



“ORTHODOX 9” PARISHES BULLETIN

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN CANADA

Monthly Newsletter for the family of Orthodox Churches including:



St. Mary’s (the Nativity of the Holy Virgin) - NISKU

Sts. Peter & Paul - BONNYVILLE

St. John the Baptist - HOREN

Holy Ascension - CALMAR

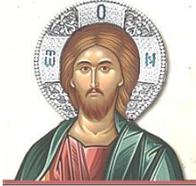
St. Onuphrius - FOAM LAKE (SK)

Whitsuntide (Holy Trinity) - THORSBY

Dormition of Theotokos -MACNUTT (SK)

St. John the Baptist - VEGREVILLE

Sts. Peter & Paul - INSINGER (SK)



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The three August Feasts of the Saviour



August in the Orthodox Christian tradition is marked by three deeply beloved feasts known collectively as the *Three Spasses* (from the Slavic word *Spas*, meaning "Saviour"). These feasts honor the salvific events of our Lord Jesus Christ – His Life-Giving Cross, His Transfiguration, which proclaims His Divine Nature, and his incarnation into the perfect and complete image of man, in the form of veneration of His certain icon. Traditionally and popularly, they are also associated with the blessings of nature, offering gratitude and reverence for the gifts of the season.

The Liturgical Name of the first is the Procession of the Honorable Wood of the Life-Giving Cross of the Lord; traditionally – First Spas – The Honey or Water Saviour – is celebrated on August 14.

This feast marks the beginning of the Dormition Fast and commemorates the ancient custom of carrying a relic of the True Cross through the streets of Constantinople to bless the land and protect it from illness and pestilence. Water was sanctified along the route—hence the name "*Water Spas*". In Slavic lands, this day also became known as "*Honey Spas*" because the first harvest of honey is brought to church to be blessed.

The second is the Greatest Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord; popularly known as the Second Spas – The Apple Saviour, which is celebrated on August 19.

This is one of the Twelve Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church, celebrating the moment when Christ revealed His divine glory on Mount Tabor. His face shone like the sun, and His garments became dazzling white, giving a glimpse of the glory of the Resurrection and the Kingdom to come. Traditionally, this is the day when the first fruits of the harvest, particularly apples and grapes, are brought to church for blessing.

The Liturgical Name of the third is the Translation of the Image of Our Lord Jesus Christ Not Made by Hands; popularly called the Third Spas – The Hazelnut or Bread Saviour, which is celebrated on August 29.

This feast commemorates the arrival in Constantinople of the *Holy Mandyllion*—a miraculous image of Christ’s face that, according to tradition, was imprinted on a cloth sent by Jesus Himself to King Abgar of Edessa. It is the first *icon* not made by human hands (or, in other words, made by the Saviour himself), a powerful affirmation of the Incarnation and the sacredness of holy images. In rural communities, it’s known as "*Hazelnut Spas*" or "*Bread Spas*", as it marks the end of the grain and nut harvest and the first baking of the season’s new bread.

Together, these three August feasts form a harmonious cycle that unites spiritual depth with the rhythm of natural or earthly life, thus sanctifying the soul and body of the God’s people, and reiterating the Christian idea of transformation and deification (2 Peter 1:4).

Saint Olga, Matushka of All Alaska

An Account of Her Life and June of 2025 Glorification



On 19-20 June 2025 the village of Kwethluk, Alaska (pop. ≈800) became the liturgical center of the Orthodox Church in America. There, before hundreds of pilgrims who had come by riverboat and small plane, the humble Yup'ik midwife Ol'ga (Arrsamquq) Michael—affectionately known for decades as Matushka (“little mother”, traditional way of calling a priest’s wife) Olga—was formally proclaimed St Olga, Matushka of All Alaska.

It was the first canonization held in Alaska since St Herman of Kodiak (1970) and the first time any woman from North America—and any Yup'ik person—was numbered among the saints.

Please, see the beginning of the account in July issue of the bulletin, and this is the continuation.



