

St John of Damascus, who expresses the complete patristic tradition on this subject, writes that, with the holy Virgin's consent, the Holy Spirit came into her, "purifying her, and giving her power to receive the divinity of the Word, at the same time as the power to give birth." Then she was overshadowed by the enhypostatic wisdom and power of the most high God, the Son of God Who is consubstantial (co-essential*) with the Father, "as if it were divine seed", and from her holy and most pure blood He formed for Himself flesh with a rational and noetic soul, as the first-fruits of our own clay, "not by means of seed, but by way of creation through the Holy Spirit."

Thus the dogma of the immaculate conception of the Theotokos is unknown to the ancient patristic tradition of the Church, since it divides the All-Holy Virgin from her forefathers and from the whole of humanity, but at the same time also reduces her holiness, which was the result of the energy of divine grace and also her collaboration, following her own personal struggle.

The Virgin Mary was conceived in the same way as all human beings, with especial grace from God. And on the day of the Annunciation she was purified and gave flesh to the Son and Word of God.

* *Homoousios* can be rendered in English either as 'consubstantial' or as 'co-essential'. Because the word *homoousios* came into English by way of the Latin *consubstantialis*, the traditional English translation is 'consubstantial'. However, *ousia* means 'essence', so the word 'co-essential' more closely expresses the Greek word. There are arguments for and against both words. In our translation we use 'consubstantial', followed the first time it is used in each chapter by 'co-essential' in brackets. – Translator's note