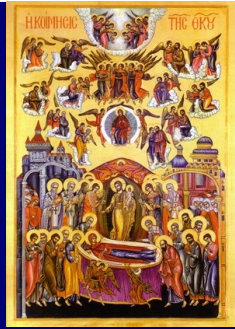


CHURCH STAFF

- Parish Priest: Very Reverend Archimandrite Christodoulos Margellos
- Parish Council President: Jim (Demetrios) Katsitis
- Philoptochos President: Eleni Giakoumopoulos
- Sunday School Directors: Susu Saba & Peli Galiti
- Greek School: Ilektra Kolokouri
- Choir Director: George Tzougros

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Wonderworker

AUGUST 2022

WHY PRAY?

As I was sitting back one night relaxing and watching a little bit of television, I started watching one of my favorite shows. It is a rare show now days, dealing with a modern day prophet, a man with visions from God, that often get him into funny situations. The greatest thing about this show is there is always a strong moral lesson. This last one I was watching was no different, what really caught my eye on this was a young woman was questioning her faith, because of a conversation she had. She attended a Christian university, and visited a nurse for something. The nurse asked her, "If she was a Christian?" She answered, "Yes". To which the nurse responded by saying, "I will pray for you". This struck the girl as odd, as if she is only praying for her since she was a Christian.

This is a problem within all faiths. They do everything they can for those of similar beliefs, but have a tendency to forget about everyone else. Now I will qualify this statement saying I am speaking about our own everyday lives, not within a church setting or during times of tragedy. We hear every Sunday during services, that we pray for the world, asking our Lord to keep it in peace, and bless it to be plentiful to all. I have stated in the past the need to see Christ in everyone we encounter. Whenever I question this I quickly am reminded of the parable of the Good Samaritan. We know that in the parable there was man who was beaten and robbed and was left on the roadside for dead. Many people simply walked past him either not realizing he was there, or simply not interested in helping out their fellow man. How is that different then what the nurse from the show did? Only wanting to pray for those she thought deserved it.

We need to be less like what the world expects us to be, and more like what God needs us to be. We must have compassion on our fellow man, and do what ever is within our means to make a difference. This does not necessarily mean we need to give money or our own time, although both those are needed. We also need to simply pray for the world. Think about how much better things would be if everyone of us took 10 minutes out of our day's to pray for those who are living in pain, struggles, poverty, incarceration, disability, etc. Now many of you might think how could prayer make that much of difference? My first answer would simply be, putting things onto God's hands has always been what has gotten me through my life, and when we are reminded of these struggles in the world we tend to do more to alleviate the problem.



I ask one simple thing from all of you as we come into this period of the fast for the Dormition of the Theotokos; let us look at all God's children as our own children. Let us pray for them and do what we can to help make the world a better place. And let us keep the parable of the Good Samaritan in the forefront of our minds.

✠ *Very Rev. Archimandrite Christodoulos*

August 2022

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| | <p>Strict Fast</p> <p>6:00 p.m. Small Paraklesis</p> | <p>Strict Fast</p> <p>6:00 p.m. Great Paraklesis</p> | <p>Strict Fast</p> <p>6:00 p.m. Small Paraklesis</p> | <p>Strict Fast</p> | <p>Strict Fast</p> | <p>Fast Day (Fish Permitted) Transfiguration</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy with Blessing of the Grapes</p> |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| <p>Fast Day Wine & Oil Permitted</p> <p>8th Sunday of Matthew</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy</p> | <p>Strict Fast</p> <p>6:00 p.m. Small Paraklesis</p> | <p>Strict Fast</p> <p>6:00 p.m. Great Paraklesis</p> <p>7:00 p.m. 2022-2023 Calendar scheduling meeting with all Ministries.</p> | <p>Strict Fast</p> <p>6:00 p.m. Small Paraklesis</p> | <p>Strict Fast</p> | <p>Strict Fast</p> <p>6:00 p.m. Small Paraklesis</p> | <p>Fast Day Wine & Oil Permitted</p> |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| <p>Fast Day Wine & Oil Permitted</p> <p>8th Sunday of Matthew</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy</p> <p>6:00 p.m. Great Vespers with Lamentation for the Dormition Philoptochos coffee reception to follow</p> | <p>Dormition of the Theotokos</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy</p> <p>Philoptochos Coffee Reception to Follow Liturgy in Social Hall</p> | <p>7:00 p.m. Parish Council Meeting</p> | <p>Strict Fast</p> | | <p>Strict Fast</p> | <p>Russian Mission Service</p> |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| <p>10th Sunday of Matthew</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy</p> | | | <p>Strict Fast</p> | | <p>Strict Fast</p> | |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |
| <p>11th Sunday of Matthew</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy</p> | <p>Strict Fast</p> <p>Beheading of Saint John the Baptist</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy</p> | <p>Fast Day (Fish Permitted)</p> | <p>Strict Fast</p> | | | |

The Parish Council Update

August 2022

Officers: Jim Katsihtis, President; Maria Molzahn, Vice President; Bruce Hansen, Secretary; Scott Storck, Treasurer; Niko Papadopoulos, Assistant Treasurer

Members: Christy Chappell-Belkin, Conn Choles, Carol Griskavich, Nick Helser, Mike Smith, John Soloninka

We hope and pray that everyone is having a blessed Summer.

