



Ouzkourni Fi Malakoutika
Remember me in Your Kingdom

Wednesday, September 17, 2016

**Homily of Father Philip Raczka during the Divine Liturgy
for our brothers departed in the Hope of the Resurrection.**

Our Lady of the Annunciation - Massachussets.

We continue to celebrate the Feast of the Dormition and Assumption of the Mother of God for a total of 9 days (August 15-23). During this blessed time, we can reflect on the Holy Mother and her importance for our life. Today, in particular, as members of “Remember Me in Your Kingdom,” we can reflect on the Blessed Mother’s participation in the Resurrection of Christ.

At the time of the Annunciation, the most holy Mary was overshadowed by the power of the Holy Spirit to become the Mother of the Lord. Christ dwelt in her womb then, and today He lives in our hearts through Baptism. The most holy Mother of Christ was with the Apostles on Pentecost Sunday, and received the fullness of the gifts and presence of the Holy Spirit. Through this, she participated in the first stage of the resurrection of Christ, for like all Christians, her divine Son now lived in her heart. She participated in the life of the Early Church, which meant that she also received the glorified risen Body and Blood of her Son in Holy Communion.

When she left the present earthly life in Jerusalem, her soul was received into heaven. This is shown in the icon of the Feast with Jesus standing over her deathbed, and holding a baby, which represents her soul. This is the second stage of the resurrected life in that the souls of the believers can go to heaven. The angel no longer bars us from entering paradise as after the sin of Adam for Christ has opened the doors for us. As lovers of Jesus Christ and his followers, we may enter into heaven.

After our Lady died, the Apostles buried her in the Garden of Gethsemane. Saint Thomas was not there due to his missionary work in far off Persia and India. He returned to Jerusalem after she was already dead for several days. He asked the other Apostles to take him to her tomb. At that time, tombs in Jerusalem were caves, not holes in the ground. They took him to the cave-tomb and opened it. Instead of finding her body on the stone shelf as expected, they found the body gone, and the tomb was full of flowers. She then appeared to the Apostles and told them that her divine Son and God had taken her body to heaven. Thus, in heaven, Our Lady lives the third and final stage of the resurrection – both her body and soul are reunited, eternal and glorious. She and Jesus share the full-resurrected life that we all will have when Jesus returns to earth at the end of time.

Our Lady was Jesus' first and best disciple. As Jesus' one and only mother, as someone especially chosen by the Father to be the mother of Christ, and someone especially consecrated by the Holy Spirit to bear the Lord, Our Lord Jesus has granted her the fullness of the future resurrected life. This is such an encouragement to us. We can look at the icon of the Dormition of the Mother of God and see not only the blessedness of the Virgin Mary, for she left this life to be with her Son, but also our blessedness; for we too will be called, when the time comes, to leave this life and be held in the arms of Jesus Christ in heaven.

To Him be glory forever.