

THE EASTERN 127: September 2020

ST JOHN'S RUSSIAN
Military Road, Colchester,

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The Church of St John of the largest Russian Orthodox British Isles, and is attended by nationalities, with some 100 baptisms per year. It is a parish of the East of England Orthodox Church Trust (Charity No. 1081707), part of the Russian Orthodox Church, caring for grassroots Orthodox in our many parishes and communities in Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and beyond.



ORTHODOX No

ORTHODOX CHURCH
Essex CO1 2AN

stjohnsorthodoxcolchester

Shanghai, built in 1855, is church building in the 3,000 Orthodox of 24

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Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rE2T2sYTy8s>

Website: www.orthodoxengland.org.uk

Расписание Богослужений / Timetable of Services

Saturday 5 September

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 6 September

9.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия. Service for those going back to school or studies / Краткий молебен для учащихся

Saturday 12 September

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 13 September

9.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия.

Saturday 19 September

5.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Sunday 20 September

9.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

1.30 pm: Vigil / Всенощное бдение

Monday 21 September: Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God / Рождество Пресвятой Богородицы

9.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Saturday 26 September

5.30 pm: Vigil for the Exaltation of the Life-Giving Cross / Всенощное бдение праздника Воздвижения Животворящего Креста Господня

Sunday 27 September: Exaltation of the Life-Giving Cross / Воздвижение Животворящего Креста Господня

9.00 am: Hours and Divine Liturgy / Часы и Божественная литургия

Baptisms in July

2 August: Theodore Tetrea

2 August: Mihai Luca

8 August: Alexander Borodovskis

15 August: Alexandru Buta

15 August: Anne-Marie Cataleya

15 August: Eduard Mocanu

15 August: Eva-Maria Bulandru

15 August: Nikitas Baltsezak

15 August: Bogdan Cernea

16 August: Eva-Maria Simion

16 August: Ioana Truta

22 August: Sofia-Maria Gemanarin

23 August: Alexandru Tudorel

23 August: Alexandru Olarescu

23 August: Vladimir Puti

23 August: Violeta Mureu

29 August: Stefan Silaghi

29 August: Damian Dron

29 August: Emilia Garbuz
29 August: Alexander Smantana

Wedding in August

Calin-Vasile Truta and Adriana Ioana Filip

Church News

St John's Hall

As the playschool in St John's Hall had to close down because of coronavirus, we have taken the opportunity to renovate it entirely and repaint it, outside and inside. Hopefully, this work will be finished on 1 September. Thank you to Matthew Edgson for helping.

New Toilet Block

We are planning to rebuild the toilet block at the back of the church in September/October. If all goes well, there will be two toilets, two washbasins, a fixed baby-changer and a dishwasher.

New Display Stands

We have been able to obtain two large display stands for the Church shop. These were given to us free of charge by the convenience store (next to our neighbours at the Chinese Restaurant) where Galina and Marina work. Thank you!

THE MOTHER OF GOD IS OUR TRUE MOTHER

A Homily on the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos

[Archimandrite Cleopa \(Ilie\)](#)



Fresco from Piva Monastery in Montenegro

Beloved faithful!

Every feast in the Orthodox Church of Christ, established in honor of the saints, brings great spiritual joy to Orthodox Christians. But however great the praise we offer the saints, it cannot be compared with that which we should offer to God, Who created the saints.

Today is not a feast of the saints or the angels. Today the Orthodox Church of God celebrates and honors the Queen of all the angels and all the saints. The honoring of slaves must not be equated to that of royalty. Today is a royal feast, for the Queen of all creation is now separated from us.

However, it would be good for you to know everything that happened at the Dormition of the Theotokos, how the Mother of Life was translated from us to Heaven. And this is how.

Three days before the Dormition of the Theotokos, the Most Holy and All-Powerful God and Savior Jesus Christ sent the Archangel Gabriel from Heaven to announce to His Mother her translation into everlasting rest. This archangel of God, who was once sent by God to announce to her that she would bear Christ, the Savior of the world, now comes and announces her translation from this earthly life to the unspeakable eternal rest and glory and honor that awaits her in Heaven.