Parish Feast Day

The feast day of our parish, the Assumption (Kimesis) of the Theotokos, is August 15th. Please join us for the special Paraklesis services this month, for the special evening Vespers with choir followed by coffee hour on the 14th, and for the Divine Liturgy the morning of the 15th.

GreekFest+

GreekFest+ is scheduled for September 24th and 25th! We have received conditional approval of the required permits. More information and a signup will be coming soon. We need volunteers and Captains of certain stations. Please see Father or a Council member to sign up and help make our festival a success. It is our largest fundraiser, and a long standing Assumption and Madison tradition. Please help us connect with our community again to share our beautiful Orthodox faith and traditions, and the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Ministry SignUps

Our BucketBrigade cleaning team is down to just one person and desperately needs your help. If you can help just 1 hour per week, 2 weeks per month, please see a Council member or Jenny Glatch.

We'll have even more ministry signup opportunities next month as we enter the new ecclesiastical year.

National Clergy-Laity Congress

In July, Fr. Christodoulos and Jim Katsihtis attended the National Clergy-Laity Congress in New York, and Jenny Glatch attended the National Philoptochos meeting which ran concurrently. Father and Jim will provide a detailed update to the Parish Council at the next Parish Council meeting.

Projects

The Parish Council continues to evaluate quotes for the roof and the plans for installing the Stavros iconography.

2022 Stewardship

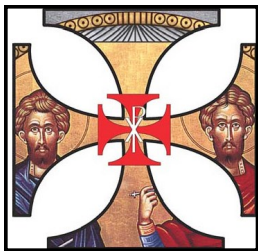
If you haven't already, please return your 2022 Stewardship form and continue to pray for, and generously support, our parish. Your stewardship helps support our worship, ministries, youth programs and facility expenses. Our goal is for stewardship to cover our operating expenses and for us not to have to rely on fundraisers for standard operating expenses. Please help us reach that goal. And please consider joining the Stewardship Committee to provide input and help us grow and engage our stewards more.

Next Parish Council Meeting

The next Parish Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 16th at 7:00PM. Parish Council meetings will typically be scheduled on the third Tuesday of the month.

On behalf of the Parish Council,

Jim
407-408-3096
jkatsihtis@gmail.com



FOCUS ON PHILOTOCHOS HELP US TO HELP OTHERS

August 2022

Focus on PHILOPTOCHOS
#PhiloCares #ArmyofAgape

The National Philoptochos Convention which took place in July highlighted the accomplishments of the whole organization, but also honored the chapters and individuals who went above and beyond for our ARMY OF AGAPE.

LOOKING AHEAD

- We continue to be #PhiloStrong because of the support of this amazing community!!
June collection tray: For **August** we are collecting for **Madison Public Schools**, focused on the **Operation Classroom** initiative. If you wish to donate school supplies, bring them to the social hall to the back section of the choir room.
- **August 31 - Philoptochos Board Meeting @ 6:00 pm via Zoom.**
- **September 4** – Philoptochos will be hosting coffee hour again in the fall, to resume on September 4. We're always looking for volunteers to assist. Reach out to chapter president Lena Giakoumopoulos at lenagiak@gmail.com if you are interested in helping our weekly rotating schedule for the 2022-2023 year.

NOTES FROM MAY, JUNE, JULY

- #PhiloConvention2022 #PhiloStrong #90YearsStrong – Our chapter was proudly represented by Jenny Glatch, Recording Secretary. You can see Jenny front and center in photos on the Philoptochos Facebook page [here](#). A full press release of all the convention highlights can be seen [here](#).
- Funds distributed in May: \$2,642 was sent to the River Food Pantry / \$750 to the Salvation Army / \$2,000 to Porchlight Inc. / \$750 to Hearts and Hands – UW Health, along with the National Philoptochos commitments and our sponsorship for the convention.

