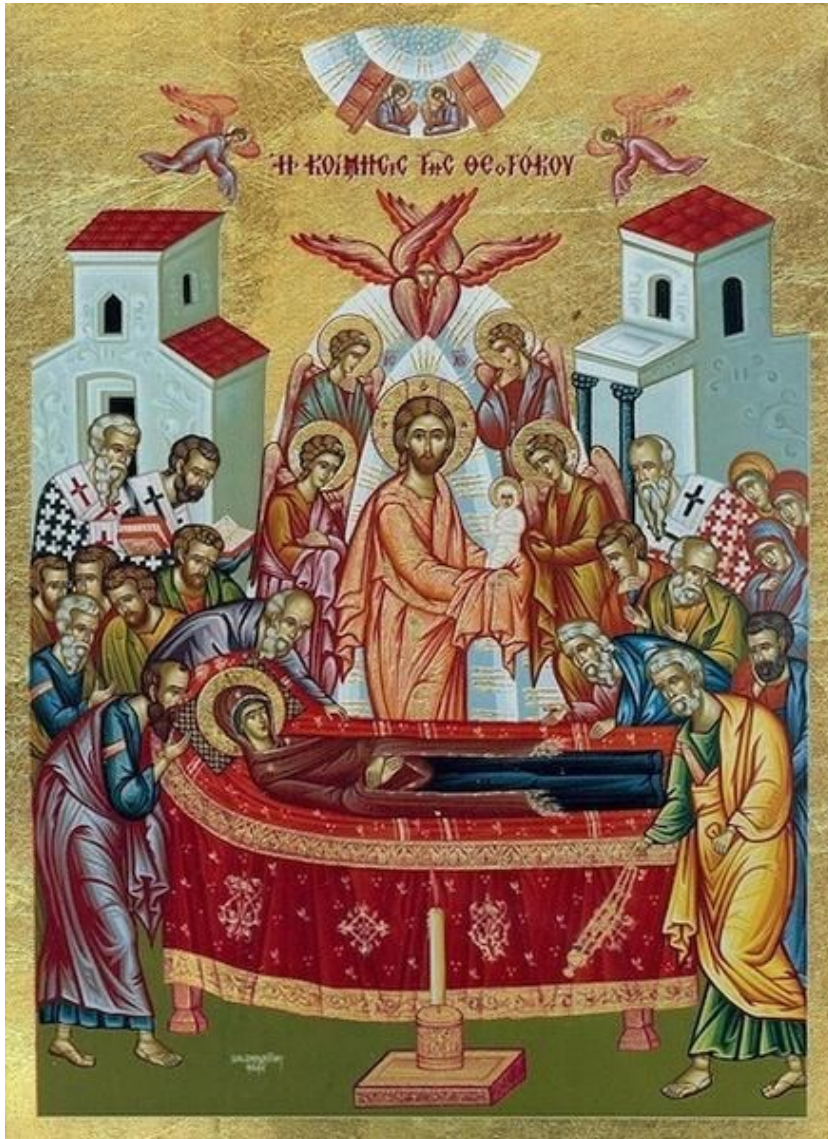


From the Divine Office for the Forefeast of the Dormition (Aug. 14)

O peoples, dance with joy and clap your hands with fervor; gather today in eagerness and jubilation and sing with glee, for the Mother of God is about to rise in glory, going up from the earth into Heaven. It is to her we always sing hymns of praise, for she is the Mother of God. (Troparion)

Today the whole universe dances with joy at your glorious memory, O Mother of God, and it cries out to you: "Rejoice, O Virgin, pride of Christians!" (Kontakion)



**ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
LEAVETAKING OF THE FEAST OF THE
TRANSFIGURATION
AUGUST 13, 2023**



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church
256 Hamilton St.
Worcester, MA 01604
Rectory: (508) 752-4174 Hall: (508) 755-2199
Email: olphmelkite@gmail.com/Website: olphworcester.org
Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor
Cell: (774) 502-8547
Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

Antiphon (Transfiguration)

1. The favors of the Lord I will sing forever; through all the generations my mouth shall proclaim His faithfulness.

O Son of God, who were transfigured on Mount Tabor, save us who sing to You. Alleluia!

