



# Welcome!

Whether you are searching for a new church home or just visiting, we are glad you're with us today. If you have a prayer request, are looking for more information about the Orthodox Faith, would like to join our parish, or would like to speak with Fr Thomas, we invite you to fill out a visitor's card and drop it in the offering basket as your offering today. We want to get to know you! God bless you!

# This Week

- Saturday, August 15: Dormition**  
 10:00 am Festal Divine Liturgy  
 4:30 pm Confessions  
 5:00 pm Great Vespers with Cathedral Vigil
- Sunday, August 16**  
 10:00 am Divine Liturgy
- Tuesday, August 18**  
*No Daily Matins during iconographic work*
- Thursday, August 20**  
*No Daily Matins during iconographic work*
- Saturday, August 22**  
 10:00 am Divine Liturgy  
 4:30 pm Confessions  
 5:00 pm Vespers with Cathedral Vigil
- Sunday, August 23**  
 10:00 am Divine Liturgy



Archpriest Thomas Soroka, *Rector*  
Deacon Luke Loboda, *Attached*

## Dormition/10<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

McKees Rocks/Pittsburgh, PA  
OrthodoxPittsburgh.org August 15/16, 2020

# Announcements

➤ Our **Icon Project continues in August!** Fr Theodore and John Jurewicz will be here from August 10-28. The projects completed this year will be the Ascension above the altar, and the vestibule entrance, the candle kiosk and the childcare room. See Fr Thomas if you're interested in sponsoring some of the work. We need everyone's support. Every donation helps! God bless you for your love of the beauty of God's holy temple.

➤ Due to the work that will take place in the church from August 10-28, **we will not serve the Daily Matins on Tuesdays and Thursdays** during that time.



# Thank You

➤ to our August donors, **from Sandi Tirpak** (Bulletin \$60) for the health and guidance of her family, (Holy Bread \$50) in memory of Nicholas, Nicholas, Amelia, and John, (Communion Wine \$40) for our Lord's guidance for my grandchildren, and (Incense \$10) in memory of Archpriest Paul; **from Donya Yewisiak** (Candles \$25) in memory of Fr Vladimir Soroka (father).

# Prayers

➤ **Ill and infirm:** *Known to be hospitalized:* (none) *Home:* Mat. Janet Mihalick, Geroge Shaytar, Paul Yewisiak,. *Shut in, Rehabilitation, or Nursing Home:* Garnette Kerchum, Eleanor Kovacs, Olga Tryszyn.

➤ **Vigil Lights From Tatyana Sechler** for the departed servants of God Polina, Galina, Slava, Valentina, Andrei, Bruce, Marina; for the health of Bunny, Diana, Edward, Bernadette, Adrianna. **From John Kowalcheck and Olga Cozza** for the departed servant of God Anatoly Vilkov. **From Alexandria Tirpak** for the departed servant of God John; for the health of Daniel; for the health and salvation of family; for special intentions. **From Chuck Wasilko** for the departed servant of God Archpriest Vladimir Soroka; for the health of sisters Doris and Marsha. **From Marsha Wasilko**, special thanks; happy birthday and many years to Nancy Pravlochak. **From Doris Wasilko** for the health of the Wasilko family and many years and happy birthday to Nancy Pravlochak. **From the John Mahalchak family** for friends and family, especially for (father) John Mahalchak. **From Mat. Nancy and Gregory Mell** for the departed servant of God Dn Joseph Mell; for the health of family. **From Irene Kulchock** for the departed servants of God Mary Pravlochak and Richard Kulchock.

**To our Visitors:** *Holy Communion is reserved for Orthodox Christians who prepare themselves by prayer and fasting. Non-Orthodox visitors are welcome to come forward to venerate the cross and receive the Antidoron (blessed bread) at the conclusion of the service.*

# On the Mary, Mother of God

The Orthodox Church honors and venerates the Virgin Mary as "more honorable than the Cherubim and more glorious without compare than the Seraphim ..." Her name is mentioned in every service, and her intercession before the throne of God is asked. She is given the title of "Theotokos" (Greek for "Birth-giver-of-God), as well as "Mother of God". She has a definite role in Orthodox Christianity, and can in no way be considered an instrument which, once used, was laid aside and forgotten.