Metropolis dates to note:

- August 20-21: Saints Constantine & Helen Greek Fest, Palos Hills, IL
- September 24: Metropolis of Chicago September Luncheon, The Empress Banquets, Addison, IL - 11 am Fellowship, Noon Luncheon
- October 1: Metropolis-Wide IOCC 16th Annual Walk at St. Andrew, 5649 Sheridan N. Rd, Chicago, Check-in 8am Walk/Run 9am
- October 8: Metropolis-Wide PRESIDENT'S MEETING, St. Iakovos Retreat Center, Kansasville, WI



The Ladies' Philoptochos Society Assumption Greek Orthodox Church 2022 Membership Drive

We invite you to join us and share in our philanthropic mission. Through your stewardships and our various fundraisers, we are able to donate to many worthy causes helping people in need locally, nationally, and internationally. Locally we donate our resources and Philoptochos power to several organizations on a regular basis, and also to special hardship situations as needs are presented to us. Nationally and internationally we support the philanthropic programs of our Metropolis Philoptochos and our National Philoptochos.

We hope that you will join us as a member and also as a volunteer. Whether you attend regular meetings, volunteer to help with our activities, or would like to support our work with your stewardship, you will be a valued Philoptochos member. We look forward to hearing from you.

Please complete the form below and submit it with your 2022 stewardship payment, by **February 28, 2022**. Checks should be made payable to "Philoptochos" and please write *membership* in the memo section. The mailing address is below. Thank you!

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

I am interested in helping with the following project(s) and please include me!

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Vasilopita Dinner (January) (n/a 2022) | | Baklava Plus Sale (Sept. – Nov.) | |
| Mid – Winter Luncheon (February) | | Maintaining the Church Hall/Kitchen | |
| Greek Independence Day Dinner | | Cooking for Grace Episcopal -Porchlight Homeless Shelter | |
| Koulourakia baking (Holy Week) | | Baking Breads for Special Dinners | |
| Spring/Easter bake sale (drive by pick up) | | Coffee Hour Host | |
| Greek Fest Bake Sale (drive by pick up or onsite) | | Prosforon (Holy Bread) baking | |
| Reception for Assumption Feast Aug 14 | | Bucket Brigade (church cleaning) | |
| Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals, and/or Memorial Services (if requested) | | | |

My Stewardship payment of \$_____ is enclosed (check #_____ or cash).

Please note: \$15.00 goes to National Philoptochos, \$5.00 to the Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos, and \$2.00 to the Bishop's Fund. We ask for a minimum pledge of \$22.00. Dues paid above the amount will be used for our philanthropic activities and other chapter obligations.

*Please return to Beth Fatsis (1215 E Johnson St, Madison, WI 53703)
or drop it in the Philoptochos mailbox at Church.*

Thank you for your generous time and support!

YOUTH CORNER

SUMMER FUN

Word Search Puzzle



| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| W | A | T | E | R | P | A | R | K | V | A | C | A | T | I | O | N |
| F | R | I | E | N | D | S | W | S | T | Z | G | H | N | A | I | G |
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| W | O | I | F | A | I | R | G | R | O | U | N | D | P | X | B | M |
| R | L | W | N | F | E | K | N | B | A | S | E | B | A | L | L | X |
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|------------|------------|------------|
| BAREFOOT | FISHING | PICNIC |
| BASEBALL | FLIP FLOPS | POPSICLE |
| BEACH | FRIENDS | ROAD TRIP |
| BICYCLE | FRISBEE | SPRINKLERS |
| CAMPING | GAMES | SUNSHINE |
| COOKOUT | ICE CREAM | SWIMMING |
| FAIRGROUND | LEMONADE | VACATION |
| FIREWORKS | OUTDOORS | WATER PARK |

Free printable courtesy of PrintItFree.net

COMMUNITY NEWS

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING: Will be held on Tuesday, August 16th, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASS: A.R.E. are now done for the Summer. We will return to in person classes and Zoom classes again this fall. We should begin again in late August or early September. We will be starting Metropolitan Kallistos Ware's book "The Orthodox Church". We will see you in the fall when we look forward to continuing our journey together.

FROM THE GREEK SCHOOL: Greek School has ended and will begin again in the Fall.

J & M HOME HELPERS: AGOC's handymen, John and Mike, will do minor home repairs and maintenance for \$25/hour, with the money for their work being donated to the church. Call Mike at (608) 516-9188 and John at (608) 575-1014 today!

HOLY CONFESSION IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF OUR LIVES: Each of us should go to the priest for Holy Confession preferably 3 times a year, but at the very least once a year. Our very salvation can be threatened when we ignore this most beautiful sacrament of our Church. This year make the effort to call your Father Confessor for an appointment.

SAVE THE DATE: GREEKFEST+ SEPTEMBER 24th & 25th. GREEKFEST HELP: We are going to need of Volunteers. Please reach out to family and friends and ask for help in working our Greekfest. It is our largest fund raiser of the year. The more help we get the smoother everything will run.

