

August 14, 2018

Greetings to all the Faithful of St. Andrew's.

Our Dormition fast culminates tomorrow with the celebration of this Feast of the Falling Asleep of our Lord's mother. At the end of her life, the Virgin Mary was borne to the Kingdom of Heaven in the arms of her Son. Notice the Icon of the Dormition: Mary is clothed in grave wrappings as if in swaddling clothes. Also, notice her size in the Icon, she is represented as if a baby who is now beginning a new life. In the same way she held the Word of God in her heart and in her arms, Jesus holds her.

Before the Word was conceived in her womb, it was conceived within. She was prepared to say Yes to the Angel Gabriel who came to her and announced the birth of Jesus because she had been in the *practice* of saying Yes. She continued to say Yes to the will of God the rest of her life. According to tradition, before her death the Angel (which means messenger) Gabriel appeared again to her and told her about her death and when it would take place. In response she intensified her devotion to God with fasting and prayer in preparation for her end. She died as she had lived—in submission and obedience to God's will. She is truly one who listened to and followed through on God's will. She bore Christ in her body and in her heart. We have Mary as an example to follow. We are called to bear him in our hearts and actions. Once, as Jesus was teaching God's Word, "A woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!' But he said, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'" (Luke 11:27-28).

Let us be among those who hear and keep God's message and teaching. We should not expect a heavenly messenger to come down to us from above. The Apostles and Prophets have left for us God's Written Word. The Apostle Paul writes to Timothy that the Sacred Writings "are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

May Scripture reading be part of our daily religious practice, perfected by the obedience which it enjoins upon us. Let us follow the example of our Virgin Mother who heard and kept God's Word.

Tomorrow, Wednesday 8/14, at 10 am, we will be celebrating the Divine Liturgy in honor of the Dormition of our Lady the Theotokos.

Happy Feast Day to all!

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Herman