And when he arrived, the Archangel Gabriel brought the Most Pure Virgin Mary a palm branch as a sign, as he had brought her a lily at the Annunciation. Having learned from the Archangel Gabriel that she was to leave the world and this Earth, the Most Holy Mother of God returned home in great joy and blessed her home with candles and incense; and having

prayed, she left her home and headed for the Mount of Olives, where she used to often pray to her sweetest Son Jesus Christ.

When the Most Holy Mother of God went to the [Mount of Olives](#) and prayed, a great and glorious miracle occurred: When she prostrated, all the olive and fruit-bearing trees there on the mountain also prostrated down to the very ground with her. And every time she bowed, the trees also bowed to the ground as a sign of great reverence and veneration offered to the Most Holy Mother of God, the Mother of Life.

Then she returned, and a great earthquake occurred, such that the place where her house stood was shaken. She fell on her face in prayer and again lit the candles and incense, and called together all the holy women who lived with her—the [holy Myrrh-bearers](#), and all her friends—and told them:

“My time has come to leave you, to go to my Son and my God.”

The holy women and Myrrh-bearers and all the holy widows and virgins who followed the Most Holy Theotokos and her teachings became greatly sorrowful and wept bitterly.

And this miracle was followed by another. Suddenly there was a great whirlwind, bringing the Twelve Apostles on the clouds of the heavens (from those edges of the earth where they were sent to preach), so they too could partake in the commemoration and burial of the Most Holy Virgin Mary. God the Word Himself brought the Apostles on the clouds in order to give even greater honor and glory to His Most Holy Mother.

And when they arrived, she said to them:

“Holy disciples of my Son and I, Apostles and disciples, this is why the clouds brought you here, to Gethsemane. I must leave here; I received word from the Archangel Gabriel that I must leave you, though not completely, but to go to Heaven and help you from there.”

And all the divine Apostles wept. Lastly, the great Apostle Paul came, and shedding tears, he said:

“O Mother of Life and of God the Word! I did not see my God Jesus Christ in the flesh, but when I saw you in the flesh, I felt that He Himself would always be with us and that I was seeing Him. And it was a great consolation to us, the Apostles, to have you with us. And now you are departing! For you it is a great joy, for you are departing into eternal joy. And we both rejoice and grieve. We rejoice in your joy, for you are departing to those most holy places and to boundless joy, but we grieve, for we are remaining here, on Earth, without beholding you, and without your humility, and without your sacred instructions and your most holy prayers.”

The other Apostles spoke the same way. Then the Most Pure Theotokos gave them her final word, saying:

“Behold, I will lie on my bed and place my body as I will, and you leave it as it is.”

And having said this, she asked forgiveness from all who were there—the divine Apostles and the holy women—and having made the Sign of the Cross, she lay down on her bed, closed her eyes, crossed her hands over her breast, and gave up her spirit.



Dormition fresco from Dečani Monastery, 14th C.

O, thy wonders, Most Pure Mother of God! As soon as the Most Holy Mother gave up her most holy and most pure spirit into the hands of her Son, all the blind and maimed, the lame and the sick who had come there from the city and all the surrounding areas were made whole! The dumb spoke, the deaf heard, lepers were cleansed, and the lame walked, for thus it pleased the Most Holy God and Savior Christ to honor the Dormition of His Most Holy Mother with glorious wonders, so all might know that it was no ordinary woman who reposed, but the Mother of the Word, the Mother of God—the God of Wonders.

As soon as the Mother of God gave up her most pure soul, the divine Apostles heard thousands and millions of angels singing in the air, praising and glorifying the exodus of the Mother of the Most Holy God. And they also sang, like the angels in the air.

And taking the bed with the most pure and most holy body of the Mother of God, they began their journey to the Garden of Gethsemane, carrying it there to place it in a grave. They were accompanied by angelic hymns from the air, and the Apostles with many Christians and all the disciples of Jesus Christ sang on the Earth. Thus there was a common singing of the rational flock of Jesus Christ on Earth and the noetic flock in Heaven, that is, the angels.