Mark your calendars for the dates and then take a moment to sign up once volunteer forms are available. We look forward to making this year our best Greekfest+ yet!

DONATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS ARTICLES: Throughout the year we all experience moments when we wish to express thanksgiving to God for all blessings

received or to offer intercessory prayer for a loved one or to honor someone dear to us. For most of us there is a special inner joy to be able to make these expressions in the form of gifts to the House of God in which we worship.

For moments like these, we have prepared a list of sacred items which are used in our worship and could be offered in thanksgiving and prayer by our beloved parishioners.

Many of the sacred items on this list are to be donated to replace others, which due to time and usage throughout the years can no longer be used in worship services. Still others are needed so that we may worship in the proper way according to our Orthodox Faith.

If there is anyone wishing to donate:

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Censor | - \$400 |
| Zeon | - \$150 |
| Red Altar Cover Set | - \$1,700 |
| Blue Altar Cover Set | - \$1,500 |
| 17 Hanging Vigil Lamps | - Waiting on Quote |
| Censor Stand | - Waiting on Quote |
| Gospel Stand | - Waiting on Quote |

If anyone has any questions concerning this list, please contact Fr. Christodoulos for more information and details.

PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND & CONSTANTINOPLE: I have been blessed to lead a few trips to the Holy Land as a priest and I plan to lead another one for our parish here at Assumption. We are currently planning on departing in November of 2023. The Itinerary is being finalized and we this trip will be all inclusive. The cost will include Airfare, hotel, breakfast, dinner and transportation. In the past this has run around \$3,200 and we will get a final price point when we get closer to November of this year. Consider joining us for this once in a lifetime opportunity to see where Jesus walked, lived, dies & resurrected. We normally meet with both the Patriarchs of Jerusalem and Constantinople. We will give more information soon.

Service of Paraklesis

Beginning August 1, until the 13th. We will be celebrating the Paraklesis service most weekdays beginning at 6:00 p.m. It is a service where we pray for the health and salvation of those who are still living. Please use this sheet to write down your names and submit them to Fr. Christodoulos.

For Health & Salvation

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You're Invited

St. Iakovos Retreat Center Fundraiser
15th Anniversary Dinner Cruise

Rescheduled

Sunday, August 28, 2022
5:00pm-8:00pm

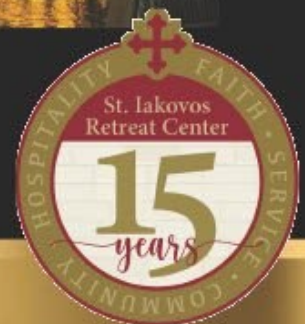
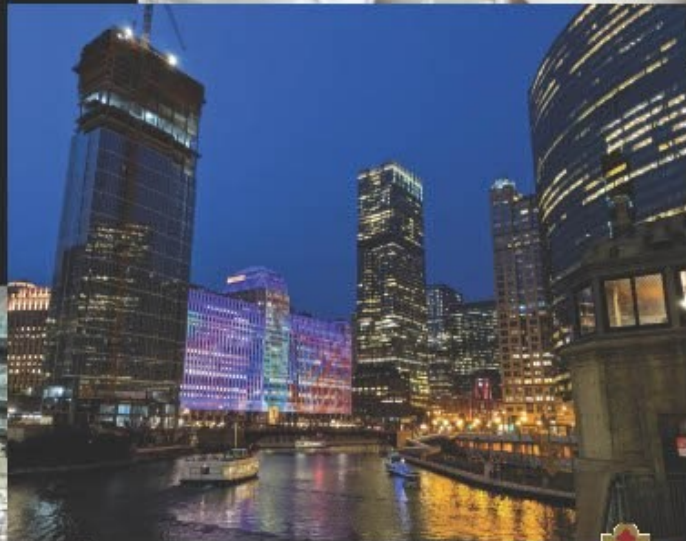
Join us to cruise the Chicago river observing architectural landmarks while enjoying a three course dinner, open bar and DJ on the Odyssey Chicago River Glass Top Boat.

\$500 per person

We have reserved the entire boat for our celebration. Seating is limited.

RSVP by Thursday, August 25th at
www.gosirc.org

Please contact Hellen Chrones at
hkchrones@gmail.com for questions.



The Dormition of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary

The Dormition of our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary: After the Ascension of the Lord, the Mother of God remained in the care of the Apostle John the Theologian, and during his journeys She lived at the home of his parents, near the Mount of Olives. She was a source of consolation and edification both for the Apostles and for all the believers. Conversing with them, She told them about miraculous events: the Annunciation, the seedless and undefiled Conception of Christ born of Her, about His early childhood, and about His earthly life. Like the Apostles, She helped plant and strengthen the Christian Church by Her presence, Her discourse and Her prayers.

