

## Translated from Life to Life

by Bishop Michael



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*In giving birth, you preserved your virginity,  
In falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Theotokos!  
You were translated to life, O Mother of Life,  
And by your prayers you deliver our souls from death.  
— Troparion for Dormition of the Theotokos (August 15)*

*Neither the tomb, nor death could hold the Theotokos,  
Who is constant in prayer and our firm hope in her intercession.  
For being the Mother of Life,  
She was translated to life by the One who dwelt in her virginal womb.  
— Kontakion for the Dormition of the Theotokos*

The passage of a Christian soul from earthly life to life eternal, from struggling against sin and temptation to rejoicing eternally at the throne of the Most Holy Trinity, is revealed as a possibility for all people by Our Lord in the passage from St. John's Gospel that is read at every funeral service (John 5:24-30). And, the hymns to the Mother of God sung at the glorious celebration of her Falling-Asleep, of her reception in both body and soul into Heaven, affirm that she was indeed granted that translation from life to life that her Son made possible.

Like her, and like so many Saints—those revealed to the whole Church and those known thus far only to God—we, too, have the potential to be “translated from life to life.” This journey, this spiritual translation, is accomplished only by the grace of God, and requires of us no more and no less than living a life that is reflective of that grace. The uncreated grace of God that was lit like a pilot light within us at our Baptism, is renewed in us whenever we participate, with fitting preparation and an attitude of humility and thanksgiving, in His holy and precious Body and Blood. His grace heals us when we seek the Sacrament of Holy Anointing in times of physical or spiritual sickness; and even when we neglect or ignore that grace through missing the mark with our sins, He receives us back and restores His grace within us by means of the Mystery of Confession.

Not long ago we heard read in church the Gospel Parable of the Great Banquet, where those who were invited first rejected that invitation with petty excuses. The master insisted that his banquet hall be filled, and so he sent his servants to scour the surrounding highways and hedges in search of anyone and everyone who would honor his invitation. The

Master, we know, is Our Lord; the Banquet, we know, is His Mystical Supper—offered every Sunday and every time the Liturgy is celebrated in our parishes and monasteries. And what is more, that Banquet is brought even to those who are too ill to come to church—in hospitals, in nursing facilities, even in their own homes—if only they desire it. How then could we even conceive of shrinking back when the Chalice is brought forth for us to “take ... eat”?

Let us, rather, resolve in this New Year to partake joyfully, gratefully and frequently of what our Pre-Communion Prayers rightly call the “provision for the journey of eternal life.” Saint John Chrysostom tells us that like the beggar Lazarus, who was carried directly to the bosom of Abraham by virtue of the meekness and humility with which he lived, we too have the possibility of being carried straight to Heaven by the Lord's angels if we pass from this life having received Holy Communion, with contrition of heart, in the days before our death. Let us strive to make the life we live in between our encounters with the Lord's Body and Blood, a life worthy of those great and holy Gifts. And let us be hopeful that like our Most Blessed Mother, and like the innumerable sinners-turned-Saints whose prayers for us fill the heavens, we too might be found worthy of that blessed “translation”—from life to life.

The Lord offers us that hope in His stirring words of the Gospel of Saint John: “Amen, Amen, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (John 5:24).