



Holy Ghost Orthodox Church

714 Westmoreland Avenue
PO Box 3
Slickville, PA 15684-0003
www.holyghostorthodoxchurch.org
Very Rev. Father Robert Popichak, Pastor
23 Station Street
Carnegie, PA 15106-3014
[412] 956-6626 cell
rpopichak@alumni.cmu.edu

*****DORMITION FAST*****

ON THE MEND: Please keep the following parishioners and others in your prayers for recovery from their illnesses and injuries: Father Bob, Archbishop Daniel, Metropolitan Antony, Metropolitan Yuriy, Archbishop Jovan, Metropolitan Savas, Father Jakiw Norton, Father Paul & Pani Judy Stoll, Father Joseph Kopchak, Father Elias Warnke, Father George Yatsko, Father Paul Bigelow, Father Emilian Balan, Father John & Pani Mary Anne Nakonachny, Father Steve Repa, Archpriest Dionysi Vitali, Protodeacon Joseph Hotrovich, Father Paisius McGrath, Father Michael Smolynech, Father Lawrence & Matushka Sophia Daniels, Father Joe & Protinica Linda Cervo, Father John Harrold [Saint Sylvester], Igumen Patrick, Father Jim Orr, Father Rick Seilier, Panimatka Laryssa Charest, Father Vasyl Sendeha, Father George & Dobrodijka Oksana Bazylevsky, Father Angelo Artemas, Father John Haluszczak, Dr. Christina Nellis, Father Joshua [Anna], Father Justin (Todd) Mokhiber, Pani Cathy Danczak, Protopresbyter Gerald Ozlanski, Father James Norton, Monk Andrew, Father Dan & Matushka Myra Kovalak, Father Joe Uzar, Father Deacon James & Diakonissa Kari Rossetti, Pastor Terry Polen, Chaplain Rachelle Zazzu, Joshua Agosto and his family, Eva Malesnick, Nick Behun, Grace Holupka, Gary & Linda Mechtly, Evelyn Misko, Jeanne Boehing, Alex Drobot, Rachelle, Jane Golofski, Doug Diller, Harry Krewsun, Mary Alice Babcock, Dorie Kunkle, Mary Evelyn King, Sam Wadrose, Isabella Olivia Lindgren, Ethel Thomas, Donna, Erin, Michael Miller, Grace & Owen Ostrasky, Patti Sinecki, David Genshi, Sue Segeleon, Mike Gallagher, Liz Stumpf, Theodore Nixon, Michelle Corba Kapeluck, Linda Hippert & family, Margaret Vladimir, Luke Emmerling, Robert McKivitz, Liz Obradovich, Halyna Zelinska [Archbishop Daniel's mother], Charlotte, Andrew Mark Olynyk, Deborah Finley, Claire Senita, Eleanor Kelly, Bryan, Nancy Barylak, Patrick Keenan, Khrystyna Chorniy, Anthony Cormier, Nathan Forbeck, Sarah Doyle, Samuel Peters, Esther Holupka, David Vallor, Henry Faraly, Julie Eiler, Dorothy Lednovich, Bob C., Allie—young girl with leukemia, Heather Kramer, Jane Wartinbee, Matthew—young man with cancer, Nicholas Orlando, Mary Ann Kuznik, Michael Pryhodzenko, Theresa Ditto, Mary Ann Musial, Yvonne Christy, Father Deacon Myron & Barbara Spak, Julia Duda, Lisa Pandle, Kris & Julie Hanczar, John Kennedy, Gaelle Kelly, Irma McDivitt, Robin Young, Mckayla, Rachel, Carl & Margaret Reed,

