

THE ORTHODOX WEEKLY BULETIN VESTAL, CLIFFWOOD, NEW JERSEY

BELOVED ICON: THE KAZAN MOTHER OF GOD

The Holy Virgin occupies a place of pre-eminence among the vast array of Saints in the Church. She is called “**Theotokos**,” a Greek term that has come to be used throughout the Church. The word means *Birthgiver* or *Mother of God*, and its use is essential for the proper understanding of the Person of Christ.

A sign of this exalted esteem of the Birthgiver of God is the great number of beloved icons that are devoted to Mother and Child, the Christ. Among these is the one called ‘**The Kazan Mother of God.**’

It first came to note in the 16 century, when a young maiden was directed in a dream to inform Church authorities of the location of a special icon, following a disastrous fire in the area. The girl proceeded to unearth the icon, which was miraculously unharmed. It was then carried in solemn procession to a cathedral. The icon was highly venerated, and believed to cause a number of healing miracles of those who were ill. This design has been popular model for iconographers ever since.

The icon is unique in a number of ways. The Mother of God is depicted to the shoulders only, and bears features that reflect both a tenderness and seriousness as she contemplates the Child she holds. The Infant-Christ appears upright, full-face, and rather serious, too. Only one hand is visible in the Kazan Icon: that of the Christchild, raised in blessing. One gets the sense that the Child has an indication of the suffering and passion that awaits Him.

For hundreds of years, then, this icon has inspired the faithful of the Church in their prayer and meditation. Let it do so for us, as well.