

AUGUST 15
THE DORMITION OF OUR MOST-HOLY LADY
THEOTOKOS AND EVER-VIRGIN MARY

THE DORMITION

The Magnificat: The first chapter of St. Luke's gospel contains an outstanding hymn by the holy Theotokos, which poured out of her heart in response to the salutation of her relative, the righteous Elizabeth: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." This Elizabethan prophecy, that we repeat so often in one of our most favorite prayers "Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos," was followed by Mary's hymn, Mary's prayerful prophesy, which is especially important for our attention on the day of her glorious Dormition.

"And Mary said: 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.'" From her childhood her entire life was dedicated to God. Her very birth from the childless and elderly parents was a miraculous one. From her infancy her home was the Temple, where she was presented at the age of three years, and was totally dedicated to God. The angel Gabriel appeared to her and announced the will of God, telling her that the Son of God was to be born of her. In an act of voluntary humility and loving obedience, she accepted on behalf of the whole of humanity this good news, this good will of God concerning her. What remained for her to say, how to begin her hymn to God which we so very often hear in our churches, if not by the glorification of God who loved her, and was loved by her - My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!

The sanctity of God's name was an inseparable part of the faith and hopes of Old Testament Israel. God's name concealed in itself such a fiery force that it was forbidden to use it in vain, even to pronounce it. Its sanctity, its holiness and mystery retain their power in Christ's church. We bless, baptize, celebrate the sacraments in the name of God, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

"And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation," Mary continues her prayer to God. "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice in Him with trembling." So said her ancestor King David in one of his early psalms. There is no fear in this, no trembling as in the humiliation of a slave. This is a fear before a mystery, the fear before a holy thing. And the Virgin Mary understands that only in such fear of God, such trembling before Him, prayerful trembling, 'generation upon generation' of His children will find His unceasing mercy.

God is a God of righteousness, and although through its whole history humanity very often bows before naked power, before might, before force, God's will concerning humanity happens on a different plane, in a different dimension. Just as the Holy Virgin says: "He has put down the mighty from their thrones and raised the lowly." How many falls from thrones has the history of humanity seen? How completely their glory has disappeared from historical memory. Their names do not appear in the Christian calendar, which flows over with names of the humble, of the saints elevated by God into eternal and heavenly glory. "He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty." How many of those who thirst in spirit have been nurtured 'not by bread alone', but by the word of God? How many rich and

wealthy, self-glorifying, self-exalting, the ones who advertise themselves, have been "sent away empty," have disappeared in the darkness of time?

God's covenant, God's promise has remained eternally. His covenant with Israel the chosen people, His promise according to which the church, the new Israel, has inherited the Messiah. The Messiah, the Son of God, has been sent into the world "as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever." These are the concluding words, the crowning words of the hymn of the Virgin Mary. The entire history of the Old and New Testaments of this humanity is tied together by these words. And in the center of this history we see the one who is full of light and holiness, from whose mouth, from whose heart flows this great and inspired glorification of the mighty providence of God concerning man: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."

Fr. George Benigsen

For a description of the circumstances of the Dormition of the Mother of God visit:

<https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2020/08/15/102302-the-dormition-of-our-most-holy-lady-the-mother-of-god-and-ever-v>

GREAT VESPERS

LORD I CALL: All stikhera of the feast in tone 1 (Special Melody "O Most Glorious Wonder"):

O the marvelous wonder!

The source of Life is laid in a grave,
and the tomb becomes a ladder to heaven.

Rejoice, Gethsemane, holy shrine of the Theotokos!

Let us, the faithful, cry out with Gabriel as our captain:

"Rejoice, O full of grace, the Lord is with you,//
He that grants the world great mercy through you!"

O the wonder of your mysteries, pure Lady:

you were made the throne of the Most High,
and today you have passed from earth to heaven.

Your glory is full of splendor, shining with grace in divine brightness.

Virgins, be raised to the heights with the Mother of the King!

Rejoice, O full of grace, the Lord is with you,//
He that grants the world great mercy through you!

The Dominions and Thrones, the Rulers, Principalities and Powers,
the Cherubim and fearsome Seraphim, glorify your falling asleep.

All those born of earth rejoice,
adorned with honor by your divine glory.

Kings fall down and sing with the Archangels and Angels:

"Rejoice, O full of grace, the Lord is with you,//

He that grants the world great mercy through you!”

GLORY...NOW AND EVER... of the Feast:

By the divine command the God-bearing Apostles
were caught up by clouds from every place.

When they came to your all-pure body, the source of Life,
they kissed it most reverently.

The highest Powers of heaven were also present with their Master,
and seized with awe they escorted the inviolate body,
the body that had received God in the flesh.

In a manner beyond this world they went before it and invisibly cried out to the ranks above
them:

“Behold, the Queen of all,
the Child of God, has come!