Lydia Wilson, Robert Pointon, Walter Cecelia, John Persico, Jeff Miller, Mary Kernick, Glenn Miller, Jean Marie, Donna & Walter McCrackin, Bonnie & Eugene Blair [Pani Gina's parents], David Hoenshell, Barbara Macino, Shelley Hill, Linda Cawley, Gerald Cogley, Corey Guich, Robert Vangrin, Pauline Witkowsky, Sera White, Deborah Smith, Nancy & Eric Dunik, Julian Strozh [young lady with cerebral palsy], Dr. Kirsten Ream, Patricia Corey, Michelle, Katie Swarm, Michelle, Patrick, Linda Morris, Chris, David Hiles, Jennifer, Cher Mount, Frank & Janet Horrell, Jim Wandling, Gail, Sirena Sharp, Ron Paulovich, Sandi Anderson, Lina, Shirley, Denny Mader, Ella Campbell, Tom Hyatt, Bill Janiro, Jean Symanko-Andy's sister, William Lemonakis, Alma Wyke, Lindsay Romanczak & family, Susan Lucas, Neil Carter & family, James Paluh, Mickie Weikel, Evelyn Krempasky, Tammy Strunk, Loida Esbry, Darlene Chicka Deskins, Drew, Alice & Keith Philipa, Kateryna Kocelko, Mira Filipović, Lynn, Jacqueline, Sharon, Zan Cheng, Kristy, Elaine Ellenberger, Brandon, Anna Tranchine, Demetra, Blase Urban, Catherine Hogel & children, Jennifer & Dylan, Ron Schwartz, Lydia Wilson, Flora Tomlin, Howell Swarm, Jane Bielewicz Allred, Katie Elizabeth, Mileva, & Michael, Deirdré Straughan, Terri Paluh, Lori & Steve Lucier, Kyranna Cherpas, Pastor Bruce Nordeen, Heather Ried, Carla Perry, Linda Elliot, Dennis McDaniel, Luke Tinsley, Brent, Tricia, Katherine Gorman, Pamela Jaquette, Sherri Walewski, Marika Zeliszczuk, Donna Davis, Jackie Crimbchin, Marta Charron, Mary [Corba], Margie Sekelsky, Gary Howell, Fran Fulton, Gina Catanese, Bill Vizza, Jamie Swarm, Kevin Allen (from Ancient Faith Radio), Kathy Flaherty, Tori Reade-Henry's niece, Derick-Glen Burlack's neighbor, Michael, Nichole & Christopher, Ben Douglas, Dianne Donahue, Zachary, Natasha, Noah Willard, Jodi Hanczar, Gregory Cervo, Lisa Bruce, Martha Nezolyk, Kathy Cvetkovich, Judy, Will, Emma, Ginny, Ye-Jin, Maria, John & JoAnn, Jim & Kitty, Phil Bouse, Ralph & Beverly Stoker, Noah Willard, Nikola, Natalie, Nikola, & Nevenka Jovonovich, Julia Collier, Amy Kemerer, Thomas Smith, Tracy Slaugenhaupt, Louis & Terri Berceli, Tom Nolan, Silvia Martin, Dena & George, Georgia, Lawanda [Evelyn's niece], Maureen Sams, John Kendall, Judi Danser, Darcy, Nancy, Ian Brick, Cecilia Barnhart, Logan Magorien, Pam & Gordon Grant, Debbie & Jerry Novosel, Noah Willard, Sandra Dillard, Danielle McCann, Barry [Father Jim Orr's cousin], Tim Joyce, Joe Samchuck—vocations, Albert Heckman, Stephen Popichak—Fr. Bob's brother, Brianna Stumpf, Stanley Porembka, David & Terry Coyne Hartnett, Mike C., Jennifer Scheirer [Nick Behun's daughter], Catherine Beecham [Father Bob's cousin], JoAnne & Dave Andrews, Rev. Peg Bowman, Pat & Jan Jennings, Tim Sams, Mike Ruzzi, Mary Kay Ludovicy, Pastor Sara Irwin, George Dilendorf, Sharon Torick, Carol Behun, Erv Frye, William Lusherand, Colin Kirton—Stage 4 pancreatic cancer, Clifford, Paul Riley, Tonee & Sydnee Turner, Annette Paluh, Theresa

