



“Joy of All Who Sorrow”

No 21 August ‘10

THE DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

On 15 August, in the Church’s calendar, we celebrate the Dormition of the the Holy Virgin Mary. The word *dormition* means her repose; her earthly death. This is not mentioned in the New Testament and, to some people, this is a problem. Why? It stems from the mantra *the Bible and the Bible only - if it isn’t in the Bible it isn’t true*.

The idea that the New Testament is a complete record of the life, activity, sayings etc of Christ or anybody else mentioned in the Gospels, Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St Paul is dismissed by the last verse of St John’s Gospel: *And there are many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not obtain the books that should be written*.

The other relevant factor is that, what is in the Bible is only there because the Church put it there. It is the Church that has determined and promulgated the Faith. This has come to us in a variety of ways which include Holy Scripture, together with the decisions of the Seven Oecumenical Councils, and the writings of the great theologians such as St John Chrysostom, St Basil, St Athanasius and many others. Added to this we have a vast amount of theology in the numerous Service Books of the Orthodox Church. These things, representing the collective wisdom of the Church over two millennia, are known as Holy Tradition.

Thus we come to the festival known elegantly in England, in ancient times, as *Our Lady in Harvest*. We do not use the word *Assumption* because it might imply that the Mother of God did not die but was carried off to Heaven in much the same manner as the Prophet Elijah who travelled in a fiery chariot. The Virgin Mary died and was buried in a tomb near to Gethsemane, by the Holy Apostles who, with the exception of St Thomas, were all present. When St Thomas arrived, three days later, he asked to have the tomb opened to say his last farewell. When the tomb was opened, it was found to be empty. The empty Tomb of the Virgin can still be visited today by pious pilgrims. The theological understanding of this event is that the Virgin Mary, being fully human, was not spared death but was spared the corruption of death. She had given birth to Christ, Who is God Incarnate. Thus, since God had taken flesh of her, it was impossible for the Holy Virgin’s body to suffer decay and therefore she has anticipated the General Resurrection.

SAINT MARY MAGDALENE

On the banks of Lake Genesareth (Galilee), between the cities of Capharnum and Tiberias, was the small city of Magdala, the remains of which have survived to our day. Now only the small village of Mejhdel stands on the site. A woman whose name has entered forever into the Gospel account was born and grew up in Magdala. The Gospel tells us nothing of Mary’s younger years, but Tradition informs us that Mary of Magdala was young and pretty, and led a sinful life. It says in the Gospels that the Lord expelled seven

devils from Mary (Luke. 8:2).

Formerly immersed in sin and having received healing, she sincerely and irrevocably began a new life and never wavered from that path. Mary loved the Lord Who called her to a new life. She was faithful to Him not only when He was surrounded by enthusiastic crowds and winning recognition as a miracle-worker, but also when all the disciples deserted Him in fear and He, humiliated and crucified, hung in torment upon the Cross. This is why the Lord, knowing her faithfulness, appeared to her first, and esteemed her worthy to be first to proclaim His Resurrection.

A daring woman, whose heart was full of reminiscence of the Resurrection, she went beyond her native borders and went to preach in pagan Rome. Everywhere she proclaimed to people about Christ and His teaching. When many did not believe that Christ is risen, she repeated to them what she had said to the Apostles on the radiant morning of the Resurrection: "I have seen the Lord!" With this message she went all over Italy.

Thanks to Mary Magdalene the custom to give each other paschal eggs on the day of the Radiant Resurrection of Christ spread among Christians over all the world. On one ancient Greek manuscript, written on parchment, kept in the monastery library of St Athanasius near Thessalonica, is a prayer read on the day of Holy Pascha for the blessing of eggs and cheese. In it is indicated that the igumen (abbot) in passing out the blessed eggs says to the brethren: "Thus have we received from the holy Fathers, who preserved this custom from the very time of the holy Apostles, when the holy Equal of the Apostles Mary Magdalene first showed believers the example of this joyful offering."

According to Church Tradition, she remained in Rome until the arrival of the Apostle Paul, and for two more years following his departure from Rome after the first court judgment upon him. From Rome, St Mary Magdalene, already bent with age, moved to Ephesus where the holy Apostle John unceasingly laboured. There the saint finished her earthly life and was buried.