2. The heavens declare the glory of God, and firmament declares the handiwork of the Lord.

O Son of God, who were transfigured on Mount Tabor, save us who sing to You. Alleluia!

3. Happy the people who know the joyful shout; in the light of Your countenance they shall walk, O Lord.

O Son of God, who were transfigured on Mount Tabor, save us who sing to You Alleluia!

Entrance Hymn

Priest: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice at Your name

People: O Son of God, who were transfigured on Mount Tabor, save us who sing to You. Alleluia!

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 2) pg. 38

When You descended to death, O immortal Life, You put Hades to death by the splendor of Your divinity. And when You raised the dead from below the earth, all the heavenly powers cried out to You: “O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to You!”

Troparion of the Transfiguration (Tone 7) twice

You were transfigured on the mountain, O Christ God showing Your disciples as much of Your glory as they could hold. Let Your eternal light shine also upon us sinners, through the prayers of the Mother of God, O Giver of light, glory to You.

Patronal Troparion (Tone 1) Pg. 15

In giving birth, you have preserved your virginity and in falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Mother of God. You have passed to life being the Mother of Life. Through your intercession, save our souls from death.

Kondakion of the Transfiguration (Tone 7)

On the Mountain, You were transfigured, O Christ God; and Your disciples saw as much of Your glory as they could hold, so that when they should see You crucified they would know that You suffered willingly and would proclaim to the world that You are verily the Splendor of the Father.

The Resurrection of the Body

The Dormition of the Theotokos points to an aspect of eternal life only briefly sketched out in the Scriptures. There we read that the risen Christ is “*the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep*” (1 Cor 15:20). To call Him “first-fruits” presumed that there is more to the crop, as St Paul elaborates: “*Christ the first-fruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming*” (v. 23).

Mary’s participation in eternal life is unique – she is not awaiting the return of her Son; she now fully shares in the eternal life in body as well as spirit by a special gift of grace. Some may see this belief as unscriptural, contradicting the very words of St Paul. Rather they confirm by a historic moment what would otherwise simply be an allegation. Mary’s dormition demonstrates that St Paul’s teaching is not mere words. Human beings can share physically in the Resurrection and Mary is there to prove it.

In the words of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Mary’s dormition “...is a singular participation in her Son’s Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians. [It is significant that this ¶ concludes by paraphrasing our troparion of the Dormition in witness to the meaning of this feast.] In giving birth you kept your virginity; in your Dormition you did not leave the world, O Mother of God, but were joined to the source of Life. You conceived the living God and, by your prayers, will deliver our souls from death.” (¶966).

What Mary Left Behind

One tradition repeated in several early texts concerns the sash or girdle of the Theotokos. Thomas was supposedly the last Apostle to arrive and missed venerating her body. According to the seventh-century Passing of the Blessed Virgin Mary attributed to Joseph of Arimathea, Thomas saw the most holy body of the blessed Mary going up into heaven, and prayed her to give him a blessing. She heard his prayer, and threw him the sash which she had about her.

Parts of this girdle are venerated to this day, chiefly at the Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos and at the Syriac Orthodox “Church of the Girdle” in Homs, Syria. During the eighteenth century when the Melkite Patriarchate of Antioch was being established some iconographers were moved to “Catholicize” the icon of the Dormition. They showed the Theotokos giving St Thomas a rosary instead of her sash, contributing to the popular notion that the Latin rosary was of Apostolic and Eastern origin.

Mary and Ephesus?

We do not know when the site of the Virgin’s tomb in Gethsemane, at the foot of Mount Olivet, became a place of Christian devotion. Some say that the first church there had been built by St Helena in the fourth century. There was clearly a church there in the fifth century. It is well documented that the first Patriarch of Jerusalem, St Juvenal, had taken the veil of the Theotokos from this shrine and sent it to the Empress Pulcheria who had asked him for the Virgin’s “relics” after the Council of Chalcedon (451). The patriarch replied, “Three days after her repose, the body of the Holy Virgin was raised up to heaven, and the Tomb in the Garden of Gethsemane bears only her Veil.” The patriarch then sent this relic to Constantinople where it was enshrined in the church of the Theotokos at Blachernae, a district of Constantinople.