Paluh, Cathy Lotinsky, Jeff & Buschra Kerr, Margaret Sekelsky, Robert Sekelsky, Robert Rodriguez, Rita & Joe Mrvos, Alexandra & Bowen, Katherine Kulik, Eleanor Kitt, Stacie & Gary, Maria Warholak, Stacie & Gary, Anna Sekelik, Christy, Mariruth, Rich & Judy Previc, Ben Williams, Tim—surgery, John Wakin, Olivia—girl with a brain tumor, Rick & Sharon Morgan, John Stasko, John, Kris, & Kait, Kristi Wilson, Wendy LaGamba, Melissa Gross [hip replacement], Amy Forbeck, David Salazar, Kitty Mary, Dr. Paul Riley, David Hess, Serena, Wyatt, Makenzie, Jennifer, Alexandra Roberts, Candace Irvin, Carol Muschick, Grace Love [knee replacement], Stacie Riley, Joseph Paul Cervo, Jr., Elizabeth, Lillian Skowvron, Sue & Greg Heinen, Paul Simpson [Father Bob's cousin], Sharon Curtis Rivas, Kathy Milcic, Lisa Bolan, David G. [cancer], Donna [dementia] & Darla, Adam Snow, the McKenna family, David Gazella, Brian & Michele Cannone, the Rodrigues family, Michael Welsh, Nick Solominsky, Samantha & Lisa Houser, Sarah Stepanovich Clark, Julia Baloga, Brett Crosby, Randy Lapuh, Henry Tkacik, Diane & Arthur Chaklis, Denny Mader, Zoe Oswalt—Fr. Bob's cousin [cancer], Barbette [cancer] & Scott, Kristin [cancer], Erm Hartmann, Barbara Bookser [cancer], Bob Mazzuca [cancer], Marko, Taylor, Terri Crosby-Vega [knee replacement], Christine Mohamed & family, Sue Demko, Tammy Marsico, Terry & David Hartnett, Jamie Ball, Kay Williams, Hannah Stewart, Jim Wyko—Alex's friend, Dan Losego, Lisa Bruce, Yvette, Barry Bender, Scott McDougall, Andrew Zelleznick, Byron & Cecilia Scott, Vespina, Michelle Russo, Julie Tripodi, Alby Oxenreiter, Debbie—HTUCC Jackie May, Barbara Morvay, David Salsar, N&O, Randy & Adrienne Kuny, Vince Berardinelli, Mason Martin [Karns City HS QB] & family, Martin Mrvos, Jeff McCoy, Lauren & Sloane Valentina Persico, Alexis & baby Colton Rosati, Jessica Shirley, Mark [kidney cancer], Steve Milcic, Wilbert Wagner, Bob Wojciechowski, Ashley, Beth Skowvron, Sharon Svitek, Laura, Christopher, & Baby Jane Dickson, Luke D, Diane Murphy, Kristin Vaughn [Harry's daughter], George Petronsky, Doug & Darcie Burkholder, Michael, Jeane, and Katie Byerly, Acolyte Photios & family [Joanne, Richard, Heather, Keith, James, Debbie, James, Sophia, Zachary, Tabitha, Arqynios, Barbara, Aristotle, Alexander, Kalev, Nina, Elias, Elijah, Jessica], Richard & Daniel Scharba [Metropolitan Antony's brothers], George Lawrence, Edie McGrath, Samantha Lopez, Bob [cancer], Syble Elliott, Maria Ancevski, Krystyna, John, & Jeffrey, Dottie & family, Bonny Diver & Ashley Smock, Steve, Jill Morocco, and Lauren S. We pray that God will grant them all a speedy recovery.

One needs to see his own sin, then wash it in repentance, and acquire a pure heart, without which a person cannot perform any good deed completely, with a pure conscience. St. Ignatius

(Brianchaninov), Bishop of the Caucasus and the Black Sea, Harbor for Our Hope: On Acquiring Peace Amidst Suffering p.128

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ... There is NOTHING to keep us from praying...for each other, for our family and friends, and most of all for the first responders—EMTs, nurses, doctors, firefighters, police officers, and members of our military who keep us safe. Be well and be **SAFE!!! God Bless!**

Please remember ALL American service men and women in your prayers. May God watch over them and ALL service men and women—and bring them all home safely!

REMEMBER—PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS FREE!

Communion Fasting: nothing to eat or drink after midnight, EXCEPT in cases where your doctor tells you to eat or drink something for medical reasons: medication, diabetes, etc. ***If you have a question, please ask Father Bob.***

AT ANY TIME—if there is an emergency, if you have questions, or if you just need to talk, please CALL FATHER BOB at [412] 956-6626.

