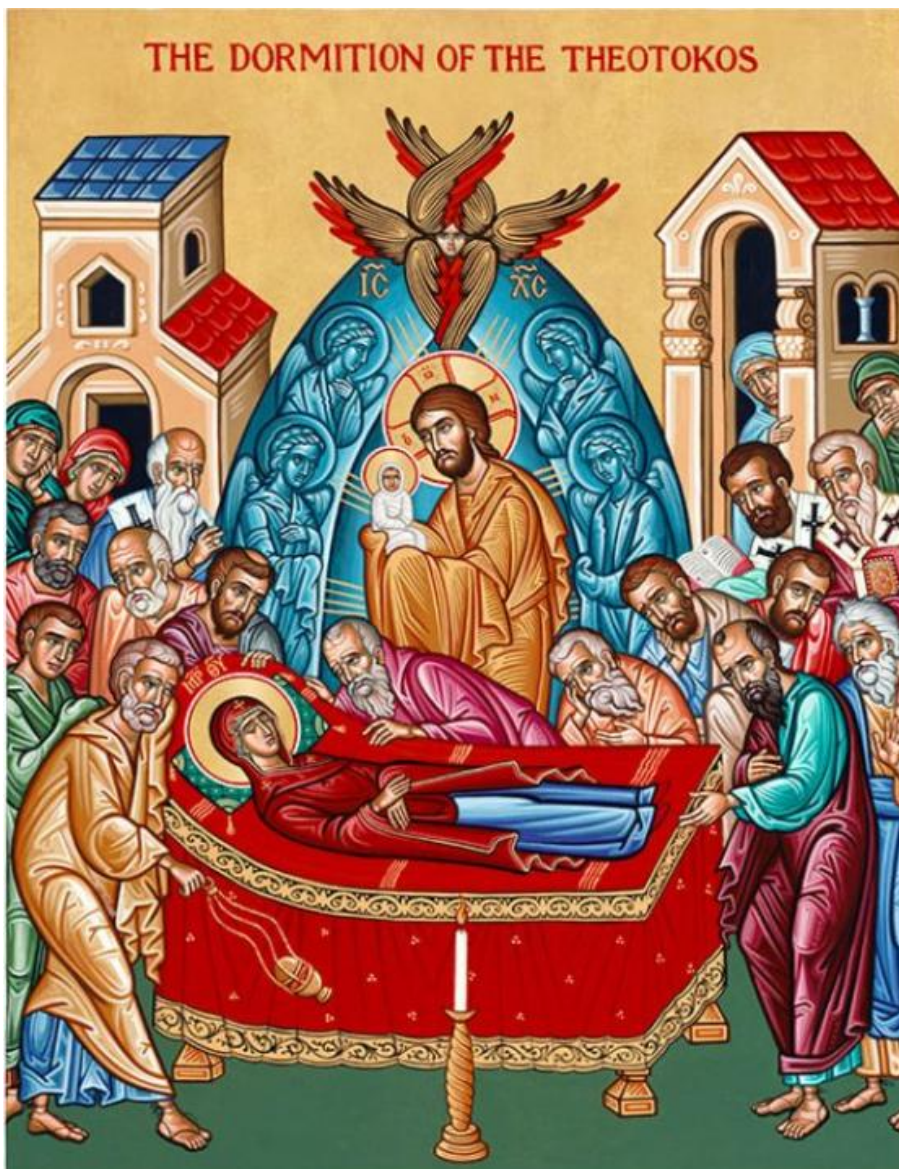


Слава Ісусу Христу!

Слава навіки!



Glory be to Jesus Christ!

Glory for ever!

Dormition of the Mother of God

Sunday, August 16, 2026

"12th Sunday after Pentecost"

Reflections for this Week!!!!

