

SOBORNOST

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Wednesday: Lay Vespers 6:30 PM

Saturday: Vespers 5 PM

Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM

Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10 AM



August 20, 2023 – 11th Sunday After Pentecost | Holy Prophet Samuel | Afterfeast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

The feast we are festively celebrating in the middle of August indicates to us the all-revered person of our Panagia. The feast is designated as the "Dormition of our Most-Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary". In these words are hidden the entire mystery of our Panagia, which is associated with the mystery of Christ. In the sermon today we will make a short analysis of the words in this title "Dormition of our Most-Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary".

The death of the Panagia is called "**Dormition**", because on the one hand death after the Resurrection of Christ is a sleep, since all will be raised bodily at the Second Coming of Christ, and on the other hand because our Panagia after her Dormition was translocated to the heavens. Thus, according to the tradition of the Church, that which will take place with everyone at the Second Coming of Christ, took place with the Panagia at her Dormition.

Next, the Panagia is called "**Most-Holy**", because she is not only holy, sanctified, but she is above all those who are holy. She is "more honorable than the Cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim". Saint Gregory Palamas

says that the Panagia is the peak and perfection of all the saints. Indeed, all the Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Fathers, Venerable Ones, and generally all the saints sing her praises and glorify her.

Also, the Panagia is called "**Lady**", because she is the Mother of the Master Christ. Indeed, Christ is the Lord and Master of heaven and earth, as consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit, while His Mother, from whom He received His human nature, is the Lady, having a special place in the mystery of the divine economy, as well as a special place in the life of the Church, and she constantly intercedes for us.

In addition, the Panagia is designated as "**Theotokos**", because she simply did not give birth to a man of stature, but the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Nestorius and those heretics like-minded with him were repulsed by the epithet "Mother of God", as well as the term "Theotokos", because they argued that the Virgin gave birth to Christ the man, not God, Who "came forth", or was "passed forth", or was "brought forth" through her, but was not born "from her". Yet the Third Ecumenical Synod established the faith of the Church, that the Panagia is the Theotokos, she gave birth to God, she gave flesh to the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, and this is why she should be called "Theotokos". This is not simply a philosophy, but theology, since the Apostles who saw Christ shining in the Light of His divinity came to know by experience that He is "Light from Light, true God from true God", which is why the Panagia is the Theotokos and Mother of the Light. Thus, in the ninth ode of the Service of Matins the priest makes the pronouncement: "The Theotokos and the Mother of the Light, honoring with hymns let us magnify."

In the title of today's feast of the Panagia, she is also referred to as "**Ever-Virgin Mary**". The word "Mary" is her name, and the word "Ever-Virgin" shows the mystery of ever-virginity, her perfect purity, since she was a virgin before giving birth, during her pregnancy and after birth. In every icon of the Panagia the iconographer paints three stars - one on her forehead, one on her right shoulder and one on her left shoulder, which denote the ever-virginity of our Panagia. This is a mystery. And this is verified through the experience of divine glory. Therefore, the feast of the "Dormition of our Most-Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary" shows us the entire wondrous and blessed Person of our Panagia, who we must honor with fasting, prayer, repentance, doxology and Divine Communion of the Body and Blood of her Son, with spiritual joy. Also, honor is given with the revered offering of her honorable name and with supplications and prayers to her who intercedes for all of us. Many years, my brethren, and may the Panagia intercede for all of us and protect us from all evil. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Synaxarion for the Holy Prophet Samuel

Even the Seer Samuel finally shut his eyes, but sees the everlasting light after his demise. Seeing the future, Samuel went hence on the twentieth.

This most holy man, a Prophet of God from childhood and the last Judge of Israel, was from the city of Ramathaim, of the tribe of Levi, the son of Elkanah and Hannah the Prophetess, born around 1155 BC. His mother gave him the name "Samuel", which means "asked of God", because, having previously been childless, she asked God for a child, with many supplications and fervent tears.

When she had given birth to him and weaned him, she took him to the town of Shiloh, where the Ark of God was then, and, although he was still an infant, she dedicated him, in accordance with her promise, to the service of God, and she gave thanks to Him, singing the Third Canticle of the Old Testament: "My heart is strengthened in the Lord..." She then returned to her home and later gave birth to three more sons and two daughters. Samuel, however, stayed in Shiloh under the protection of Eli, who was High Priest of the Hebrews at that time, and served in the Tabernacle of God. On account of his reverent behavior he was well-pleasing to God and to other people, according to the testimony of Holy Scripture: "But the child Samuel led his life and he grew and matured and found favor both with the Lord and with men" (1 Kings/1 Samuel 2:26).

