

THE ORTHODOX MESSENGER

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THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS

THE FIRST CHAPTER of St. Luke's gospel contains an outstanding hymn by the holy Theotokos, which poured out of her heart in response to the salutation of her relative, the righteous Elizabeth: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." This prophecy of St. Elizabeth, that we repeat so often in one of our most favorite prayers "Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos," was followed by Mary's hymn, Mary's prayerful prophesy, which is especially important for our attention on the day of her glorious Dormition. "And Mary said: 'My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.'" From her childhood her entire life was dedicated to God. Her very birth from the childless and elderly parents was a miraculous one. From her infancy her home was the Temple, where she was presented at the age of three years, and was totally dedicated to God. The angel Gabriel appeared to her and announced the will of God, telling her that the Son of God was to be born of her. In an act of voluntary humility and loving obedience, she accepted on behalf of the whole of humanity this good news, this good will of God concerning her. What remained for her to say, how to begin her hymn to God which we so very often hear in our churches, if not by the glorification of God who loved her, and was loved by her — *My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior!*

The sanctity of God's name was an inseparable part of the faith and hopes of Old Testament Israel. God's name concealed in itself such a fiery force that it was forbidden to use it in vain, even to pronounce it. Its sanctity, its holiness and mystery retain their power in Christ's church. We bless, baptize, celebrate the sacraments in the name of God, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. "And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation," Mary continues her prayer to God. "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice in Him with trembling" — so said her ancestor King David in one of his early psalms. There is no fear in this, no trembling as in the humiliation of a slave. This is a fear before a mystery, the

fear before a holy thing. And the Virgin Mary understands that only in such fear of God, such trembling before Him, prayerful trembling, "generation upon generation" of His children will find His unceasing mercy. God is a God of righteousness, and although through its whole history humanity very often bows before naked power, before might, before force, God's will concerning humanity happens on a different plane, in a different dimension. Just as the Holy Virgin says: "He has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of low degree." How many falls from thrones has the history of humanity seen? How completely their glory has disappeared from historical memory. Their names do not appear in the Christian calendar, which flows over with names of the humble, of the saints elevated by God into eternal and heavenly glory. "He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty." How many of those who thirst in spirit have been nurtured "not by bread alone" but by the word of God? How many rich and wealthy, self-glorifying, self-exalting, the ones who advertise themselves, have been "sent away empty," have disappeared in the darkness of time? God's covenant, God's promise has remained eternally. His covenant with Israel the chosen people, His promise according to which the Church, the *New Israel*, has inherited the Messiah. The Messiah, the Son of God, has been sent into the world "as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever." These are the concluding words, the crowning words of the hymn of the Virgin Mary. The entire history of the Old and New Testaments of this humanity is tied together by these words. And in the center of this history we see the one who is full of light and holiness, from whose mouth, from whose heart flows this great and inspired glorification of the mighty providence of God concerning man: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior."

—Fr. George Benigsen



ON AUGUST 1 we began the Fast in preparation of the Feast of Dormition, the repose and exaltation of the Mother of God. Vigil for the Feast will be celebrated on August 14 at 6:15 PM. The Divine Liturgy will be celebrated **here** on August 15 at 9:30 AM, and in **Calistoga** at the Monastery of the Dormition (aka Assumption) at 9 AM.

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Advice from St. Porphyrios

“ONE DAY,” [the Elder said to me], “you are walking quietly on your way and see your brother walking in front of you, also quietly, when at one point a crook jumps out in front of your brother from a side road and attacks him. He beats him, pulls his hair, wounds him and throws him down bleeding. Faced with a scene like that would you be angry with your brother or would you feel sorry for him?”

I was puzzled by the Elder’s questions and I asked him in turn: “How could I possibly be angry with my wounded brother, who fell victim to the criminal? The thought didn’t even cross my mind. Of course I would feel sorry for him and I would try to help him as much as I could.” “Well, then,” continued the Elder, “everyone who insults you, who hurts you, who slanders you, who does you an injustice in anyway whatsoever is a brother of yours who has fallen into the hands of some criminal demon. When you notice that your brother does you an injustice what should you do? You must feel very sorry for him, commiserate with him and entreat God warmly and silently both, to support you in that difficult time of trial, and to have mercy on your brother, who has fallen victim to the evildoer, the demon. Because if you don’t do that, but get angry with him instead, reacting to his attack with a counter attack, then the devil who is

already on the nape of your brother’s neck will jump on to yours and dance with the both of you.”

