

The Marian Month Celebrating St. Mary

Δ ΤΑΙ ΠΑΡΘΕΝΟC (A Tai Parthenos)

The Hymn of the 10 Strings 1st and 2nd Strings

The Hymn of the 10 Strings (Δ ΤΑΙ ΠΑΡΘΕΝΟC) is traditionally sung in honor of the Theotokos, St. Mary, during the Sunday Theotokia, St. Mary's fast, and the Month of Kiahk. The hymn draws inspiration from Psalm 45, where the queen stands at the right hand of the King, prophesizing the glory of St. Mary as the mother of God. In this hymn, King David is portrayed as "plucking the strings of his harp," each string representing a prophetic verse or image exalting the Theotokos.

Over the next few weeks, we will be diving into the "10 Strings" to understand the depth behind this beautiful, prophetic hymn, through which, the hymn portrays St. Mary's purity, honor, humility, and divine selection as the vessel of the Incarnation.

The first string draws from Psalm 45:9, a verse in which King David declares, "The queen stood at Your right hand, O King." According to the Church Fathers, the "queen" is St. Mary, who is seated at the right hand of the King, our heavenly Father. This verse exalts Mary as the chosen one among all creation, clothed in spiritual splendor and adorned with divine grace.

As St. Athanasius of Alexandria declares, "O noble Virgin, truly you are greater than any other greatness. For whom is your equal in greatness, O dwelling place of God the Word? To whom among all creatures shall I compare you, O Virgin? You are greater than them all."

In St. Mary, we see a striking contrast: the humble servant of the Lord, who is also exalted as the Queen who bore the King of Kings. St. Ephreim beautifully writes: "Mary stands at the right hand of her Lord, not by nature but by grace, as the chosen vessel through which the King took flesh."

The second string is taken from Psalm 45:10-11, in which King David praises, saying, "Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear: forget your people and your father's house, and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your lord, bow to him."

Out of all women in generations of the past and generations of the future, St. Mary was chosen to be the Mother of God. This speaks to how favored she was in our God's eyes. However, the decision for St. Mary to take on the responsibility of being the Mother of God could not have been easy. Rather than questioning, hesitating, or resisting the challenges that would come with being the mother of the Messiah, St. Mary, in her perfect humility, embraced the will of her Lord.

The call to "forget your people and all your father's house" reflects her complete consecration to God, setting aside every earthly bond to become the dwelling place of the eternal Word. St. Ambrose explains: "Mary left behind all human ties when she accepted the overshadowing of the Spirit; she became wholly God's." Through her obedience the mystery of salvation entered the world, and she became the doorway for humanity's reconciliation with God.

As we enter this fast in honor of St. Mary, we must strive to imitate her humility and obedience—setting aside our own desires to do the will of our heavenly Father. When our hearts are aligned with Him, we too can share in the grace of the eternal salvation He offers.

Sources:

- Bible, English Standard Version (ESV)
- Catena Bible
- Saint Athanasius – “O Noble Virgin”
- St. Ambrose - "On the Mysteries"