Objections to the veneration of the Theotokos are based primarily on what is called "a lack of scriptural evidence to support such a practice." While it is true that the Church depends heavily on her Tradition other than Holy Scripture (Ecumenical Councils, liturgical books, and the writings of the Fathers) for details and the precise definition of the nature of the veneration of the Virgin Mary, there are several passages of the New Testament that really form the basis for our practice.

The consequences of denying the Theotokos a part in the life of Christians are more serious than one may think in view of all its implications. Orthodox theology insists upon the two perfect natures of our Lord Jesus Christ; He was perfect God and perfect Man. The Virgin Mary communicated the humanity of the Incarnate God. The redemption of the human race was possible through the union of God and man in Christ. De-emphasis of the sinlessness of Christ's Mother, insistence upon her having other children by Joseph (which cannot be demonstrated by the New Testament), and failure to remember her part in the history of the salvation of mankind have contributed to a general misunderstanding in some churches of the Incarnation in all its fullness and power. Very closely related to the above-mentioned things is the denial of the virgin birth of Christ, a rather popular feature of present-day liberal theology. After the virgin birth, the next basic teaching under attack is the divinity of Christ, and His resurrection, and with that, the Holy Trinity Itself.

**St Nicholas Church will strive to glorify God through Orthodox Christian worship, sincere love and care for one another, and service to those in need around us.**

# Hymns and Readings for Saturday, Aug 15

## **Tone 1 Troparion** *of the Feast*

In giving birth you preserved 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.

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

## **Tone 2 Kontakion** *of the Feast*

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.

## **Tone 3 Prokeimenon** *(Song of the Theotokos)*

My soul magnifies the Lord, / and my spirit  
rejoices in God my Savior. (*Lk 1:46-47*)

## **Epistle** *of the Feast* (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** *of the Feast* (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!"

## **Tone 1 Hymn to the Theotokos** *of the Feast*

*Refrain:* The Angels, as they looked upon the Dormition of the Virgin, were struck with wonder, seeing how the Virgin went up from earth to heaven.

*Heirmos:* The limits of nature are overcome in you, O Pure Virgin: for birthgiving remains virginal, and life is united to death; a virgin after childbearing and alive after death, you ever save your inheritance, O Theotokos.

## **Communion Hymn** *of the Feast*

I will receive the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! (Ps 115/116:13).

# On Baptism

## **Ignatius**, 110 AD

Jesus was born and baptized that by his suffering he might purify the water. (*Letter to the Ephesians 18*)

Wherever the bishop shall appear, let the multitude of also be, just as wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic [i.e., universal] church. It is not lawful either to baptize or to celebrate a love feast without the bishop, but whatever he approves of, that is also pleasing to God. (*Letter to the Smyrneans 8*)

## **The Didache**, 80 - 160 AD

Concerning baptism, baptize in this way: Having first said all these things [i.e., the commands contained in the Way of Life and Death contained in first 6 chapters of the Didache], baptize into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in running water. But if you have no running water, baptize into other water. If you cannot baptize in cold, then in warm. But if you have neither, pour water three times upon the head in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. However, before baptism, let the baptizer fast, and the baptized, and whoever else can. Either way, you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before. (*ch. 7*)

## **Barnabas**, 120 - 130 AD

Concerning the water, it is written about the Israelites that they should not receive the baptism which leads to the remission of sins, but should procure another for themselves. The prophet therefore declares, "Be astonished, O sky, and let the earth tremble at this: this people has committed two great evils. They have forsaken me, a running spring, and have hewn out for themselves broken cisterns" [Jer. 2:12-13]. (*Letter of Barnabas 11*)

Blessed are they who, placing their trust in the

cross, have gone down into the water. For, says he [i.e., God through the Scriptures], they shall receive their reward in due time. (Letter of Barnabas 11)

We indeed descend into the water full of sins and defilement but come up bearing fruit in our heart, having the fear and trust in Jesus in our spirit. (*Letter of Barnabas 11*)

