud.

Rejoice, for your Son took you from earth in the palm of His hand.  
Rejoice, for the Angelic powers escorted you to Heaven.  
Rejoice, for thus the earthly Heaven was brought to Paradise.  
Rejoice, O Throne of the Lord, brought from earth to the Heavenly Kingdom.  
Rejoice, for the very air was blessed by your passing.  
Rejoice, for the apostle Thomas confirmed your body's translation to Heaven.  
Rejoice, for you kept your word to the apostle to be his Defender.  
Rejoice, for you granted him peace at the request of your Son and God. //  
Rejoice, O Lady, our merciful defender before God!

### **Kontakion 11**

As we praise the many miracles flowing from your holy and wonderworking icon, all evil is quickly defeated. For you are our speedy helper in times of calamity and sorrow. You are the healer of every infirmity and disease. You are our deliverance from the assaults and torments of demons. Therefore, in every place and at all times, we call to you in faith and sing to God: *Alleluia!*

### **Ikos 11**

O Theotokos, we see your holy icon as a brightly burning candle, ablaze with the light of your grace. It illumines all who come before you, seeking the salvation of their souls. Therefore with love we cry to You:

Rejoice, for you kept your promise to save and protect all who come to you.  
Rejoice, for you glorify those who glorify you.

Rejoice, for you bring the prayers of the faithful before your Son and God.  
Rejoice, for you ceaselessly pray before His Glorious Throne for the salvation of all.  
Rejoice, for bestowing your grace upon your holy icons.  
Rejoice, for illuminating the entire universe with the rays of your grace.  
Rejoice, for you are more honorable than the Cherubim and more glorious, beyond compare, than the Seraphim.  
Rejoice, for you are greater in glory than all Creation.  
Rejoice, O Queen of Heaven and earth.  
Rejoice, for great is the power of your prayer before your Son and God.  
Rejoice, O Speedy Defender of the Christian people.  
Rejoice, for you are the firm hope of the faithful. //  
Rejoice, O Lady, our merciful defender before God!

### **Kontakion 12**

Desiring to bestow on us a new revelation of your grace, O Lady, you revealed your holy icon as a new fountain of miracles. Therefore, through you the faithful find wisdom, laborers find safe refuge; and the sorrowful find a calm haven. Glorifying God, Who grants us all things, we sing: *Alleluia!*

### **Ikos 12**

Singing the praises of the miracles and many bounties you have richly given us, we gratefully fall down before your most holy image, O Lady. With love and in the fear of God we fervently entreat you: Firmly establish us on the path of salvation. Make us worthy of your merciful intercessions. Always be our steadfast Protectress and constant Advocate, for with faith and love we sing:



Rejoice, O Protector and Defender of the faithful.  
Rejoice, O Teacher and Enlightener of the unfaithful.  
Rejoice, O Hope and Sure Reliance of the hopeless.  
Rejoice, O Salvation of the fallen.  
Rejoice, O Consolation of those in sorrow.  
Rejoice, O Restoration of those with infirmities.  
Rejoice, O Protection of widows and orphans.  
Rejoice, O Refuge of the humble and oppressed.  
Rejoice, O Strength of kings and rulers.  
Rejoice, O Glory and Honor of hierarchs.  
Rejoice, O Joy of all monastics.  
Rejoice, O Gladness of the righteous. //  
Rejoice, O Lady, our merciful defender before God!

### Kontakion 13

O All-praised Mother, who gave birth to the most holy Word! You are our Champion and Protectress against every enemy, both visible and invisible. You are the one who delivers us from every tribulation and sorrow! Preserve us from all sins and temptations. In the future life be our Mediator and Defender as we stand before the judgment seat of your Son and our God. Deliver us from eternal condemnation so that, having gained salvation, we may join the choirs of angels in singing to God: *Alleluia!*

*Kontakion 13 is sung three times, Ikos 1 and Kontakion 1 are then repeated in the order below:*

### Ikos 1

The ranks of angels serve you with great joy, O Lady! They honor you, who bore the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, in the embrace of your arms. Now the Angels themselves bear this, your holy Icon, throughout the world, so that we on earth may be gloriously amazed at the appearance of your holy Image. Together with them, we sing:

Rejoice, for you are higher than all the Heavenly Powers.  
Rejoice, for you precede all the ranks of Angels.  
Rejoice, for you are more honorable than the Cherubim.  
Rejoice, for you are more glorious than the Seraphim.  
Rejoice, O Joy of the Angels.  
Rejoice, O Praise of the heavenly hosts.  
Rejoice, O Lady whom the angelic powers glorify.  
Rejoice, for before you the Archangels bend their knees.  
Rejoice, O Exaltation of the Cherubim.  
Rejoice, for the powers of Heaven ceaselessly honor you.  
Rejoice, for your Image is beloved by the angelic host.  
Rejoice, for your visible Image is invisibly borne by  
invisible hosts of angels. //  
Rejoice, O Lady, our merciful defender before God!