SERVICES IN SLICKVILLE

**SUNDAY, August 25 OBEDNITZA—SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM—UPSTAIRS 10:30 AM
9TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; AFTERFEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION;
MARTYRS ANICETUS & PHOTIUS OF NICOMEDIA; HIEROMARTYR
ALEXANDER-BISHOP OF COMANA; MARTYRS PAMPHILUS & CAPITO**

Tone 8

1 Corinthians 3:9-17

Matthew 14:22-34

**WEDNESDAY, August 28
DORMITION OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS AND EVER-VIRGIN MARY**

**SUNDAY, September 01 OBEDNITZA—SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM—UPSTAIRS 10:30 AM
10TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; AFTERFEAST OF THE DORMITION; MARTYR
ANDREW STRATELATES & 2593 SOLDIERS WITH HIM IN CILICA;
MARTYRS TIMOTHY, AGAPIUS, & THECLA OF PALESTINE**

Tone 1

1 Corinthians 4:9-16

Matthew 17:14-23

Litany in Blessed Memory of Josephine Roman, Father John Harvey, Father Dragan Filipovic, Frank Gazella, Sr., Suzie Pelczar, Helen McNally, & Gerald Wampler—Fr. Bob

**SUNDAY, September 08 OBEDNITZA—SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM—UPSTAIRS 10:30 AM
11TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; MARTYRS ADRAIN, NATALIA, & 33
COMPANIONS OF NICOMEDIA; MARTYRS ATTICUS & SISINNIUS**

Tone 2

1 Corinthians 9:2-12

Matthew 18:23-35

BULLETIN INSERT FOR 25 AUGUST 2024

**9TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST; AFTERFEAST OF THE
TRANSFIGURATION; MARTYRS ANICETUS & PHOTIUS OF
NICOMEDIA; HIEROMARTYR ALEXANDER-BISHOP OF COMANA;
MARTYRS PAMPHILUS & CAPITO**

TROPARION—TONE 8

Thou didst descent from on high, O Merciful One!
Thou didst accept the three-day burial to free us from our sufferings!
Our Lord, our Life and Resurrection, Glory to Thee!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever,
and unto ages of ages. Amen.

KONTAKION—TONE 8

By rising from the tomb,
Thou didst raise the dead and resurrect Adam.
Eve exults in Thy Resurrection,
And the world celebrates Thy Rising from the dead,
O greatly Merciful One!

PROKEIMENON—TONE 8

READER: Pray and make your vows before the Lord our God!

PEOPLE: Pray and make your vows before the Lord our God!

READER: In Judah, God is known; His name is great in Israel!

PEOPLE: Pray and make your vows before the Lord our God!

READER: Pray and make your vows.

PEOPLE: Before the Lord our God!

ALLELUIA VERSES—TONE 8

Come let us rejoice in the Lord! Let us make a joyful noise to God our
Savior!

Let us come before His face with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with psalms.

Sister Vassa [Larin]

HOW DOES THE THEOTOKOS "SAVE" US? (Tuesday, August 13)

"The laws of nature are overcome (Νενίκηθηται τῆς φύσεως οἱ ὄροι / Побеждаются естества уставы) in you, O Pure Virgin: for birthgiving remains virginal, and life is united to death; a virgin after childbearing and alive after death, you ever save your inheritance, O Theotokos." (Canon of Dormition, Ode 9)

On the eve of the great feast (or fast, if we're on the Older Calendar) of the Dormition of the Theotokos, I'm reflecting on how the above-quoted hymn helps us better understand its final words: "you ever *save* your inheritance (i.e., all of us), O Theotokos."

Let's first note that we do not confuse the Theotokos with our one-and-only Savior. What we are doing, when we affirm that the Theotokos "saves" us, is professing the indispensable role that she played, as Theotokos, in His incarnation, without which we would not have salvation.

What is "salvation"? It means "a return to wholeness" from previous fragmentation or separation from that wholeness through all the contradictions of our being. Salvation is accomplished by the "Theo(s)"-part of the "Theo-tokos," by God, but not without her part, the "tokos" or "birth-giving" part. Our incarnate Lord integrates and overcomes our contradictions, like life and death, birth giving and virginity, fruitfulness and barrenness, victory and defeat, divinity and humanity, heaven and earth, spirit and body, by becoming one of us, in the flesh, through one of us – the Theotokos. The Mother of God exemplifies, par excellence, the whole Mother-Church that participates in this integration of the contradictions, in this return to wholeness that is "salvation," in communion with Christ. The above-quoted hymn celebrates the salvific overcoming or integration of the contradictions in and through our "Theo-tokos." That is to say, through the synergy of God and the human being that is manifested in her unique vocation, which continues to "save" us on a daily basis.

