SAINT SERGIUS SCHOOL

2026–2027 · YEAR 1

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LESSON 4

Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos

Date: October 11, 2026

Term: I — Entering the Life of the Church

Book Study: The Law of God — Archpriest Seraphim Slobodskoy

Lesson Focus: Students will learn why the Orthodox Church celebrates the Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos, what her protecting veil represents, and what Christians mean when we ask the Mother of God to pray for us.



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Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos

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Introduction

1. What does it mean to protect someone?
2. Who do you ask to pray for you when you need help?
3. Have you ever prayed for another person?
4. What do you already know about the Mother of God?
5. What do you think intercession means?

What Is the Protection of the Theotokos?

The Orthodox Church celebrates the Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos on October 1/14. The feast is often called the Pokrov, a word connected with covering or protection.

The feast remembers a vision at the Church of Blachernae in Constantinople. Many people were gathered for prayer. Among them were St. Andrew the Fool-for-Christ and his disciple Epiphanius.

During the service, St. Andrew saw the Most Holy Theotokos praying for the people. Epiphanius saw the vision too.

The Protecting Veil

They saw the Mother of God praying before Christ for the faithful gathered in the church. Then she extended her veil over the people as a sign of her prayerful protection.

What Does the Veil Mean?

The veil helps us understand something we normally cannot see: the loving prayers of the Mother of God for Christ's Church.

The veil is not magic. The Theotokos does not act separately from God or possess power apart from Him. She prays to her Son, Jesus Christ, for His people.

Important Point

The protection of the Theotokos is always centred on Christ. We ask her to pray for us because she belongs to Christ and directs us toward Him.

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What Is Intercession?

Intercession means praying to God for another person.

We may ask our parents, priest, friends, or people in our parish to pray for us. We also ask the saints to pray for us because the Church is one family in Christ.

When we ask the Mother of God to intercede for us, we are asking: “Most Holy Theotokos, pray to God for us.”

We do not worship the Theotokos. Worship belongs to God alone. We honour her because she is the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ and because of her unique place in God's plan of salvation.

Mary Points Us to Christ

At the Wedding at Cana, Mary noticed a need and brought it to Jesus. Then she told the servants:

“Whatever He says to you, do it.”
— John 2:5 NKJV

Memory Verse

“Whatever He says to you, do it.”
— John 2:5 NKJV

Today We Learned

The Feast of the Protection remembers the Mother of God praying for Christ's Church. Her protecting veil is a sign of her intercession. Orthodox Christians honour the Theotokos and ask her to pray for us, but worship belongs to God alone. Like Mary at Cana, she always directs us toward Jesus Christ.

Key Vocabulary

Theotokos — Mother of God.
Protection / Pokrov — The feast remembering her prayerful protection.
Intercession — Praying to God for another person.
Veil — A visible sign of her prayers for the Church.
Fool-for-Christ — A Christian who accepts an unusual life of deep humility for Christ.



COURSE WORK

Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos

Discussion Questions

1. Where were the people gathered when St. Andrew saw the Mother of God?

2. Who saw the Theotokos praying in the church?

3. What did the Mother of God extend over the faithful?

4. What does the protecting veil represent?

5. What does intercession mean?

6. When we ask the Theotokos to pray for us, to whom is she praying?

7. What did Mary do when the people needed help at the Wedding at Cana?

8. What did Mary tell the servants?

9. Why do Orthodox Christians honour the Mother of God without worshipping her?

10. Who is one person, or what is one need, that you can remember in prayer this week?

ACTIVITY

Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos

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Activity — Under Her Protection
Pray · Trust · Help

The Feast of the Protection reminds us that the Mother of God prays for Christ's Church. We can also pray for others, bring our needs to God, and care for people around us.

I CAN PRAY

One person I can remember in prayer this week is:

_____

I CAN TRUST GOD

One worry, difficulty, or need I can bring to God in prayer is:

_____

I CAN HELP

One way I can care for someone who needs help is:

_____

Most Holy Theotokos, pray to God for us.

TEACHER'S REFERENCE

Delivery & Differentiation

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Lesson Purpose: Students learn why the Orthodox Church celebrates the Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos and understand the protecting veil as a sign of the Mother of God's intercession for Christ's Church.

Core Teaching: The Theotokos prays for Christ's Church and always directs us toward her Son. The Feast of the Protection teaches Christians to ask for her intercession while placing their trust in God.

Early Learner Emphasis: Mary is the Mother of Jesus. She loves Christ, prays for us, and the veil reminds us of her prayers and care. We can also pray for others.

Elementary Emphasis: Introduce Protection/Pokrov, St. Andrew and Epiphanius, the protecting veil, intercession, Cana, and the difference between honouring the Theotokos and worshipping God.

Older Student Extension: Discuss intercessory prayer, the communion of saints, veneration and worship, and why Orthodox devotion to the Theotokos remains Christ-centred.

Theological Safeguard: Do not describe the protecting veil as a magical object or imply that the Theotokos possesses saving or protecting power independently of God. The feast presents the Mother of God at prayer. Worship belongs to the Holy Trinity alone.

Main Point to Remember
"The Theotokos prays for Christ's Church and always leads us toward her Son."

Liturgical-Language Note
If students know "Most Holy Theotokos, save us," explain that save can mean help, rescue, or deliver through prayer. The Theotokos does not replace Christ as Saviour.

Icon Guidance
Use A01 as the principal identifying icon. Reserve A02 for enlarged presentation study.

Activity Guidance
A. Early Learners: Draw or dictate one person to pray for or one way to help.
B. Elementary: Complete all three prompts and choose one action for the week.
C. Older Students: Explain how prayer for someone can lead to loving action.

TEACHER'S REFERENCE

Answer Key & Resource Control

Discussion Questions — Teacher Answer Key

1. Where were the people gathered?
Answer: In the Church of Blachernae in Constantinople.

2. Who saw the Theotokos praying?
Answer: St. Andrew the Fool-for-Christ and his disciple Epiphanius.

3. What did she extend over the faithful?
Answer: Her protecting veil.

4. What does the veil represent?
Answer: Her prayers and intercession for Christ's Church.

5. What does intercession mean?
Answer: Praying to God for another person.

6. To whom is the Theotokos praying?
Answer: To God; she intercedes before her Son, Jesus Christ.

7. What did Mary do at Cana?
Answer: She noticed the need and brought it to Jesus.

8. What did Mary tell the servants?
Answer: "Whatever He says to you, do it." — John 2:5 NKJV

9. Why do Orthodox Christians honour the Mother of God without worshipping her?
Answer: We honour her because she is the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ and has a unique place in God's plan of salvation. Worship belongs to God alone.

10. Who or what can you remember in prayer this week?
Answer: Answers vary. Encourage a specific person or genuine need and, where appropriate, one practical act of care.

The Law of God
Supporting Reading: Part IV, Chapter 6, feast-calendar section listing the Protection of the Mother of God (PDF p. 923 / book p. 496); Part I, Chapter 13, Icons (PDF pp. 91–110 / book pp. 37–47).

Scripture: John 2:1–5; Memory Verse: John 2:5 NKJV.

Image/icon Provenance: See lesson Sources & Rights record.
A01 — 1399 Novgorod Pokrov icon — primary.
A02 — Novgorod school, early 15th c. — presentation study.
A03 — Russian, 16th c., MET — approved reserve.

Optional Early Learner Resource: Protection/Pokrov colouring resource — external-link delivery only.