Thus, both Heaven and Earth—that is, people and angels—accompanied the Mother of God to her most holy sepulcher.

And as they went thus, and the chants were heard, and a sweet fragrance was exuded from her most holy body, filling the places they passed, the envy of the Jews was aroused, and some of them rushed with great boldness to throw the most holy bier from the shoulders of the Apostles to the ground. And they even dared to approach and raise their hands to the most holy bier. But—O, thy wonders, O Mother of God!—all who desired to throw the bed from the shoulders of the Apostles went blind and could no longer see where they came from or where they were going!

As for the one who dared to touch the most pure bier on which lay the most holy body of the Mother of God—a Jew named Anthony—both of his hands were immediately cut off by an invisible angelic right hand, and they hung, clinging to the bier, and he himself fell unconscious and half-dead.

And both the blinded and the one whose hands were cut off began to ask forgiveness from the Mother of God. Then the divine Apostle Peter, taking the palm branch brought to her by the Archangel Gabriel from the breast of the Mother of God, from the bier, put it on the eyes of the blind, and they immediately became healthy, and when he touched the hands severed by an invisible angel, they were healed!

Thus were performed the glorious miracles of the Mother of God. Therefore, they all exclaimed with one voice:

“Great is our God Jesus Christ and great is His Most Pure Mother, the Most Holy Virgin Mary!”

Then they all continued together. Those who had been jealous also went, singing and confessing their sins to Christ God; and repenting of their former sin, they hymned the Mother of mercy, the Mother of the Lord, Who did not hold onto their sin, but forgave all and gave them healing.

And having arrived at the Garden of Gethsemane, they placed the most pure body of the Theotokos in a new stone tomb, already carved out, and having placed a stone at the door of the sepulcher, three days and nights they heard the singing of angels around the tomb of the Most Holy Theotokos.

Then another miraculous thing happened. The Apostle Thomas, who was not present at the Resurrection of the Lord and therefore did not believe that the Resurrected Savior had appeared to the ten disciples, was late again, by the providence of God. He was not brought on the clouds together with the others, but a cloud brought him after the burial of the Mother of God. Therefore, he was very grievous and sorrowful, thinking, “For what sins have I been found unworthy to see the Mother of God in the flesh? For what sin did I delay in faith in the Resurrection, and am now late for the Dormition of the Mother of God?”

Then God inspired the Apostles, by general counsel, to open the tomb of the Most Holy Theotokos, so Thomas might kiss the feet of the Most Holy Mother of God in the tomb and receive consolation and firm hope that his preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ was also accepted.

And when they opened the tomb and coffin of the Mother of God—O, thy wonders, Most Holy Theotokos!—they did not find the body of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, but only the shroud, as had remained in the tomb of Christ the Savior after the Resurrection; for the Most Holy God and our Savior Jesus Christ took His Most Holy Mother with her body to Heaven and put her in a place that He knows.

This is a true event, brethren, and this truth about what happened at the Dormition of the Mother of God has been handed down to our day.



Icon of

The Dormition, St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai

But pay attention to the fact that during the terrible sufferings of our Savior Jesus Christ, during His crucifixion and death, there also occurred great miracles. There was darkness across the whole Earth from the sixth to the ninth hour. There was an earthquake and the rocks split in two in Jerusalem. The graves were opened and the dead were resurrected.

And just as there were great and glorious wonders at the death of our Savior Jesus Christ, so it pleased her Most Holy God and Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to honor the Dormition of His Most Holy Mother with glorious miracles. This included the coming of the Archangel Gabriel, the trees bowing to her on the Mount of Olives, the arrival of the divine Apostles on the clouds, the blinding and cutting off of the hands of the insolent ones and their healing

after their repentance, the angelic hymns invisibly heard all around, accompanying the Mother of God to her tomb, and then the raising of her body into Heaven, leaving the most holy shroud behind in the tomb for the consolation of those remaining on earth.

Why did so many miracles occur? Why when the Mother of God gave up her spirit were so many deaf, lepers, lame, maimed, withered, and all kinds of sick people healed? Why did God crown the Dormition of His Most Pure Mother with so many glorious miracles? This is why: for us and for our faith, so we might know until the end of the world who the Mother of God was on Earth, who was then translated to Heaven.