This is why we say, "Most Holy Theotokos, save us!" – and not, "Mary, save us!" because we are professing our faith in the vital, indispensable part of our salvation that is the incarnation. And this is why traditionally we do not depict the Theotokos alone on icons, but always together with the Lord. It's not just about her, nor just about God. It's about both her, – a human being just as human as the rest of us, and God, Who invites all of us to participate in the synergy she exemplifies. We're all invited to be "blessed" by receiving the Word of God (inside us, in our "wombs") and then to "keep it" by giving it away; by giving birth to it in our world and

sharing it in our own context. As Christ said to the woman who cried out from the crowd and blessed His mother (Lk 11:27): "Moreover, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it!"

(Happy upcoming Dormition or Assumption, or Dormition Fast, dear Friends! For more on Dormition and Assumption, tune in to my new podcast for this week. The link is in the first comment below. And please pray for the deceased Archpriest George today, - it's the 40th day today after my dad's passing.)



Father Joseph Cervo

August 15/28: The Falling Asleep of the Theotokos

By:Fr. Bill Olnhausen, retired priest, St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Church, Cedarburg, Wisconsin.

This feast is observed by Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and some traditional Protestants. Most Protestants ignore Mary's death because they say it's not in the Bible. This is true. They also ignore Mary after her death because they say that is not in the Bible. This is false! We'll come to that later.

Mary's Death

We Orthodox title this day the Falling Asleep of the Theotokos – or her Dormition (from the Latin) or her Kimissis (Κοιμησις Θεοτόκου) in Greek. "Falling asleep" means death.*

This term is used several times in the New Testament to refer to death. If we are repentant and in the grace of God, dying is like falling

asleep with Christ on this side and waking up with Christ on the other side. After death we will still have a lot of growing to do before we come to perfection, but please don't believe any of the "scare" theories about what happens. Our God "is good and loves mankind."

People all over the world honor their departed loved ones. It's the natural thing to do. I pray for my mother daily. Last week when we were traveling in Ohio my son, grandson, and I (it was a guys' trip) stopped at my parents' grave and offered Trisagion (Memorial) prayers for them.

Say hello to my son David and my grandson Matthew.

I pray for my mom especially on the date of her death, July 25. Did the Virgin Mary really die on August 15? No one knows for sure. But my uneducated guess is that if, 34 years later, I remember the date of my mother's death, the early Christians likely remembered the date of Mary's death and passed it down in the Church.

OK, so her death is not recorded in the Bible. But she was there in the very early Church (Acts 1:14), and Christ had given her into the care of the Apostle John the Theologian. How could the early Christians possibly have forgotten her and her death? This woman who was the Theotokos, the "bearer of God"? who raised and shaped our dear Lord Jesus when he was a boy? This Woman who has become our Mother, too?

Our Mother Mary

I know some folks have an issue with this title, but listen: After being born of the Virgin Mary, Christ then took his new human family and expanded it into the Church. All who are baptized become children of his Father, and brothers and sisters of Jesus, and if you take him you also get his whole family. When my son-in-law married into the family, he didn't get to pick and choose among us. That's just the way life is. So on what basis should anyone exclude Mary, our Lord's Mother? For if we are adopted siblings of Jesus, then we are adopted children of his Mother. Mary is Mother of the whole Christian family, Mother of the Church. What could be more obvious?

When she and his adoptive brothers went out to see if he was taking care of himself, Jesus looked at the crowd and said, "Who are my mother and my brothers? All who do the will of my Father in heaven are my brother and sister and mother." Matthew 12:46-50: An obvious reference to Mary's "Be it unto me according to your word." I remember an old movie which focused on Mary's face as he said this. Her initial shock (are we being rejected?) slowly turned into a big smile, as she looked out over the crowd, and you could see her realizing: "My family! they're all my children!"

Orthodox genuinely, naturally love our Mother Mary. To forget her and her death seems almost offensive to us – to think of people ignoring Mom!

What happened at her death?

