

Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

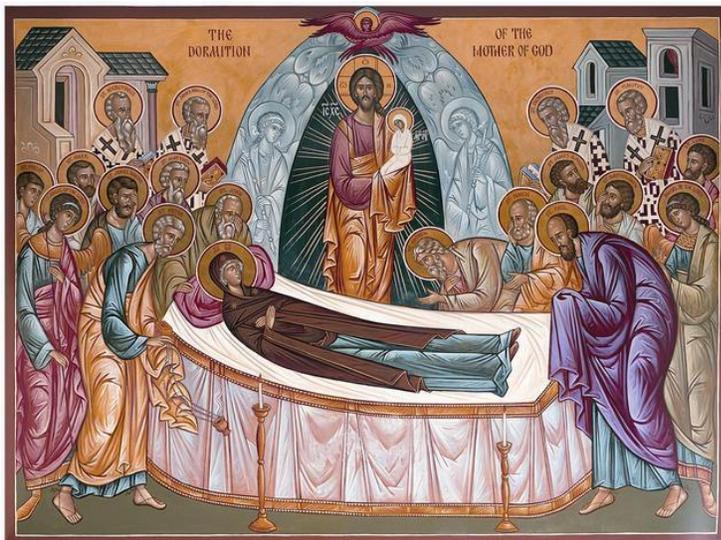
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The Dormition of the Mother of God Week of August 28, 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!



I'm certain that all of you remember the beautiful words of St. Luke in the 2nd chapter of his Gospel: *And she brought forth her first born son, wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.* With these words the 3rd Evangelist describes the humility of the birth of the Only-Begotten Son of the Father, God incarnate, the Lord Jesus Christ. With tenderness and love that first Christmas the All Holy Mother of God gave birth to the Savior. As any mother would do at the birth of her child, she was careful to see that He was safe, comfortable and warm. And

according to the customs of that time, she took pieces of cloth and bound him in them; so doing would make the Newborn Child feel safe, secure and warm.

A newborn child is perhaps the most vulnerable and insecure of all creatures. Until the mother takes the child safely into her arms, the child cannot feel secure or safe. I have attended the childbirth of four of my children and remember how frightening the screams of the newborn sounded until their mother, my wife, took them into her arms. Then, everything was better; then there was peace and security.

The icon that I pasted above the text of this email is that of the Dormition, the Falling Asleep, the death of the All-Holy Theotokos. And surely the iconographer of this and all other icons of the Dormition that I have seen remembered with tenderness the story of the Savior's birth, how He had been wrapped in swaddling clothes by His Mother and laid in a manger to be kept warm, safe and secure. For in the icon, he shows our Lord holding a tiny figure in His arms, the figure of what appears to be a child wrapped in swaddling clothes. The figure, Brothers and Sisters, is none other than the Soul of His Mother, the All-Holy Theotokos. Just as she held Him in her arms, wrapped in swaddling clothes, so now He holds her tenderly in His arms, safe and secure.

There not one among us who does not fear death. Although we believe in the Risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with all our hearts, we still shudder at the thought that someday each of us will take that last breathe as our souls are ripped away from our bodies. This tragedy awaits us all. But when we think of it, let us keep the image of the icon of the Dormition before our eyes and in our thoughts. For the Lord Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior; He is merciful and tender, humble of heart. And as that last breathe leaves our bodies and the soul separates from the unity that the Lord had created, He, the Lord Jesus Christ, will take *our* souls; with tenderness and love, He will keep us safe and secure, just as the icon of the Dormition shows that He did with the soul of His Blessed Mother. We shall be held safely in His hands to await that time when He will raise our bodies to be like unto His own Body, and unite our souls in a new creation to our remade bodies once again as He promised.

I have always loved the Feast of the Dormition. It is a reminder to me as it should be to you of that wondrous invitation that our Lord offers to all of us:

Come unto me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Remember what the LORD has done for you! Give Him thanks and praise! *Glory to His NAME for all things!* Pray for me, His most unworthy of priests.

In Christ our true God,

+Fr. Elias

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