The reverence of the Apostles for the Most Holy Virgin was extraordinary. After the receiving of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the Apostles remained at Jerusalem for about ten years attending to the salvation of the Jews, and wanting moreover to see the Mother of God and hear Her holy discourse. Many of the newly-enlightened in the Faith even came from faraway lands to Jerusalem, to see and to hear the All-Pure Mother of God.

During the persecution initiated by King Herod against the young Church of Christ (Acts 12:1-3), the Most Holy Virgin and the Apostle John the Theologian withdrew to Ephesus in the year 43. The preaching of the Gospel there had fallen by lot to the Apostle John the Theologian. The Mother of God was on Cyprus with Saint Lazarus the Four-Days-Dead, where he was bishop. She was also on Holy Mount Athos. Saint Stephen of the Holy Mountain says that the Mother of God prophetically spoke of it: "Let this place be my lot, given to me by my Son and my God. I will be the Patroness of this place and intercede with God for it."

The respect of ancient Christians for the Mother of God was so great that they preserved what they could about Her life, what they could take note of concerning Her sayings and deeds, and they even passed down to us a description of Her outward appearance.

According to Tradition, based on the words of the Hieromartyrs Dionysius the Areopagite (October 3), Ignatius the God-Bearer (December 20), Saint Ambrose of Milan (December 7) had occasion to write in his work "On Virgins" concerning the Mother of God: "She was a Virgin not only in body, but also in soul, humble of heart, circumspect in word, wise in mind, not overly given to speaking, a lover of reading and of work, and prudent in speech. Her rule of life was to offend no one, to intend good for everyone, to respect the aged, not envy others, avoid bragging, be healthy of mind, and to love virtue."

When did She ever hurl the least insult in the face of Her parents? When was She at discord with Her kin? When did She ever puff up with pride before a modest person, or laugh at the weak, or shun the destitute? With Her there was nothing of glaring eyes, nothing of unseemly words, nor of improper conduct. She was modest in the movement of Her body, Her step was quiet, and Her voice straightforward; so that Her face was an expression of soul. She was the personification of purity.

All Her days She was concerned with fasting: She slept only when necessary, and even then, when Her body was at rest, She was still alert in spirit, repeating in Her dreams what She had read, or the implementation of proposed intentions, or those planned yet anew. She was out of Her house only for church, and then only in the company of relatives. Otherwise, She seldom appeared outside Her house in the company of others, and She was Her own best overseer. Others could protect Her only in body, but She Herself guarded Her character."

According to Tradition, that from the compiler of Church history Nicephorus Callistus (fourteenth century), the Mother of God "was of average stature, or as others suggest, slightly more than average; Her hair golden in appearance; Her eyes bright with pupils like shiny olives; Her eyebrows strong in character and moderately dark, Her nose pronounced and Her mouth vibrant bespeaking sweet speech; Her face was neither round nor angular, but somewhat oblong; the palm of Her hands and fingers were longish..."

In conversation with others She preserved decorum, neither becoming silly nor agitated, and indeed especially never angry; without artifice, and direct, She was not overly concerned about Herself, and far from pampering Herself, She was distinctly full of humility. Regarding the clothing which She wore, She was satisfied to have natural colors, which even now is evidenced by Her holy head-covering. Suffice it to say, a special grace attended all Her actions.” [Nicephoros Callistus borrowed his description from Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus (May 12), from the “Letter to Theophilus Concerning Icons.”]

The circumstances of the Dormition of the Mother of God were known in the Orthodox Church from apostolic times. Already in the first century, the Hieromartyr Dionysius the Areopagite wrote about Her “Falling-Asleep.” In the second century, the account of the bodily ascent of the Most Holy Virgin Mary to Heaven is found in the works of Meliton, Bishop of Sardis. In the fourth century, Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus refers to the tradition about the “Falling Asleep” of the Mother of God. In the fifth century, Saint Juvenal, Patriarch of Jerusalem, told the holy Byzantine Empress Pulcheria: “Although there is no account of the circumstances of Her death in Holy Scripture, we know about them from the most ancient and credible Tradition.” This tradition was gathered and expounded in the Church History of Nicephorus Callistus during the fourteenth century.

At the time of Her blessed Falling Asleep, the Most Holy Virgin Mary was again at Jerusalem. Her fame as the Mother of God had already spread throughout the land and had aroused many of the envious and the spiteful against Her. They wanted to make attempts on Her life; but God preserved Her from enemies.

