

# HOLY ASCENSION PARISH AUGUST 2009 NEWSLETTER



ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

THE HOLY ASCENSION ORTHODOX CHURCH  
is the Washington, DC, parish of the Russian Orthodox Church  
Abroad (ROCA), under the *omophor* (or the conciliar leadership) of  
Metropolitan Agafangel (Pashkovsky), Bishop of Odessa & Taurida.  
The Holy Ascension Parish was organized on Ascension Day, 17  
May 2007.

## BISHOPS & LOCAL CLERGY

✠ Metropolitan Agafangel, Bishop of Odessa & Taurida, and First  
Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad ✠ Andronik,  
Archbishop of Ottawa & North America ✠ Bishop Joseph  
(Hrebinka), Bishop of Washington ✠ Michael Foster, deacon ✠  
Seraphim Englehardt, subdeacon ✠ John Hinton, subdeacon ✠  
Daniel Olson, reader & choir director ✠

## ADDRESS

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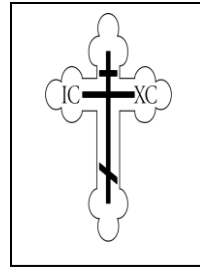
## PART 1. OUR PARISH

The Holy Ascension parish welcomes all Orthodox people to its sacraments and all people with an interest in Christianity and the abiding Tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church. The immediate Holy Ascension parish background is Russian émigré with many English-speaking converts. Members, visitors, and people in touch online come from all ethnicities. The Church is One.

<http://ruschurchabroad.com/engindex.htm>

<http://ruschurchabroad.com/>

<http://www.holyascension.info/>



## PART 2. EVENTS OF JULY

12 July 2009. Divine Liturgy in the Church of the Vilensky Martyrs in Melbourne, Australia [*shown below*], was served by Hieromonk Andrew (Erastov), Fr. Stilyan, and Protodeacon Basil Yakimov.



Hieromonk Andrew (Erastov) has joined our jurisdiction and will be serving at the parish in Melbourne, Australia. Hieromonk Andrew is a noted iconographer who lived previously at the Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, NY.

### PART 3. FINDING A NEW PLACE OF WORSHIP FOR THE HOLY ASCENSION PARISH

#### *Warden's Letter*

Dear Parishioners,

The Building Committee has searched for a new location for our church for almost two years. We have seen a wide range of properties throughout Maryland, the District, and Virginia. Finding something acceptable to everyone was made difficult by the high cost of real estate in the DC area and the limited budget we are working with.

We believe the property we found in Fairfax City is the best choice so far, providing about 1,400 sq. ft. for \$500, 000. The property is on the ground floor of a small building in a clean, attractive setting with ample parking and close to major roads and highways. It may be somewhat farther in miles for our members from Maryland, but hardly any further away in time, since it is mostly highway driving.

Our current location served its purpose for the beginning, but the cost is high and there are other drawbacks. It is time for us to move, purchase something we can call our own and put our limited funds to better use. Obtaining a commercial loan requires a 25% down payment, about \$125,000. We have approximately \$46,000 in our Building Fund account, so you can see we have a way to go. We fervently ask all our dear parishioners to help make this move possible. Please fill out a pledge form in the church and submit it to Ruth or Dimitri, or respond to this email with your commitment.

Please help to keep our small island of traditional Orthodoxy afloat, so that we can all have a place to serve our Lord and continue the traditions and beliefs of the Church Abroad.

Our church needs your help and support and cannot make it without you.

*Please* be generous in your donation.

Thank You,  
Dimitri Gontscharow  
Church Warden

#### PART 4. AUGUST LITURGIES, BY CIVIL CALENDAR DATE

All Sunday Liturgies begin at 10:00 AM. A luncheon buffet follows all Sunday liturgies. Volunteers may offer to help with luncheon fare by cooking food at home and by preparation and service at the church.

Currently a regular schedule also designates a family that is responsible for cleaning the church after the services. The duty is for one month at a time. If you wish to volunteer, please see the warden/*starosta*, Mr. Gontscharow.

On many Saturday afternoons a BIBLE STUDY GROUP meets at 3:30 PM, chaired by Bishop Joseph. Please check beforehand with the church office, to be sure that the study group will meet on any specific day.

Bishop Joseph also serves an *akathist* every Wednesday at 7 PM at the church, praying for God's help in finding new premises for our church. Parish members also read *akathists* at home, praying to find a new parish home

#### SCHEDULE OF SERVICES IN AUGUST

Friday, July 31. Vigil at 6:00 PM.