While this good young boy was sleeping in the Tabernacle, where the Ark of God was, he heard a voice three and four times calling him by name and saying, "Samuel, Samuel!" The voice was the voice of God, which announced to Samuel God's decision about the future destruction of Eli. For Eli had two sons, called Hophni and Phinehas, very lawless young men who held God in contempt, and he did not concern himself in any way with correcting them. The divine decision was fulfilled in due course, and all of Eli's family was wiped out in one day - a terrible example of those who neglect the good upbringing of their own children and the appropriate chastisement of their wrongdoings.

Samuel was chosen after this to protect the people and he judged them in holiness and righteousness, setting them an example of good works, and considering it a great sin if he ever stopped praying for them and beseeching God for the remission of their transgressions. As he said in the presence of all: "Far be it from me to sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will serve the Lord and show you the good and right way" (1 Kings/1 Samuel 12:23). The justice and selflessness with which he directed the people and judged the cases of each one were acknowledged by all when he asked them, with God as witness, to say conscientiously whether he had ever wronged anyone, or taken property, money or a gift, even as much as a worthless sandal. They unanimously replied: "You have

not wronged us or oppressed us or crushed us, nor taken anything from anyone's hand" (1 King/1 Samuel 12:2-4).

When he was growing old and the people asked for a king, he anointed Saul for them. Saul, however, before long disobeyed the divine commandment, and Samuel reprimanded him on the Lord's behalf. Leaving Saul, he anointed David at God's command.

Having lived for ninety-eight years beyond reproach in every respect, and being an example to all of a life well-pleasing to God, he died in about 1057 BC. The books of Judges and Ruth and the first twenty-four chapters of the First Book of Kingdom [First Book of Samuel] are ascribed by many scholars to him. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 9:2-12 EOB

Brethren, If to others, I am not an apostle, yet at least for you I am one! You are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. My defense to those who question me is this: Have we no right to eat and to drink? Do we not have the right to take along a sister – a wife – even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Kephass? Or is it only Barnabas and I who are obliged to work? What soldier ever serves at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who feeds a flock and does not drink from the flock's milk? Do I speak these things according to human ways? Does not the law say the same thing as well? For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it for the oxen that God shows care, or does he say these things for our benefit? Yes, it was written for us, because whoever plows and whoever threshes should do so with the hope to have their share {of a harvest}. If we sowed to you spiritual things, is it [such] a great thing if we reap your material things? If others partake of this right over you, should we not even more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we bear all things, so that we may cause no hindrance to the Good News of Christ.

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint Matthew 18:23-35 EOB

The Lord said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a king who wanted to settle his accounts with his servants. When he began the settlement, someone was brought in who owed him ten thousand talents. But because the servant could not pay, his lord gave orders that he be sold, with his wife, children, and all that he had, so that payment may be made. At this, the servant fell down on his knees before him, saying: 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will repay you all!' The lord of that servant, moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. However, that servant went out and found one of his fellow-servants who owed

him one hundred denarii. He grabbed him and took him by the throat, saying: 'Pay me what you owe!' And so, his fellow-servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying: 'Have patience with me, and I will repay you!' But the first man would not [have compassion] but went off and had him cast into prison, until he should pay back what was due. When his [other] fellow-servants saw what had been done, they were extremely distressed and came to their lord to report all that had taken place. Then, his lord summoned the [first] servant and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should not you also have had mercy on your fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on you?' His lord was angry and delivered him to the jailers until he would pay all that was due. This is how my heavenly Father will also treat you if you do not each forgive each other from your hearts."

Homilies on the Divine Liturgy: The Ecclesiastical Government

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos and Agiou Vlasiou

When an official visits our land, an audience usually follows, that is, the meeting, to which we report our requests, and we ask them to satisfy some of our desires that refer to the life and society in which we live. The same happens with the Divine Eucharist. After the coming of Christ on the Holy Table there follows our requests and the expression of our inner feelings. Three main things will be mentioned.

First, immediately after the change of the Holy Gifts we feel the need to say to the Father - our God - that we offer the Divine Liturgy to honor the Saints, the Prophets, the Righteous of the Old Testament, the Venerables and the Confessors and every righteous person who ended their life in Christ. Above all, we offer the Divine Liturgy to our Panagia, which is why we say "especially our all-holy, immaculate, most-blessed, glorious Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary." The Saints were united with Christ. At this time we also mention the Saint who celebrates that day, because we believe that this day they are especially among us.

