

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE
**PARISH OF ST. PARASKEVI, ST. BARBARA &
ST. JOHN THE MERCIFUL**

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PROGRAMME AUGUST 2017



THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS: 15TH AUGUST

“O you apostles from afar, being gathered together, in the villiage of Gethsemane, lay my body in burial; and You my son and my God, take now my spirit from me.” *(Hymn from Paraklesis Service)*

PROGRAMME AUGUST 2017

Every Thursday Evening the program is as follows:

6pm: The St Ignatius children's group and choir (primary school age and up)

7pm: Paraklesis service to the Theotokos (in English)

7.45: Bible study group (for all ages), led by Fr Demosthenis

Every Evening (Monday- Friday) until the 15th August:

The Supplicatory Service to the Mother of God (the Small and Great Paraklesis) will be sung IN GREEK from 5-6pm

SUNDAY, 6th August: **THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am

FRIDAY, 11th August: **EVENING: AGRYPNIA (Night Vigil Service), the Annunciation of the Dormition of the Theotokos**, paraklesis, Vespers, Artoklasia, Matins and Divine Liturgy, memorial for departed, **7.00PM-12.30AM**

SUNDAY, 13th August: **St Maximus the Confessor**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am

MONDAY, 14th August: **Prophet Micha, The Forefeast of the Dormition of the Theotokos**, 7.30-9.30am

Evening: VESPERS FOR THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS, with burial hymns and Procession of the Epitaphios, 7.00-8.30pm

TUESDAY, 15th August: **THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am

THURSDAY, 17th August: **Evening: ENGLISH DIVINE LITURGY**, 7.30-9.00pm

SUNDAY, 20th August: **11th Sunday of Matthew**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-11.00am

WEDNESDAY, 23rd August: **Apodosis of the Dormition of the Theotokos**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-10.00am

THURSDAY, 24th August: **St Kosmas (Equal to the Apotles)**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-10.00am

SUNDAY 27th August: **St Fanourios**, Matins and Divine Liturgy, 7.30-10.00am

A DESCRIPTION OF OUR MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS...

“She is the ardent intercessor of her Son, Christ God, for all those who entreat her. She is the calm harbor of all those buffeted by waves, who rescues them from spiritual and fleshly waves.

She is the guide on the way of life for all who have gone astray.

She is the one who seeks converts those who are lost.

She is the help and support of those who are afflicted.

She is the intercessor and mediator of those who are penitent.

And I will say even more than the above:

She is the resurrection of the fallen Adam.

She is the destruction of Eve's tears.

She is the comforter of those who mourn.

She is the throne of the king, who bears the One who bears all.

She is the one who renews the old world.

She is the ladder that reaches to heaven, by which God descended to the earth.

She is the bridge that leads from earth to Paradise.

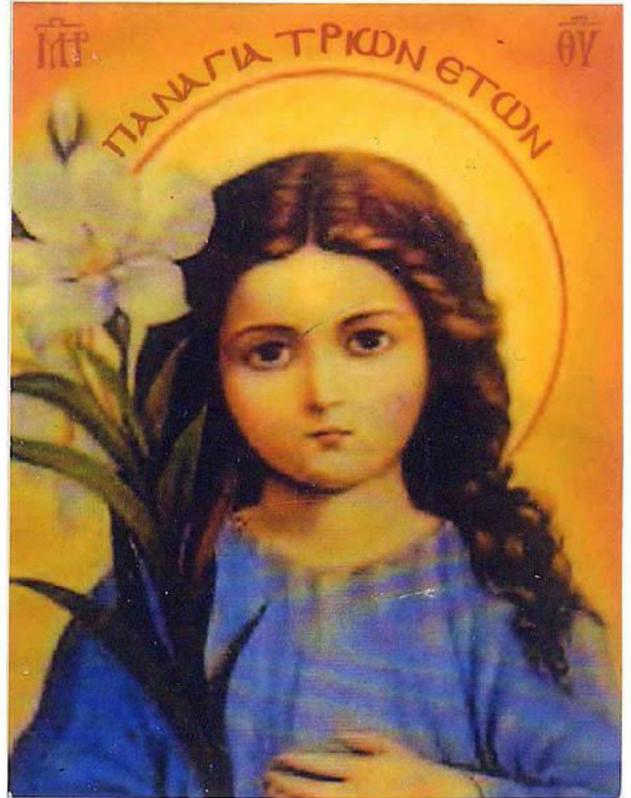
She is the wonder of angels, and she is the wound of demons and their destruction.