Day and night She spent her time in prayer. The Most Holy Theotokos went often to the Holy Sepulchre of the Lord, and here She offered up fervent prayer. More than once, enemies of the Savior sought to hinder Her from visiting her holy place, and they asked the High Priest for a guard to watch over the Grave of the Lord. The Holy Virgin continued to pray right in front of them, yet unseen by anyone.

In one such visit to Golgotha, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to Her and announced Her approaching departure from this life to eternal life. In pledge of this, the Archangel gave Her a palm branch. With these heavenly tidings the Mother of God returned to Bethlehem with the three girls attending Her (Sepphora, Abigail, and Jael). She summoned Righteous Joseph of Arimathea and other disciples of the Lord, and told them of Her impending Repose.

The Most Holy Virgin prayed also that the Lord would have the Apostle John come to Her. The Holy Spirit transported him from Ephesus, setting him in that very place where the Mother of God lay. After the prayer, the Most Holy Virgin offered incense, and John heard a voice from Heaven, closing Her prayer with the word “Amen.” The Mother of God took it that the voice meant the speedy arrival of the Apostles and the Disciples and the holy Bodiless Powers.

The faithful, whose number by then was impossible to count, gathered together, says Saint John of Damascus, like clouds and eagles, to listen to the Mother of God. Seeing one another, the Disciples rejoiced, but in their confusion they asked each other why the Lord had gathered them together in one place. Saint John the Theologian, greeting them with tears of joy, said that the time of the Virgin’s repose was at hand.

Going in to the Mother of God, they beheld Her lying upon the bed, and filled with spiritual joy. The Disciples greeted Her, and then they told her how they had been carried miraculously from their places of preaching. The Most Holy Virgin Mary glorified God, because He had heard Her prayer and fulfilled Her heart’s desire, and She began speaking about Her imminent end.

During this conversation the Apostle Paul also appeared in a miraculous manner together with his disciples Dionysius the Areopagite, Saint Hierotheus, Saint Timothy and others of the Seventy Apostles. The Holy Spirit had gathered them all together so that they might be granted the blessing of the All-Pure Virgin Mary, and more fittingly to see to the burial of the Mother of the Lord. She called each of them to Herself by name, She

blessed them and extolled them for their faith and the hardships they endured in preaching the Gospel of Christ. To each She wished eternal bliss, and prayed with them for the peace and welfare of the whole world.

Then came the third hour (9 A.M.), when the Dormition of the Mother of God was to occur. A number of candles were burning. The holy Disciples surrounded her beautifully adorned bed, offering praise to God. She prayed in anticipation of Her demise and of the arrival of Her longed-for Son and Lord. Suddenly, the inexpressible Light of Divine Glory shone forth, before which the blazing candles paled in comparison. All who saw it took fright. Descending from Heaven was Christ, the King of Glory, surrounded by hosts of Angels and Archangels and other Heavenly Powers, together with the souls of the Forefathers and the Prophets, who had prophesied in ages past concerning the Most Holy Virgin Mary.

Seeing Her Son, the Mother of God exclaimed: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God My Savior, for He hath regarded the low estate of His Handmaiden" (Luke 1:46-48) and, rising from Her bed to meet the Lord, She bowed down to Him, and the Lord bid Her enter into Life Eternal. Without any bodily suffering, as though in a happy sleep, the Most Holy Virgin Mary gave Her soul into the hands of Her Son and God.

Then began a joyous angelic song. Accompanying the pure soul of the God-betrothed and with reverent awe for the Queen of Heaven, the angels exclaimed: "Hail, Full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee, blessed art Thou among women! For lo, the Queen, God's Maiden comes, lift up the gates, and with the Ever-Existing One, take up the Mother of Light; for through Her salvation has come to all the human race. It is impossible to gaze upon Her, and it is impossible to render Her due honor" (Stikherion on "Lord, I Have Cried"). The Heavenly gates were raised, and meeting the soul of the Most Holy Mother of God, the Cherubim and the Seraphim glorified Her with joy. The face of the Mother of God was radiant with the glory of Divine virginity, and from Her body there came a sweet fragrance.

Miraculous was the life of the All-Pure Virgin, and wondrous was Her Repose, as Holy Church sings: "In Thee, O Queen, the God of all hath given thee as thy portion the things that are above nature. Just as in the Birth-Giving He did preserve Thine virginity, so also in the grave He did preserve Thy body from decay" (Canon 1, Ode 6, Troparion 1).

Kissing the all-pure body with reverence and in awe, the Disciples in turn were blessed by it and filled with grace and spiritual joy. Through the great glorification of the Most Holy Theotokos, the almighty power of God healed the sick, who with faith and love touched the holy bed.