Saturday, August 1. No Divine Liturgy. VENERABLE  
SERAPHIM OF SAROV

Saturday, August 1. Vigil at 5 PM.

Sunday, August 2. Eighth Sunday After Pentecost.

Hours & Divine Liturgy at 9:30 AM. PROPHET ELIAS

Saturday, August 8. Vigil at 5 PM.

Sunday, August 9. Ninth Sunday After Pentecost. Hours  
& Divine Liturgy at 9:40. GREAT-MARTYR PANTELEIMON

Thursday, August 13. Vespers & Matins with the  
Bringing Out of the Cross at 6:30 PM.

Friday, August 14. Procession of the Life-Giving Cross of  
the Lord. Hours & Divine Liturgy at 7:40 AM. MACCABEE MARTYRS.

Saturday, August 15. Vigil at 5 PM.

Sunday, August 16. Tenth Sunday After Pentecost.  
Hours & Divine Liturgy at 9:40 AM. VENERABLE  
ISAACIUS, DALMATUS, & FAUSTUS

Tuesday, August 18. Vigil at 6 PM.

Wednesday, August 19. TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD.  
House & Divine Liturgy at 7:40 AM, & Blessing of Fruits.

Saturday, August 22. Vigil at 5 PM.

Sunday, August 23. Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost,  
Hours & Divine Liturgy at 9:40 AM. AFTERFEAST OF  
THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD. MARTYR AND  
ARCHDEACON LAURENCE.

Thursday, August 27. Vigil at 6 PM.

Friday, August 28. DORMITION OF THE MOST HOLY  
THEOTOKOS. Hours & Divine Liturgy at 7:40 AM.

Saturday, August 29. Vigil at 5 PM.

Sunday, August 30. Twelfth Sunday After Pentecost.  
Hours & Divine Liturgy at 9:40 AM. AFTERFEAST OF  
THE DORMITION OF THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS.  
MARTYR MYRON.

Saturday, September 5. Vigil at 5 PM.

Sunday, September 6. Thirteenth Sunday After  
Pentecost. Hours & Divine Liturgy at 9:40 AM.

HIEROMARTYR EUTYCHES.

Thursday, September 10. Vigil at 6 PM.

Friday, September 11. THE BEHEADING OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST.

Hours & Divine Liturgy at 7:40 AM.

## FALLS CHURCH FESTIVAL

The festival will take place in the city center on Saturday, September 12, 2009, from 10 to 4, rain or shine. We hope to take the opportunity to have a bake sale/yard sale/book sale at the same time in front of our building. If you would like to contribute baked goods or anything else, please contact Philip Rapp or Dimitri Gontscharow.

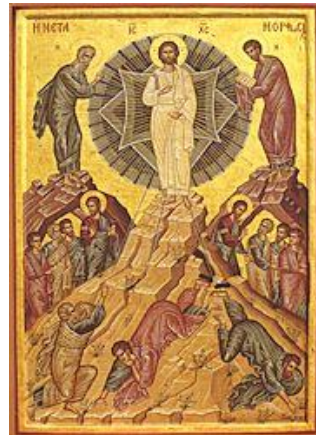
## PART 5. FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

The TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST is one of the Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church, celebrated on August 6.

Lord Jesus had gone with his disciples Peter, James, and John to Mount Tabor. Our Lord's appearance was changed while they watched into a glorious radiant figure. The Prophets Elijah and Moses, speaking with Our Lord Jesus. The disciples were amazed and terribly afraid

This event shows forth the divinity of Lord Jesus Christ, so that the disciples would understand after His Ascension that He was truly the radiant Splendor of the Father, and that his Passion was voluntary (*Mark 9:2-9*). It also shows the possibility of our own *theosis*.

This event was the subject of some debates between Gregory Palamas and Barlaam of Calabria. Barlaam believed that the light



Transfiguration of Our Lord

shining from Jesus was created light, while Gregory maintained the disciples were given grace to perceive the uncreated light of God.

This supported Gregory's larger argument that although we cannot know God in His essence, we can know Him in His energies, as He reveals Himself.

Accounts of the TRANSFIGURATION are found in the Bible: MATTHEW 17:1-8, MARK 9:2-9, LUKE 9:28-36, and II PETER 1:16-19.

