




# PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

## PROGRAM FOR 11– 17 AUGUST 2019

<b>SUNDAY 11 AUGUST</b>	<b>EIGHTH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW, Matthew 14: 14-22</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.30am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li><li>• <b>5.00pm</b> Paraklesis to the Theotokos</li></ul>
 <b>SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES</b> (A free voluntary program organised by the Church) Lessons take place in the building behind the church and begin at the time of Holy Communion until Church dismissal. We have classes for ages ranging from 5yrs to teenage years. Lessons are taught in a relaxed, friendly environment. Please bring your children along to learn of their rich Orthodox faith and come close to God and His Love.	
<b>MONDAY 12 AUGUST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>10.00am</b> Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.</li><li>• <b>5.00pm</b> Paraklesis to the Theotokos</li></ul>
<b>TUESDAY 13 AUGUST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.00am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li><li>• <b>5.00pm</b> Paraklesis to the Theotokos</li></ul>
<b>WEDNESDAY 14 AUGUST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>5.00pm</b> Service of Vespers for Dormition of the Theotokos</li></ul>
<b>THURSDAY 15 AUGUST</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>7.00am</b> Orthros and Divine Liturgy</li></ul>
<b>THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS</b>	
<b>SUNDAY 18 AUGUST</b>	<b>GOSPEL READING: Matthew 14: 22-34</b> <b>EPISTLE READING: 1Corinthians 3: 9-17</b>



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

We should try to live in  
such a way that if the  
Gospels were lost,  
they could be  
re-written by looking  
at us."

Met. Anthony of Surozh

### In Praise of The Theotokos!

*Some seven hundred years ago, St. Gregory Palamas delivered a beautiful and inspiring homily regarding the Dormition of the Mother of God and Ever Virgin Mary. Below are some excerpts:*

...There is also nothing dearer or more necessary for me than to expound with due honor in church the wonders of the ever-virgin Mother of God... If "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Ps. 116:15) and "the memory of the just is praised" (Prov. 10:7 LXX), how much more fitting is it for us to celebrate with highest honors the memory of the ever virgin Mother of God, the Holy of Holies, through whom the saints receive their hallowing?

That is exactly what we are doing today by commemorating her holy dormition and passing away, through which, having been made a little lower than the angels (cf. Ps. 8:5), she arose incomparably higher than the angels, archangels, and all the heavenly powers above them, because of her nearness to the God of all (cf. Rom. 9:5), and the marvels written of old which were accomplished in her.

On her account there were divine predictions by prophets... Nations and circumstances were transformed to make way for the fulfillment of the new mystery concerning her. The culmination, or rather the beginning and foundation of subsequent marvelous events, was the accomplishment of God's promise to Joachim and Anna, the most virtuous people of their day, that, although childless from their youth, they would have a child in their extreme old age, and that their daughter would bear without seed Him whom God the Father had begotten before all ages, outside time.

The Mother of God left her father's house in extraordinary fashion while still an infant, to live in God's house. For the space of many years she stayed there, strange as it seems, in the Holy of Holies, provided with indescribable nourishment by attending angels.

[She] reversed Adam and Eve's condemnation, and healed the curse which was upon them, turning it into a blessing (Luke 1:28-38). For the King of all desired the secret beauty of the Ever-Virgin, as David foretold (cf. Ps. 45:11). He bowed the heavens and came down (Ps. 18:9) and overshadowed

owed her (cf. Luke 1:35), rather, the power of the Most High came to dwell in her in His very person.

Since anything that overshadows something else naturally gives it its own form and character, what came to pass in the Virgin's womb was not just union but the formation, out of both the power of the Most High and her all-holy virgin womb, of the incarnate Word of God...He made our human nature divine, and bestowed on us, according to the holy apostle, "things the angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. 1:12).

Her death, too, was life-giving and led to heavenly immortal life, and its day of remembrance is a joyful holiday and worldwide festival...all the holy apostles were gathered from every country to her sacred funeral, the hymns of divine revelation sung on that occasion by these inspired men, the attendance of angels, singing and ministering around her...The Lord...was invisibly present, honoring His Mother's departure. Into His hands she entrusted her God-bearing spirit, and through Him her body, her spirit's companion, was soon translated into a heavenly place of eternal life, as rightly befits her whole life from the very beginning.

According to Solomon, "Many have acquired riches, and many daughters have acted with power, but she excels and outdoes them all," to an inexpressible degree (cf. Prov. 31:29). Standing between God and the whole human race, she alone made God a son of man, and men sons of God, rendered the earth heaven and made mankind divine. She alone among women was declared the Mother of God by nature transcending every nature. Through her unutterable child bearing she became Queen of all creation in this world and beyond, and through herself she raised up those below her, and made her subjects heavenly instead of earthly. She...was set high above all, the supremely blessed Queen of a blessed race.

Today, she has moved from earth to heaven, and now she has heaven too as a fitting dwelling-place, a palace meet for her. She has stood on the right hand of the King of all, clothed in vesture wrought with gold, and arrayed in diverse colors, as the psalmist and prophet says of her (cf. Ps. 45:9 LXX); and you should take this garment interwoven with gold to mean her divinely radiant body, adorned with every type of virtue. For at present she is the only one who has a place in heaven with her divinely glorified body in the company of her Son [*all of the other saints are awaiting the coming resurrection to be united with their glorified bodies*].