Bewailing their separation from the Mother of God, the Apostles prepared to bury Her all-pure body. The holy Apostles Peter, Paul, James and others of the Twelve Apostles carried the funeral bier upon their shoulders, and upon it lay the body of the Ever-Virgin Mary. Saint John the Theologian went at the head with the resplendent palm-branch from Paradise. The other saints and a multitude of the faithful accompanied the funeral bier with candles and censers, singing sacred songs. This solemn procession went from Sion through Jerusalem to the Garden of Gethsemane.

With the start of the procession there suddenly appeared over the all-pure body of the Mother of God and all those accompanying Her a resplendent circular cloud, like a crown. There was heard the singing of the Heavenly Powers, glorifying the Mother of God, which echoed that of the worldly voices. This circle of Heavenly singers and radiance accompanied the procession to the very place of burial.

Unbelieving inhabitants of Jerusalem, taken aback by the extraordinarily grand funeral procession and vexed at the honor accorded the Mother of Jesus, complained of this to the High Priest and scribes. Burning with envy and vengefulness toward everything that reminded them of Christ, they sent out their own servants to disrupt the procession and to set the body of the Mother of God afire.

An angry crowd and soldiers set off against the Christians, but the circular cloud accompanying the procession descended and surrounded them like a wall. The pursuers heard the footsteps and the singing, but could not see any of those accompanying the procession. Indeed, many of them were struck blind.

The Jewish priest Athonios, out of spite and hatred for the Mother of Jesus of Nazareth, wanted to topple the funeral bier on which lay the body of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, but an angel of God invisibly cut off his hands, which had touched the bier. Seeing such a wonder, Athonios repented and with faith confessed the majesty of the Mother of God. He received healing and joined the crowd accompanying the body of the Mother of God, and he became a zealous follower of Christ.

When the procession reached the Garden of Gethsemane, then amidst the weeping and the wailing began the last kiss to the all-pure body. Only towards evening were the Apostles able to place it in the tomb and seal the entrance to the cave with a large stone.

For three days they did not depart from the place of burial, praying and chanting Psalms. Through the wise providence of God, the Apostle Thomas was not to be present at the burial of the Mother of God. Arriving late on the third day at Gethsemane, he lay down at the tomb and with bitter tears asked that he might be permitted to look once more upon the Mother of God and bid her farewell. The Apostles out of heartfelt pity for him decided to open the grave and permit him the comfort of venerating the holy relics of the Ever-Virgin Mary. Having opened the grave, they found in it only the grave wrappings and were thus convinced of the bodily ascent of the Most Holy Virgin Mary to Heaven.

On the evening of the same day, when the Apostles had gathered at a house to strengthen themselves with food, the Mother of God appeared to them and said: “Rejoice! I am with you all the days of your lives.” This so gladdened the Apostles and everyone with them, that they took a portion of the bread, set aside at the meal in memory of the Savior (“the Lord’s Portion”), and they exclaimed : “Most Holy Theotokos, save us”. (This marks the beginning of the rite of offering up the “Panagia” (“All-Holy”), a portion of bread in honor of the Mother of God, which is done at monasteries to the present day).

The sash of the Mother of God, and Her holy garb, preserved with reverence and distributed over the face of the earth in pieces, have worked miracles both in the past and at present. Her numerous icons everywhere pour forth signs and healings, and Her holy body, taken up to Heaven, bears witness to our own future life there. Her body was not left to the vicissitudes of the transitory world, but was incomparably exalted by its glorious ascent to Heaven.





The Beheading of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist John:

Commemorated on August 29. The Beheading of the Prophet, Forerunner of the Lord, John the Baptist: The Evangelists Matthew (Mt.14:1-12) and Mark (Mark 6:14-29) provide accounts about the martyric end of John the Baptist in the year 32 after the Birth of Christ.

Following the Baptism of the Lord, Saint John the Baptist was locked up in prison by Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch (ruler of one fourth of the Holy Land) and governor of Galilee. (After the death of king Herod the Great, the Romans divided the territory of Palestine into four parts, and put a governor in charge of each part. Herod Antipas received Galilee from the emperor Augustus).

The prophet of God John openly denounced Herod for having left his lawful wife, the daughter of the Arabian king Aretas, and then instead cohabiting with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip (Luke 3:19-20). On his birthday, Herod made a feast for dignitaries, the elders and a thousand chief citizens. Salome, the daughter of Herod, danced before the guests and charmed Herod. In gratitude to the girl, he swore to give her whatever she would ask, up to half his kingdom.

The vile girl on the advice of her wicked mother Herodias asked that she be given the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Herod became apprehensive, for he feared the wrath of God for the murder of a prophet, whom earlier he had heeded. He also feared the people, who loved the holy Forerunner. But because of the guests and his careless oath, he gave orders to cut off the head of Saint John and to give it to Salome.