### Kontakion 1 (Tone 8)

O Victorious Leader, Lady Theotokos  
We offer grateful thanks to you for revealing to us your  
Wonderworking Icon  
For those who come before you are always delivered  
from visible and invisible enemies.  
Therefore, as a merciful Mother, accept our humble  
prayer, O Queen of heaven and earth,  
Grant us your endless mercy and protection  
And defend from all evil and distress those who  
fervently cry out to you: //  
Rejoice, O Lady, our merciful defender before God!

*Prayers to the most holy Theotokos are read before her  
wonderworking Tikhvin Icon*

## First Prayer

O most holy Virgin Mother of the Lord of all, Queen of Heaven and earth, our invincible Defender and the Protectress of our lands! Accept from us, your sinful and unworthy servants, hymns of praise and thanksgiving. Bring our prayers before the Throne of God, your Son, that He may be merciful toward our transgressions and show forth His compassion upon us who venerate your holy and wonderworking image. For, since He grants all things to you, may we be made worthy of His mercy by your intercession. Therefore, we run to you, our certain and unfailing Defender! Hear our prayers as we fall down before you! Cover us with your all-powerful protection. Beseech your Son and God to make our pastors zealous and vigilant for our souls. Grant strength and wisdom to our rulers. Enable our judges to discern justice and truth. Give our instructors wisdom and humility. Enable our families to live in love and accord. Inspire our children to learn honor and obedience. Guide the lowly and downtrodden in finding mercy. Teach our oppressors the fear of God. Comfort those in sorrow. Help us to discern the spirit of wisdom and truth, of charity and humility, of purity and righteousness. O most pure Lady! Have pity on us, your weak and feeble children. Gather the scattered sheep! Establish the lost on the path of salvation! Bring comfort to our aged, wisdom to our youth, and nourishment to our infants. Look down with mercy upon us as we entreat your intercession. Bring us out of the gloominess of our sins, that our hearts may be illumined with the rays of salvation. Show your compassion on us in this temporal life. And remain with us when we stand before the judgment seat of your Son in the presence of those who with faith and repentance departed this life before us and who now stand with the angels and

saints in life everlasting. For you, O Lady, are the Joy of those in Heaven and the Hope of us on earth. You are the Defender and Consolation of those who come to you in faith. We fervently beseech you, O all-powerful Helper and Protector, and to you we commend ourselves, and each other, and all our life, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

## Second Prayer

We thank you, O most gracious, all-pure, and ever-blessed Virgin Lady, Mother of Christ our God, for the many bounties you shower upon the human race, and especially upon the Christian people. And we also thank you for bestowing upon us, your unworthy servants, the great and unfathomable mercy of the miraculous appearance of your holy Icon for the illumination and sanctification of our lands. Therefore, we sinners come before you and, with fear and joy, tearfully pray: O most holy Virgin and Sovereign Lady Theotokos! Have mercy on us, your people! Deliver us from our adversaries, and grant us victory over our enemies! Protect every Christian city and land and this holy temple from the onslaught of evil. Grant to all who pray before your holy icon all that is beneficial to their souls. For you are truly most blessed, together with your Son and God Who was born of you, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

*The Troparion, Kontakion and Magnification are sung in order*

## **Troparion to the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God (Tone 4)**

Today, your icon appears in the sky like the eternal sun,  
O Theotokos.

Enlightening the world with rays of mercy.

Accepting the heavenly gift from above, this land honors  
you as the Mother of God.

We praise Christ our Lord Who was born of you.

Pray to Him, O Sovereign Queen and Virgin,

That all Christian cities and lands be guarded in safety,  
//

And that He will save those who venerate His divine, and  
your holy, image, O unwedded Bride.

*Glory... now and ever.... Amen.*

## **Kontakion to the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God (Tone 8)**

O people! Let us run to the Virgin Queen and Mother,  
giving thanks to Christ God.

Let us fall before her miraculous icon, crying out:

"O ever-virgin Mary, you visited this land through the  
wondrous appearance of your precious image.

Save us, your people, and show us the heavenly life, //

For to you we faithfully cry: "Rejoice, O Virgin, the  
salvation of the world!"

## **Magnification to the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God**

It is truly meet / to magnify you, / O Theotokos, /  
more honorable than the Cherubim // and more  
glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim.

## The History of the Wonderworking Icon of Our Lady of Tikhvin



According to ancient tradition, the wonderworking icon of Our Lady of Tikhvin is one of several painted by Saint Luke the Evangelist. The icon was taken from Jerusalem to Constantinople in the fifth century, where it was enshrined in the Church of Blachernae, which was built especially for this purpose.