Her holy relics were transferred in the ninth century to Constantinople, and placed in the monastery Church of St Lazarus. In the era of the Crusader campaigns they were transferred to Italy and placed at Rome under the altar of the Lateran Cathedral. Part of the relics of Mary Magdalene are said to be in Provage, France near Marseilles, where over them at the foot of a steep mountain a splendid church is built in her honour.

The Orthodox Church honours the holy memory of St Mary Magdalene, the woman called by the Lord Himself from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. In 'the Lives of the Saints', St Dmitri of Rostov says:

'The attainment by the holy Mary Magdalen of such a true and full love for the Lord under all circumstances serves as a living example of the love which each Christian must have for God his Saviour. And following the example of St Mary Magdalen, all of us Christians must have and show forth a self-denying love for God with all our hearts, all our desires, aspirations and all the powers of our souls. With all our understanding, all our cognitive abilities, we must cleave wholly to the Lord our Saviour. The power of our love for God must be such that no-one and nothing can separate us from that love: 'neither life, nor death, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creation, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come' (Rom 8:3)'

CHURCH NOTES AND JOTTINGS

SAINT WANDREGISILIUS - The members of the church committee have commissioned an ikon of St Wandregisilius from Cyprus. This will restore to Mettingham the veneration of this beloved saint who inspires us in two ways. Firstly, through the total devotion of his life to serving Christ and, secondly, because of his dedication to the teaching of the Faith. This is especially significant today when so few people in this country have a grasp of the basic tenets of Christianity. Ignorance of the Christian Faith is responsible for many of the unfortunate attitudes of contemporary society. Just because something is legal, that does not necessarily make it right because the conscience of so many modern legislators is not informed by Christian belief.

ARCHBISHOP MARK IN CAR ACCIDENT - Late in the evening on 4 July Archbishop Mark and Bishop of Agapit of Stuttgart were returning by car to the St Job's Monastery, Munich, when another car crashed into them. The driver of the car was drunk, having been celebrating Germany's victory over Argentina in the World Cup. Vladika Mark and his driver were unhurt. Vladika Agapit did suffer minor injuries to his back and neck, for which he received hospital treatment. Thanks be to God that no serious injuries were sustained.

ENDOWMENT OF CHURCH IKON LAMPS - At the time of writing, two ikon lamps in church have been endowed and promises of the endowment of two more have been received. God bless you for your piety.

CATHEDRAL PATRONAL FESTIVAL -The Patronal Festival of the London Cathedral (Harvard Rd, Chiswick, W4) is on Saturday 28 August. The Hierarchal Liturgy will begin at 10am.

BRIGHTON CHURCH FIRE - There was a serious fire at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Brighton on 4 July. Although the altar remained untouched, there was extensive damage to the rest of the building. The police are certain that the cause was arson but the reason for the attack is not yet known. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Brighton parishioners at this stressful time.

SPONSORED CHURCH CYCLE RIDE - The annual Sponsored Cycle Ride organised by Suffolk Historic Church Trust is on 11 September this year. Sponsorship forms are on the table in the narthex.

NAMEDAYS - Wishing you all congratulations and MANY YEARS

1 August - St Seraphim of Sarov - Serafima Hopper

2 August - Prophet Elijah (Elias) - Fr Elias Jones

4 August - St Mary Magdalene - Mary Tattum-Smith

6 August - St Boris & St Gleb - Boris Jermy, Gleb Jermy

7 August - St Anna, Mother of the Virgin Mary - Anya Moss

24 August - St Laurence, Archdeacon and Martyr - Laurence Davis

Dates of the above have been designated according to the regular civil calendar.

Orthodox Church of the Mother of God *Joy of All Who Sorrow*
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REGULAR SERVICES: Every Sunday 10.30am - Every evening 6pm

Extra services for festivals and saints days will be announced in the bulletin.

e-mail churchmettingham@aol.com Website www.joyofallwhosorrow.org.uk

Cheques for the church fund should be made payable to "*Joy of All Who Sorrow*" Church.

The account is in HSBC Bank, 3 New Market, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 9HQ

Account No 71395912 Sort Code 40-09-24