Earth, the grave, and death could not ultimately detain her life-giving body, which has held God and been a more beloved habitation for Him than heaven and the heaven of heavens. For if a soul which has the grace of God dwelling within it goes up to heaven when released from this world, as we believe and is evident on many accounts, how can that body which not only received within it the pre-eternal, only-begotten Son of God, the ever-flowing fount of grace, but was also plainly seen to bear Him, fail to be taken up from earth to heaven?

Could she who when only three years old, before the heaven child had dwelt within her and been clothed by her in flesh, lived in the Holy of Holies, and who became excellent and truly heavenly even in her body through many great works, afterwards become earth and subject to corruption? How could this seem reasonable to people who take a rational view?

It was right, therefore, that the body which brought forth the Son should be glorified with Him in divine glory, and that the ark of Christ's holiness should arise with Him who rose on the third day, as the prophet sang (cf. Ps. 132:8 LXX). The linen cloths and winding sheets left behind in the tomb, which were all that those who came to look for her found there, proved to the disciples that she too had risen from the dead, just as was earlier the case with her Son and Lord...she was taken up directly from the grave to the heavenly realm, whence she sends bright shafts of holy light and grace down to earth, illuminating all the space around the world, and is venerated, admired, and hymned by all the faithful.

It is as though God wanted to set up an icon of everything good and, in so doing, to display His own image clearly to angels and men, and thus He made her so truly beautiful. Bringing together all the various means He had used to adorn all creation, He made her a world of everything good, both visible and invisible. Or rather, He revealed her as the synthesis of divine, angelic, and human loveliness, a nobler beauty to embellish both worlds, originating from the earth but reaching up, through her ascension now from the tomb to heaven, to the heavens and beyond.

Also, she is superior to everyone in that after death she became immortal, and she alone lives in her body with her Son and God in heaven. Thence she pours down abundant grace on those who honor her and bestows on them the possibility of reaching up to her, the receptacle of such great graces, who lavishes the highest benefits upon us in her goodness, and never ceases to yield a rich harvest and plentiful gifts for us.

The Mother of God is so much closer to God than others who draw near to Him that she is able to intercede more powerfully than any of them, and by this I mean not just human beings but even all the ranks of angels. Isaiah writes of the highest order of angels in heaven, "And the seraphim stood round about him" (Isa. 6:2 LXX), whereas David says of the Mother of God, "Upon thy right hand did stand the queen" (Ps. 45:9). Do you notice the difference in their standing? You can also see from this the difference in honor between the seraphim's rank and hers, for the seraphim are "round about" God, but only the Queen of all stands beside Him.

She is admired and praised by God Himself, as though He were extolling her to the powers around Him in the words used in the Songs of Songs, "How beautiful is my companion!" (cf. S. of S. 4:1; 6:4 LXX). She is more brilliant than light, she blossoms more beautifully than the gardens of divine paradise, and she is more delightfully adorned than the visible and invisible worlds.

It is fitting that she stands not just beside God, but on His right hand, for where Christ sat in heaven, namely, on the right hand of the majesty (Heb. 1:3), there she now stands, having ascended from earth to heaven...because she is truly His throne; and where the King sits, there stands the throne.

Isaiah saw this throne in the midst of the choir of the cherubim and described it as "high and lifted up" (Isa. 6:1)...The patriarch Jacob, seeing obscure glimpses of this throne, said "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God and this is the gate of heaven." (Gen. 28:17) Elsewhere, David...plays a harmonious song to her, with the words, "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee forever, even for ever and ever." (Ps. 45:17)

Notice how all creation praises the Virgin Mother, not just in past times, but "forever, even for ever and ever." From this we can see that she will never cease doing good to the whole of creation, not just to the human race, but also to the immaterial supernatural hosts of angels.

The fact that they, like us, partake of and touch the intangible divine nature only through her is clearly shown by Isaiah. For he did not see the seraphim taking the live coal directly off the altar, but picking it up with tongs, which he also used to touch his prophetic lips to purify them (Isa. 6:6-7). This vision of the tongs is the same as that great vision which Moses saw of the bush burning with fire but not consumed (Exod. 3:2) Is there anyone who is unaware that the Virgin Mother is both that bush and those tongs, which held the divine fire without being burnt...She alone stands at the border between created and uncreated nature, and no one can come to God unless he is truly illumined by her.

Just as it was only through her that the Son came to us, was seen on earth, and lived among men, after previously being invisible to all, so from now on for endless eternity all progress toward the manifestation of divine light, every revelation of divine mysteries, and all forms of spiritual gifts are beyond everyone's grasp without her.

She was the first to receive the all-pervading fullness of Him who fills all things (Eph. 1:23, cf. 4:10), and she brought him within reach of all, distributing to each as he is able to receive, in proportion to the measure of his purity, such that she is both the treasure-house and Mistress of God's riches.

It is an eternal custom in heaven that those who are lesser should participate through those who are greater in what lies beyond existence, and the Virgin Mother is incomparably greater than all. So as many as will share in God will do so through her, all those who know God will know her as the one who holds Him whom nothing can contain, and all who sing God's praises will hymn her after God.

She is the cause of what preceded her, the protectress of what comes after her, and she procures eternity. She is the prophets' theme, the apostle's starting point, the martyrs' mainstay, and the teachers' foundation. Of all those on earth she is the glory, of those in heaven the delight, the adornment of all creation. Source, fount, and root of ineffable good things, she is the crown and perfection of all the saints.

O holy and now heavenly Virgin...Just the remembrance of you brings hallowing. Simply turning toward you makes our mind more lucid, and takes it straight up to divine heights...You have become the treasurer of graces and their store, not so you might keep them for yourself, but that you might fill the universe with grace.

Text comes from [Saint Gregory Palamas: The Homilies.](#)