Today some claim that the Theotokos died in Ephesus where St John the Theologian lived for many years because the Lord Jesus had entrusted His mother to him as He was dying on the cross.

In the nineteenth century a house claimed to be that of the Virgin was unearthed near Ephesus, based on a supposed vision of Anne Catherine Emerich. This shrine became popular in the West; however there was never any early tradition connecting Mary’s death and burial with the city of Ephesus.

DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today **Our Families & Friends, Living and Deceased**

August 20 **+Rev. Basil Samra (40 day)**

Today's Coffee Hr. is hosted by the Dumont Family

Next Sunday's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by

Last Week's Collection

| | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Weekly | \$ 908 |
| Candles | \$ 31 |
| Coffee Hr. | \$ 53 |
| Donations | \$ 30 |
| Other | \$ 90 |
| TOTAL | \$ 1,108 |



FOOD DONATION BOX

There is a green box in the narthex for food donations. Once a month, we will deliver whatever we collect to a local charity that helps those with food insecurity. Our first delivery will be to Mustard Seed Ministries on August 4. Please buy a couple of extra items when you go the grocery store and put them in the box on your way into the church on Sunday. Thank you in advance for your generosity in helping those who need a little extra assistance!

UPCOMING LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Mon 8.14 6PM-Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Dormition

Fri. 9.8 6PM-Divine Liturgy for the Nativity of the Theotokos

Wed. 9.13 6PM-Great Vespers for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Thu. 9.14 6PM-Divine Liturgy for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Please plan to join us!

Welcome to any visitors we have with us this morning! We are happy to have you worship with us.

Please join us downstairs in the church hall for the coffee hour so that we can get to know each other better and answer any questions you may have about the parish or the Melkite Church.

100th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION & FAMILY PICNIC

Our 100th Anniversary will be celebrated on **November 4-5**. We will have Great Vespers followed by a banquet on November 4. On November 5, we will celebrate a hierarchal Divine Liturgy followed by lunch in the parish hall. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend. More information will be forthcoming. Please contact Fr. Bryan if you would like to help with the planning and preparation for the occasion.

You should have received a letter and form to use if you want to place an Ad in the commemorative book. As a reminder, the deadline for submitting Ads is **September 1**.

We are looking for donations to offset some of the costs for the anniversary celebration. If you can donate, please let us know.

We are also working on our Family Picnic which will be **September 10**. **We need your help to make the Picnic successful!** Please volunteer to help in some capacity. Too much of the work is being done by too few people. If each of us does a little, no one is overwhelmed.

Our next meeting for both events will be **Wednesday August 16 at 6:30PM**.

PARKING LOT

Work on the repaving of the parking lot is almost finished! Hopefully, you have seen the pictures on Facebook or our website (olphworchester.org). This project eliminates a safety issue and greatly improves the exterior look of the property. The project cost is approximately \$85,000. We have the funds to pay for the work but it will deplete almost all our savings.

Please prayerfully consider making a donation to help replenish our savings .

As always, God bless you for your generosity!

August 15 – Feast of the Holy Dormition of the Theotokos

IN BYZANTINE CHURCHES the first Great Feast in the liturgical calendar is the Nativity of the Theotokos (September 8). The feast of her Holy Dormition (August 15), coming at the end of the Church year, brings this cycle to a close. Like a musical masterwork, our annual remembrance of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ begins with an “overture” (the birth of His Mother) and concludes with a “coda” (her entry into the new life which is promised to us).

What Is a “Dormition”?

Our English word echoes the French and Latin words for “sleep.” The corresponding Greek word, koimisis, appears in English as “cemetery,” or “sleeping place.” By calling death a “repose” or a “falling asleep” we are affirming our faith that death is not an ultimate reality.

Mary’s is not the only Dormition observed in our Church. The first saints to be commemorated were the martyrs, witnesses to Christ at the risk of their life; their death was considered as a “crowning” to their testimony. Some saints not martyred were remembered on the day of their peaceful death, their dormition. Thus we remember the Dormition of St Anne, mother of the Theotokos (July 25) and of St. John the Theologian, the only apostle not martyred (September 26). The Coptic Church also remembers the Dormition of St Joseph (August 2).