Lift up your gates, and in a manner beyond this world
receive the Mother of the everlasting Light,

for through her was accomplished the salvation of all the mortal race!

We cannot gaze upon her,

nor is it possible to render honor worthy of her,

for her excellence surpasses all understanding.”

Therefore, O immaculate Theotokos,

who live forever with your Son, the life-bearing King,

pray ceaselessly to Him to preserve the new people of God,

and to save them from every hostile assault,

for we have acquired your intercession,//

and to the ages, in manifest splendor, we call you blessed.

Old Testament Readings

The reading from Genesis. (28:10-17)

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

There above it stood the LORD, and he said: “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.

Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.

I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I

was not aware of it.” He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.”

The reading from the prophecy of Ezekiel. (43:27-44:4)

At the end of these days, from the eighth day on, the priests are to present your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings on the altar. Then I will accept you, declares the Sovereign LORD.” Then the man brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, the one facing east, and it was shut.

The LORD said to me, “This gate is to remain shut. It must not be opened; no one may enter through it. It is to remain shut because the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered through it. The prince himself is the only one who may sit inside the gateway to eat in the presence of the LORD. He is to enter by way of the portico of the gateway and go out the same way.”

Then the man brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple. I looked and saw the glory of the LORD filling the temple of the LORD, and I fell facedown.

The reading from Proverbs. (9:1-11)

Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city. “Let all who are simple come in here!” she says to those who lack judgment. “Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding.

“Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse. Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you. Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For through me your days will be many, and years will be added to your life.

LITYA, tone 1:

It was right that the eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word should see the Dormition of His Mother according to the flesh: the final mystery concerning her; so that they might be witnesses not only to the Ascension of the Savior, but also to the translation of her who gave Him birth. Assembled from all parts of the earth by divine power, they came to Zion, and sent forth to heaven the Virgin, who is higher than the Cherubim.// We also venerate her, for she prays for our souls.

Glory...now & ever... tone 5:

Sing, O people! Sing the praises of the Mother of our God; for today she delivers her soul, full of light, into the hands of Him Who became incarnate of her without seed.

And she entreats Him without ceasing//
to grant the earth peace and great mercy.

APOSTIKHA: All stikhera of the Feast, tone 4:

Come, O people,
Let us sing the praises of the pure and most holy virgin
From whom the Word of the Father ineffably came forth in the flesh!
Let us cry aloud and say:
Blessed are you among women and blessed is the womb that held Christ!
Having delivered your soul into His holy hands//
Most pure one, entreat Him to save our souls.

Verse: Arise, Lord, into your resting place: You and the ark of Your strength!

Pure and most holy virgin,
The multitude of angels in heaven and mankind on earth
Extol and venerate your falling asleep,
For you are the mother of Christ our God and Creator of all.
Never cease to intercede with Him on our behalf
For next to God we have put our hope in you,//
Greatly-honored, unwedded Theotokos!

Verse: The Lord swore to David a sure oath from which He will not turn back!

Come, O people,
Let us sing today to Christ our God a song of David!
The virgins that follow her, he said, shall be brought to the king.
With joy and gladness shall they be brought!
For she, through whom we have been made godlike, is of the seed of David,
And gloriously and ineffably commends herself into the hands of her own Son and Master!
Praising her as the mother of God we cry out to her and say:
Save us who confess you, O Theotokos,//
From all distress and tribulation!

GLORY... NOW AND EVER... tone 4:

At your departing, O Virgin Theotokos,
to Him Who was ineffably born of you,
James, the first bishop and brother of the Lord, was there,
and so was Peter, the most honored pinnacle of the theologians,
and the whole sacred choir of the Apostles.
In words of theology that showed forth heavenly things
they sang the praises of the divine and amazing mystery of the dispensation of Christ,
and they rejoiced, O all-praised Virgin, as they buried your body,
the source of Life, which had received God.

On high, the all-holy and most venerable angelic Powers,
in amazement at the wonder, bowed and said to one another:
“Lift up your gates, and receive her who bore the Creator of heaven and earth!”
So we too celebrate your memory
and cry out to you, all-praised Lady:://
“Raise up the horn of Christians, and save our souls!”

DIVINE LITURGY

TROPARION

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.

KONTAKION

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.

PROKEIMENON, tone 3: My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

vs. For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden, for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

EPISTLE: (240) Philippians 2:5-11 Brethren, 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 servant, 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 things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Alleluia in the second tone: Arise, O Lord, into Thy resting place, Thou and the ark of Thy holiness.

vs. The Lord has sworn to David a sure oath and will not change His mind.

GOSPEL: (54) Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28 At that time, 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!”

COMMUNION HYMN: I will receive the cup of salvation and call on the Name of the Lord. Alleluia...