Second, we remember our living and reposed brethren. We first mention those who have fallen asleep, because they are in great need of our prayers, since now they can do nothing for themselves and expect them of us. The commemoration takes place at this time - the memorial service for our brethren, our relatives. That is why at the time when the chanter chants "Axion Estin" we should mention the names of the people we love and who have left this world. Then we mention the names of the living, we pray for the world, the Church that is all over the world, for the priests and deacons, for those who struggle to live with purity and modesty and for the rulers, so that there is peace in the nation. We also pray for the city in which we live and for those who live in it in faith, for those who travel in various ways, for

the sick and the demon-possessed, the captives, for those who help the Church in various ways, for those who help the poor and finally we pray for ourselves, to receive the mercy of God.

Third, we mention our Bishop, in whose name the priest performs the Divine Liturgy. "And first remember Lord our Archbishop ... to whom you have given your holy Churches peace, salvation, honor, health, length of days, correctly dividing the word of your truth."

The Metropolitans commemorate the Holy Synod to which they belong, the leaders of the Autocephalous Churches and the Patriarchs, and mention "every Diocese of the Orthodox". This utterance shows our ecclesiastical government. The Church is not an abstract faith and ideology, but a specific organization, structured in Patriarchates, Autocephalous Churches, Dioceses and Parishes. Everyone mentions their immediate superior, to whom they refer. There is no individual ecclesiastical life. The Hieromonk who liturgizes in the wilderness of Mount Athos mentions the Ecumenical Patriarch, to whose jurisdiction Mount Athos belongs. If this mention is omitted then the Divine Liturgy suffers from being uncanonical. And we say this because a Eucharist that takes place outside the Church is not a real Divine Eucharist, but a conventicle. And of course it is not enough to mention one's Bishop and not to have a meaningful communication with him.

The Church is one body, the Body of Christ. To this Body belong the Saints, the Angels, the dead who departed with repentance and the living who struggle to be united with the Body of Christ. One cannot live alone and independently of one's brethren. Also, one cannot live outside his Bishop, who is in "the type and place of the head of the Church, that is, of Christ." Worse still, a priest cannot perform the Divine Liturgy in the name of his Bishop, mention him, so that God may preserve him in peace, salvation, honor, health, longevity and the orthodoxy of the word of truth, and yet with his daily actions to slander him, to demonize him, to fight him in various ways.

Today we do not need an individual religiosity, but a stable ecclesiastical experience and mindset. We must live in the spiritual family called the Church and respect the Bishops God has placed in the Church organization. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Each of us is tormented with the question: what will happen to us and what awaits us after death? A sure answer to this question we cannot find by ourselves. But the Holy Scripture, and first of all the word of our Lord Jesus Christ reveals the secret to us. It is also revealed by the apolytikion and kontakion of this great feast of the

Dormition of the Most-Holy Theotokos, along with the church hymns that we chant at this feast.

I want all of you to understand why the death of the Most-Holy Theotokos and Virgin Mary is called “Dormition”. The great apostle John the Theologian, in the 20th chapter of the Revelation speaks of the first and second death. The first death, which alone is inescapable to all men, also awaits the saints and righteous ones. But the second, the fearsome and eternal death, awaits the great and unrepentant sinners, who denied the love and the righteousness of God and are condemned to eternity in communion with the devil and his angels.

In the Gospel of the same great apostle and evangelist John the Theologian, we read the words of Christ, which are very closely associated with those written in the Revelation: “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” (John 5:24).

Do you hear this, do you understand this? I think that this probably strikes you as strange, that all those who are obedient to the word of Christ and believe in the Heavenly Father Who sent Him passes immediately after death to eternal life. There is no reason to judge those who have living faith in God and who follow his commandments.

And to the great twelve apostles, our Lord Jesus Christ said: “Amen, I say to you that you who follow me, in the age to come, when the Son of man sits upon his throne of glory, will also sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28). Judges and condemners the Apostles of Christ will be during the Terrible Judgment of God, and of course, we are totally unable to imagine the Most-Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary being judged*, along with the Baptist of the Lord John, the great Prophets of God, Elias and Enoch whom God took to Heaven alive, all the countless mass of martyrs of Christ, the holy hierarchs and wonderworkers who were glorified by God, foremost being St. Nicholas, archbishop of Myra of Lycia.