The Tradition of the Virgin’s Repose

Several writings describing the death of the Virgin have come down to us; the earliest still in existence dates from the fifth century. But, according to biblical scholar Lino Cignelli, “All of them are traceable back to a single primitive document, a Judaeo-Christian prototype, clearly written within the mother church of Jerusalem some time during the second century, and, in all probability, composed for liturgical use right at the Tomb of Our Lady.”

The early Tradition generally places Mary’s death in Jerusalem, a few years after the death and resurrection of Christ. According to one early version, “...the apostles carried the couch, and laid down her precious and holy body in Gethsemane in a new tomb. And, behold, a perfume of sweet savor came forth out of the holy sepulcher of our Lady the Mother of God; and for three days the voices of invisible angels were heard glorifying Christ our God, who had been born of her. And when the third day was ended, the voices were no longer heard; and from that time forth all knew that her spotless and precious body had been transferred to paradise.”

Other of these writings speak of all the apostles being summoned and/or transported miraculously to attend the Holy Virgin at her passing. When Mary reposes, they see Christ taking her soul to heaven. When they bury her body as the Lord had instructed, the apostles once more see Christ. In one version Peter appeals to Him: “It had seemed to us Your servants to be right that, just as You, having vanquished death, now reign in glory, You should raise up the body of Your mother and take her with You in joy into heaven.” Christ restores her soul to her body and glorifies both with Him. In all these accounts Mary enters eternal life in the fullness of her spiritual and bodily existence.

Employing elements of these accounts, the Churches of the East and then the West began to celebrate the feast of Mary’s passing, which became widespread before the end of the first millennium AD. The eighth century Father, St John of Damascus, has left us several sermons on the meaning of Mary’s Dormition as well as a canon which we still sing at Orthros on this feast. “What, then, shall we call this mystery of yours? Death? Your blessed soul is naturally parted from your blissful and undefiled body. The body is delivered to the grave, yet it does not remain in death, nor is it the prey of corruption. The body of her, whose virginity remained unspotted in child-birth, was preserved in its incorruption, and was taken to a better, more divine place, where there is no death, only eternal life” (First Homily on the Dormition).



Prokimenon

Reader: My strength and my courage is the Lord, and He has been my Savior.

People: My strength and my courage is the Lord, and He has been my Savior.

Reader: The Lord has chastised me through His teaching, yet He has not delivered me to death.

People: My strength and my courage is the Lord, and He has been my Savior.

Reader: My strength and my courage is the Lord,

People: And He has been my Savior.

Epistle: 1 Cor. 9:2-12

Alleluia Verses

The Lord shall hear you on the day of distress; may the name of the God of Jacob defend you.

Verse: O Lord, save Your people and bless Your inheritance.

Gospel: Mt. 18:23-35

Hirmos of the Transfiguration (Tone 4)

You gave birth without stain, for it was God incarnate in the flesh who came forth from your womb. He was seen on earth and conversed with men. Wherefore, O Mother of God, we all exalt you.

Kinonikon: We shall walk forever in the light of the glory of your countenance, O Lord. Alleluia!

After Communion: Troparion of the Transfiguration

Please remember in your prayers: Lorraine Lian, George Arraj, Jr., Ron Abraham, Peter Abraham, Robert Ghiz, Sadie Mirante, Archie Opatka, Anthony Poti, Katherine Thomas, Charlotte Stockhaus, Ruth Welsh, Richard Abraham, Sr., Frank Boyda, Carol Boyda, Bob Lynch, Joe Najemy, Michael Mooradian, Dennis Desplaines, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Wyatt William Rahall, Billy Rahall, Dan Rahall, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Elaine Foley, David Ahlin, Elio Kanaan, all those affected by the earthquakes in Syria and Turkey, and the people of Ukraine.

If there are people for whom you would like me to pray, please reach out and give me their names. Part of our vocation as Christians is to pray for each other, especially when someone is sick or suffering in any way.