She who was translated then to Heaven is the daughter of God, for do you hear what the Holy Spirit says? *Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people* (Ps. 44:11), and so on. At the same time, she is the Mother of the Word in the flesh. The Holy Spirit tells us this again: It was the Immaculate Bride, the royal chamber of the Most Holy Spirit, the chamber of the Most Holy and Most Pure Spirit who was then translated to Heaven.

And if we ask the holy Prophets, and each of them separately, we will hear from all of them: The spiritual and rational Dove is now translated to Heaven, bringing to the world a sign of the end of the flood of sin—the olive branch that Noah’s dove brought, a sign of God’s propitiation for the salvation of mankind. This is what the divine Prophets would tell us: Now is translated to Heaven the noetic ladder, the spiritual ladder, by which human nature has been raised from Earth to Heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father through the deified body of Jesus Christ.

Let us ask David, her most blessed forefather and parent, father of God in the flesh, and he will also tell us: Now the Queen is translated to Heaven, standing at the right hand of the Holy Trinity in gilded array, clothed and adorned.[\[1\]](#)

The Prophet Ezekiel will tell us: Now is translated to Heaven the closed door of God, through which none have passed saved the Lord God alone, leaving her closed, not breaking the seal of her virginity.

If we ask the Prophet Isaiah, he will also tell us: Now is translated to Heaven the Virgin who gave birth to Emmanuel, that is, Christ God, who is and ever will be with us.[\[2\]](#)

If we ask Gideon, he will tell us: Now the fleece, full of the dew of the Holy Spirit, is translated to Heaven.[\[3\]](#)

If we ask the Prophet Habakkuk, he will tell us in turn: Now the mountain of God, overshadowed by a thick shadow, is translated to Heaven.[\[4\]](#)

And again, David will tell us: Now is translated to Heaven the mountain in which God was pleased to live.[\[5\]](#)

If we ask the Prophets, they will all say that now the Mother of God the Word, the Mother of Life, the Mother of mercy and grace is translated from us to Heaven.

Yes, brothers, how much more we could say about the Mother of God, but it’s impossible to retell it all in one Liturgy, for the time is short, and no one can praise her worthily. Let us know that today [our Mother](#) is translated to Heaven, the Mother of mercy and grace. For all of us who have God as Father also have the Mother of the Lord as our spiritual Mother, who ever prays and ever intercedes for us and for the salvation of mankind.



God would have destroyed the world long ago, as the divine Fathers say, for the many sins with which men anger Him, but as the Mother of God wrapped Jesus Christ and swaddled Him in the manger, so now she binds the anger of God and stops Him from destroying mankind. For the Mother of mercy and grace does not want God to destroy the souls of men, for she knows that were the anger of God to wax hot, it would destroy the entire world that has become the abode of so much sin and evil.

The Most Holy Virgin Theotokos, who served the Father as a daughter, Christ as Mother, and as holy servant to the Holy Spirit, ever remaining a servant and handmaid of the Lord, as it says in the Gospel,^[6] ever serving now the Most Holy Trinity in Heaven together with all the saints and angels after ceaselessly serving Him on Earth to her last breath, now ever intercedes and ever prays for us and for our salvation.

We have a kind and merciful Mother there in Heaven. Do not think that because the Mother of the Lord is translated to Heaven today that she has left the world. No! Once moving there, she has great authority and great power to help us. She is now nearer to the throne of God; she has gone there to ever look upon the needs of the poor, the prayers of widows, upon beggars, the imprisoned, the persecuted, the suffering, the sick. There she became a Mother helping everyone in trouble—all who are oppressed and all who love her and call upon her help with their whole hearts. We have a most blessed Mother in Heaven, the Mother of mercy and grace, who ever prays for the entire Church of Christ and every child of the Church of Christ individually.

Blessed and thrice blessed is every Christian who keeps an icon of the Most Holy Theotokos in their house and reads an akathist, moleben, and other prayers to the Mother of God every day. There is none in Heaven nor on Earth more powerful, save the Holy Trinity, than the Mother of God, who is mighty in helping us.

