

The Account of St. John the Theologian of the Falling Asleep of the Holy Mother of God.

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As the all-holy glorious mother of God and ever-virgin Mary, as was her wont, was going to the holy tomb of our Lord to burn incense, and bending her holy knees, she was insistent that Christ our God who had been born of her should return to her. And the Jews, seeing her lingering by the divine sepulchre, came to the chief priests, saying: Mary goes every day to the tomb. And the chief priests, having summoned the guards set by them not to allow any one to pray at the holy sepulchre, inquired about her, whether in truth it were so. And the guards answered and said that they had seen no such thing, God having not allowed them to see her when there. And on one of the days, it being the preparation, holy Mary, as was her wont, came to the sepulchre; and while she was praying, it came to pass that the heavens were opened, and the archangel Gabriel came down to her and said: Hail, you that brought forth Christ our God! Your prayer having come through to the heavens to Him who was born of you, has been accepted; and from this time, according to your request, you . . . shall go to the heavenly places to your Son, into the true and everlasting life.

And having heard this from the holy archangel, she returned to [her home], having along with her three virgins who ministered unto her. And after having rested a short time, she sat up and said to the virgins: Bring me a censer, that I may pray. And they brought it, as they had been commanded. And she prayed, saying: My Lord Jesus Christ, who deigned through Your supreme goodness to be born of me, hear my voice, and send me Your apostle John, in order that, seeing him, I may partake of joy; and send me also the rest of Your apostles, both those who have already gone to You, and those in the world that now is, in whatever country they may be, through Your holy commandment, in order that, having beheld them, I may bless Your name much to be praised; for I am confident that You hear Your servant in everything.

And while she was praying, I John came, the Holy Spirit having snatched me up by a cloud from Ephesus, and set me in the place where the mother of my Lord was lying. And having gone in beside her, and glorified Him who had been born of her, I said: Hail, mother of my Lord, who brought forth Christ our God, rejoice that in great glory you are going out of this life. And the holy mother of God glorified God, because I John had come to her, remembering the voice of the Lord, saying: Behold your mother, and, Behold your son. John 19:26-27 And the three virgins came and worshipped. And the holy mother of God said to me: Pray, and cast incense. And I prayed thus: Lord Jesus Christ, who has done wonderful things, now also do wonderful things before her who brought You forth; and let Your mother depart from this life; and let those who crucified You, and who have not believed in You, be confounded. And after I had ended the prayer, holy Mary said to me: Bring me the censer. And having cast incense, she said, Glory to You, my God and my Lord, because there has been fulfilled in me whatsoever You promised to me before you ascended into the heavens, that when I should depart from this world You would come to me, and the multitude of Your angels, with glory. And I John said to her: Jesus Christ our Lord and our God is coming, and you see Him, as He promised to you. And the holy mother of God answered and said to me: The Jews have sworn that after I have died they will burn my

body. And I answered and said to her: Your holy and precious body will by no means see corruption. And she answered and said to me: Bring a censer, and cast incense, and pray. And there came a voice out of the heavens saying the Amen. And I John heard this voice; . . . And the Holy Spirit said to me: This voice which you heard denotes that the appearance of your brethren the apostles is at hand, and of the holy powers that they are coming hither today.

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And the Holy Spirit said to the apostles: Let all of you gather together, having come by the clouds from the ends of the world . . .

From the latin texts: *All gathered except Thomas who is called Didymus.*

And after all these wonderful things had come to pass through the mother of God, and ever-virgin Mary the mother of the Lord, while we the apostles were with her in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit said to us: You know that on the Lord's day the good news was brought to the Virgin Mary by the archangel Gabriel; and on the Lord's day the Saviour was born in Bethlehem; and on the Lord's day the children of Jerusalem came forth with palm branches to meet him, saying, Hosanna in the highest, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord; and on the Lord's day He rose from the dead; and on the Lord's day He will come to judge the living and the dead; and on the Lord's day He will come out of heaven, to the glory and honour of the departure of the holy glorious virgin who brought Him forth. And on the same Lord's day the mother of the Lord said to the apostles: Cast incense, because Christ is coming with a host of angels; and, behold, Christ is at hand, sitting on a throne of cherubim. And while we were all praying, there appeared innumerable multitudes of angels, and the Lord mounted upon cherubim in great power; and, behold, a stream of light coming to the holy virgin, because of the presence of her only-begotten Son, and all the powers of the heavens fell down and adored Him. And the Lord, speaking to His mother, said: Mary. And she answered and said: Here am I, Lord. And the Lord said to her: Grieve not, but let your heart rejoice and be glad; for you have found grace to behold the glory given to me by my Father. And the holy mother of God looked up, and saw in Him a glory which it is impossible for the mouth of man to speak of, or to apprehend. And the Lord remained beside her, saying: Behold, from the present time your precious body will be transferred to paradise, and your holy soul to the heavens to the treasures of my Father in exceeding brightness, where there is peace and joy of the holy angels—and other things besides. And the mother of the Lord answered and said to him: Lay Your right hand upon me, O Lord, and bless me. And the Lord stretched forth His undefiled right hand, and blessed her.