7. The Vigil and Rite of Glorification (19–20 June 2025)

The formal services opened late Thursday afternoon. As Metropolitan Tikhon (primate of the OCA) stepped off the boat, altar-servers in gold vestments greeted him with riverbank gun-salutes. Inside St Nicholas Church, Olga’s relics, wrapped in a blue floral *kuspuk*, were placed before the iconostasis.

Over the next four hours Vespers and Matins unfolded in Yup’ik, Church Slavonic, and English, each petition met by the choir’s trilingual refrain—“Uaspataq Naklekikut / Gospodi pomilui / Lord have mercy.” The **Magnification**—“We magnify thee, O holy and righteous Mother Olga...”—was sung for the first time, signaling the exact moment of her entrance into the Calendar of Saints. A newly written **Troparion (Tone 4)** and **Kontakion (Tone 8)** followed, both highlighting her healing ministry to the afflicted.

An all-night vigil began at 9 p.m. Even at 2 a.m., with the sub-arctic sun hovering low, clusters of faithful filed past the coffin. Among them was James Michael, Olga’s 75-year-old son, transported upriver on a stretcher after a recent stroke; clergy paused to bless him as he was wheeled to his mother’s side.

The vigil ended near dawn with the singing of Paschal hymns—an unplanned eruption of joy that left many pilgrims in tears.



8. Divine Liturgy and Procession (20 June 2025)

Friday’s Divine Liturgy drew an even larger crowd. Hierarchs concelebrated outdoors under a canvas awning while inside the church a smaller choir maintained the cycle of hymns. After Communion a river-procession carried the relics to a newly blessed chapel where they will remain permanently, ensuring that “to take Matushka Olga even to Anchorage is to take her away from her people,” as Archbishop Daniel noted. Plans are now underway to build a guesthouse so future pilgrims can stay in Kwethluk year-round.

St Olga’s glorification affirms that sainthood is not confined to monastics or hierarchs but can blossom in a subsistence village among mothers, midwives, and the oppressed. For Yup’ik believers her recognition validates cultural forms—*kuspuks*, steam-baths, fishing camps—within the wider Orthodox narrative.

Olga is already invoked by women (and men) who have endured abuse. Her own life story, coupled with numerous testimonies of posthumous help, places her beside saints like Maria of Paris as a modern patron of the violated and voiceless.

With Kodiak’s St Herman and Spruce Island’s St Juvenaly, Alaska already functions as the “Holy Land” of American Orthodoxy. Kwethluk now joins that map, encouraging encounters between urban converts and Indigenous cradle-Orthodox alike.

From a riverboat procession in low fog to an incense-filled wooden chapel ringing with trilingual hymns, the glorification of **St Olga, Matushka of All Alaska** wove Yup’ik village life into the liturgical heartbeat of global Orthodoxy. Her story—poor in possessions yet rich in love—offers a distinctly North-American icon of holiness: the healing hands of a midwife raised to bless an entire continent.

adn.com; oca.org; adn.com; kyuk.org; oca.org; gorthochristian.com; adn.com; kyuk.org

Saint Olga of Alaska, pray for us!

About the Icon of the Holy Dormition

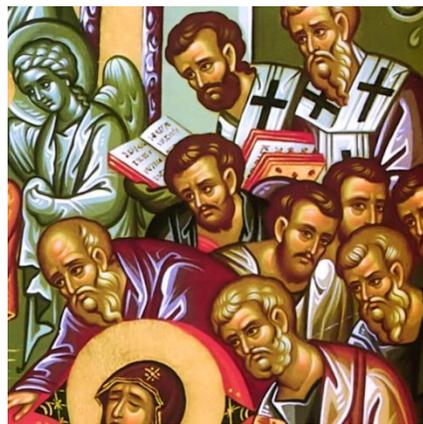


The Icon of the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God shows her on her deathbed surrounded by the Apostles. Christ is standing in the center looking at His mother. He is holding a small child clothed in white representing the soul of the Virgin Mary. With His golden garments, the angels above His head, and the mandorla surrounding Him, Christ is depicted in His divine glory.