If the memory of the just is with praise, then how much praise ought we offer the Mother of God—the Queen of all the righteous, of all saints and all angels of God? And if she is the Queen, then she has great power from the Most Holy God to help us, to protect the world, to

come to the aid of both the great and small, the rich and the poor, the wise and the simple, the sick and the healthy, and all faithful, being at the same time our Heavenly Mother.

Blessed are those Christians who, after the Holy Trinity, honor the Mother of God with all their hearts, and wherever they go, say: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, through the prayers of Thy Most Pure Mother and all Thy saints, have mercy upon me, a sinner.”

I’ll tell you one story so you see what a speedy helper the Mother of God is for those who have her as Mother and who venerate her as the Mother of God the Word, and how close she is to those who believe in her and ever call upon her for help.

There was a woman, a widow, whose husband died when she was still young, leaving her alone with two small children. The poor woman also had a farm. But she revered God and the Most Holy Theotokos, with an icon of her with the God-Child in her embrace. And she taught her children from an early age to bow before the icon, to pray the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed, and at least the shortest prayers to the Mother of God for a start. And the children would ask like babes—which they were:

“Mama, who is that on the icon?”

And she would tell them:

“It’s your Mama, your true Mama.”

“Aren’t you our mama?”

She would say:

“No, your true Mother is in Heaven, and she is called the Mother of God.”

“And Who is this Child she is holding in her arms?” they would ask.

“That is our Lord Jesus Christ, Who created us and was carried in the womb of the Mother of God. She gave birth to Him by the Holy Spirit, and He was both God and perfect man.”



A child's prayer. Photo: www.orthphoto.net

Thus this poor mother taught her children who the Mother of God is, and she taught them with her whole heart that the Mother of God is their true Mother. Therefore, the children, rising in the morning, even before speaking with their mother, would run to the Mother of God, make several prostrations, pray the Lord's Prayer and prayers to the Mother of God, honoring her according to the strength of their childish understanding.

One day this poor woman had to go work the harvest in the field, and there was no one to leave the children with. It was her custom to lock the children up in the house when she left them. She called the children, left them something to eat, and said:

"You stay home alone. I'm going to work—I have a lot to reap."

And the children asked:

"Who are we staying with?"

"You'll stay with our Mother," she said, pointing to the icon of the Mother of God, before which a lampada was burning.

Then she said:

“Your Mother will be with you and protect you, and you be smart and pray if you get in trouble. Call out to her, for she will protect you!”

The children believed their mother that they wouldn’t be left alone, but with their Heavenly Mother, and the poor woman hastened off to her work in the field. The children prayed, but their minds went from one thing to another, without stopping on a single thought.

So they forgot their mother’s advice. They prayed for a while, then started playing games and started playing with fire. As I said, the mother locked them in the house so they wouldn’t go outside and get lost, knowing that she probably wouldn’t be home for at least half a day.

And when the children started playing with fire, the house itself caught fire. Seeing their household items catch fire—rugs and whatever else they had—and when they saw that the whole house was burning and that there was no one to come to put it out, since it was summer time and everyone was at work, they ran to the icon of the Mother of God, picked it up with their little hands, and shouted:

“Mama, don’t leave us!”

And—O, thy wonders, O Mother of God!—the entire house burned down, but the fire did not touch the wall where the icon of the Most Holy Theotokos was hanging, with the children clinging to it!

Someone brought the woman news of it in the field.

“Oh, woman, your house has burned down!”

And this poor thing said:

“Oh, woe is me, I left my children at home!”

The one who told her didn’t know about the miracle that occurred with the children, but only told her: “Run—I heard it’s your house!”

Hearing this, and knowing that she locked her children in the house, she took off running, and her heart was about ready to leap out of her chest from running and from fright. And when she reached the outskirts, she asked:

“Did my house burn down?”

“Yes,” they answered her, “your house burned down. They saw a huge fire, and people ran to put it out, but the house had already burned down.”

And she cried out:

“Mother of God, how could you leave my children? I left them with you!”