## **Shepherd of Hermas**, 100-160 AD

"Hear, therefore, why the tower is built on the waters:--Because your life is saved, and shall be saved, by water." In answer to the question, "Why did the stones come up into this tower out of the deep?" he says it was necessary for them to come up by (or through) water, that they might be at rest; "for they could not otherwise enter the kingdom of God; for before any one receives the name of the Son of God, he is liable to death; but when he receives that seal, he is delivered from death and assigned to life. Now, that seal is water, into which persons go down, liable to death, but come out of it assigned to life; for which reason to these also was the seal preached; and they made use of it, that they might enter the Kingdom of God." (*Shepherd of Hermas, Vision III, ch. 3 & Similitude IX, ch. 16*)

## **Justin Martyr**, 150 AD

I will also tell you how we dedicated ourselves to God once we had been made new through Christ. ... As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and who determine to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and entreat God with fasting for the remission of their sins of the past. We pray and fast with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water, and they are regenerated in the same manner in which we ourselves were regenerated. For in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, "Unless you are born again, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" [John 3:3]. ...

# Hymns and Readings for Sunday, Aug 16

## **Tone 1 Troparion** (Resurrection)

When the stone had been sealed by the Jews, while the soldiers were guarding Thy most pure body, Thou didst rise on the third day, O Savior, granting life to the world. The powers of heaven therefore cried to Thee, O Giver of Life: “Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ! Glory to Thy Kingdom!// Glory to Thy dispensation, O Thou who lovest mankind!”

## **Tone 2 Troparion** (“Icon not-made-by-hands”)

We venerate Thy most pure image, O Good One; and ask forgiveness of our transgressions, O Christ our God. Of Thine own will Thou wast pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh and deliver Thy creatures from bondage to the Enemy. Therefore with thankfulness we cry aloud to Thee: “Thou hast filled all with joy, O our Savior,// by coming to save the world.”

## **Tone 1 Troparion** of the Feast

In giving birth you preserved 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.

## **Tone 1 Kontakion** (Resurrection)

As God, Thou didst rise from the tomb in glory, raising the world with Thyself. Human nature praises Thee as God, for death has vanished. Adam exults, O Master! Eve rejoices, for she is freed from bondage and cries to Thee://

“Thou art the Giver of Resurrection to all, O Christ!”

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.*

## **Tone 2 Kontakion** (“Icon not-made-by-hands”)

Uncircumscribed Word of the Father, as we behold the victorious image of Thy true incarnation, not made by hands, but divinely wrought in Thine ineffable and divine dispensation towards us,// we honor it with veneration.

*Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

## **Tone 2 Kontakion** of the Feast

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.

## **Tone 1 Prokeimenon** (Resurrection)

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us / as we have set our hope on Thee! (Ps 32/33:22)

## **Tone 3 Prokeimenon** (Song of the Theotokos)

My soul magnifies the Lord, / and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. (Lk 1:46-47)

## **Epistle** of the Sunday (1 Corinthians 4:9-16)

For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored! To the present hour we

both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.

I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me.

## **Gospel** of the Sunday (Matthew 17:14-23)

And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.”

Then Jesus answered and said, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.” And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.

Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?”

So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will

kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.” And they were exceedingly sorrowful.

## **Tone 1 Hymn to the Theotokos** of the Feast

*Refrain:* The Angels, as they looked upon the Dormition of the Virgin, were struck with wonder, seeing how the Virgin went up from earth to heaven.

*Heirmos:* The limits of nature are overcome in you, O Pure Virgin: for birthgiving remains virginal, and life is united to death; a virgin after childbearing and alive after death, you ever save your inheritance, O Theotokos.

## **Communion Hymn** of Sunday

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! I will receive the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! (Ps 148:1, 115/116:13)

## **The Transfer of the Icon of our Lord Jesus Christ Not-Made-by-Hands from Edessa to Constantinople**

occurred in the year 944. Eusebius, in his History of the Church (I:13), relates that when the Savior was preaching, Abgar was the ruler of Edessa. He was stricken with leprosy all over his body. Without having seen the Savior, Abgar believed in Him as the Son of God. He wrote a letter requesting Him to come and heal him. Ananias (sent by Abgar to paint the Lord’s portrait) arrived in Jerusalem and saw the Lord surrounded by many people. He was not able to get close to Him because of the large crowd which had gathered to hear the Savior.. Then the Savior saw him, called him by name, and gave him a short letter for Abgar. Then the Lord asked for some water and a cloth to be brought to Him. After washing His Face, He dried it with the cloth, and His Divine countenance was imprinted upon it. Ananias brought the cloth to Edessa. Reverently, Abgar pressed the holy object to his face and received partial healing. Later the Lord’s disciple came and he was entirely healed.

healing and joined the crowd accompanying the body of the Mother of God, and he became a zealous follower of Christ.