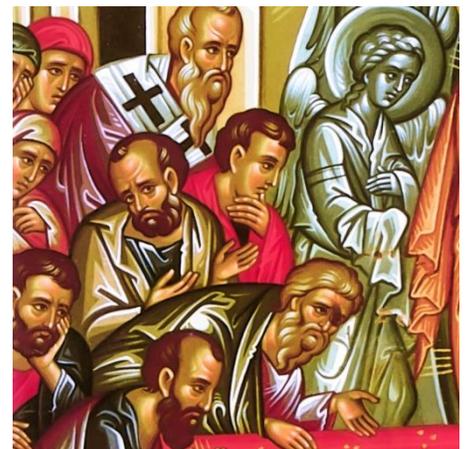


The posture of the Apostles direct attention toward the Theotokos. On the right [in this icon] Saint Peter censes the body of the Theotokos. On the left Saint Paul bows low in honor of her.

Together with the Apostles are several bishops and women. The bishops traditionally represented are James, the brother of the Lord, Timothy, Heirotheus, and Dionysius the Areopagite. They are shown wearing episcopal vestments. The women are members of the church in Jerusalem.



In front of the bed of the Theotokos is a candle that helps to form a central axis in the icon. Above the candle is the body of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. Standing over His mother is Christ holding her most pure soul. Above Christ the gates of heaven stand open, ready to receive the Mother of God.



This great Feast of the Church and the icon celebrates a fundamental teaching of our faith—the Resurrection of the body. In the case of the Theotokos, this has been accomplished by the divine will of God. Thus, this Feast is a feast of hope, hope in Resurrection and life

eternal. Like those who gathered around the body of the Virgin Mary, we gather around our departed loved ones and commend their souls into the hands of Christ. As we remember those who have reposed in the faith before us and have passed on into the communion of the Saints, we prepare ourselves to one day be received into the new life of the age to come.

We also affirm through this Feast as we journey toward our heavenly abode that the Mother of God intercedes for us. Through Christ she has become the mother of all of the children of God, embracing us with divine love.

goarch.org/dormition



Heartfelt gratitude, many thanks, and many years to our Parish Council and everyone who labored and were catering for the summer picnic of 2025, especially to David and Beverly Borys, Darcy and Tanny Doblanko, Daniel and Anita Borys, and Natasha Borys.

We had a very good time communicating informally and discussing both vital and important, and informal and funny things, greeting our guests, including the new ones, getting to know them and each other better, sharing our plans and experiences at the very good meal in our clean and cozy church hall.

We were as perfectly ready for the picnic as usually, but it looks like the farmers had a better deal with the weather that day 😊 so we had a warm gathering inside the St. Mary's Church Hall while the rain was pouring and giving water to the fields around us.

May God keep our parishioner and guests and bless them with good health and peace from Above!

Thank you so much!

THOUSANDS OF CHRISTIANS AND ALAWITES SLAUGHTERED IN SYRIA, SAYS GREEK MEP

Several thousands of Christians and Alawite Muslims have been brutally slaughtered by security forces in Syria, according to Greek Member of European Parliament Nikolas Farantouris, a member of the European Parliament's Committee on Security & Defense, who visited Damascus on March 8–9. During his visit, he met with His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch and officials from the regime that toppled the government several months ago. Violence broke out last week as security forces began slaughtering hundreds and thousands of civilians in cities along the west coast.

“Reliable data indicate 7,000 Christians and Alawites slaughtered and unprecedented atrocities against civilians. Christian and other communities with a millennial presence in this region are at risk of extinction,” Farantouris said in a statement following his visit, reports Greek City Times.

“The new Islamic regime is leading Syria into an Islamic state and is pretending that it cannot control the paramilitaries and the gangs associated with them who attack innocent civilians,” he continued, adding that Patriarch John X made an appeal “to stop the bloodshed, while in our private meeting he pointed out the tragic shortages of food and medicine that Christians are facing.”