...He said to me with regard to this: “Our aim is not to condemn evil, but to correct it. A man can be lost through condemnation, but through understanding and help he will be saved. We must treat the sinner with love and respect his freedom. When a member of the family knocks a vase off the table and breaks it we usually get angry. If at that crucial moment, in a movement of spiritual elevation, we show understanding and we excuse the damage, we win both our soul and that of our brother’s. That is all our spiritual life: an elevating movement, from the annoyance that comes from egotism, to the understanding that comes from love.”

...the Elder revealed one more secret of the spiritual battle to me, saying: “You shouldn’t get annoyed even internally about any unjust criticism of you whatsoever. It is bad. Evil starts from bad thoughts. When you get bitter and annoyed, even if only in thought, you ruin the spiritual atmosphere. You stop the Holy Spirit from working and you allow the devil to increase evil. You should always pray, love and forgive, rejecting each and every bad thought within you.”

That is to say the Elder taught that our bad thoughts about one of our fellows on the one hand defiles our soul, and on the other, it can do harm to the other person. A bad thought sends out an evil power, which influences the other, as prayer helps him. Of course all this has to be understood correctly within the teaching of the Church about the existence of good and evil spirits and their work. The work of the evil ones is denigration, lying, commotion, dissension and so on, whereas for the good ones it is the service of those who are destined to inherit the Kingdom of God. A bad thought cannot be hidden. It affects the person we are thinking ugly thoughts about unfavorably towards us, even from a distance, even if the other person doesn’t consciously realize why he is opposed to us. We are obliged to be “pure in heart,” pure not only from evil works, but from bad and evil thoughts, especially from resentment and bitterness. (*Elder and Saint Porphyrios reposed in 1991*)

GAME NIGHT FOR YOUTH

PARISH YOUTH, ages 11 and up, are invited to a Game Night at the Parish Hall on Thursday, August 9. Vespers for the Feast of the Martyr Lawrence of Rome will be served at 5 PM, followed by dinner, snacks and games. The evening is being organized by Vicky Basch and Gloria Collins, with help from Amy Ramirez and Garret Hamner.

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **CONSIDERED ONE OF THE TWELVE** Great Feast Days of the Church, Transfiguration commemorates the glorious revelation of Christ—the Son of God—as the Radiance of the Father, the Light and Savior of the world, and the One Who shares His glory with us. The Vigil will be served on Sunday, August 5 at 4 PM, and the Divine Liturgy and Blessing of Fruit (bring fruit) on Monday, August 6 at 9 AM. Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky, preaching in 1898, encourages us on this Feast: “Let us, brothers and sisters, strive for this glory, not by relying on our own powers, but by praying and immersing ourselves in Divine teaching, let us be ready to accept sorrows for Christ according to His commandments, and He will enable us to participate in His eternal glory in heaven; and we, just as Peter on Mt Tabor, will forget our sorrows and deprivations and will eternally exclaim in spiritual ecstasy: ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here.’” Amen.
- **THE REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK** distribution will take place on Wednesday, August 8. Volunteers are asked to arrive no later than 5 PM. This Food Bank is the primary way in which our parish does outreach to the community. Come and participate in this worthy endeavor.
- **BENEFIT CONCERT HERE:** Mother Melania and the Sisters of Holy Assumption Monastery are organizing a benefit concert — Wednesday August 22 at 7 PM — to help one a homeless artist they have befriended. Renowned jazz pianist Larry Vuckovich and his trio will be performing here at that concert. See the flyer below.
- **A PANIKHIDA** will be served at Shiloh Cemetery, for Paul Byron Burch, on the anniversary of his repose, at 3 PM, Sunday, August 19. On Saturday, August 25, at 11 AM we will serve a Panikhida for the two-year anniversary of the repose of Gabriel Griovksi at Oak Mound Cemetery, Healdsburg.
- **SONOMA COUNTY’S** premiere a cappella vocal ensemble, Cantiamo Sonoma will sing a selection of songs—in St. Seraphim Cathedral—by Baltic and Scandinavian composers on Sunday, August 26 at 6 PM. This is their annual fundraiser. The ticket price includes an after-concert reception with food & drink in the courtyard. See Nicolas Custer for tickets, or call (707) 538-4220.
- **VESPERS and TALK:** Following the 6 PM Wednesday Vespers on August 29, Andrew Vernon from San Anselmo will join us for a Potluck dinner and a talk on the Holy Trinity. Previously posted dates for that talk had to be cancelled.
- **WORK PARTY:** Saturday, September 1 from 9 AM–1 PM. Tasks: Begin sorting Glendi equipment; cut down dead plum tree; create Innocents’ Garden, move “graveyard cross” to garden; “sort” junk behind Storage Building, etc.
- **CHURCH CLEANING SIGN-UP SHEET:** Many thanks to those who signed up to clean the Church. We are covered until September. Many slots remain until the end of the year. “O Lord, bless those who love the beauty of Thy House.”
- **USHERS NEEDED:** Our Usher team is looking for some new members. Please speak with me if you’d like to help out. What do Ushers do? They arrive at 9:30 AM; assist guests in finding a place to stand or sit and ask their names, so that I can welcome them at the conclusion of the Liturgy; introduce the guests to a parish member who will accompany them to the Agape Meal; introduce them to one of the priests. Call or email me if you are interested in this important parish ministry. —Fr. Lawrence
- **INSTEAD OF GLENDI:** We are planning a Family Camp Out for Friday night and Saturday, September 14/15, here on the parish grounds. More info to follow.

