



Prophet Elias News

News in the time of self –isolation for the Orthodox Church of
the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon
9th August 2020



Feast of the Dormition – 15th August

MOST HOLY MOTHER OF GOD, SAVE US



Troparion of the Feast

In giving birth, O Mother of God, thou hast retained thy virginity,
and in falling asleep thou hast not forsaken the world.
Thou who art the Mother of Life hast passed over into life,
And by thy prayers thou dost deliver our souls from death.

Kontakion

Neither the tomb nor death had power over the Mother of God,
who is ever watchful in her prayers
and in whose intercession lies unfailing hope.
For as the Mother of Life she has been transported into life
by Him who dwelt within her ever-virgin womb.

Exapostilarion

O ye apostles, assembled here from the ends of the earth,
Bury my body in Gethsemane:
And Thou, O my Son and God, receive my spirit.

Excerpt from a Sermon by **Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh** for the **Feast of the Dormition**

given at the Cathedral of the Dormition and All Saints, Ennismore Gardens, on 28th August 1986

The Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God has been for centuries, indeed, from the very beginning of the existence of the Russian Orthodox Church its Feast, its joy, its glory. The Mother of God has not been a passive instrument of the Incarnation; without Her 'Amen' the Incarnation would have been as impossible as without the will of God. She is the response of the whole creation to God's love and to God's gift of self not only to mankind but to the whole Cosmos He has created. And in that we rejoice, because Her word is our word. Her word was perfect, as Her trust was, Her faith was, Her gift of self was. Ours is imperfect, and yet our voices resound within Hers, weakly, hesitantly at times, but with faith and also with love.

She is the glory of all Creation; the Mother of God: one might have expected that death could not touch Her; but if death, and a death so cruel, could touch Her Divine Son, the Son of God and the Son of Mary, the Son of God and the Son of man - of course She had to pay the tribute of all the earth to the sin of man and also die. But according to Orthodox Tradition, death could not keep Her prisoner. She had given Herself unreservedly and perfectly to God, and it was to God, no longer to the earth that She belonged. And on the third day, when the Apostles came and reopened Her grave for one of them to be able to venerate Her, who had not been present at Her burial, it was found empty: She had risen because the bonds of death could not hold Her, and corruption could not touch a body which had been the body of the Incarnation. What a wonderful joy to think that now, side by side with the risen and ascended Christ, one of us, of mankind, a woman of flesh and blood is enthroned and in Her we can see the glory which will, we believe, be ours if we are faithful to God as She was.

So, let us rejoice, here where our church has been dedicated since the early eighteenth century to the Assumption of the Mother of God, to Her Dormition, one with the Mother Church, one with the Mother of God, worshipping the Lord with all there is in us and seeing in Her the image of the whole Creation in adoration before the Living God.

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Dormition in Mani

After the festivities of Profitis Ilias, (*see previous issue*) the next big social event in the villages of Mani in the Southern Peloponnese is the Feast of the Dormition. Rather than in a remote chapel, the celebration will be in the parish church, which will be full to overflowing by the end of the Liturgy, often with the service relayed by loudspeaker into the village square. After the service, the kafeneia around the square will be heaving with people, and loud with competing conversations of that particular Greek variety that sound much like the outbreak of war. From time to time a family group will get up to go, and amid much handshaking and kissing (the latter mostly only between the women – Maniat men are not great ones for physical demonstrations of affection) one phrase will be heard frequently – Kalo Heimona, Have a Good Winter.

But it's only the middle of August, and it's HOT. Why start talking about winter? The fact is, that over the next few days the Athenians – a word that covers everyone from anywhere further away than Kalamata or Sparta, including the whole of the Diaspora - will be going home, taking their flashy clothes and their (by Maniat standards) brash bad manners with them. And then people will be able to relax. Yes, it's been nice to have the relatives back home in the village, and yes, there's been lots of money to be made, but it's really, really hard work. So the next month or so is a precious time of unwinding, before September 14th, Holy Cross Day, marks the beginning of the grape harvest and wine making and then, more importantly, the serious work of olive harvesting and processing starts on 26th October - Saint Dimitrios' Day. The number of regular churchgoers may have declined in recent decades in Mani as much as everywhere else, but the Church calendar still has a big part to play in maintaining the rhythm of rural life there.

Martin Olsson

Who Now Reads The Old Testament ?

A few weeks ago I wrote about the Orthodox western rite, mentioning the use by some convert communities in America of suitably adjusted versions of Anglican services. As well as the “Liturgy of St Tikhon” (closely based on the eucharistic liturgy of the (Anglican) Episcopal Church), forms have been authorised for Matins and Evensong (Vespers) from the same source.

Ultimately these daily services derive from those replacing the mediaeval Latin rites when the Church of England split from Rome in the sixteenth century. One bold new feature of the reformed offices was the inclusion of lengthy Scripture readings: an Old Testament and a New Testament reading at each of them, arranged so that almost the entire Bible was read in the course of a year.