In 1383, seventy years before the seizure and fall of Constantinople at the hands of the Turks, fishermen on Lake Ladoga in the principality of Novgorod the Great witnessed the icon miraculously hovering over the lake's waters amidst a radiant light. According to an early 16th-century Russian manuscript, *"The Tale of Miracles of the Icon of the Tikhvin Mother of God,"* the Theotokos herself decided that her image should leave Constantinople, perhaps in anticipation of the impending fall of the Byzantine Empire. Shortly after its miraculous appearance, the icon was discovered in several neighboring towns, including the village of Motchenitsy on the bank of the Tikhvinka River, before it finally appeared near the town of Tikhvin. A wooden church dedicated to the Dormition of the Theotokos was built on the site of the icon's final resting place. Miraculously, the icon survived a number of fires.

In the early 16th century, through the zeal of Great Prince Vasilij Ivanovich, a stone church was built to replace the original wooden structure. In 1560, by order

of Tsar Ivan the Terrible, a men's monastery was established near the church and enclosed with a stone wall.

In 1613-1614, the Swedish army, having seized Novgorod, made several attempts to destroy the monastery. The countless prayers offered to the Theotokos before the icon were heard, and the monastery was spared. On one occasion, after monks had been alerted to the approaching Swedish army, they decided to flee and to take the icon with them. But the monks soon discovered that they could not remove the icon from its shrine. Seeing this as a sign of the Theotokos' protection, the monks decided not to abandon the monastery, begging the Theotokos to spare them and their beloved spiritual home. To their amazement, a large Muscovite army appeared to defend the monastery. When the Swedes encountered the army, they retreated immediately. Word of this miracle spread rapidly, and imperial emissaries soon visited the monastery. Accompanied by a copy of the wonderworking icon, they set off for the village of Stolbovo, 33 miles from Tikhvin, where they concluded a peace treaty with the Swedes on February 10, 1617. Afterwards, the copy of the icon was taken to Moscow and enshrined in the Kremlin's Dormition Cathedral. Later, the same icon was placed in the Cathedral of the Holy Wisdom in Novgorod at the request of the city's faithful, who also found themselves under attack by the Swedes. Once again, through the intercession of the Theotokos, the city was spared.

Over the centuries, the icon's fame spread far and wide. Copies of the wonderworking icon began to adorn churches throughout the land. Some of these copies also proved to be sources of miracles, and it was not uncommon to find the faithful praying before the icon to seek healing for children who were ill. No fewer than 24 processions with the icon were celebrated each year at the

Tikhvin Monastery, where the icon was enshrined. A decorative cover, or "riza," adorned the icon, exposing only the faces and hands of the Holy Virgin and Christ child. Numerous precious stones studded the riza, and many of the faithful, desiring to express thanksgiving for prayers answered through the Theotokos' intercession, affixed precious jewelry to the riza.

Most miraculous is the fact that the icon was preserved from destruction or sale after the Russian Revolution, which ushered in a 74-year persecution of the Church. During the 1920s, the communist government demanded that the Russian Orthodox Church turn over countless icons and other precious liturgical items, which through the nationalization of private property were considered the property of "the people." Many of these sacred items were sold, allegedly to raise money to feed the Russian and Ukrainian population which was afflicted by famine.

During the World War II German occupation, the Nazis removed the icon from the Tikhvin Monastery, from where it was taken to Pskov and subsequently to Riga, Latvia. When the city was evacuated, Bishop John [Garklavs] of Riga, in whose care the icon was placed, took the icon to Bavaria, where it was venerated by Orthodox faithful who had been displaced because of the war. While Soviet agents had spotted the icon, Bishop John was permitted to take the icon to the United States in 1949, under the pretext that the icon in his care was a reproduction, the work of a simple monk, and that it was of little historic or monetary value. Shortly after his arrival in the United States, Bishop John, who was later elevated to the rank of Archbishop, was elected to oversee the Diocese of Chicago, and the icon was regularly displayed and venerated in Chicago's Holy Trinity Cathedral. Bishop John frequently took the icon on pil-

grimage to various places throughout the United States and Canada. After his retirement in the late 1970s and death on Palm Sunday in 1982, Archpriest Sergei Garklavs, Bishop John's adopted son, became the caretaker of the icon. In 2003, over a decade after the fall of communism and the resurrection of the Russian Orthodox Church, the decision was made to return the precious icon to its original home.

The icon began its year-long journey to Russia at the 99th annual Pilgrimage to Saint Tikhon Monastery, South Canaan, Pennsylvania, May 23-26, 2003. His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, together with members of the Holy Synod of Bishops and guest hierarchs, greeted the icon, which was available for veneration by the faithful.

The icon follows the "Odigitria" model and is similar in style to the ancient icon of Our Lady of Iberia. It differs in that the Christ child's legs are crossed, while the sole of His foot is turned to the viewer. Several historic sources note that several other Odigitria icons of the Theotokos had been brought to Russia in the 1380s, during the rule of the saintly prince Dmitri Donskoy.

-- *Archpriest John Matusiak*



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