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The Lord said to His mother: Let your heart rejoice and be glad; for every favour and every gift has been given to you from my Father in heaven, and from me, and from the Holy Spirit: every soul that calls upon your name shall not be ashamed, but shall find mercy, and comfort, and support, and confidence, both in the world that now is, and in that which is to come, in the presence of my Father in the heavens. And the Lord turned and said to Peter: The time has come to begin the singing of the hymn. And Peter having begun the singing of the hymn, all the powers of the heavens responded with the Alleluiah. And then the face of the mother of the Lord

shone brighter than the light, and she rose up and blessed each of the apostles with her own hand, and all gave glory to God; and the Lord stretched forth His undefiled hands, and received her holy and blameless soul. And with the departure of her blameless soul the place was filled with perfume and ineffable light; and, behold, a voice out of the heaven was heard, saying: Blessed are you among women. And Peter, and I John, and Paul, and Thomas, ran and wrapped up her precious feet for the consecration; and the twelve apostles put her precious and holy body upon a couch, and carried it. And, behold, while they were carrying her, a certain

From the Latin: And, behold, a new miracle. There appeared above the bier a cloud exceeding great, like the great circle which is wont to appear beside the splendour of the moon; and there was in the clouds an army of angels sending forth a sweet song, and from the sound of the great sweetness the earth resounded. Then the people, having gone forth from the city, about fifteen thousand, wondered, saying: What is that sound of so great sweetness? Then there stood up one who said to them: Mary has departed from the body, and the disciples of Jesus are singing praises around her. And looking, they saw the couch crowned with great glory, and the apostles singing with a loud voice. And, behold, one of them, who was chief of the priests of the Jews in his rank, filled with fury and rage, said to the rest: Behold, the tabernacle of him who disturbed us and all our race, what glory has it received? And going up, he wished to overturn the bier, and throw the body down to the ground. And immediately his hands dried up from his elbows, and stuck to the couch. And when the apostles raised the bier, part of him hung, and part of him adhered to the couch; and he was vehemently tormented with pain, while the apostles were walking and singing. And the angels who were in the clouds smote the people with blindness.

12. Then that chief cried out, saying: I implore you, Saint Peter, do not despise me, I beseech you, in so great an extremity, because I am exceedingly tortured by great torments. Bear in mind that when, in the prætorium, the maid that kept the door John 18:17 recognised you, and told the others to revile you, then I spoke good words in your behalf. Then Peter answering, said: It is not for me to give other to you; but if you believe with your whole heart on the Lord Jesus Christ, whom she carried in her womb, and remained a virgin after the birth, the compassion of the Lord, which with profuse benignity saves the unworthy, will give you salvation.

To this he replied: Do we not believe? But what shall we do? The enemy of the human race has blinded our hearts, and confusion has covered our face, lest we should confess the great things of God, especially when we ourselves uttered maledictions against Christ, shouting: His blood be upon us, and upon our children. Matthew 27:25 Then Peter said: Behold, this malediction will hurt him who has remained unfaithful to Him; but to those who turn themselves to God mercy is not denied. And he said: I believe all that you say to me; only I implore, have mercy upon me, lest I die.

13. Then Peter made the couch stand still, and said to him: If you believe with all your heart upon the Lord Jesus Christ, your hands will be released from the bier. And when he had said this his hands were immediately released from the bier, and he began to stand on his feet; but his arms were dried up, and the torture did not go away from him. Then Peter said to him: Go up to the body, and kiss the couch, and say: I believe in God, and in the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom she bore, and I believe all whatsoever Peter the apostle of God has said to me. And going up, he kissed the couch, and immediately all pain went away from him, and his hands were

healed. Then he began greatly to bless God, and from the books of Moses to render testimony to the praises of Christ, so that even the apostles themselves wondered, and wept for joy, praising the name of the Lord.

well-born Hebrew, Jephonias by name, running against the body, put his hands upon the couch; and, behold, an angel of the Lord by invisible power, with a sword of fire, cut off his two hands from his shoulders, and made them hang about the couch, lifted up in the air. And at this miracle which had come to pass all the people of the Jews who beheld it cried out: Verily, He that was brought forth by you is the true God, O mother of God, ever-virgin Mary. And Jephonias himself, when Peter ordered him, that the wonderful things of God might be showed forth, stood up behind the couch, and cried out: Holy Mary, who brought forth Christ who is God, have mercy upon me. And Peter turned and said to him: In the name of Him who was born of her, your hands which have been taken away from you, will be fixed on again. And immediately, at the word of Peter, the hands hanging by the couch of the Lady came, and were fixed on Jephonias. And he believed, and glorified Christ, God who had been born of her.

And when this miracle had been done, the apostles carried the couch, and laid down her precious and holy body in Gethsemane in a new tomb. And, behold, a perfume of sweet savour came forth out of the holy sepulchre of our Lady the mother of God; and for three days the voices of invisible angels were heard glorifying Christ our God, who had been born of her.

From the latin: Then the most blessed Thomas was suddenly brought to the Mount of Olivet, and saw the most blessed body going up to heaven, and began to cry out and say: O holy mother, blessed mother, spotless mother, if I have now found grace because I see you, make your servant joyful through your compassion, because you are going to heaven. Then the girdle with which the apostles had encircled the most holy body was thrown down from heaven to the blessed Thomas. And taking it, and kissing it, and giving thanks to God, he came again into the Valley of Jehoshaphat. He found all the apostles and another great crowd there beating their breasts on account of the brightness which they had seen. And seeing and kissing each other, the blessed Peter said to him: Truly you have always been obdurate and unbelieving, because for your unbelief it was not pleasing to God that you should be along with us at the burial of the mother of the Saviour. And he, beating his breast, said: I know and firmly believe that I have always been a bad and an unbelieving man; therefore I ask pardon of all of you for my obduracy and unbelief. And they all prayed for him. Then the blessed Thomas said: Where have you laid her body? And they pointed out the sepulchre with their finger. And he said: The body which is called most holy is not there. Then the blessed Peter said to him: Already on another occasion you would not believe the resurrection of our Master and Lord at our word, unless you went to touch Him with your fingers, and see Him; how will you believe us that the holy body is here? Still he persists saying: It is not here. Then, as it were in a rage, they went to the sepulchre, which was a new one hollowed out in the rock, and took up the stone; but they did not find the body, not knowing what to say, because they had been convicted by the words of Thomas. Then the blessed Thomas told them how he was chanting the Liturgy in India— he still had on his priestly robes. He, not knowing the word of God, had been brought to the Mount of Olivet, and saw the most holy body of the blessed Mary going up into heaven, and prayed her to give him a blessing. She heard his prayer, and threw him her girdle which she had about her. And the apostles seeing the belt which they had put about her, glorifying God, all asked pardon of the

blessed Thomas, on account of the benediction which the blessed Mary had given him, and because he had seen the most holy body going up into heaven. And the blessed Thomas gave them his benediction, and said: Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

And when the third day was ended, the voices were no longer heard; and from that time forth all knew that her spotless and precious body had been transferred to paradise.

And after it had been transferred, behold, we saw Elisabeth the mother of St. John the Baptist, and Anna the mother of the Lady, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and David, singing the Alleluiah, and all the choirs of the saints adoring the holy relics of the mother of the Lord, and the place full of light, than which light nothing could be more brilliant, and an abundance of perfume in that place to which her precious and holy body had been transferred in paradise, and the melody of those praising Him who had been born of her— sweet melody, of which there cannot be enough, such as is given to virgins, and them only, to hear. We apostles, therefore, having beheld the sudden precious translation of her holy body, glorified God, who had shown us His wonders at the departure of the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose prayers and good offices may we all be deemed worthy to receive, under her shelter, and support, and protection, both in the world that now is and in that which is to come, glorifying in every time and place her only-begotten Son, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.