*[*Note: St. Luke is in no way denying Christ's Awesome Judgment of all mankind at His Second Coming, but is saying that all the righteous made worthy of Paradise will join Christ and the Theotokos with body and soul in the New Heaven and New Earth of His eternal Kingdom.]*

We are unable to pass the thought from our minds that they would be judged, they who heard from the mouth of Christ: “The kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21). In those great strugglers of Christ, as if in precious temples, dwelt the Holy Spirit. And while they were alive on earth, they were in close communion with God, for thus Christ said: “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my

Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”
(John 14:23)

The Most-Holy Virgin Mary was the spotless temple of the Savior in which dwelt the Holy Spirit, and from her most-holy womb the Son of God received his human body, He Who descended from the Heavens. Because of this, the bodily death is not death, but Dormition, in other words, an immediate passage from the Kingdom of God within to the Kingdom of the Heavens and to eternal life.

Something new just came to mind. In one of the previous sermons, I told you that we have every reason to believe that the body of the Most-Holy Theotokos, through the power of God, remained incorrupt and ascended to the heavens. The kontakion of the great feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos tells us this: “Neither the grave nor death could contain the Theotokos, the unshakable hope, ever vigilant in intercession and protection. As Mother of life, He who dwelt in the ever-virginal womb transposed her to life.”

Note that it says: “neither the grave nor death could contain her”. Think that, as we remember the Holy Scripture writes regarding the death of the greatest prophet of the Old Testament, Moses, in the 34th chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, that he died according to the word of God on Mount Nebo, and was buried in the land of Moab. The grave of this great prophet must have been a place of pilgrimage for the whole people of Israel. However in the Bible we read that: “no one knows of his tomb until the current day” (Deuteronomy 34:6). However, at the Transfiguration of the Lord on Mount Tabor, Moses appeared to his Lord and Master, Jesus, together with the prophet Elias, who was seized alive into heaven.

I think that it would not be a sin to say that the body of the great Moses, as the body of the Most-Holy Theotokos, remained incorrupt.** Because of this his tomb is unknown.

[***Note: As is clear above, St. Luke acknowledges the distinction that the Theotokos (in accordance with Tradition) ascended bodily to Heaven following her Dormition, as opposed to the incorrupt bodies of the Saints, which await the general Resurrection.*]

Let us think, brothers and sisters, about the blessed Dormition of the Most-Holy Virgin Mary and remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” (John 5:24). May God also make us sinners worthy to experience this great joy, through the joy and love for man of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom belong all glory and dominion with His beginningless Father and His All-Holy Spirit, unto the ages. Amen.

— St. Luke of Simferopol

Saint Photini Outside the Doors of Blachernae

Now you see light in the innermost sanctuary of the Lord, departed Martyr graced with His love.

According to the *Synaxarion of Constantinople*, on August 20th is the "Commemoration of the Holy Martyr Photini, Outside the Doors of Blachernae." And besides the iambic verses above, no other information is given. However, in an 11th or 12th century life of Saint Photini, where her post-humous miracles are recorded, there is recounted the story of how the relics of Saint Photini (*the Samaritan woman – Ed.*) were discovered and worked many miracles in Constantinople, specifically outside of the Church of Blachernae, and a shrine was erected there in her honor, and on this day it celebrated its feast. Thus, by the 10th century, her veneration was centered in Constantinople where they celebrated both her martyrdom (March 20th) and the discovery of her relics (August 20th).

According to the story of the discovery, an epidemic of blindness had swept through the city of Constantinople and a man called Abraham (Abraamios) was distraught having lost his sight. He cried out to "God not to neglect him who was in mortal danger, but to show him the path whereby he should not be deprived of the light that is sweetest to all men. As he was thus despondent and lamenting his condition, he found respite from his despair in sleep, and while he was asleep he saw a divine vision: the vision was of a woman who was already elderly and aged and quite advanced in years, wearing a garment of linen, with a pleasant and charming face. She seemed to carry a large candle, and touched his eyes and said in a cheerful voice: 'Blind man, recover your sight, and those who are in darkness, receive the light; for behold, through me, the perfume-bearing martyr Photini, Christ will grant light to your darkened eyes and will bring an end to your affliction and relieve your suffering. And this is a sign for you. A thickly wooded and dark cave holds my remains in its depths, and if you dig you will find me and light will shine on you and all your household and everyone who calls on my name through Jesus Christ.' As she spoke these words, she indicated the place with her hand, and he made a mental note of it. Therefore he quickly shook off his drowsiness, and ran to the spot, after sharing word of his vision with others. And after laboring hard for a short time they found concealed beneath an underground chamber the inviolate treasure, the true pearl, the blooming lily, the venerable remains of the great martyr Photini, which dimly preserved the features in the man's vision. Straightaway then the afflicted man embraced, clasped and kissed the relics, washed them with his tears, lifted his eyes up to them, and was immediately delivered entirely from his dim sight."