When the procession reached the Garden of Gethsemane, then amidst the weeping and the wailing began the last kiss to the all-pure body. Only towards evening were the Apostles able to place it in the tomb and seal the entrance to the cave with a large stone.

For three days they did not depart from the place of burial, praying and chanting Psalms. Through the wise providence of God, the Apostle Thomas was not to be present at the burial of the Mother of God. Arriving late on the third day at Gethsemane, he lay down at the tomb and with bitter tears asked that he might be permitted to look once more upon the Mother of God and bid her farewell. The Apostles out of heartfelt pity for him decided to open the grave and permit him the comfort of venerating the holy relics of the Ever-Virgin Mary. Having opened the grave, they found in it only the grave wrappings and were thus convinced of the bodily ascent of the Most Holy Virgin Mary to Heaven.

On the evening of the same day, when the Apostles had gathered at a house to strengthen themselves with food, the Mother of God appeared to them and said: “Rejoice! I am with you all the days of your lives.” This so gladdened the Apostles and everyone with them, that they took a portion of the bread, set aside at the meal in memory of the Savior (“the Lord’s Portion”), and they exclaimed: “Most Holy Theotokos, save us”. (This marks the beginning of the rite of offering up the “Panagia” (“All-Holy”), a portion of bread in honor of the Mother of God, which is done at monasteries to the present day).

The sash of the Mother of God, and Her holy garb, preserved with reverence and distributed over the face of the earth in pieces, have worked

miracles both in the past and at present. Her numerous icons everywhere pour forth signs and healings, and Her holy body, taken up to Heaven, bears witness to our own future life there. Her body was not left to the vicissitudes of the transitory world, but was incomparably exalted by its glorious ascent to Heaven.

The Feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos is celebrated with special solemnity at Gethsemane, the place of Her burial. Nowhere else is there such sorrow of heart at the separation from the Mother of God, and nowhere else such joy, because of Her intercession for the world.

The holy city of Jerusalem is separated from the Mount of Olives by the valley of Kedron on Josaphat. At the foot of the Mount of Olives is the Garden of Gethsemane, where olive trees bear fruit even now.

The holy Ancestor-of-God Joachim had himself reposed at 80 years of age, several years after the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple (November 21). Saint Anna, having been left a widow, moved from Nazareth to Jerusalem, and lived near the Temple. At Jerusalem she bought two pieces of property: the first at the gates of Gethsemane, and the second in the valley of Josaphat. At the second locale she built a tomb for the members of her family, and where also she herself was buried with Joachim. It was there in the Garden of Gethsemane that the Savior often prayed with His disciples.

The most-pure body of the Mother of God was buried in the family tomb. Christians honored the sepulchre of the Mother of God, and they built a church on this spot. Within the church was preserved the precious funeral cloth, which covered Her all-pure and fragrant body.



## Falling Asleep of the Mother of God

The Dormition of our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary: After the Ascension of the Lord, the Mother of God remained in the care of the Apostle John the Theologian, and during his journeys She lived at the home of his parents, near the Mount of Olives. She was a source of consolation and edification both for the Apostles and for all the believers. Conversing with them, She told them about miraculous events: the Annunciation, the seedless and undefiled Conception of Christ born of Her, about His early childhood, and about His earthly life. Like the Apostles, She helped plant and strengthen the Christian Church by Her presence, Her discourse and Her prayers.

The reverence of the Apostles for the Most Holy Virgin was extraordinary. After the receiving of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the Apostles remained at Jerusalem for about ten years attending to the salvation of the Jews, and wanting moreover to see the Mother of God and hear Her holy discourse. Many of the newly-enlightened in the Faith even came from faraway lands to Jerusalem, to see and to hear the All-Pure Mother of God.