The MEP called on Greece and EU member states to act immediately to protect Christian and Muslim minorities in Syria.

orthochristian.com/167981

The Dormition of the Mother of God — A Story for Children

After Jesus went up to Heaven (this is called the *Ascension*), His Mother, the Virgin Mary, stayed on Earth for some time. The Apostle John, one of Jesus' closest friends, took care of her, just as Jesus had asked him to.

Mary was very kind and comforting to all the followers of Jesus. She would tell the Apostles beautiful stories that she had remembered and kept in her heart—stories like the Angel Gabriel visiting her with the good news (*the Annunciation*), the birth of Jesus (*the Nativity*), His childhood, and the many wonderful things He did during His life on Earth.

The Mother of God often went to the place where Jesus was buried and rose again—the *Holy Sepulchre*. There, she would pray with all her heart.

One day, while she was praying on the hill of *Golgotha*, the Archangel Gabriel

appeared to her again. He told her that very soon, she would leave this world and go to be with her Son, Jesus, in Heaven.

When that day came, the Mother of God did not feel any pain. She peacefully fell asleep, and her soul went to be with God. This is why we call it Dormition, which means "falling asleep."

But even death could not hold her. Having fallen asleep in the Lord, the all-holy Theotokos was taken up bodily to her Son; her body did not remain in the tomb. And now, she is with her Son in Heaven forever.

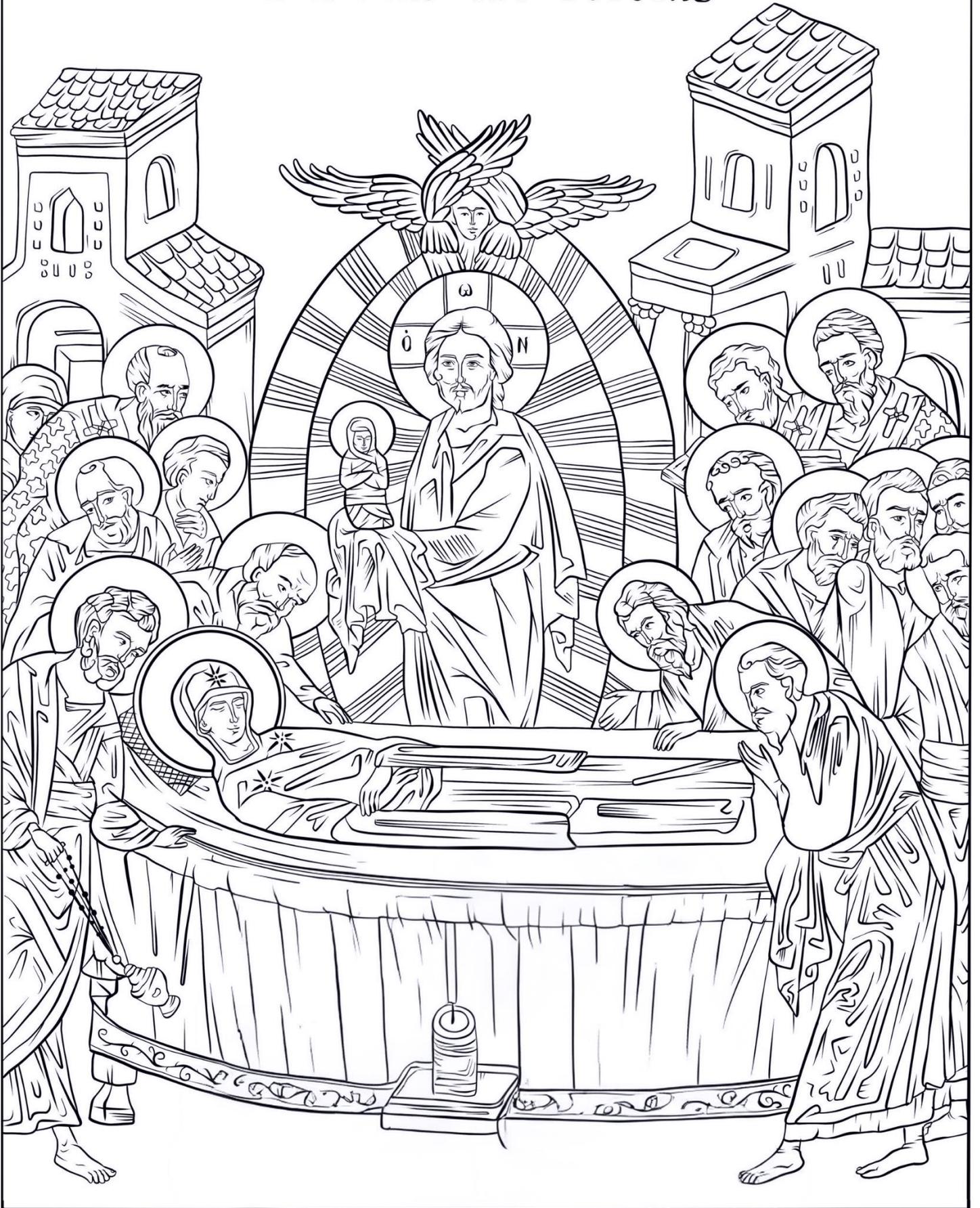
Since then, the Virgin Mary has become a mother to all Christians. She listens to our prayers, helps people who are sad or lost, and gives hope to those who feel like they have no one to turn to. Because she knows what it means to suffer and to trust God with all her heart, she understands our troubles and wants to help us.