She is the root of the incorruptible shoot.

She is the tree of immortal fruit.

She worked on the worker, the lover of humanity.

She sprouted forth the planter of life ...”



*(St. Maximus the Confessor, The Life of the Virgin) *ICON: The most Holy Theotokos at 3 years of age.*

Troparion, Tone 1

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, Tone 2

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.

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

(TAKEN FROM THE BOOK : THE LIFE OF THE VIRGIN; ST MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR)

“ Then the holy Theotokos opened her incorruptible and completely immaculate mouth and said to them, “May the will of my son and God be upon me. He is my God, and I will glorify and exalt him, the God of my father. He is my son, born from me according to the flesh, but the father is also God the creator of his mother. Therefore I desire to go to the one who gives life and being to all things. And when I stand before him, I will not cease to pray and intercede on behalf of you and all Christians and the entire world, so that the one who sees mercy as necessary will have mercy on all believers and make them steadfast and guide them on the way of life, and he will convert the unbelievers and make all into one flock of the good shepherd, who laid down his life for the sake of his sheep, and he knows his own, and his own know him (cf. John 10.11, 14–16).”

When the all-blessed mother of Christ spoke thus and blessed them, suddenly there was the sound of great thunder and a cloud on a gentle breeze. And behold, like fragrant drops of dew the holy disciples and apostles of Christ descended from the beautiful cloud, and in front of the house of the holy Virgin, the Theotokos, they came together from the ends of the earth. But John the Evangelist and Theologian met them and greeted them, and he brought them in before the holy and blessed Virgin. Not only were the Twelve there, but also many others of their distinguished disciples and those who were worthy of the honor of apostleship, as the great Dionysius the Areopagite informs us in his letter written to Timothy that, according to him, Dionysius, Timothy, Hierotheus, and others of their friends came there with the apostles for the Dormition of the queen. They went in before her and greeted her with fear and respect...

...And behold, the glorious and wonderful arrival of Christ her God and son took place, and there were with him innumerable hosts of angels and archangels and other hosts of seraphim and cherubim and thrones: they all stood with awe before the Lord, for wherever the king is, the hosts also accompany him. The Holy Theotokos knew about all of this from the beginning, and she was waiting with steadfast hope. Therefore she said, “I believe that all the things that you have said to me will be fulfilled,” and at that time she clearly saw the apostles as well, and they beheld the glory, each one according to his ability. And this present coming of the Lord was more glorious and tremendous than the first, for he appeared more radiant than the brilliance and Transfiguration that occurred on Tabor, although it was less than his natural glory, for that is unfathomable and invisible. Then the

apostles were terrified, and they fell to the ground as if dead (cf. Matt 17.6). But the Lord said to them, "Peace be with you," as he had said before when he entered in through closed doors (cf. John 20.19, 26), for at that time they were also gathered together in the house of John: then because of fear of the Jews, and now for the Dormition of the mother of the Lord. When the apostles heard the sweet and pleasant voice of the Lord, they were revived and strengthened in soul and body, and with reverence they began to look upon the brilliance of his glory and his divinely beautiful face. Nevertheless, the all-holy, immaculate, and blessed mother of Christ was filled with joy, and her glorious face shone with brilliance and divine glory. But she also beheld with fear and reverence the glory and brilliance that shone forth from her king and son Jesus Christ. She glorified his divinity even more and prayed for the apostles and for all those who were standing there. And she sought intercession for all the faithful, wherever they were. She made an offering for the entire world and for every soul that calls upon the Lord and calls to mind the name of his mother, and wherever they observe a commemoration of her, she asked that a blessing would spread throughout that place.