Today's Gospel presents a young man approaches Jesus with sincerity and enthusiasm. He is not hostile, indifferent, or rebellious. He has lived a moral life, observed the commandments, and genuinely desires eternal life. Yet, after meeting Christ, he leaves sorrowful. It is one of the saddest moments in the Gospel because someone stands face to face with the Source of Life and still walks away.

This passage reveals a profound truth about the spiritual life. It is possible to be religious without being completely free. It is possible to obey God's commandments while still allowing something else to occupy the deepest place of the heart. The young man was not condemned because he possessed wealth. Rather, his wealth possessed him. Jesus looked beyond his outward righteousness and lovingly touched the hidden attachment that prevented him from becoming truly alive.

The Gospel tells us that Jesus looked at him and loved him. This detail changes everything. Christ's invitation was not a criticism but an expression of divine love. Whenever Jesus asks us to surrender something, He is never trying to impoverish us. He is creating space for something infinitely greater. God never removes without giving more. He never empties a heart unless He intends to fill it with His own presence.

The rich young man wanted eternal life while remaining exactly as he was. He desired salvation without transformation. Yet the Christian life is not merely about adding God to our existing plans. It is about allowing God to reshape every part of our existence. Christ does not simply improve our lives. He creates a new heart.

In our tradition, salvation is understood as communion with God, the journey toward theosis, becoming by grace what Christ is by nature. Every attachment that competes with God slows this sacred journey. Wealth, success, comfort, reputation, pride, fear, relationships, or even our own opinions can quietly become idols. An idol is not necessarily something evil. Often it is something good that has taken the place reserved for God alone.

Jesus' invitation to sell everything and follow Him is therefore much deeper than a command about money. It is a call to radical interior freedom. Every disciple must ask, "What am I unable to surrender if Christ asks?" The answer reveals the place where our spiritual work must begin.

The sadness of the young man is especially revealing. He does not argue with Jesus. He does not deny the truth. He simply cannot let go. His sorrow teaches us that attachment always produces sadness. We often believe that holding tightly to our possessions, ambitions, or

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securities will make us happy. The opposite is true. Whatever we refuse to surrender eventually becomes a burden we must carry. Only Christ can give the freedom that allows the soul to breathe.

Jesus then speaks about the difficulty for the rich to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

The disciples are astonished because wealth was commonly viewed as a sign of God's blessing. Christ overturns this way of thinking. The danger is not material prosperity itself but the illusion of self sufficiency. Wealth can tempt us to believe that we no longer need God because we have learned to rely upon ourselves.

This temptation extends far beyond money. Education, influence, talents, professional success, and even spiritual accomplishments can create the same illusion. Whenever we begin to trust ourselves more than God, we become spiritually poor while imagining ourselves rich.

The image of the camel passing through the eye of a needle is intentionally impossible. Jesus wants His disciples to understand that human effort alone cannot save anyone. The Kingdom is not earned through discipline, intelligence, or moral achievement. Salvation is always a gift of grace.

Peter and the other disciples ask the silent question that lives in every human heart, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus answers with one of the most hope filled declarations in all of Scripture. "For human beings this is impossible, but for God all things are possible."

These words become the foundation of Christian hope. We all have attachments that seem impossible to overcome. We all carry fears, addictions, resentments, wounds, and habits that resist change. Left to ourselves we fail repeatedly. Yet Christ reminds us that divine grace accomplishes what human strength never can.

The spiritual life is therefore not about trying harder but about surrendering more completely. Every Divine Liturgy invites us to place our whole life into the hands of Christ. Every confession loosens another chain that binds the heart. Every act of charity weakens selfishness. Every moment of prayer opens another door through which grace enters. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, Christ transforms the heart until what once seemed impossible becomes possible.

This Gospel asks each of us a deeply personal question. What is preventing me from following Christ with my whole heart? The answer will be different for every believer, but the invitation remains the same. Jesus still looks upon each of us with love. He still invites us to trust Him completely. He still asks us to exchange temporary securities for eternal treasure.