Weekday Matins and Evensong never became popular services, although in theory they take place every day in Anglican parish churches as well as in cathedrals, where Evensong sung by their highly trained choirs attracts a loyal following. Whether they heard it read in church or not, until quite recently most people in this country would have had at least a nodding acquaintance with the Bible. They had probably had Scripture lessons at school and might even have attended Sunday School, so if no more they knew a bit about Jesus and some of the more popular stories from the Old Testament.

It’s these stories which need rescuing from the danger of oblivion, as it’s impossible to understand the New Testament – and therefore the Christian religion – without some knowledge of the Old. Old Testament themes and events prefigure those of the New (consider how the “passing over” of Israel through the Red Sea looks forward to Christ’s “passing over” from death to life, and to ours in Baptism), and the Church has always been quite creative in borrowing Old Testament imagery to illustrate New Testament truths.

Orthodox liturgical texts are full of Old Testament allusions (a good example of this is the Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete), and the “prophecies” read at Vespers on great feasts use Old Testament images to bring out the meaning of the mystery being celebrated.

Those appointed for the Dormition and other feasts of the Mother of God are a case in point:

Genesis ch28 vv10-17 tells the story of Jacob’s dream of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, interpreted as a symbol of Mary as the one through whom God would restore the link between them.

Ezekiel ch43 v27 – ch44 v4 is part of a vision of the rebuilt Temple in the new Jerusalem. At the beginning of ch43 “the glory of the Lord” enters by the east gate to take up residence within, so that gate is to be sealed and used by no-one else. This is taken as an illustration of Christ’s entry into the world through the ever-Virgin Mary.

Proverbs ch9 vv1-11 is a celebration of Christ, the Wisdom of God, who has built his seven-pillared “house” – the Church, his Body, of which His Mother is a living icon.

Hugh

Father Peter

Father Peter’s health is still not one hundred percent, and he needs to rest to help him recuperate. He will therefore not be livestreaming services for the time being, but will let us know when he is ready to begin again. In the meantime, it is important for us all to keep him and one another in our thoughts and prayers. *Ed.*

In the Glorious Assumption of Our Blessed Lady
by Richard Crashaw (1612 – 1649)

Hark! She is call'd, the parting hour is come.
Take thy Farewell, poor world! Heav'n must go
home.
A piece of heav'nly earth; Purer and brighter
Than the chaste stars, whose choice lamps come to
light her
While through the crystal orbs, clearer than they,
She climbs; and makes a far more milky way.
She's call'd again. And will she go?
When heav'n bids come, who can say no?

Go then; go *Glorious*
On the golden wings
Of the bright youth of heav'n, that sings
Under so sweet a Burden. Go,
Since thy dread Son will have it so.
And while thou goest, our song and we
Will, as we may, reach after thee.
Hail, holy Queen of humble hearts!
We in thy praise will have our parts.
Thy precious name shall be
Thy self to us; and we
With holy care will keep it by us.
We to the last
Will hold it fast
And no Assumption shall deny us.
All the sweetest showers
Of our fairest flowers
Will we strew upon it.
Though our sweets cannot make
It sweeter, they can take
Themselves new sweetness from it.

Maria, mother of our king.
Live, rosy princess, *Live*. And may the bright
Crown of a most incomparable light
Embrace thy radiant brows.
Live, our chaste love, the holy mirth
Of heav'n; the humble pride of earth.
Live, crown of women; Queen of men.
Live, mistress of our song. And when
Our weak desires have done their best,
Sweet angels come, and sing the rest.

This Week We Celebrate

On Thursday 11th August – **St Blane**,
Bishop of Bute
We wish Fr **Alexander** and the
Community of Saint Nicholas in
Dunblane a Happy Feast and Many Years!

On Saturday 15th August – **The Dormition
of Our Most Holy Lady the Mother of
God and Ever Virgin Mary**
Happy Feast and Many Years to Fr
Stephane and all in the **Parish of the
Dormition** in Holborn!

How Music Changes Minds

Shusha sent this link to a fascinating online
lecture on the 'dark music' of Shostakovich:

<https://vimeo.com/405406300>

'Why do we need dark music? For Aristotle, tragedy was the means to achieve 'catharsis' - purging of painful emotions. For Nietzsche it was the highest demonstration of how art could help us, in a terrifying uncertain world, 'say yes to life'. And for many Russians, enduring the terrors of Stalinism and the Second World War, Shostakovich's music in particular was a lifeline and a beacon of hope. Yet Shostakovich's output contains some of the most desolate, heart-rending music written in the 20th century. How is it that such music can help us, sometimes more profoundly than music designed to cheer us up? Stephen Johnson, author of 'How Shostakovich Changed My Mind', looks to psychology, philosophy and his own personal experience to provide possible answers.'

Liturgy and Life

The liturgy must be translated into life. It is why Christ came into the world and why he gave us our liturgy.

Saint Maria of Paris