During the persecution initiated by King Herod against the young Church of Christ (Acts 12:1-3), the Most Holy Virgin and the Apostle John the Theologian withdrew to Ephesus in the year 43. The preaching of the Gospel there had fallen by lot to the Apostle John the Theologian. The Mother of God was on Cyprus with Saint Lazarus the Four-Days-Dead, where he was bishop. She was also on Holy Mount Athos. Saint Stephen of the Holy Mountain says that the Mother of God prophetically spoke of it: “Let this place be my lot, given to me by my Son and my God. I will be the Patroness of this place and intercede with God for it.”

The respect of ancient Christians for the Mother of God was so great that they preserved what they could about Her life, what they could take note of concerning Her sayings and deeds, and they even passed down to us a description of Her outward appearance.

According to Tradition, that from the compiler of Church history Nicephorus Callistus (fourteenth century), the Mother of God “was of average stature, or as others suggest, slightly more than average; Her hair golden in appearance; Her eyes bright with pupils like shiny olives; Her eyebrows strong in character and moderately dark, Her nose pronounced and Her mouth vibrant bespeaking sweet speech; Her face was neither round nor angular, but somewhat oblong; the palm of Her hands and fingers were longish...

The circumstances of the Dormition of the Mother of God were known in the Orthodox Church from apostolic times. Already in the first century, the Hieromartyr Dionysius the Areopagite wrote about Her “Falling-Asleep.” In the second century, the account of the bodily ascent of the Most Holy Virgin Mary to Heaven is found in the works of Meliton, Bishop of Sardis. In the fourth century, Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus refers to the tradition about the “Falling Asleep” of the Mother of God. In the fifth century, Saint Juvenal, Patriarch of Jerusalem, told the holy Byzantine Empress Pulcheria: “Although there is no account of the circumstances of Her death in Holy Scripture, we know about them from the most ancient and credible Tradition.” This tradition was gathered and expounded in the Church History of Nicephorus Callistus during the fourteenth century.

At the time of Her blessed Falling Asleep, the Most Holy Virgin Mary was again at Jerusalem. Her fame as the Mother of God had already spread throughout the land and had aroused

many of the envious and the spiteful against Her. They wanted to make attempts on Her life; but God preserved Her from enemies.

Day and night She spent her time in prayer. The Most Holy Theotokos went often to the Holy Sepulchre of the Lord, and here She offered up fervent prayer. More than once, enemies of the Savior sought to hinder Her from visiting her holy place, and they asked the High Priest for a guard to watch over the Grave of the Lord. The Holy Virgin continued to pray right in front of them, yet unseen by anyone.

In one such visit to Golgotha, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to Her and announced Her approaching departure from this life to eternal life. In pledge of this, the Archangel gave Her a palm branch. With these heavenly tidings the Mother of God returned to Bethlehem with the three girls attending Her (Sepphora, Abigail, and Jael). She summoned Righteous Joseph of Arimathea and other disciples of the Lord, and told them of Her impending Repose.

The Most Holy Virgin prayed also that the Lord would have the Apostle John come to Her. The Holy Spirit transported him from Ephesus, setting him in that very place where the Mother of God lay. After the prayer, the Most Holy Virgin offered incense, and John heard a voice from Heaven, closing Her prayer with the word “Amen.” The Mother of God took it that the voice meant the speedy arrival of the Apostles and the Disciples and the holy Bodiless Powers.

The faithful, whose number by then was impossible to count, gathered together, says Saint John of Damascus, like clouds and eagles, to listen to the Mother of God. Seeing one another, the Disciples rejoiced, but in their confusion they asked each other why the Lord had gathered them together in one place. Saint John the Theologian, greeting them with tears of joy, said that the time of the Virgin’s repose was at hand.

Going in to the Mother of God, they beheld Her lying upon the bed, and filled with spiritual joy. The Disciples greeted Her, and then they told her how they had been carried miraculously from their places of preaching. The Most Holy Virgin Mary glorified God, because He had heard Her prayer and fulfilled Her heart’s desire, and She began speaking about Her imminent end.

During this conversation the Apostle Paul also appeared in a miraculous manner together with his disciples Dionysius the Areopagite, Saint Hierotheus, Saint Timothy and others of the Seventy Apostles. The Holy Spirit had gathered them all together so that they might be granted the blessing of the All-Pure Virgin Mary, and more fittingly to see to the burial of the Mother of the Lord. She called each of them to Herself by name, She blessed them and extolled them for their faith and the hardships they endured in preaching the Gospel of Christ. To each She wished eternal bliss, and prayed with them for the peace and welfare of the whole world.