The rich young man walked away because he believed he had too much to lose. The saints walked toward Christ because they discovered they had everything to gain. Their joy did not come from what they possessed but from Whom they followed.

When Christ becomes our greatest treasure, every other blessing finds its proper place. We begin to possess the things of this world without allowing them to possess us. Our hands become open instead of closed, our hearts become peaceful instead of anxious, and our lives become witnesses that the greatest wealth any person can ever receive

The Feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos stands among the most beautiful and hope filled celebrations of the Byzantine Church. It is not merely a remembrance of the earthly passing of the Virgin Mary, but a proclamation of the victory of life over death through her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The Church intentionally speaks of her "Dormition," her falling asleep, because death has been transformed by Christ into a passage toward eternal communion with God.

The Holy Theotokos lived her entire life with one word upon her heart, "Yes." From the moment of the Annunciation, when she freely accepted the will of God, until she stood faithfully beneath the Cross, every moment of her life became an offering of love. Her Dormition is the final expression of that lifelong surrender. Having carried Christ in her womb, nurtured Him in His childhood, followed Him in His public ministry, and shared in His suffering, she now enters fully into the glory of His Resurrection.

The Dormition reminds us that holiness is not found in extraordinary achievements but in extraordinary faithfulness. Mary never sought recognition or earthly power. She lived quietly, humbly, and obediently, allowing God to accomplish great things through her willing heart. Her greatness was not found in what she accomplished for herself, but in the space she made for God to dwell within her. She teaches us that the most fruitful life is the one completely surrendered to the Lord.

In the icon of the Dormition, the Apostles gather around the bier of the Mother of God, while Christ stands in their midst holding a small child clothed in radiant white. That child represents the soul of Mary. The One whom she once held in her arms as an infant now lovingly receives her into eternal life. The image reveals the beautiful reversal of salvation history. The Mother who embraced the Savior is now embraced by the Savior. It reminds us that those who entrust themselves to Christ will never face death alone.

For every Christian, the Dormition becomes a source of profound hope. We often fear death because it seems like an ending, yet the Holy Theotokos teaches us that for those united with Christ it is the beginning of eternal life. Death no longer has the final word. Through the Resurrection of Jesus, the grave has become a doorway to the Kingdom. Mary's Dormition assures us that the promises of Christ are not distant ideals but living realities.

This feast also invites us to examine how we are preparing for our own meeting with the Lord. Mary was ready because she had already given her life completely to God. Every prayer, every act of mercy, every sacrifice offered with love prepared her heart for eternity. Our own lives should become a similar preparation. Every Divine Liturgy draws us closer to heaven. Every sincere confession cleanses the soul. Every act of forgiveness loosens our attachment to this passing world and strengthens our desire for the Kingdom that has no end.

The Dormition also reveals the dignity of the human person. God created us not for destruction but for eternal communion with Him. In honoring the Holy Theotokos, the Church celebrates what God's grace can accomplish in a human life that remains open to Him. Mary becomes the image of the Church and the image of every believer who allows Christ to transform the heart.

Congratulations to Ivy and Kyle

With great joy, our parish community congratulates **Ivy and Kyle Barrett** on the joyful birth of their beautiful son, **Simeon Anthony**, born on **August 9**.

We give thanks to God for the precious gift of new life and rejoice with Ivy and Kyle and their family on this beautiful blessing. The birth of a child is a sacred moment, a reminder of God's love and the wonderful gift of family. May little Simeon Anthony always be surrounded by love, faith, kindness, and the prayers of those who cherish him.

May the Lord bless Simeon with good health, happiness, wisdom, and a heart open to God's grace. May he grow in faith and love, and may his life always reflect the goodness and light of Christ. May God also bless Ivy and Kyle with patience, strength, joy, and abundant grace as they begin this beautiful new chapter of their lives as parents.

As a parish family, we rejoice with you and give thanks for Simeon Anthony.