Sobbing and wailing, she ran like a madwoman. When she arrived, she saw people standing and looking at the glorious miracle: The entire house had burned down, but the wall with the icon of the Theotokos stood untouched, and the children were holding the icon and crying, “Mama, Mama!”

Seeing this, the poor woman dashed through the fire to the icon of the Mother of God and fervently thanked the Mother of God that her babies, whom she had entrusted to her, were kept alive and healthy.[7]

I have told you this to show you that whoever venerates the Theotokos as their Mother and patroness enjoys her protection, as well as their children, and cattle, and all their possessions. Have this faith always, and may the Akathist and prayers to the Mother of God never cease in your home, and no matter what sorrows or misfortunes befall you, call upon the Mother of God with all your heart, and she will surely come with her speedy help, with her most holy and most powerful prayers.

Know that there isn't a soul under Heaven that could place its hope in the Mother of God and be thoroughly put to shame. By her prayers, it will have peace, comfort, shelter, and refuge in this age, and at the moment of death, the mercy of the Mother of God will not leave it. And on the day of the Judgment, the Most Holy Mother will kneel before her Most Holy and Sweetest Son, our God Jesus Christ and say: "My Lord God and Son, this tormented soul, even if it has sinned, has always entreated me to pray to Thee. Forgive it, have mercy, and show it mercy."

Thus, by the prayers of the Most Holy Theotokos, we will find mercy in this age, and at the hour of death, and on the day of the Judgment.

Amen!

Footnotes

[1] Cf. Ps. 44:14

[2] Cf. Is. 7:14

[3] Cf. Judges 6:37-38

[4] Cf. Hab. 3:3

[5] Cf. Ps. 67:17

[6] Cf. Lk. 1:38

[7] After the repose of Elder Cleopa, a similar story happened with him: There was a fire at one monastery, and the house of one nun burned down together with everything in it, as well as the windows, floor, and roof. Only a simple paper portrait of Elder Cleopa, which the nun venerated and which hung alone on the wall, remained untouched.

From the book, Predici la Sărbătorile de peste an [Feast-day Homilies]. Editura Christiana, 2001.

Archimandrite Cleopa (Ilie)

Translated by Jesse Dominick

Pravoslavie.ru

8/28/2020

THE THEOTOKOS ON HER DEATHBED

[*St. Nikolai \(Velimirovic\)*](#)



The Dormition of the Mother of God. Mosaic.

We have read the last page of the sacred book, the content of which exudes innocence and piety from cover to cover. At the mere sight of this book, even the cruelest critics bearing the weight of prejudice and bias have silently stopped, and having read it from beginning to end, walked away with softened hearts and rejuvenated spirits. Closed now is the book that began with the words, “In the Jewish town of [Nazareth](#) lived the childless elder [Joachim and his wife Anna...](#)”

How bright are the first pages of this story, truly illuminated by this tender and quiet flush of the evening’s setting sun, so that it might after the night is over shine forth from the east. Who is not gladdened at this aged couple’s happiness, which visited them only at their parting from this world to add a drop of honey to their life so poisoned by sorrow!

The souls of Joachim and Anna were filled with inexpressible paradisaic cheer at the sight of their little Daughter, entering the temple of God accompanied by her maiden friends and met there with a modest but solemn greeting. The joy of these elderly, pious souls was all the more pure and perfect in that these parents did not even suspect that this would be the first and last joyful event for their tearfully sought Fruit. The young Mary became an orphan early in life, left without a father or mother. For their piety God spared Joachim and Anna, so that they would not live to see the uninterrupted chain of calamities and suffering that their child would have to go through for the sake of acquiring her reward, truly great and unattainable by any others: their Daughter would be called the Mother of the Son of God.

Joachim and Anna reposed, comforted that they had left their Child under the protection of the temple, under God's shield. Who then could have foretold the turbulent life of this Maiden who spent her entire youth in the church, in peace, fasting, and prayer? Nevertheless, the storms of the sea of life mercilessly ripped at this orphan, drew her into unknown lands, forcefully plunged her from inspiration into fear, and back again. The shock of the angel's sudden annunciation concerning God's great mercy and designating this Virgin to give birth to the Savior of the World would have been more than sufficient for this tender, virginal soul.

