

The "Help in Birth-giving" Icon

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From time immemorial, it has been known that in moments of the most intense suffering of the birthing process, women run with especially fervent prayer to the Savior and to His Most-pure Mother. In our time as well, pious families keep copies of the Icon of the Mother of God known as the "Help in Birth-giving" Icon. In this Icon, the Most-pure Virgin is depicted full-length, standing with hands upraised, and with the Babe in her arms, as in the "Sign" Icon. Mothers bow down before this Icon, calling in fervent prayer upon the assistance of the Most-blessed Virgin Mary, the one who had painlessly given birth to Christ the Savior. They call out to her in a mother's awesome, uniquely mysterious and secret moment, in the belief that she is a strong intercessor and helper before God for all who suffer and are heavy-laden. And who, running to the Queen of Heaven, can come away without being comforted by her in times of sorrow and ills?! Her almighty intercession brings a solution to all the illnesses and sufferings from which no earthly power or earthly riches could save us.



There is another very ancient Icon, known as the "Icon of the Most-holy Theotokos, helper to women giving birth to children." On that Icon, the Mother of God is depicted with head uncovered, her hair flowing down her shoulders, and her arms folded upon her breast. The fingers of the left hand partially cover the fingers of the right. Below the level of her wrists sits the Divine Infant, the fingers of His right hand forming the acronym of His Name (ICXC), and the left resting upon His knee. His feet protrude from below the hem of his garments. The Theotokos' outer garment is red and gold, with a gold star on each shoulder. Her inner garment is dark green, with flashes of gold and with gold stars, and the same kind of trim on her collar and cuffs. The Theotokos' head inclines slightly. The Savior's clothing is yellow and gold, blending on his chest into a dark green color. The entire composition is written on a semi-circle.

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