We welcome him with love and prayer and look forward to the many blessings and joy he will bring to your family and to our community.

Congratulations, Ivy and Kyle! May God bless Simeon Anthony and your entire family, now and always. Many blessed years to little Simeon Anthony!

Welcome, Fr. Abraham Miller!

We warmly welcome Fr. Abraham Miller, who will be celebrating the Divine Liturgy and serving our parish while Fr. Hugo is away. We are grateful for his generous ministry and willingness to be with our parish family. May the Lord abundantly bless Fr. Abraham, and may the Holy Theotokos and St. Nicholas watch over him during his time with us. We pray that you will make him feel at home with your warm hospitality and prayers.

A Note Regarding Fr. Abraham

If any parishioner would like to speak with **Fr. Abraham**, please feel free to call him directly at **480-901-6281**, which is the preferred number.

You may also call the **Rectory/Parish number** and leave a message. Fr. Abraham will check periodically for any messages that have been recorded and will return your call as soon as possible.

The Courage to Remain Spiritually Awake !!!

The nineteenth step of the Ladder of Divine Ascent invites us into one of the quietest, yet most powerful virtues of the Christian life, holy wakefulness. Saint John Climacus teaches that the soul must remain spiritually alert, attentive to the presence of God, and ready to recognize both His grace and the subtle temptations that seek to draw us away from Him. This step demands courage because remaining spiritually awake is far more difficult than falling asleep in comfort, routine, or distraction.

Our world encourages constant activity, endless entertainment, and continual noise. We fill our minds with countless images, opinions, and worries. We rush from one responsibility to another, believing that productivity is the same as fruitfulness. Yet beneath all this movement, the soul can quietly drift into spiritual sleep. We may continue attending the Divine Liturgy, saying our prayers, and fulfilling our duties, while our hearts slowly become less attentive to the voice of Christ.

Holy wakefulness is not merely staying physically awake. It is the continual awareness that every moment belongs to God. It is living with open eyes, an attentive heart, and a spirit that recognizes the presence of Christ in every circumstance. The watchful soul notices opportunities to forgive, to encourage, to remain silent when anger rises, to offer gratitude when complaints seem easier, and to choose love when selfishness calls more loudly.

This kind of vigilance requires courage because it asks us to examine ourselves honestly. It is much easier to notice the faults of others than to recognize the subtle movements within our own hearts. Pride rarely announces itself. Vanity often disguises itself as confidence.

Resentment quietly presents itself as justice. Spiritual laziness hides behind excuses that seem perfectly reasonable. Without watchfulness these attitudes quietly grow until they begin to shape our character.

Saint John Climacus reminds us that the spiritual battle is often won or lost in the smallest moments. A single careless word, a neglected prayer, an unnoticed resentment, or a small compromise may seem insignificant. Yet these little moments gradually determine the direction of our soul. Likewise, one humble prayer, one act of patience, one hidden sacrifice, or one sincere act of repentance opens the heart to the transforming grace of God.

The courage to remain spiritually awake also means refusing to become discouraged by our weaknesses. Every Christian experiences moments of failure. We become distracted in prayer. We lose patience with those we love. We speak before thinking. We become anxious about tomorrow instead of trusting the providence of God. The watchful person does not pretend these failures never happened. Instead, they immediately return to Christ with humility, allowing repentance to become the bridge back to communion rather than a reason to remain distant from Him.

The Byzantine spiritual tradition constantly reminds us to guard the heart, because the heart is the meeting place between God and the human person. Every Divine Liturgy calls us to lift up

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our hearts. This invitation is not only for the hour we stand before the holy altar. It is the calling of every hour of every day. To lift our hearts means to direct our thoughts, desires, decisions, and hopes toward Christ instead of allowing them to become imprisoned by fear, anger, greed, or pride.