According to Tradition, the mouth of the dead preacher of repentance once more opened and proclaimed: "Herod, you should not have the wife of your brother Philip." Salome took the platter with the head of Saint John and gave it to her mother. The frenzied Herodias repeatedly stabbed the tongue of the prophet with a needle and buried his holy head in a unclean place. But the pious Joanna, wife of Herod's steward Chuza, buried the head of John the Baptist in an earthen vessel on the Mount of Olives, where Herod had a parcel of land. (The Uncovering of the Venerable Head is celebrated February 24). The holy body of John the Baptist was taken that night by his disciples and buried at Sebastia, there where the wicked deed had been done.

After the murder of Saint John the Baptist, Herod continued to govern for a certain time. Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea, later sent Jesus Christ to him, Whom he mocked (Luke 23:7-12).

The judgment of God came upon Herod, Herodias and Salome, even during their earthly life. Salome, crossing the River Sikoris in winter, fell through the ice. The ice gave way in such a way that her body was in the water, but her head was trapped above the ice. It was similar to how she once had danced with her feet upon the ground, but now she flailed helplessly in the icy water. Thus she was trapped until that time when the sharp ice cut through her neck.

Her corpse was not found, but they brought the head to Herod and Herodias, as once they had brought them the head of Saint John the Baptist. The Arab king Aretas, in revenge for the disrespect shown his daughter, made war against Herod. The defeated Herod suffered the wrath of the Roman emperor Caius Caligula (37-41) and was exiled with Herodias first to Gaul, and then to Spain.

The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, a Feast day established by the Church, is also a strict fast day because of the grief of Christians at the violent death of the saint. In some Orthodox cultures pious people will not eat food from a flat plate, use a knife, or eat food that is round in shape on this day.

Today the Church makes remembrance of Orthodox soldiers killed on the field of battle, as established in 1769 at the time of Russia's war with the Turks and the Poles.



Repose of the New-Hieromartyr Cosmas of Aitolia, Equal of the Apostles:

Commemorated on August 24 The New Hieromartyr Cosmas, Equal of the Apostles, in the world Constas, was a native of Aitolia. He studied at first under the guidance of the archdeacon Ananias Dervisanos, and afterwards continued his education on Mount Athos, at the Vatopedi school renowned for teachers such as Nicholas Tzartzoulis (from Metsovo) and Eugenius Voulgaris (afterwards in the years 1775-1779 the archbishop of Ekaterinoslav and the Chersonessus).

Remaining on Athos at the Philotheou monastery to devote himself to spiritual labors, he was tonsured a monk with the name Cosmas, and later was ordained hieromonk. The desire to benefit his fellow Christians, to guide them upon the way of salvation and strengthen their faith, impelled Saint Cosmas to seek the blessing of his spiritual fathers and go to Constantinople. There he mastered the art of rhetoric and, having received a written permit of Patriarch Seraphim II (and later from his successor Sophronius) to preach the Holy Gospel.

So the saint began to proclaim the Gospel at first in the churches of Constantinople and the surrounding villages, then in the Danube regions, in Thessalonica, in Verroia, in Macedonia, Chimaera, Akarnania, Aitolia, on the islands of Saint Maura, Kephallonia and other places.

His preaching, filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, was simple, calm, and gentle. It brought Christians great spiritual benefit. The Lord Himself assisted him and confirmed his words with signs and miracles, just as He had confirmed the preaching of the Apostles.

Preaching in the remote areas of Albania, where Christian piety had almost disappeared among the rough and coarse people entrenched in sin, Saint Cosmas led them to sincere repentance and improvement with the Word of God.

Under his guidance, church schools were opened in the towns and villages. The rich offered their money for the betterment of the churches, for the purchase of Holy Books (which the saint distributed to the literate), veils (which he gave women, admonishing them to come to church with covered heads), for prayer ropes and crosses (which he distributed to the common folk), and for baptismal fonts so that children could be baptized in the proper manner.

Since the churches could not accommodate everyone wanting to hear the wise preacher, Saint Cosmas with forty or fifty priests served the Vigil in the fields, and in city squares, where thousands of people prayed for the living and for the dead, and were edified by his preaching. Everywhere that Saint Cosmas halted and preached, the grateful listeners set up a large wooden cross, which remained thereafter in memory of this.

The apostolic service of Saint Cosmas was brought to a close by his martyric death in the year 1779. At 65 years of age, he was seized by the Turks and strangled. His body was thrown into a river, and after three days, was found by the priest Mark and buried near the village of Kolikontasi at the monastery of the Entrance into the Temple of the Most Holy Theotokos. Afterwards, part of his relics were transferred to various places as a blessing.

He was glorified by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1961.

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