She is always close to us—and when we pray to her, she gently brings our prayers to her Son.

(If you like, dear friend, you can look at the icon above and give the same colors to the picture below.)



Ἡ ΚΟΙΜΗΣΙΣ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ



August 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<p><u>3</u> 10:00 a.m. - Divine Liturgy at St. Tikhon's Children Camp 10:00 am – Divine Liturgy at St. Barbara's Cathedral</p>	<p><u>4</u> Holy Myrrh- bearer Mary Magdalen</p> 	<p><u>5</u></p>	<p><u>6</u> Martyr Christina of Tyre (ca. 300)</p> 	<p><u>7</u></p>	<p><u>8</u> Nun-martyr Parasceva of Rome (138-161)</p> 	<p><u>9</u></p>
<p><u>10</u> Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos "Of Smolensk"</p> 	<p><u>11</u></p>	<p><u>12</u> Martyr John the Soldier, at Tralles in Asia Minor (363)</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Holy Dormition Fast Starts</p>	<p><u>13</u></p>	<p><u>14</u> Holy Seven Maccabees: Martyrs (166 b.c.)</p> 	<p><u>15</u></p>	<p><u>16</u> Protomartyr Rajden of Tsromi and Nikozi, Georgia (457)</p> 
<p><u>17</u> 10:00 am – Liturgy – St. Mary's Church at NISKU – Blessing of fruit</p>	<p><u>18</u></p>	<p><u>19</u> Transfiguration of the Lord 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy – at St. Barbara's</p> 	<p><u>20</u></p>	<p><u>21</u> St. Gregory, iconographer, of the Kiev Caves (12th c.)</p> 	<p><u>22</u></p>	<p><u>23</u> Holy Hieromartyr Archdeacon Lawrence (Rome, 258)</p> 
<p><u>24</u> 10:00 am – Liturgy – St. Barbara's Cathedral</p> <p><i>Afterfeast of the Transfiguration</i></p>	<p><u>25</u></p>	<p><u>26</u> New Hieromartyr Seraphim (Zvezdinsky), (1937)</p> 	<p><u>27</u></p>	<p><u>28</u> Dormition of the Mother of God 10:00 a.m. – Divine Liturgy – St. Barbara's</p> 	<p><u>29</u></p>	<p><u>30</u> Martyrs Florus and Laurus, of Illyria (2nd c.)</p> 
<p><u>31</u> 10:00 am – Divine Liturgy at St. Peter and Paul, Regina</p>	<p><u>31</u></p>	<p><u>31</u></p>	<p><u>31</u></p>	<p><u>31</u></p>	<p><u>31</u></p>	<p><u>31</u></p>