Roman Catholics title this day the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. They believe that at Mary's death she was assumed ("translated," "moved") bodily into heaven – although it was not till 1950 (!) that they declared this to be a dogma necessary for salvation. A few Roman Catholics have even believed that the Mother of God did not die. This is the rather sentimental Latin approach. Compare it to the more sober Orthodox icon below.

Protestants are equally dogmatic. They dogmatically disbelieve in her Assumption. I once visited a Lutheran church which had been given a set of Orthodox icons of the annual feasts. They had them hanging on the walls in the entrance way, for people to see as they went into the church. Good for them! Except for the icon of the Falling Asleep of Mary which showed her Son receiving her soul. I mean, how controversial could that be?! But they offered to give the icon to me "because it isn't Biblical." (That again!) Dogmatic disbelief. I almost said, "Neither is Martin Luther," but I held my tongue. And took the icon.

What exactly do Orthodox believe? We are not so dogmatic as either the Roman Catholics or the Protestants. We certainly believe she was "translated," taken into heaven ("assumed" in that sense), and glorified there, but, as I say, our Dormition icon shows only Christ receiving her soul under the image of a little child. We have no official teaching about her bodily Assumption.

The first written accounts of her funeral and Assumption appear late, in the 5th and 6th centuries, though they are certainly the product of earlier unwritten tradition. (You might want to read the little book *On the Dormition of Mary*, which is part of the Popular Patristics series available from Saint Vladimir's Press.) Some of them say that 3 days after her burial her tomb was found empty. At our services, we sing about some of the stories from these accounts: her burial in Gethsemane, how the Apostles were gathered (on the "clouds") for her funeral, how Thomas was late again, how Bishop Philotheos of Athens was also there and sang beautifully. (I think this last detail is evidence for the authenticity of the account. Why ever would anyone make this up?) But so far as I can find, we do not sing about her being assumed bodily.

This is the Troparion for her Falling Asleep. Since the English text is provided only "mid-video", I'll include it here:

"O Theotokos, in giving birth you were preserved in virginity, and in your falling asleep you have not forsaken the world. For since you were the Mother of Life, you were translated into Life. Therefore by your intercessions, deliver our souls from death."

However, the Theotokos has been fully part of the Church, present all over the world. Some saints seem to concentrate their efforts especially in certain areas or for particular purposes. She has been not only in heaven, but here, doing everything everywhere for everybody, like no other saint. Father Alexander Schmemmann wrote an essay called *The Presence of Mary*, pointing out that if you just hang around the Church for a while you discover for yourself that she is here – like her Son, “more present” on earth universally than she was during her earthly lifetime. We don’t need dogmatic definitions to know that.

It is a Mystery. But...

An Episcopal priest friend of mine once said to me, “I want a straight answer: What do you Orthodox really believe? Was she assumed bodily or wasn’t she? Yes or no.” I answered, “Well... must we have a dogmatic answer? It’s a mystery.” – the typical Orthodox answer when we can’t think what to say. But really, it is a mystery.

However, there are good reasons to believe in Mary’s bodily Assumption:

- 1 Most Orthodox seem to have believed in it. The people of God matter here. Some Orthodox churches are dedicated to her Assumption, for example the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church in Madison, Wisconsin.
- 2 There are no relics of Mary. The cult of relics began very early in Christian history – and again naturally so. Bodies are good, created by God. For that reason traditionally, as still in Orthodoxy, Christians have not cremated the dead. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, we have honored the bodies and burial places of our loved ones. Saint Peter’s body lies in honor in Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome. Saint Paul’s body likewise lies in Saint Paul’s Outside the Walls. Saint Andrew has moved around a great deal, but his head at least is now back in Patras in Greece where he was crucified, and he is honored there. And so on with a multitude of saints, ancient and modern. But there have never been any relics of Mary. If, as tradition says, she was buried in Gethsemane, her relics have never been found there or anywhere else. Would the early Christians, would the Church have just lost her? There must be another explanation for the absence of her relics. The simplest one is that there weren’t any.
- 3 It is doctrinally acceptable. There is Old Testament precedent. Elijah/Elias was taken bodily into heaven, and tradition said Moses was too, and probably Enoch. Christ took his risen body with him into heaven at the Ascension. He promised the resurrection of our bodies. We say in the Creed that we “look for the resurrection of the dead.” That means our bodies. Heaven is great enough to take in matter, to receive our bodies. Heaven is not less than physical, it is more than physical. Heaven is super-

physical, super-material. In heaven we will be not be less than we are here, but more than we are here. As Blessed Mary already is.

