



The Sunday Messenger

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH - WILKES BARRE, PA

Sun, August 15, 2021: 8th Sunday after Holy Pentecost, Dormition of our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary



Hymns for Today's Service

By Your Cross You destroyed death. To the thief You opened Paradise. For the Myrrhbearers You changed weeping into joy. And You commanded Your disciples, O Christ God, to proclaim that You are risen, granting the world great mercy.

In giving birth you preserve your virginity. In falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Theotokos You were translated to life O Mother of Life, and by your prayers you deliver our souls from death.

The dominion of death can no longer hold men captive, for Christ descended, shattering and destroying its powers. Hell is bound, while the Prophets rejoice and cry: "The Savior has come to those in faith; enter, you faithful, into the Resurrection!"

Neither the tomb, nor death, could hold the Theotokos, who is constant in prayer and our firm hope in her intercessions. For being the Mother of Life, she was translated to life by the One Who dwelt in her virginal womb.

Epistle Reading - Philippians 2:5-11

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Gospel Reading - Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28

Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!" But He said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

DEAR GUESTS AND FRIENDS: A most sincere and heartfelt welcome to you from our community. According to the ancient traditions of the Orthodox Church, the Sacrament of Holy Communion is to be administered only to Orthodox Christians who have prepared to receive the Holy Sacrament through prayer and fasting. If you have questions please let us know!

This Week's Schedule

THIS WEEKEND - HOLY DORMITION

SAT, Aug 14th: Great Vespers with Lity @ 5 PM
Confessions @ 5:45 PM

SUN, Aug. 15th: Hour @ 8:40 AM, Divine Liturgy for the Dormition @ 9 AM, Blessing of Flowers, **Special Coffee Hour**, Orthodox Etiquette Presentation

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THIS WEEK

WED: Church Open for Private Prayer 11AM-1:30 PM

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NEXT WEEKEND

SAT, Aug 21th: Great Vespers @ 5 PM
Confessions @ 5:45 PM

SUN, Aug. 22nd: Hour @ 8:50 AM, Divine Liturgy @ 9 AM, Coffee Hour, Orthodox Etiquette Presentation, Parish Council & Maintenance Committee Meetings

Upcoming Parish Events & Announcements

Orthodox Etiquette Presentation Aug 15 and 22:

Paul (Garret) Hamner, our parish's summer intern from St. Tikhon's, will offer 3 brief presentations on what and why we do the things we do in church and during our worship services. Each presentation will give us insight into the meaning behind Orthodox worship practices with time for questions and answers. Join us during coffee hour on Aug 8, 15 and 22 to gain a deeper understanding of our faith and worship.

Special Collection for the Hamners: We are so thankful to our seminarian intern family, the Hamners, and all they have contributed to Holy Trinity this summer! After August 29, Paul and the family will begin their final year at St. Tikhon's Seminary before going back to California. We hope we will continue to see them this year, but their official internship will be over. If you would like to express your gratitude to the Hamners, please consider making a special donation as a thank you in support of their last year in seminary. To make a donation simply put "Hamner Family" on the donation envelope and leave it at the candle stand. May God bless the Hamners and their ministry!

August 22: Parish Council Meeting @ 11:30 AM

followed by a brief Maintenance Committee meeting to assess the placement of our new church sign on E. Main St.

AUG 29 - HTOC Shrimp Boil Feast: Sunday August 29 from 11:30 AM – 4 PM. A hearty meal consisting of a generous portion of extra-large shrimp, smoky pork sausage, locally harvested new potatoes and freshly picked corn on the cob. All ingredients prepared in a broth of old bay, herbs and other seasonings. **\$18 per serving.**

Pre-orders may be placed August 23–27 (Monday – Friday) / 9AM – 5 PM, **online** (wbholytrinity.org) or by **phone** (570-825-6540). **Walk-in orders** are welcome. Eat in & take out.

YOUTH & FAMILY LABOR DAY WEEKEND COOKOUT & CAMP



Sunday, September 5th

Cookout and Games begin at 4 PM

Ping Pong, Foosball, Outdoor Games

Followed by Campfire & Music

Camping w/ late night movie begins at 10 PM

Morning breakfast & departing at 9AM

++ Camping is optional - come enjoy the fun ++

Birthdays & Anniversaries

August Birthdays: Joan Lello (8/1), David Voda (8/2), Sophia Leonori (8/5), Joe Lello (8/14), William Talpash (8/19), Olivia Dutko (8/22), Carl Zbegner (8/22), Denise Meck (8/23), Ephraim Neal (8/25), Lindsey Rivera (8/31), Pat Bankos (8/?). **August Anniversaries:** Greg & Laura Polk (8/17), George & Rita Krill (8/?), Catie & Dan Decarlo (8/22)

This Week's Birthday: William Talpash (8/19)
Anniversary: Greg & Laura Polk (8/17)

PARISH PRAYER LIST Living: Cynthia Dulsky, Theodore & Elenor Sovryda, Nadine Breisch, Rosalie Bagenski, Sonja & Leanne Kay, Josie Bissett, Lisa & Scott Harvey, Daniel & Shannon Bissett, Delores Karas, Antonette Terry, Archpriest Daniel & Matushka Myra Kovalak, Violet Filipi, Catherine, Danny Gobish, Lorraine Pace, Camden Thomas, Peter Holoviak & Family, Marni Bachman & Family, Rose Marie, Helen Gudaitis, Mahaffey Family, George Scott, Evelyn Kosmiski, Joe Sloan, Louis Gianuzzi, Betty Serafin, Matushka Elizabeth, Karen Maier, John and Mary Metz, Bill & Chris, Leigh Remp



The Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God

By Archpriest Ayman Kfouf

The Dormition of the Theotokos is one of the Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church, celebrated on August 15. The word "Dormition" is a derivative from the Latin word "dormitio", which means "falling asleep."

The Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos is the commemoration of the falling asleep, burial, resurrection, and translation of the Theotokos into heaven in the body.

Historical Background of the Feast

The Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos is one of the oldest Marian feasts in the church. The roots of the feast go back to Jerusalem, where the apostles and the Christians of Jerusalem honored and kept alive the memory of the falling asleep of the Theotokos. Consequently, quickly, her empty tomb, in Gethsemane,

became a destination for pilgrims from Jerusalem and the surrounding neighborhoods.

After the dogmatization of the doctrine of the Divine Motherhood of the Virgin Mary in the third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus (431), the commemoration of the falling asleep of the Theotokos became more popular amongst Christians in the vast majority of the Christian world.

In the late sixth century, in the year 588, the Emperor Maurice officially adopted the commemoration of the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos into the liturgical calendar in the entire Byzantine Empire, and commanded that it be celebrated on August 15.

In the second half of the seventh century, the feast of the Dormition appeared in the West under the influence of the East. It was accepted in Rome under Pope Sergius I (687-701), and from Rome it passed over to the rest of Europe.

Up until the end of the ninth century, the feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos was preceded by two periods of fasting: **FIRST:** before the feast of the Transfiguration (August 1-5) and **SECOND:** after the feast of the Transfiguration (August 7-15). In the tenth century, the two fasting periods were merged into one, which includes fourteen fasting days beginning on August 1st through August 14th.

The Narrative of the Feast

The main source of the narrative of the feast of the Dormition is based on the oral and written Tradition of the church, which include: the writings of Saints Dionysios the Areopagite, John the Damascene and Andrew of Crete; the hymnography and iconography of the Church, in addition to an apocryphal narrative of the feast by Saint John the Theologian.

According to the Orthodox Tradition, the Virgin Mary lived after Pentecost in the house of the Apostle John in Jerusalem. As the Mother of the Lord, she became the source of encouragement and help for the Apostles and all Christians.

Three days before her death, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary and revealed to her the date of her departure into eternal life. Immediately, the

Theotokos returned to her home and prepared herself for this event through fasting and prayer.

On the day of her repose, even though the apostles were scattered throughout the world, they were miraculously transported to be at her side. Exceptionally, the Apostle Thomas did not arrive on time to bid his final farewell to the Theotokos.

While the Apostles were singing hymns in honor of the Mother of God, they saw a vision showing Christ, accompanied by Angels and Saints, coming to escort the soul of His Most Holy Mother into heaven. With songs of praises, the Apostles carried the body of the most pure Theotokos to the grave in Gethsemane to be buried near her parents.

At Gethsemane, the disciples gathered and remained around her tomb and kept a vigil for three days. On the Third day, the Apostle Thomas arrived and asked to view for the last time the Most Holy Mother of God. When the Apostles opened the grave of the Theotokos, her body was not there. The Apostles realized then that she was taken into heaven in the body to be reunited with her soul.

The Meaning of the Feast

The hymnography and liturgical text of the feast of the Dormition portrays the feast as mystical, eschatological, and paschal in nature.

1. Mystical and Eschatological

The hymnography of the feast envisions the Dormition of the Theotokos as an eschatological event that confirms the destruction of hades and the defeat of death. The Dormition of the Theotokos confirms the reality of the transformation of death from a fearful enemy into a joyous passage to eternal life.

The eschatological nature of the feast of the Dormition is evident, not only in the hymnography of the feast, but also in the mysterious gathering of the apostles, who gathered to witness how Christ, himself, comes to escort His mother to the kingdom. They are mysteriously gathered to witness, again, to the truthfulness of resurrection of Christ and his victory over death.

2. Paschal

The liturgical text of the Feast of the Dormition depicts the feast as a Paschal event. The hymns of the feast assert that the Virgin Mary experienced her own personal Pascha by passing through death and rising to eternal life. Being alive in heaven, as a queen and mother of Christ, we, now, can ask her intercessions to help us transform our own forthcoming death into a Paschal victory over death.

In the ecclesiastical tradition, the feast of Dormition of the Theotokos is called the "Summer Pascha." This name is derived from the fact that the Theotokos experienced her own Pascha; "Passover" from this life into life eternal.

St. John of Damascus confirms the Paschal nature of the Feast of the Dormition by calling the death of the Theotokos: "The Deathless Death". He calls it the deathless death because of the fact that death resulted in her translation into life eternal, into glorification and union with the Lord. "O how does the source of life pass through death to life? She dies according to the flesh, destroys death by death, and through corruption gains incorruption, and makes her death the source of resurrection." (St. John of Damascus)

Conclusion

The Dormition of the Theotokos is a confirmation of the resurrection of Christ and a source of hope for the faithful in the promise of their personal resurrection, their personal Pascha. The death of the Theotokos and her translation into heaven confirms the divine promise of Christ to His faithful children that they will enjoy life eternal in everlasting communion with God.

What a paradox! While this Feast is called the "Falling Asleep of the Theotokos," it is in reality a celebration of her life and victory over death. It is a celebration of her "Passover" from this life into life eternal. It is a celebration of the confirmation of the promise of our own resurrection in Christ. Amen!