

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

On Wednesday we will be celebrating our parting with someone very dear to us. Under normal circumstances, this would not be a time for celebrating. But in this case, we have every reason to do so. On Wednesday we will accompany the body of the Mother of God to her place of burial. Why are we celebrating the burial of someone so dear to us? Because she is not leaving us, but going to a place where she can become our greatest protector and helper.

After the Lord's Ascension, the Mother of God waited with great anticipation to be reunited with her divine Son. She found great comfort in continually going to the place from which He ascended, to pray to Him and share with Him how much she wished to be with Him. Finally, the day came. During such a time of prayer, the Archangel Gabriel, her tutor from the days when she was living in the Temple, appeared to her. He made the joyous announcement that she had long been waiting for. In three days, she would be taken to Heaven.

Upon hearing these joyous words, the Mother of God wished for two things. She wanted to bid farewell to the apostles in person. Since they were scattered around the world teaching, angels were dispatched to carry them through the air back to Jerusalem. The second request was for her Son to personally receive her soul as it left her body. She knew that His presence would prevent her from witnessing the horrifying sight of demons gathering at her death site. This they do each time any person dies, in order to attempt to intercept the soul and drag it down to Hell. She then fasted the three days and gave away all her earthly possessions to the poor.

This is what we will be witnessing on Wednesday. As we walk in procession with the apostles to her tomb, we see angels flying above us in a cloud while singing prayers for burial. Her most-holy body placed in the tomb, the apostles return to Jerusalem, and during their dinner meal, she appears to announce to the world that now being in Heaven she will be able to answer any prayer we make to her and give us her divine assistance in anything that we truly need. She will tell us that she is now the Heavenly Mother to all of humanity.

In view of this glorious celebration, I am sure that all of us without exception will want to participate. We will gather for the vigil on Tuesday evening at 6:00 pm as well as at one of the liturgies on Wednesday, at 7:30 or 9:30 in the morning. I eagerly look forward to sharing with you this wonderful day.

In Christ,
Archpriest Serge Kotar