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| Saint Nectarios Greek Orthodox Church and Shrine |

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The Holy Theotokos with her Son Jesus Christ

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| **Panagia** is an icon of the Holy Theotokos with her Son, Jesus Christ as child. This icon of the most Blessed Holy Theotokos is facing the viewer directly, with her hands in the orans position and with an image of Jesus Christ as a child in front of her chest. This symbolically represents Jesus within the womb of the Virgin Mary at the moment of the Incarnation. This type of icon is also called the Platytéra, by containing the Creator of the Universe in her womb, Mary has become Platytera ton ouranon (Πλατυτέρα τῶν Ουρανῶν), "more spacious than the Heavens". This type is also sometimes called the Virgin of the Sign or Our Lady of the Sign, a reference to Isaiah 7:14:***Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.***Such an image is often placed on the inside of the apse which rises directly over the altar of Orthodox churches. In contrast with standard religious mosaics which have gold backgrounds, the Platytera is often depicted on a dark blue background, sometimes dotted with gold stars: a reference to the Heavens.As with most Orthodox icons of Mary, the letters ΜΡ ΘΥ (short for ΜΗΤΗΡ ΘΕΟΥ, "[Mother of God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mother_of_God)") are placed on the upper left and right of the [halo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halo_%28religious_iconography%29) of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary.Iconographers of all times tried to show in the image of Theotokos as much beauty, gentleness, dignity, and grandeur as they could imagine. They sometimes paint her in grief, and sometimes sorrowful, but always filled with spiritual strength and wisdom.The Most Pure Lady is shown with her head covered with a veil, which drops to her shoulders, according to the tradition of Jewish women of that time. This veil or head covering is usually colored red to show her suffering and her acquired holiness. Under her veil, her clothing is blue, symbolizing the humanity of the Theotokos.There are three golden stars, one on the forehead and one on each shoulder of the Most Holy Theotokos. These stars are symbols of her virginity. She was a virgin before, during, and after the [**Nativity**](http://orthodoxwiki.org/Nativity) of Christ. The three stars are also a symbol of the [**Holy Trinity**](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Holy_Trinity)**.****Hymns to the Theotokos**There are many hymns that are sung to the Theotokos. The two following are from the Divine Liturgies of **St.**[**John Chrysostom**](https://orthodoxwiki.org/John_Chrysostom) and **St.**[**Basil the Great**](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Basil_the_Great): From the [**Divine Liturgy**](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Divine_Liturgy)of **St.**[**John Chrysostom**](https://orthodoxwiki.org/John_Chrysostom):It is truly meet and right to bless you, O Theotokos,Ever blessed and most pure, and the Mother of our God.More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim,Without defilement you gave birth to God the Word.True Theotokos, we magnify you!From the **Divine Liturgy** of **St.**[**Basil the Great**](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Basil_the_Great):All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of Grace,The assembly of Angels and the race of men.O Sanctified Temple and Rational Paradise! O Glory of Virgins!From you, God was incarnate and became a child, our God before the ages.He made your body into a throne, and your womb He made more spacious than the heavens.All of creation rejoices in you, O Full of Grace! Glory to you!References:<https://orthodoxwiki.org/Panagia><https://orthodoxwiki.org/Theotokos> |

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