Then again the holy Virgin Mary looked and beheld the glory of her son, which human language is not capable of expressing. And she said, "Bless me, O Lord, with your right hand, and bless all those who glorify you and invoke your name, and receive all their prayers and supplications." Then the Lord held forth his right hand, blessed his mother and said to her, "Let your heart rejoice and be glad, O Mary blessed among women, for every grace and gift has been given to you by my heavenly Father, and every soul that calls on your name with holiness will not be put to shame but will find mercy and comfort both in this life and in the age to come. You, however, come forth to the eternal dwelling places, to unending peace and joy, to the treasure houses of my Father, so that you will see my glory and rejoice by the grace of the Holy Spirit." And immediately at the Lord's command the angels began to sing hymns with a sweet voice, a clear and pleasant voice, and through the Holy Spirit the holy apostles stood shoulder to shoulder and sang with the angelic hymns.

And thus the all-holy mother of the Lord entrusted her blessed and immaculate soul to her Lord, king, and son, and slept a sweet and pleasant sleep. As she escaped the pains of childbirth in the ineffable Nativity, so the pains of death did not come upon her at the time of her Dormition, for both then and now the king and Lord of natures altered the course of nature. Then the host of angels invisibly applauded the send-off of her holy soul. The house and the surrounding area were filled by a waft of indescribable perfume, and unapproachable light (cf. 1 Tim 6.16) spread forth over the holy body. And in this way the master and the disciples, and

heaven and earth led forth the holy Virgin: the gracious and glorious Lord and master led away the holy soul of his immaculate mother to heaven; the disciples took care of her immaculate body on earth, anointing it with myrrh and tending to the things that she had planned. And after a little while, her son and God wished to translate the body to Paradise. The holy apostles encircled the bed on which lay the holy Theotokos' body, wider than heaven. They honored it with hymns and praise; they embraced it with fear and trembling. They not only showed faith and devotion but were also gratified to receive grace and great benefit, and the work of faith had only just begun.

Nevertheless, as soon as news of the holy queen's Dormition had spread, all the sick and infirm assembled there. Then the eyes of the blind were opened, the ears of the deaf were unblocked, the lame stood up to walk (cf. Isa 35.5–6), demons were expelled, and every suffering and sickness was cured. The sky and the heavens of heavens were sanctified by the ascension of the holy soul, and the earth likewise was made worthy of the honor of sanctity by the immaculate body. Then the apostles called on blessed Peter to deliver a funeral prayer. Peter pressed Paul and John to pray. They refused and honored him as the head of the apostles. The blessed Peter complied with their words, as was fitting for this occasion and this mystery. He prayed, and immediately they wrapped in a holy shroud and anointed with myrrh the body that contained the uncontainable, the king and creator of all things visible and invisible, and they laid it on a bed. And again Peter began to sing a hymn, and all the assembly of the apostles joined in, and the powers of heaven sang with them invisibly, and the air shone and was made fragrant with lamps and incense. Then the holy apostles took up the honorable bed on their shoulders, and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit they went forth to the area of Gethsemane, as the Theotokos had previously directed. The angels went ahead and were surrounding them and followed behind, covering them with their wings. The apostles were singing hymns, and all the believers accompanied them with faith. The procession of the glorious and praised one was itself glorious and praised. All the infirm and the sick were cured, and there were not only sixty strong men around the bed of the king, as Scripture says (cf. Cant 3.7), but visibly the numerous apostles and their innumerable followers and all the faithful, and invisibly the innumerable host of angels.

And at that time the adversary and enemy of truth did not refrain from showing his treachery, but again he stirred up the evil Jews to envy and violence. For when they saw the glorious procession of the immaculate and all-praised mother of Christ, and the multitude of the faithful that was accompanying the apostles, and the innumerable miracles that they were working by the grace of the holy queen,

and they heard the voices of the divinely beautiful singing, wicked envy seized the deranged and unwise people, the nation deliberating on destruction, in whom there is no understanding (Deut 32.6 and 32.28). As before when the crowds of innocent children went forth to meet Christ the king of all things with branches from date palms and said, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the king of Israel!" (cf. Matt 21.9 and 21.16), and the godless high priests and the scribes were enraged and fought with wicked envy against the one who is gracious and compassionate to all, to the point that they condemned him to death by death on a cross, so now also they gathered to attack the procession of his gloriously immaculate mother and to obstruct the orderly and adorned company of the apostles and the faithful, and with perverse cries they came to destroy the divine assembly.