## PART 6. FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF THE VIRGIN.

In Orthodoxy and Byzantine Catholicism, as in the language of Holy Scripture, death is often called a "sleeping" or "falling asleep" (Greek κοίμησις; whence κοιμητήριον > coemetērium > cemetery, A PLACE OF SLEEPING). A prominent example of this is the name of this feast, Dormition of the Virgin; another is the Dormition of Anna, Mary's mother. The Orthodox and many Catholics believe that Saint Mary, having spent her life after Pentecost supporting and serving the nascent Church, was living in the house of the Apostle John, in Jerusalem, when the Archangel Gabriel revealed to her that her repose would occur three days later. The apostles, scattered throughout the world, are said to have been miraculously transported to be at her side when she died. The sole exception was Thomas, who was characteristically late. He is said to have arrived three days after her death, and asked to see her grave so that he could bid her goodbye. Saint Mary the Virgin had been buried in Gethsemane, according to her request. When they arrived at the grave, her body was gone, leaving a sweet fragrance. An apparition is said to have confirmed that Our Lord Jesus Christ had taken her body to heaven after her soul but not reunited them.

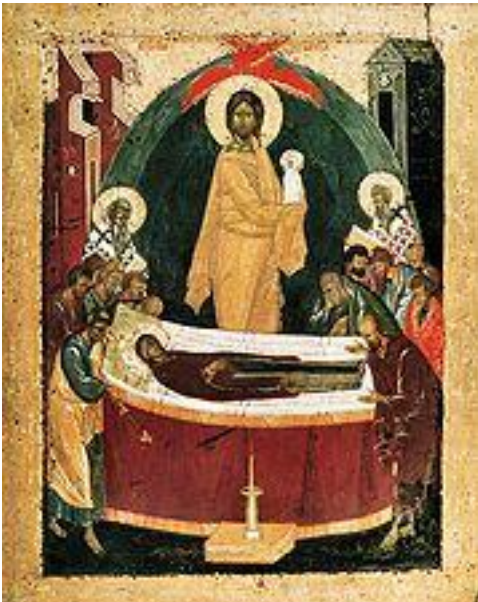
The DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS is celebrated on August 15 (celebrated as August 28 civil, the 15<sup>th</sup> of the Julian Calendar). The DORMITION and the Assumption [the *taking up* of the Theotokos] are different names for the same event—Saint Mary the Virgin's departure from the earth although the sets of beliefs are not exactly the same.

The Orthodox Church teaches that the Mother of God died a natural death, like any human being; that her soul was received by Our Lord upon her death; and that her body was resurrected the

third day after her repose, at which time she was taken up, bodily only, into heaven. Her tomb was found empty on the third day.

Both the Orthodox and some western Christians agree that she was physically taken up into heaven. The Orthodox beliefs regarding Mary's falling asleep are expressed in the liturgical texts used on the FEAST OF THE DORMITION, one of the Twelve Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church. Although it is held by all pious Orthodox Christians, this belief has never been formally defined as dogma by the Orthodox Church nor made a precondition of baptism.

In some places, the Rite of the "Burial of the Theotokos" is celebrated at the DORMITION, during the All-Night Vigil. The order of the service is based on the service of the Burial of Christ on Great Saturday. The service uses an *Epitaphios* of the Theotokos, a richly embroidered cloth icon portraying her lying in state, together with special hymns of lamentation that are sung with Psalm 118. The *Epitaphios* is placed on a bier, and carried in procession in the same way as the *Epitaphios* of Christ during Holy Week.



Dormition of the Theotokos

Icon of the Dormition by Theophan the Greek, 1392.

The Theotokos is shown lying on a bier, surrounded by the Twelve Apostles. At center, Our Lord Jesus Christ is shown in a *mandorla*, swaddling the soul of the Virgin Mary, with a red seraph above His head).

On the sides are the Hieromartyrs Dionysius the Areopagite and Ignatius the God-Bearer who, according to sacred tradition, are responsible for transmitting the Dormition account.

This practice began in Jerusalem, and was carried to Russia, where it was followed in various Dormition Cathedrals, in particular that of Moscow. The practice slowly spread among the Russian Orthodox, though it is not by any means a standard service in all parishes, or even most cathedrals or monasteries. In Jerusalem, the service is chanted during the VIGIL OF THE DORMITION. In some Russian churches and monasteries, it is served on the third day after DORMITION.

The FEAST OF THE DORMITION has a one-day Forefeast and 8 days of Afterfeast. The feast is framed and accentuated by three feasts in honor of Jesus Christ, known as the "Three Feasts of the Savior in August." These are the PROCESSION OF THE CROSS (August 1, Julian), the TRANSFIGURATION (August 6), and the ICON OF CHRIST "NOT MADE BY HAND" (August 16).

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