Holy wakefulness also changes the way we see other people. Instead of viewing them as interruptions, competitors, or sources of frustration, we begin to recognize them as living icons of God. Every encounter becomes an opportunity to practice mercy. Every difficult conversation becomes a chance to grow in humility. Every act of service becomes an offering placed before the Lord.

This vigilance fills the heart with peace rather than anxiety. The spiritually awake person is not constantly worried about what may happen tomorrow because his attention is fixed upon Christ today. He discovers that God's grace is always present in the present moment. Yesterday belongs to God's mercy. Tomorrow belongs to God's providence. Today belongs to our faithful response.

This step also teaches us that prayer is not limited to words. The attentive soul learns to carry an inner remembrance of Jesus throughout the day. While working, driving, preparing meals, caring for family, or serving the parish, the heart quietly whispers, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me." This continual remembrance gradually transforms ordinary moments into holy moments.

The courage to climb this nineteenth step is the courage to live consciously before God. It is choosing awareness instead of carelessness, gratitude instead of complaint, repentance instead of excuses, and hope instead of despair. It is allowing every thought, every word, and every action to be examined by the light of Christ.

When we embrace this holy vigilance, we discover that God has never been absent from our lives. It was we who often became distracted. As our spiritual eyes open, we begin to see His hand in our joys, His strength in our struggles, His mercy in our failures, and His love in every breath we receive. Then every day becomes a sacred ascent, every moment becomes an invitation to holiness, and every heartbeat becomes another opportunity to walk beside Christ until, fully awake in His presence, we enter the everlasting Kingdom where there is no darkness, no sleep, but only the unending light and joy of God.



A Thought for the Week

“God does not ask us to see the whole road before we begin walking. He asks us to trust Him enough to take the next step. When we place our fears, hopes, and plans into His hands, even ordinary moments become places where grace can meet us. Faith is not the absence of uncertainty, but the courage to keep walking with Christ through it. Sometimes God is silent, not because He has forgotten us, but because He is teaching our hearts to listen more deeply.

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Sunday Divine Liturgy:

9:00 a.m. The Third Hour

9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy

Religious Education
September - May

Sacraments Penance:
Sunday before Liturgies
or by appointment

Baptism - Matrimony
In most instances
six-month membership
required

Funerals
Membership of an
immediate family member
required

**Communion to the
Homebound**
If you or your family
members are confined to a
health center or are
homebound, please contact
Fr. Hugo directly so that
arrangements can be made
for his visitation.

Sunday, August 16

"12th Sunday after Pentecost"

"The Transfer of the Icon Not-Made with-Hands of Our Lord Jesus Christ"

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. Gospel: Matthew 19:16-26.

9:00 a.m. The Third Hour

9:30 a.m. God's blessings and good health for all our parishioners and friends

Monday, August 17

"The Holy Martyr Myron"

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 8:7-15. Gospel: Mark 3:6-12.

Tuesday, August 18

"The Holy Martyrs Florus and Laurus"

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5. Gospel: Mark 3:13-19.

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Wednesday, August 19

"The Holy Martyr Andrew the General and Those with Him"

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 9:12-10:7. Gospel: Mark 3:20-27.

Thursday, August 20

"The Holy Prophet Samuel"

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 10:7-18. Gospel: Mark 3:28-35.

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Friday, August 21

"The Holy Apostle Thaddeus"

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 11:5-21. Gospel: Mark 4:1-9.

Saturday, August 22

"The Holy Martyr Agathonicus and Those with Him"

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 2:5-9. Gospel: Matthew 22:15-22.

6:30 p.m. Evening prayers via Zoom

Sunday, August 23

"13th Sunday after Pentecost"

"The Holy Martyr Luppus"

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 16:13-24. Gospel: Matthew 21:33-42.

9:00 a.m. The Third Hour

9:30 a.m. God's blessings and good health for all our parishioners and friends

We are most appreciative for your generosity in donations to the church, and pray that the Lord bless you all with many blessings and good health.