But for Mary were prepared much more onerous trials that could have broken even the hardiest of spirits and crushed the greatest courage. After Her first maternal smile to Her Divine Child, Who gladdened Her soul [exhausted] by alarm and the difficult passage through the dark of night and rain, She had to quickly flee [from Palestine to Egypt] without looking back in order to save Her precious and most high Child. It was precisely so, for [King Herod](#) feared Her Child Who lay in the straw, and human envy deprived the Son of God of all peace, even in the cave, that humble refuge.

Seized with fear and trembling, She fled across the Palestinian plains, clutching Her little Child close to her breast, indefatigably rushing day and night through forests and deserts, knowing neither roads nor pathways, only to save Him from the sword of the king's executioners. In fact, she did not quake or weaken in spirit along the way, or faint from anxiety and exhaustion, encouraging herself with the thought that the Lord God is the great King over all gods and that in His hands are the mountains' heights and valleys of the earth (cf. Ps. 49:1; 45:3–4), for she had from an early age implanted in her soul the teaching of the wise Preacher: *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them* (Eccl. 12:1).

She endured all this with faith in God, and did not even suspect that the name of the Mother of God would bring her more bitterness than joy. Yes, and could She have thought otherwise after the Archangel Gabriel's magnificent greeting? And could it even have occurred to anyone that people would greet their Heavenly Emissary and Savior with enmity?

For even as the glory of her Son began to be pronounced all over the world, dolorous presentiments and cares never left her maternal soul. She was continually accompanying Jesus, following Him at a distance amidst the masses of curious people, watching Him with trepidation and drinking in His words, but She never resolved to come closer to him, afraid to trouble Him. She knew about His limitless love for all people, she had heard His words: *My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it* (Lk. 8:21).

He had ceased to belong only to Her, and had become the living Spring for the whole world, so that anyone who wished could come to Him and drink their fill. But again, He was never so endearing to anyone as to His Mother's heart. Within that enormous mass of people who followed at Jesus's heels throughout Palestine and so enthusiastically greeted Him, two eyes always looked intently at Him, two lips ceaselessly repeated his sacred words and quietly uttered prayers for Him. This was His Mother.

Jesus steadily walked ahead, not looking back at the impenetrable wrath of sinners fuming at Him. Nothing disturbed or frightened Him. He was always equally magnificent and decisive—as on the Mount of Olives when [entering Jerusalem](#) and other triumphant moments, as well as at the last supper when parting with His disciples before His ascent to Golgotha. And only

one attentive heart heard the gnashing of teeth against Jesus, and one soul foresaw the intentions of the godless ones, who sought to ensnare the soul of the righteous man and condemn innocent blood (cf. Ps. 93:21), and every day Her heart was filled with trepidation at what She heard and felt. This was His Mother.

She would have liked to have at least one night alone with Jesus to tell Him about everything that had reached Her ears, what people were saying about Him and what they were preparing for Him; she wanted so badly to inform Him, so that he might be more attentive and cautious, although she knew that He knew everything much better than She. But not even at night did He have a spare moment of rest, instructing His disciples and preparing them for future labors. And She burned with the desire to be at least at night far from worldly vanity to speak with Him a little, and press His weary head to herself. However, her desire was not to be fulfilled, and so She spent Her nights also without Her Son, gazing at the starry sky with tear-filled eyes and directing there the consoling words of King David: *According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy consolations brought gladness unto my soul* (Ps. 93:19).

But all these anxieties of the soul, all the cares and sorrows, all the evil anger and hatred of people that Mary had to endure for Her Son—all this was nothing compared to the terrible blow that was being prepared against Jesus and against Her own soul. For She saw with Her own eyes Her Son bound, spat upon, and bloodied beneath the crown of thorns, and heard those hellish shouts: “Crucify Him, Crucify!” She followed Him to Golgotha, she saw how He lost strength and fell under the cross; She bent to the ground and gathered His blood with the dust. She heard also the sounds of the nails being beaten into His hands that once embraced Her, She saw Him on the cross, naked and formless, having endured horrible torments, covered with sweat and losing His last strength.

