



# PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

## PROGRAM FOR 12—18 AUGUST 2018

<b>SUNDAY 12 AUGUST</b>	<b>11th Sunday of Matthew, Matthew 18: 23-35</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7.30– 11.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li><li>• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos</li></ul>
<p>***** <b>SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES</b> *****</p> <p>(A free voluntary program organised by the Church)</p> <p><i>Immediately after Holy Communion until Church dismissal, in the building behind the Church, Religious Instruction lessons take place for our children. We have classes for ages ranging from 5yrs to teenage years, which are given in a relaxed, friendly environment. The understanding of our faith through the religious instruction lessons brings our children closer to God and the joy and peace of His Love.</i></p>	
<b>MONDAY 13 AUGUST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 9.00am Service of Holy Unction</li><li>• 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.</li><li>• 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos</li></ul>
<b>TUESDAY 14 AUGUST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 4.45pm Service of Vespers for Dormition of the Theotokos</li></ul>
<b>WEDNESDAY 15 AUGUST</b>  <b>THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li></ul>
<b>SATURDAY 18 AUGUST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3.45pm Service of Vespers</li></ul>
<b>SUNDAY 19 AUGUST</b>	<b>GOSPEL READING: Matthew 19: 16-26</b> <b>EPISTLE READING: 1Corin. 15: 1-11</b>



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Fr Athanasios and  
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are available at the Church  
every Monday to Friday  
**between 4.00 and 6.00pm**  
for Holy Confession and  
any spiritual need.

They asked an elder,  
"What is humility?" The  
elder said, "When your  
brother sins against you,  
and you forgive him,  
before he repents  
before you."

~ ~ ~  
Ancient Patericon,

### Apolitikion

#### *The Koimisis—Falling Asleep of the Theotokos*

*O Mother of God, in giving birth you still preserved virginity;  
and in falling asleep you did not forsake the world.  
You are the Mother of Life and have been transferred to life,  
and through your prayers have delivered our souls from death.*



## How to Share in the Glory of Christ's Resurrection: Homily for the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos

At the very heart of our faith as Orthodox Christians is the good news that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. He truly died and was buried as a human being, but Hades and the grave could not contain Him as God. Because He is risen, those who die enter into His presence as they await the resurrection of the body and the Last Judgment. Those who have loved and served Him experience paradise already as a foretaste of heaven, for they are with the Lord to Whom they united themselves during their lifetimes. Our Saviour rose as a whole person with a glorified body and then ascended into heaven forty days later. That is how He has made it possible for us all to share in the eternal joy of the heavenly kingdom.

As St. Paul wrote in today's epistle lesson, Christ rose and ascended because, though He is fully divine, He "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Our Lord has made it possible for us to participate in His heavenly glory by lowering Himself to become one of us, and thereby conquering sin and death on our behalf.

This great feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos shows how we may all come to share in the eternal life of our Lord. At the end of the Mother of God's earthly life, the Apostles were miraculously assembled in her presence. St. Thomas, however, arrived three days late. When her tomb was opened for him to pay his last respects, her body was not there. Even as she was the first to accept Christ into her life—and in a unique way into her womb as His virgin mother—she was the first to follow Him as a whole, complete person into the Kingdom of Heaven. Her Dormition is an icon of our hope for eternal life.

In order to see the connection between this feast and our hope, we must remember that the Virgin Mary is as fully human as the rest of us. We call her "Theotokos" because she is the "Bearer" or "Mother of God." The One to Whom she gave birth is our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ. In order for Him to be truly human, He had to have a mother like the rest of us. From ancient times, Christians have honoured her with this title for that very reason. The only ones who refused to call her Theotokos were those who did not believe in the divinity of the child born to her, such as the heretic Nestorius. By overreacting to various abuses in the Roman Catholic Church during the Middle Ages, Protestant traditions have downplayed and often ignored her unique role in our salvation. In contrast, the Orthodox Church makes a clear distinction between worship and honour or veneration. We worship only God, but we honour or venerate those whose lives are shining examples of God's holiness. The honour that we give them magnifies the glory of God Who has done great things through them. Properly honouring the Theotokos in no way distracts us from worshipping her Son, but inspires us all the more to welcome Him into our lives as she did. And since she followed Him into the heavenly kingdom at her Dormition, how could we not ask for her prayers even as we celebrate her wonderful example of loving and serving the Lord? Remember that He performed His first miraculous sign in St. John's gospel, turning water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, at His mother's request.