Then came the third hour (9 A.M.), when the Dormition of the Mother of God was to occur. A number of candles were burning. The holy Disciples surrounded her beautifully adorned bed, offering praise to God. She prayed in anticipation of Her demise and of the arrival of Her longed-for Son and Lord. Suddenly, the inexpressible Light of Divine Glory shone forth, before which the blazing candles paled in comparison. All who saw it took fright. Descending from Heaven was Christ, the King of Glory, surrounded by hosts of Angels and Archangels and other Heavenly Powers, together with the souls of the Forefathers and the Prophets, who had prophesied in ages past concerning the Most Holy Virgin Mary.

Seeing Her Son, the Mother of God exclaimed: “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God My Savior, for He hath regarded the low estate of His Handmaiden”

(Luke 1:46-48) and, rising from Her bed to meet the Lord, She bowed down to Him, and the Lord bid Her enter into Life Eternal. Without any bodily suffering, as though in a happy sleep, the Most Holy Virgin Mary gave Her soul into the hands of Her Son and God.

Then began a joyous angelic song. Accompanying the pure soul of the God-betrothed and with reverent awe for the Queen of Heaven, the angels exclaimed: “Hail, Full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee, blessed art Thou among women! For lo, the Queen, God’s Maiden comes, lift up the gates, and with the Ever-Existing One, take up the Mother of Light; for through Her salvation has come to all the human race. It is impossible to gaze upon Her, and it is impossible to render Her due honor” (Stikherion on “Lord, I Have Cried”). The Heavenly gates were raised, and meeting the soul of the Most Holy Mother of God, the Cherubim and the Seraphim glorified Her with joy. The face of the Mother of God was radiant with the glory of Divine virginity, and from Her body there came a sweet fragrance.

Miraculous was the life of the All-Pure Virgin, and wondrous was Her Repose, as Holy Church sings: “In Thee, O Queen, the God of all hath given thee as thy portion the things that are above nature. Just as in the Birth-Giving He did preserve Thine virginity, so also in the grave He did preserve Thy body from decay” (Canon 1, Ode 6, Troparion 1).

Kissing the all-pure body with reverence and in awe, the Disciples in turn were blessed by it and filled with grace and spiritual joy. Through the great glorification of the Most Holy Theotokos, the almighty power of God healed the sick, who with faith and love touched the holy bed.

Bewailing their separation from the Mother of God, the Apostles prepared to bury Her all-pure body. The holy Apostles Peter, Paul, James and others of the Twelve Apostles carried the

funeral bier upon their shoulders, and upon it lay the body of the Ever-Virgin Mary. Saint John the Theologian went at the head with the resplendent palm-branch from Paradise. The other saints and a multitude of the faithful accompanied the funeral bier with candles and censers, singing sacred songs. This solemn procession went from Sion through Jerusalem to the Garden of Gethsemane.

With the start of the procession there suddenly appeared over the all-pure body of the Mother of God and all those accompanying Her a resplendent circular cloud, like a crown. There was heard the singing of the Heavenly Powers, glorifying the Mother of God, which echoed that of the worldly voices. This circle of Heavenly singers and radiance accompanied the procession to the very place of burial.

Unbelieving inhabitants of Jerusalem, taken aback by the extraordinarily grand funeral procession and vexed at the honor accorded the Mother of Jesus, complained of this to the High Priest and scribes. Burning with envy and vengefulness toward everything that reminded them of Christ, they sent out their own servants to disrupt the procession and to set the body of the Mother of God afire.

An angry crowd and soldiers set off against the Christians, but the circular cloud accompanying the procession descended and surrounded them like a wall. The pursuers heard the footsteps and the singing, but could not see any of those accompanying the procession. Indeed, many of them were struck blind.

The Jewish priest Athonios, out of spite and hatred for the Mother of Jesus of Nazareth, wanted to topple the funeral bier on which lay the body of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, but an angel of God invisibly cut off his hands, which had touched the bier. Seeing such a wonder, Athonios repented and with faith confessed the majesty of the Mother of God. He received