An Evening of Jazz & Art



Live Benefit Concert
featuring
Larry Vuckovich
With Kai Lyons and Sanna Craig



One Artist helping another



*Petaluma homeless
artist Michael Koerber
& wife Angela*

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 22
AT 7:00 PM**
ST. SERAPHIM CATHEDRAL
90 MOUNTAIN VIEW AVE.
SANTA ROSA CA 95407
TICKETS @ JAZZART.EVENTBRITE.COM



ONLY \$30
**ART ON
DISPLAY
& FOR SALE**

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

AUGUST 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
July 29 – Martyr Callinicos • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • Assembly of “Blessing Bags” for the homeless (See Denise Pellizzer)	30	31 – St. Germanos • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy • 6 PM, Matins and Bringing out of the Cross	1 – HOLY CROSS • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy and Water Blessing <i>Beginning of Dormition Fast</i> • 6 PM, Supplicatory Canon to the Theotokos	2 • 8 AM, <i>Kazan Skete, Divine Liturgy</i> • 6 PM, Supplicatory Canon to the Theotokos	3 • 6 PM, Supplicatory Canon to the Theotokos	4 • 5 PM, Great Vespers
5 – St. Nonna • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • 4 PM, Vigil for Transfiguration	6 – Transfiguration • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy, Blessing of Fruit and Vineyard	7 • 6 PM, Supplicatory Canon to the Theotokos	8 • 5 PM, Food Bank • 6 PM, Supplicatory Canon to the Theotokos	9 • 5 PM, Vespers for St. Lawrence • 5:45 PM, Youth Game Night • 7 PM, Parish Council	10 – St. Lawrence • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy	11 • 4:30 PM, 40th Day Panikhida for Nickolai Zache • 5 PM, Great Vespers
12 – St. Anicletus • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal	13	14 • 6:15 PM, Vigil for Dormition of the Theotokos	15 – Dormition • 9:30 AM, Liturgy <i>Calistoga Monastery Feast Divine Liturgy at 9 AM</i> <i>No Vespers</i>	16	17	18 • 5 PM, Great Vespers
19 – Martyr Andrew • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • 3 PM, <i>Panikhida for Byron Burch, Shiloh Cemet.</i>	20	21 • 7 PM, Church School Teacher Mtg	22 • 6 PM, Vespers • 7 PM, <i>Larry Vukovich Concert*</i>	23	24	25 • 11 AM, <i>Panikhida for Gabriel Griovskii, Healdsburg</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers
26 – Sts. Adrian & Natalie • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • 6 PM, <i>Cantiamo Choral Concert</i>	27	28 • 6 PM, Great Vespers	29 – St. John the Baptist • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy <i>Strict Fast Day</i> • 6 PM, Vespers and potluck and talk on the Holy Trinity	30	31	September 1 • 5 PM, Great Vespers