It is no accident, of course, that the Theotokos is a woman, for obviously only a woman could be the mother of our Saviour. Her unique role in our salvation reminds us that God creates us male and female in the divine image and likeness, and uses both sexes together to bring salvation to the world. The Church knows the Theotokos as "the New Eve" through whom the Son of God became "the Second Adam." The first Eve came from the body of the first Adam, while the Second Adam became a human being through the body of the New Eve. The imagery of male and female continues with the Church as the Bride of Christ, born from the blood and water which flowed from the Lord's body at His crucifixion. They symbolize the Eucharist and baptism through which we share in the life of our Lord. He is the Groom and we, the Church, are His bride. The biblical drama of salvation culminates in the wedding feast of the Lamb in Revelation, which fulfills so much imagery from Christ's teaching and ministry about the marriage banquet as a sign of the Kingdom of God.

Today's gospel reading reminds us that the Theotokos prepared to follow her Son into eternal life by attending to the one thing needful, by hearing and obeying the word of the Lord. As she said to the Archangel Gabriel in response to her unique vocation to become the Virgin Mother of the Son of God: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." Through her obedience, she gives life to the One Who conquers death. She risks her life and reputation by agreeing in humble faith to do something totally unheard of in becoming a virgin mother. In a world where slavery to the passions so easily dominates the circumstances surrounding conception and childbirth, she bears the Saviour in complete purity. None of this was her idea or plan; it was God's. But she obeyed in humility, nonetheless.

The particulars of our callings are different from that of the Theotokos, but the underlying truth is the same. Namely, we become participants in the eternal life of our Lord by obeying Him in humble faith, by opening our lives to Him such that His holy glory shines through us. She became the living temple of the Lord in a unique way when she contained within her own body the Son of God. Remember, however, that we also become temples of the Holy Spirit by the presence of Christ in our hearts. We are living members of His own Body, the Church. We receive His Body and Blood into ours. We, too, are called to give life to Christ in this world, to allow Him to become incarnate in us and in all that we say, do, and think.

In all these ways, the Theotokos stands as a clear and relevant model for each and every one of us, regardless of the circumstances of our lives. Married, single, widowed, or divorced, we must all keep a close watch on our thoughts and desires, especially concerning the relationship between man and woman. If not, they will control us instead of us controlling how we respond to them. No matter how busy or distracting our lives may be, we must devote ourselves to prayer and reading the Scriptures daily. If not, we will end up putting the world before God without even noticing it. Above all else, we must become close to Christ, uniting ourselves to Him in obedient love. That means doing our best to live as we know He wants us to, not because of a law, but because we want His life to become ours. We want His holiness to shine through us. That is how to prepare to enter joyfully into His presence when we depart this life.

The feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos calls us to enter mystically into the Kingdom of Heaven as we celebrate her following her Son into eternal life. It should not be surprising that one who had welcomed Christ into her life so profoundly was in turn welcomed by Him. Inspired by her great example, "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1-2) That is how we will prepare, by God's grace, to follow the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary into eternal life. She shows us how to respond to the good news of His resurrection which, of course, is the basis of our hope to participate in the blessed joy of the heavenly kingdom. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." Those who live that truth are already in the presence of the One Who died, rose from the grave, and ascended into heaven. They are united to the Saviour in holy love and experience a foretaste of heavenly glory.

Fr. Philip LeMasters