



# The Pochaiv Icon of the Mother of God

*Commemorated on August 5*

The Pochaiv Icon of the Mother of God is among the most sacred items in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Located at the Dormition Cathedral in Pochaiv, Ukraine, the icon is renowned in Slavic countries and is venerated by Orthodox Christians throughout the world. Christians of other confessions also come to venerate the wonderworking image of the Most

Holy Theotokos, together with the Orthodox. The wonderworking icon has been kept at the Pochaiv Lavra, an ancient bastion of Orthodoxy, for approximately 400 years. The miracles which have come from the holy icon are numerous and are testified to in the monastery books with the signatures of the faithful who have been delivered from unclean spirits, liberated from captivity, and sinners brought to their senses.

In 1721, Pochaiv was occupied by Uniates. Even in this difficult time for the Lavra, the monastery chronicles note 539 miracles from this glorified Orthodox icon. During the time of the Uniate rule in the second half of the eighteenth century, for example, the Uniate nobleman, Count Nicholas Pototski, became a benefactor of the Pochaiv Lavra. Having accused his coachman of overturning the carriage with frenzied horses, the count took out a pistol to shoot him. The coachman, turning towards Pochaiv Hill, reached his hands upwards and cried out: "Mother of God, manifest in the Pochaiv Icon, save me!" Several times Pototski tried to shoot the pistol, but the weapon misfired, and the coachman remained alive. Pototski ran to the wonderworking icon and devoted himself and all his property to the building-up of the monastery. From his wealth the Dormition Cathedral was built, as well as buildings for the brethren.

The return of Pochaiv to the bosom of Orthodoxy in 1832 was marked by the miraculous healing of the blind maiden, Anna Akimchukova, who had come on a pilgrimage together with her seventy-year-old grandmother from Kremenets-

Podolsk, 200 miles away. In memory of this event, the archbishop of Volhynia, as well as Lavra Archimandrite Innocent, established the reading of the Akathist on Saturdays before the wonderworking icon. During the time of Archimandrite Agathangelus, Archbishop of Volhynia, in the nineteenth century, a separate chapel was constructed in the galleries of the Holy Trinity Church in memory of the victory over the Tatars, which was dedicated on July 23, 1875.

The celebration in honour of the Pochaiv Icon of the Mother of God on July 23/ August 5 was established in memory of the deliverance of the Dormition Lavra Monastery from a Turkish siege on July 20-23, 1675. During the war with the Turks in the summer of 1675, Tartar regiments invaded Pochaiv, surrounding the monastery on three sides. The weak monastery walls and its stone buildings did not offer much defence against a siege. The abbot, Joseph Dobromirsky, urged the monks and laypeople to pray to their heavenly intercessors: the Most Holy Theotokos and St. Job of Pochaiv.

The monks and the laypeople prayed fervently, prostrating themselves before the wonderworking icon of the Mother of God and the reliquary with the relics of St. Job. At sunrise on the morning of July 23, as the Tatars were planning an assault on the monastery, the abbot ordered that an Akathist to the Theotokos be sung. At the opening words, "O Queen of the Heavenly Hosts," the Most Holy Theotokos suddenly appeared over the church, in "an unfurled gleaming-white omaphorion," with angels holding unsheathed swords. St. Job stood beside the Mother of God, bowing to Her and beseeching Her to defend the monastery.

Becoming terrified at the sight of the holy army, the Tatars shot arrows at the Most Holy Theotokos and St. Job. However, the arrows fell backwards and wounded those who shot them. In panic and without looking, the enemy trampled upon and killed each other. The defenders of the monastery pursued them and took many prisoners. Afterwards, some of the prisoners accepted Christianity and remained at the monastery.

The Pochaiv Icon is also commemorated on Friday of Bright Week and on September 21.