Then one of the reprobates, who was more brazenly insidious and shameless than the others, insolently tore through the crowd of the faithful that was following the ark of holiness. He reached the holy apostles, who were bearing the treasure house of heaven that contained the uncontainable and unbounded nature. He stretched forth his impure hands and seized the bed on which lay the immaculate body of the most blessed queen, before which even angels tremble, which even the cherubim look upon with awe. This bed the arrogant and foolish man tried to throw down to the ground. Oh savage soul! Oh deranged mind! But immediately he saw just retribution for his deeds, for in the very touching of the holy bed with his hands, both hands were instantly severed from the shoulders when he dared to approach the one whom he was not even worthy to look upon. The wrath of God came upon him as he cried out and screamed. Wailing and moaning overcame him and the other Jews with him. The wrath of fury came by the hand of the angel of wrath. They were turned back and were put to shame, and the angel of the Lord pursued them. This miracle took place to bring shame and fear to the Jews, but it was a source of great courage and glory to the faithful. And then the one who was initially seized by great folly and was counted among the enemies and slanderers of God, when he was punished in accordance with his deeds, he was ashamed. And he understood and converted his former rebuke into faith, and his wicked envy into fear and repentance, and his calumnies and reproaches into contrition and prayer. He was no longer able to raise his hands in prayer, but with ardent tears and a penitent voice he called on the holy Theotokos and asked for mercy.

Nevertheless, the one who is the cause of all things and the source of all joy does not wish to inflict suffering and misery and mourning and unending sorrow on the sinner, but with a small wound of the flesh, he cured the incurable wounds of the soul and made him worthy to become a Christian and by the grace of baptism to

be called a child of God. Then he mercifully healed the wound of his hands, for when the justly punished Jew understood his error, he began to repent and to pray with ardent tears, and he invoked the name of Christ and of his holy mother Mary. The holy apostle Peter ordered that the holy bed be set down, and they all cried out to the holy Theotokos with prayers and supplications, and they brought before her the wounded sinner, shattered and repenting with the blood of his wound and drenched with the tears of his eyes. Then he touched the holy bed, no longer as before, but he prayed with fear and trembling. And the blessed Peter placed the severed hands in their place, and immediately by the grace of Christ and his all-holy mother, the hands severed from the shoulders were fitted and attached to his body. And not only did the pains and anguish disappear, but there was no trace of the wound at all. From that point, this man believed in Christ, and he was baptized and joined to the number of the believers, and he glorified Christ and his all-immaculate and glorious mother. This miracle, the sudden wound and the swift cure, strengthened the faith of many who had doubts and converted many of the Jews to the faith, and they confessed that the one crucified by them, Jesus Christ the Lord, was God, and they proclaimed his holy mother the Theotokos.

Thus all of the apostles again called on Peter and Paul to lay the holy body in the tomb, for John the evangelist was carrying a censer, and he censured the holy body of the queen with fragrant incense and drenched it with tears. Then Peter and Paul did not touch the holy body with their hands, but with fear and reverence they took hold of the shroud that was hanging from here and from there, and thus they lifted the blessed body from the bed, and using the shroud they laid it in the tomb. As the glorious and most revered apostles had properly and worthily served her son, so they also served his mother, and they honored the one honored by men and angels, whom all generations call blessed and glorify, as the blessed one said with her own holy mouth (cf. Luke 1.48).

Thus, when the holy one and the Holy of Holies, the body of the most blessed Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, was sealed in the tomb, the holy apostles remained there for three days, and they heard the beautiful singing of the holy angels, sweet and pleasant singing that it is not possible for human language to describe: as the prophet David said, "I will go forth to the marvelous dwelling place in the house of God with the sound of singing and acknowledgement, with the sound of a festival" (Ps 41.5), for here is truly the dwelling place of the Lord, the marvelous house of God in which the Lord of glory, God, the king of peace was pleased to dwell."