

The Ascension of Our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ

The Acts of the Apostles records the Ascension of Christ in a very simple narrative. "He was lifted up before their eyes in a cloud which took him from their sight" (1:9). Our Church celebrates this event of Christ's glorification. It celebrates all that Christ did and accomplished for us.

The kontakion of the feast summarizes Christ's work: When you had fulfilled the plan of salvation for us and united the earthly with the heavenly, you were taken up in glory, O Christ our God. Never parting from us but remaining constantly, you proclaimed to those who love you: I am with you and no one can be against you.

The icon celebrates the meaning of this event for the church and for the world. The Ascension took place on the Mount of Olives, and thus the mountainous background of the panel. Christ ascends gloriously surrounded by a circular nimbus composed of various bands of color, symbolizing the heavens. This nimbus itself is supported by angels whose presence indicates the glory and divinity of Christ. It recalls the Old Testament image of God enthroned upon the Cherubim.

In the foreground of the icon stands the Mother of God surrounded by two groups of Apostles. Of prime importance is her position - directly below Christ. This entire grouping, the Mother of God and the Apostles, expresses the establishment and role of the church.

The church witnesses this event. The Mother of God who carried Christ within herself as the temple of the incarnate Son of God, now stands here and personifies the church - the body of Christ, whose head is the ascending savior.

Her hands uplifted in faith and prayer express the role of the church, ceaselessly interceding for the salvation of the world. The movement of this whole group, their gestures, the focus of their eyes and postures, all are directed upward toward the Source of the life of the church, its head who abides in heaven.

"He led them out near Bethany, and with hands upraised, blessed them. As He blessed, He left them, and was taken up to heaven. They fell down to do Him reverence, then returned to Jerusalem filled with joy. There they were to be found in the temple constantly, speaking the praises of God" (Lk 24:50-53).

Our worship of the Father is one with Christ. Through the church we are joined with Christ, our hope of eternal glory.

TROPARION

You were taken up in glory, O Christ our God; you gladdened the disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit; by blessing them you confirmed that you are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the World.