It should also be noted that in the *Life of Saint Nikon Metanoite*, having decided to depart from the island of Crete where he had built many churches, he traveled

from Gortyna and along the way stopped one night to rest at the remains of an older and now ruined church. As he slept he had a dream that Saint Photini appeared to him, asked him to rebuild the ruined church, and threatened that he would not leave the island if he did not do so. Saint Nikon awoke and could not tell whether the vision of Saint Photini was a "dream or a vision enlightened by grace." He ultimately decided that it was the former and continued on his way. But then, suddenly, he lost his sight. This showed him that the vision was certainly divine will, and once he decided to return to the site of the ruined church his vision returned. Returning to the site and committed to following the request of Saint Photini, Saint Nikon lacked the tools for the work -- namely spades and shovels -- but God provided him with a column of fire which attracted the attention of the local residents who soon came to help him rebuild (and apparently excavate) the church.

The above two stories thus reveal to us that Saint Photini is a Saint associated with healing eye ailments. Moreover, both stories involved pious men losing their sight and regaining it only after the recovery of a lost sacred object or place. It is also worth noting that another Cretan saint, Saint John the Stranger, lost his sight briefly while resting in a very large, old building on Crete. In this case, he is told by the Virgin Mary to build a church to her nearby, and when he agrees his sight is restored. Why this association between blindness and disobedience? It is because it reveals that for a moment they were blind spiritually to the will of God. It has some parallels to the blindness of the Apostle Paul following his vision on the road to Damascus. *(from johnsanidopoulos.com)*

Also Commemorated Today

New Hieromartyr Vladimir priest (1938).

Hieromartyr [Philip](#), bishop of Heraclea, and with him [Martyrs Severus, Memnon](#), and 37 soldiers at Plovdiv in Thrace (304).

St. Hierotheus of Hungary (10th c.) and St. Stephen I king of Hungary (1038).

Martyr [Lucius](#) the Senator of Cyprus (ca. 310).

Martyrs [Heliodorus](#) and [Dosa](#) (Dausa) in Persia (380).

Sts. [Reginos](#) and [Orestes](#) of [Cyprus](#) (before Constantine)

New Martyr [Theocharis](#) of Neapolis (1740)

St. [Philibert](#) of [Jumieges](#) (685) (*Gaul*).

St. [Oswin](#), King and martyr of Deira, Northumbria (651)

St. [Edbert](#) of [York](#), [king](#) and monk of Northumbria (768)

Holy New-Martyrs of [Estonia](#) Peter, Bishop of Tartu and Pechory; Alypy, Archimandrite; Vladimir, Protopresbyter; Seraphim, Ioann, & Leonid, priests; Andrei & Alexander (1944-55)

St. [Amator](#) ([Amadour](#)), hermit at Rocamadour (incorrupt) (France) (unk)

St. [Burchard](#), bishop of [Worms](#) (1026)

St. [Haduin](#) (Harduin), bishop of Le Mans (c. 662)

St. [Maximus](#), founder of monastery of [Chinon](#) (France)(c. 470)

Martyrs [Leovigild](#) (hieromonk) and Christopher with 46 others in Cordoba (852)

Sept 16
Saturday
11am - 5pm

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College Student

SUNDAY

AUGUST 27, 2023

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Social Team for August 27

Team 6 – Howl, Dee Jubb, Johnsons, Charlotte H., Andrew Joseph, Jameson Barker.
Thank you!

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri & Mt. Kenya, Bennett family, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Roberta Corson, Jon Church, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Marlene Doukas, Linda A. Georgiev, Sandi Hebel, Howl family, Helen P. Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Helen, Brian, Luke and Mia Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & family, Nicholas Pavlik, Weston Perry & family, John Reece, Mary Reed, Marge Rusnak, Rose Song, Fr. Nectarios & Ia, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the suffering people of Ukraine, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)