O, if only She could but fall at His blood-drenched feet, embrace and kiss them! But even this was impossible for poor Mary. O mothers who lament over your sick sons, remember Mary, suffering beneath the cross on which Her Son suffered in [dreadful] torments! Remember and fortify your hearts with what also encouraged Her: hope in divine mercy!

Christ gave up His spirit. But in the greatest sufferings, before He gave His spirit to His Father, He remembered a certain person and looked down to the earth. Searching out His Mother with His eyes, He saw Her broken and failing in strength. Clearly conscious of yet another of His duties with regard to Her, he cast His gaze upon His most beloved disciple [John](#), and said to His Mother, “Woman! This is Your son!”

Christ’s disciples scattered across the whole world to teach and save the human race. They left their native homes and families and dedicated all their strength to preaching the Savior’s teachings. They were no longer so fearful as on that night when Jesus was seized, but became fearless and mighty giants, disdaining all danger.

As long as they were in Palestine, holy Mary spent time with them, helping them confirm themselves in the Savior’s commandments, encouraging them to all goodness and cheering them. But when the disciples departed from Palestine to distant lands alien and unknown, She remained in John’s house.

She did not waste Her time with trifles, but used every minute for the benefit of mankind, the very human race that crucified Her innocent Son! She dedicated her labors and care to visiting the sick and the imprisoned; she comforted, taught, and instructed anyone who

needed support or counsel. She lived strictly according to Her Son's commandments and therefore she could assuage people's sorrows. She was a source of healing, and shade, and all who drew from that source felt freshness and relief and were fortified by heavenly love. The good works to which she entrusted Herself filled her soul with great blessedness and consolation, which were the reward for the woes and calamities she previously bore. For only after Her Son was resurrected did her eyes open to what had happened, and hope arrived.

So, now the time had come for Mary to shut her eyes and commend Her soul to God. This took place in peace and quietude. Her death did not evoke any confusion or trouble. Palestine, the former witness of such turbulent events, frantic from the suddenness and unexpectedness of what had gone on, had now calmed down and tranquilly went on about its daily life, only now and then peering at its own face shrouded in glory and gloom in the mirror of its recent past. The world hastens along its everyday, habitual activity.

The Theotokos rests on her bed. But the world feels no change at all, it does not sense that the most God-pleasing Woman has departed from its midst. The world is always the same—with its empty chatter and trivial cares for bodily needs it steals sanctity from the most solemn moments in the history of mankind. As the greatest strugglers for its happiness died in torments, it placidly and with incessant hubbub from a multitude of voices rushed after bread. But now, as the great Benefactress of people lies on her deathbed, the street noise and cacophony of voices is not silent even for a minute.

But as she is carried to her place of rest, as the Apostles sing the funeral hymns, bright memories are resurrected in the soul of this world of the Great Teacher of love and His meek and magnificent Mother. And some are found, undoubtedly found, who will join themselves to the apostles and bedew with warm tears the grave of the exemplary Nazarene Woman, and will correct their lives and deeds according to the Gospel of Her Son. Suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, the world will forget about its cares and renew its memory of the whole life of this Woman Who had strong faith; and the world itself will be convinced that *The name of the Lord is of great strength; and the righteous running to it are exalted* (Prov. 18:11).

In the house of the apostle John, peace and quiet reign. Nothing disturbs this reverent atmosphere. There is a small, modest room illumined by two rows of lamps standing around the deathbed. We might think that there was no one in the room, although in fact in this moment almost the entire army of Christ is gathered there. Here are His apostles, who had just arrived from the ends of the earth to see the Mother of their Teacher off to Her eternal abode.

With bowed heads they stand around the Theotokos, and she reposes. Her countenance shines with the mark of goodness and a certain mysterious happiness that witnesses to the absence of all sorrow, and Her final "Farewell!" is filled with mercy and condescension to the whole world, which showed so little sympathy, hospitality, or love to Her and Her Son.

[St. Nikolai \(Velimirovic\)](#)

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