

Bright Friday: The Life Giving Spring of the Mother of God.



On Bright Friday, the first Friday after Easter, the Life-Giving Spring is celebrated. The Life-Giving Spring is all at once a title given to the Mother of God, an actual miracle-working spring near Constantinople, and an Icon of the same name.

The icon principally shows the miracle-working spring, located outside the Golden Gate of Constantinople, amid a grove of trees. Over-time the spring was not taken care of, became choked with plants, and was forgotten. It was later in the 5th century that the spring was rediscovered by the future-emperor Leo Marcellus, at the prompting of the voice of the Theotokos. A church dedicated to her as the Life-Giving Fount was built, protecting the spring until it was destroyed 1000 years later during the Turkish invasion. Nevertheless, the spring still survives today, underground now and accessed by descending stone steps.

As mentioned, the “Life-Giving Spring” is also a title of honour given to Mary, the Mother of God, for example in the Canon of the Akathist:

HAIL, Sovereign Lady, never failing spring of the living Water

The living Water is, of course, Christ Himself and the line is a reference to the Old

Testament, when Moses in the wilderness struck the rock “and [God] brought water out of the rock, and caused waters to flow down as rivers” (Psalm 78:16; also Exodus 17). Jesus, referring to this miracle, said: “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believes on me, according to the Scriptures, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” (John 7:38)

Just as the Old Testament miracles prefigured the as yet unborn Jesus Christ, so too do modern miracles point back to their source in the Risen Christ.

The Icon, then, shows the miraculous spring which still exists today – usually in the shape of the Cross. Around about people are coming to the waters to be healed. This is where most of the people’s attention is focused. Yet we who stand “outside” the Icon, are also granted the invisible image of the Mother of God holding Jesus Christ. Seated within a font, they sanctify the waters which then flow into the cross-shaped pool everyone is gathered around. The physical manifestation of God’s love for mankind is shown together with the spiritual source of such miracles: Christ, the living Water and His Mother, from whose belly the living Water flowed.

Apolytikion for the Feast Day.

As a life-giving fount, you conceived the Dew that is transcendent in essence,
O Virgin Maid, and you have welled forth for our sakes the nectar of joy eternal,
Which pours forth the water that springs up unto everlasting life in unending and
mighty streams;

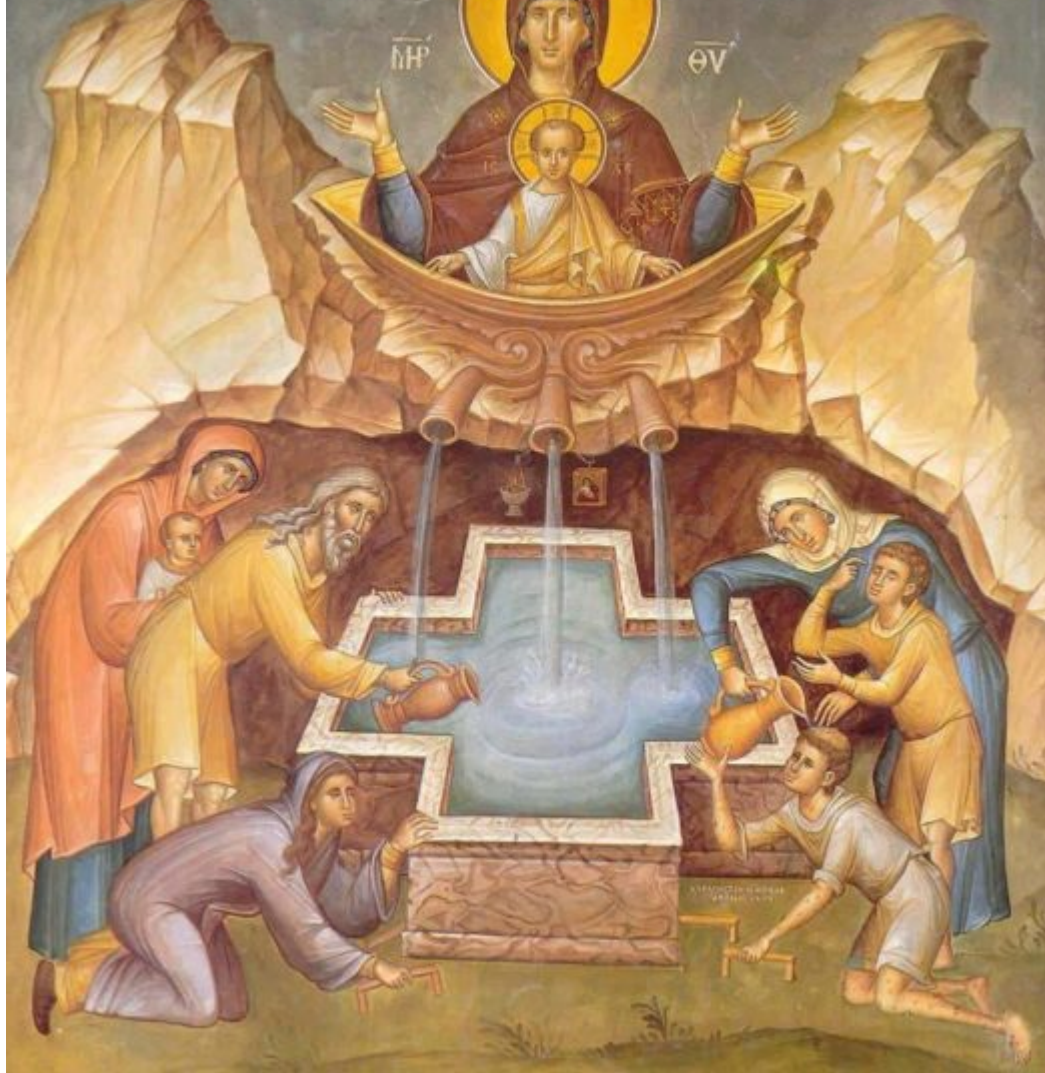
And so, taking delight, we all cry out:

Rejoice, O Spring of life for all men!











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