4 Here on earth she has given us so many material signs of her presence. Weeping icons with material "myrrh" – which is just a word for that for which we have no words – flowing from the eyes of innumerable icons. These are not common, but they are far from rare. I have seen 2, maybe 3, myself and I have heard first-hand of many more, and read of far more, all over the world. (We'll talk about this next week.) Are these material manifestations here signs that she is bodily present on the other side?

The Glorification of Mary

In any event, the Protestants are dead wrong (pardon the expression) about Mary not being in the Bible after her death. She is in the book of Revelation, traditionally ascribed to the Apostle John the Theologian, into whose care the Lord from the Cross gave his Mother Mary: "Woman behold your Son, Son behold your Mother". Tradition says she lived for a time in Ephesus with John. Some of you may have seen her house there. In Revelation chapter 1 John described a vision of Jesus, "his countenance like the sun shining in full strength", the risen and ascended Christ. In Revelation 12 John has a similar vision of a "Woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, on her head a garland of twelve stars" "who bore a male Child who was to rule all the nations." The "sun" connection between Christ in chapter 1 and the Woman in chapter 12 is obvious. She shares in his glory. Some say the Woman is Judaism which produced Christ – but, since the Jews had rejected Jesus, John could hardly have meant that. Some say she is the Church who brings Christ into the world, and I think that is true. But Biblical stories have more than 1 layer of meaning. Surely John must have been thinking first about Mary the Mother of God, who literally bore Christ, the Ruler of all nations. Mary whom he knew so well. John is saying that as Christ by nature shines with the light of divinity, so his Mother is now clothed with the light of his divinity, that she has now become by grace what he is by nature, that she is now in heaven in the fullness of being, just as he is. What else can it mean? And as Jesus ascended into heaven, body, mind, and soul... Dear Protestant brothers and sisters, please read all of the Bible.

Orthodox Approaches to the Mystery

Bishop Kallistos Ware writes : "... Orthodox tradition is clear and unwavering in regard to the central point [of the Dormition]: the Holy Virgin underwent, as did her Son, a physical death, but her body – like His – was afterwards raised from the dead and she was taken up into heaven, in her body as well as in her soul. She has passed beyond death and judgement, and lives wholly in the Age to Come. The Resurrection of the Body...has in her case been anticipated and is already an accomplished fact.

That does not mean, however, that she is dissociated from the rest of humanity and placed in a wholly different category: for we all hope to share one day in that same glory of the Resurrection of the Body which she enjoys even now." Festal Menaion [London: Faber and Faber, 1969], p. 64

But since we have no dogmatic definition about this, some Orthodox are more cautious and speak only of her Glorification, being careful to reverence the Mystery, as did Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky: "The destiny of the Church and world has already been fulfilled, not only in the uncreated person of the Son of God, but also in the created person of his Mother. That is why St. Gregory Palamas calls the Mother of God 'the boundary between the created and the uncreated.' Beside the incarnate divine [being] there is a deified human [being]. ...In the person of the Mother of God it is possible to see the transition from the holiness of the Old Testament to the holiness of the Church. ...we are now concerned with another transition: the transition from the world of becoming to the eternity of the Eighth Day, the passage from the Church to the Kingdom of God. This last glory of the Mother of God, the eschaton realized in a created person before the end of the resurrection and beyond the Last Judgement. She participates in the glory of her Son, reigns with him, presides at his side over the destinies of the Church in time, and intercedes on behalf of all before him who will come again to judge the living and the dead."*

This quote from Lossky is found in many places, and I know I saw it in one of his books, but I can't find it now. Does anyone know?

Finally, here is the lovely Megalynarion for her Falling Asleep, which also implies much, but doesn't quite say it:

"We bless you in every generation, O only Mother of God. The limits of nature are overcome in you, O most pure Virgin. And in childbirth you remained a virgin, and your death became a herald of life. And after childbirth, you remained a virgin, and after death you are still alive. O holy Theotokos, may you ever save your inheritance..."

