



Orthodox Church in America
DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST

Friday, 26 June 2026

The Appearance of the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God

№. 107

ARCHPASTORAL GREETINGS OF THE MOST REVEREND DANIEL
ARCHBISHOP OF CHICAGO AND THE MIDWEST
ON THE FEAST OF THE APPEARANCE
OF THE TIKHVIN ICON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

**Beloved Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful
of the God-protected Diocese of Chicago and the Midwest:**

Today, like a most brilliant sun, your all-honored icon dawns over us in the air, illuminating the world with rays of mercy. Our land, piously receiving it as a divine gift from on high, does glorify you, O Mother of God and Mistress of all, joyfully magnifying Christ our God Who was born of you. Pray to Him, O Lady Queen and Theotokos, that all Christian cities and lands be preserved unharmed from every incursion of the enemy and that they will be saved who worship in faith His Divine and your most pure image, O Unwedded Virgin. -Troparion, Tone 4

On this joyous feast of the Appearance of the Wonderworking Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God, the patronal feast of the Diocese of the Midwest, we lift our hearts in thanksgiving to our Lord Jesus Christ and glorify His Most Pure Mother, the heavenly Protectress of our Diocese. We celebrate with gratitude, giving thanks for the special blessings received throughout the decades because of the presence in the Diocese of the Midwest of this greatly venerated and wonderworking icon. Together, as clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Diocese, we rejoice in the motherly care, protection, and intercession granted us in this God-protected corner of the Lord's Vineyard.

The Tikhvin Icon is among the type of icons of the Theotokos known as *hodegetria*, "She who shows the way." In the icon, we see Mary lifting her right hand upward and pointing toward her Divine Son, whom she holds in her left arm. She draws attention away from herself and directs us to Christ, the source of our salvation. This is the foremost role of Mary: she always points us toward her Son, guiding us to the One who is our Lord and Savior. We are reminded of this role in the story of the wedding at Cana of Galilee, when she directs the wine stewards to go to Christ and to "do whatever He tells you," (John 2:5).

In her Tikhvin Icon, Mary directs us to her Son, even as she looks forward, gazing into the eyes of those who approach her image. Her gaze toward the beholder is quiet and peaceful, almost contemplative. In looking upon those who approach her image in faith, she looks at us with the gentle eyes of a loving mother, inviting us to share something that is within her heart (cf. Luke 2:5). Mary draws us in and invites us to share in her love for her Son, to imitate her fidelity to Him, to follow her example of serving Him, and to always place our trust in Him.

This loving mother was near her Divine Son throughout His life and saving ministry, beginning from the moment of His conception and His birth, throughout the hidden, unrecorded years in Nazareth, and during His public ministry. She heard Him preach and teach and witnessed Him performing miracles. Ultimately, she stood beneath the cross, near her Son as He died for us, so that we might live. And she remains near to Him in the Kingdom of Heaven, where He sits forever at the Father's right hand.

This nearness of Mary—to her Son and to us—is not merely a pious thought or comforting notion. It is a reality. It is a theological truth that is grounded in the Church's teaching on the nature of the Church itself and the communion of its saints. The continuing intercession of Mary is very real. The mother who stood beneath the Cross on Golgotha, who received her Son's dying gift in the person of Saint John, who was present with the Apostles in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost, continues to be mother to those who were given her, by her Son Himself. Today, we rejoice that she continues to be our Mother. She continues to guide us and draw us ever nearer to Christ.

For generations, the Mother of God, honored in her Tikhvin Icon, has watched over the parishes, clergy, monastics, and faithful people of the Diocese of the Midwest and has interceded for them with her unending prayers. Through times of trial and sorrow, as well as times of great spiritual joy, she has remained a steadfast refuge, guiding us to her Son and blessing our diocese and our families with her maternal protection.

As we celebrate the feast of the Appearance of the Tikhvin Icon on June 26, I invite you to join me in prayer, asking the Most Blessed Theotokos to continue to bless our Diocese of the Midwest, to strengthen our clergy in their ministry, to preserve our parishes in peace and unity, and to protect every family and home entrusted to her care.

Let us especially pray that under her maternal gaze our children may grow in faith, our communities may abound in love, and all who seek Christ within our Diocese may find healing, consolation, and salvation.

May this feast renew our faith in Christ, deepen our devotion to His Most Pure Mother, draw us ever closer to the *one who gave birth to God the Word*, and fill our hearts with peace, hope, and joy.

With love in the Lord,



DANIEL

Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest