



# HOLY TRINITY

## ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



723 N BODINE ST PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

# CHURCH BULLETIN

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## The 8th Sunday after Pentecost

### Gospel Reading Matthew 14: 14 - 22

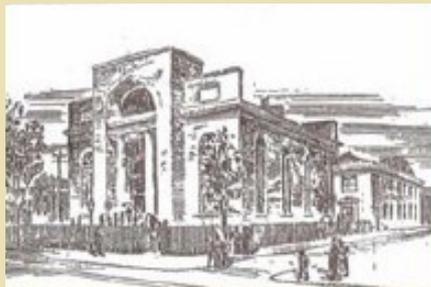
*At that time, Jesus saw a great throng; and he had compassion on them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a lonely place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me." Then he ordered the crowds*

*to sit down on the grass; and taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke and gave the loaves to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Then he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.*

### Apostle Reading 1 Corinthians 1: 10 - 17

*Brethren, I appeal to you by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brethren. What I mean is that each one of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Is Christ divided?*

*Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispos and Gaius; lest any one should say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any one else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*



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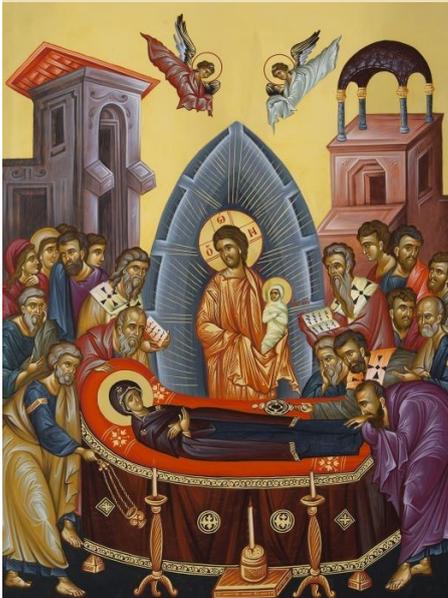
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## Synaxarion. Sunday August 15, 2021 (Eighth Sunday after Pentecost): Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos

## Sermon on the Eight Sunday after Pentecost

Today's Gospel from St Matthew relates to us the feeding of the five thousand and the miraculous multiplication of loaves and fishes. The account of this event is to be found in all Four Gospels. From the details that are added in the other Gospels we know that this event took place in the third year of the Saviour's public preaching, after the beheading of St John the Baptist. From it we can learn several things.

First of all, we should note that this was an enormous crowd, almost unimaginable in size, of five thousand men plus women and children. We notice how they followed Christ on foot in the heat of the day into the wilderness and without food. What faith and devotion we see here, when there are Orthodox who claim to be unable to come to church on Sundays in their cars, because the church is too far from their beds!

Secondly, we can see that this miracle took place not for the personal vanity or glory of the Saviour, but out of compassion for the people. We can see this in many miracles of Christ and it is mentioned again in today's Gospel how the Lord healed because He 'took pity' on the sick. Each miracle of Christ is an act of love performed out of compassion.

Thirdly, we see also how before He performed the miracle, Our Lord took up the five loaves and fishes, and then looked up to Heaven and thanked the Father and blessed the food. Here He sets us Orthodox the example of praying before eating. How many Orthodox often forget even to make the sign of the cross before eating! And yet the Saviour Himself, 'by Whom all things were made', asks for the blessing of the Father before eating.

Fourthly, we can compare the humble conditions in which this miracle happened, in the wilderness, sitting on the grass, with the conditions in which just previously St John the Baptist's death had been ordered, at Herod's luxurious birthday banquet.



Fifthly, we can see how this miracle is also a revelation of the Saviour's divinity, of the power of Christ.

The miracle takes place when the day is already far spent, but Christ is not limited by time; He is the Lord of Time.

The miracle takes place in a desert place, in the wilderness; Christ is also the Lord of Space.

He blesses and multiplies bread and fish; He is also the Lord of Land and Sea.

Finally, in this miracle we see how Christ not only feeds us with material food, but also with spiritual food, for, as it is written in the Holy Scriptures, man shall not live by bread alone. We see this in the numbers mentioned in this Gospel.

Why five loaves? The number five, as we read in the Psalms and in the prayers of thanksgiving after communion, represent our five senses, being, which is fed by Christ, the Bread of Life.

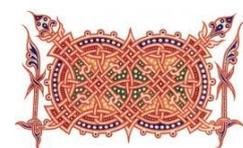
Why two fishes? They represent the two parts of the New Testament, the Gospels and the Epistles, which were written by fishermen become fishers of men, for we are spiritually fed by their writings.

Why twelve baskets of fragments? They represent the twelve Apostles who preach to the ends of the universe, the fragments who feed our souls with the words of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Let us this day open our minds and souls to Christ our True God that we too may be fed and satiated with the Bread of Life.

Amen.

**Archpriest Andrew Phillips**



## The Dormition of the Theotokos



“Magnify O my soul, the honourable Translation of the Mother of God from earth to heaven.” (Refrain for the 9th Ode of the Canon)

Let us be happy, beloved brothers and sisters that we belong to the Holy Orthodox Church, worthily and rightly glorifying the Most Holy Sovereign Theotokos on this eminent day out of all the days of the year with special solemnity. There exists on earth many societies and entire governments that do not consider the need nor the obligation to call upon and glorify the Queen of heaven and earth, the Mother of Our Divine Lord Jesus Christ, and other saints and angels; to submissively serve Her lovingly, as the true Mother of God. Sadly in Russia nowadays we have heretics (among us) who actively dishonor the Mother of God, the saints, their icons, their relics and their festivals. O, if only they also unanimously with us glorified the worthy Queen of heaven and earth!

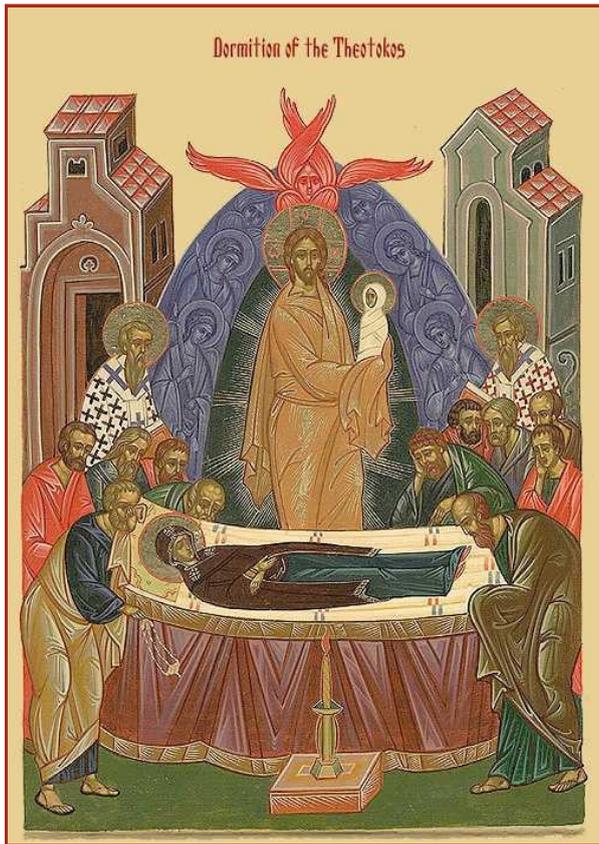
Today the Holy Church solemnly glorifies the honorable Dormition or translation of the Mother of God from earth to heaven. A wonderful translation - she died without serious illness, peacefully. Her soul is taken up in the divine hands of Her Son and carried up into the heavenly abode, accompanied by the sweet singing of angels. And then, her most pure body is transferred by the apostles to Gethsemane where it is honorably buried, and on the third day it is resurrected and taken up to heaven. You see this on the icon of the Dormition of the Theotokos. On it is represented the life-bearing body of the Theotokos laying on a bier, surrounded by the apostles and hierarchs, and in the center of the icon the Lord holding in His hands the most pure soul of the Theotokos. The translation of the Mother of God is a paradigm of the

translation in general of the souls of Christians to the other world.

We say that our dead have “fallen asleep” or “passed away.” What does this mean? This means that for the true Christian there is no death. Death was conquered by Christ on the cross. But there is a translation, i.e. a rearrangement of his condition, i.e. his soul is in another place, in another age, in another world beyond the grave, eternal, without end, that is what is meant by “falling asleep”. It is as if it were a temporary dream after which, by the voice of the Lord and the fearful yet wonderful trumpet of the Archangel, all the dead shall live and come forth each to his place: either to the resurrection of life or to the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:29). This is what the Christian means by translation. We should be ready for this translation, for the day of the general resurrection and judgment, for this indescribable world event, recorded in the Holy Scriptures.

This preparation for the meeting of the heavenly King before the dread judgment seat, after death, is essentially the person’s preparation throughout the whole of his life. This preparation means a change in all his thoughts, and the moral change of all his being, so that the whole man would be pure and white as snow, washing clean everything that defiles the body and spirit, so that he is adorned with every virtue: repentance, meekness, humility, gentleness, simplicity, chastity, mercifulness, abstention, spiritual contemplation, and burning love for God and neighbor.

Our preparation for meeting the heavenly King, and for the inheritance of eternal life in heaven, should consist of



# HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from August 15 to August 29, 2021

## **Sunday August 15 (Eighth Sunday after Pentecost) - Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos:**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Holy Liturgy  
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour

## **Sunday August 22 (Nineth Sunday after Pentecost):**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Holy Liturgy  
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour

## **Sunday August 29 (Tenth Sunday after Pentecost)- Beheading of Saint John the Baptist:**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Holy Liturgy  
12:00 pm - Coffee Hour



these things. The heavenly King desires souls adorned with immutable virtue, souls prepared so that the Very Lord Himself could abide in them. Do not marvel that the Very Lord wants to live in us. In fact the human soul is more spacious than the heavens and the earth, for it exists in the image of God. And if one removes sins from the soul, the Lord of all will settle in it and will fill it with Himself. "We will come to him and make our dwelling with him" (John 14:23), says the Lord about the souls who love Him.

And so, ye participants in the Christian feasts, and especially the present feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, ye who are brightly adorned with every virtue and translated to the heavenly kingdom, to Her Son and God, proclaim to each and every one about preparing their souls to be the dwelling place of the Lord, about continual repentance, and about the incorruptible adornment of Christian virtue. Let your death also be unashamed and peaceful, serving as the pledge of a good answer at the dread judgment seat of Christ. Amen.

**Saint John of Kronstadt**

(Source: <https://www.orthdoxtacoma.com>)

## The Holy Brâncoveanu Martyrs

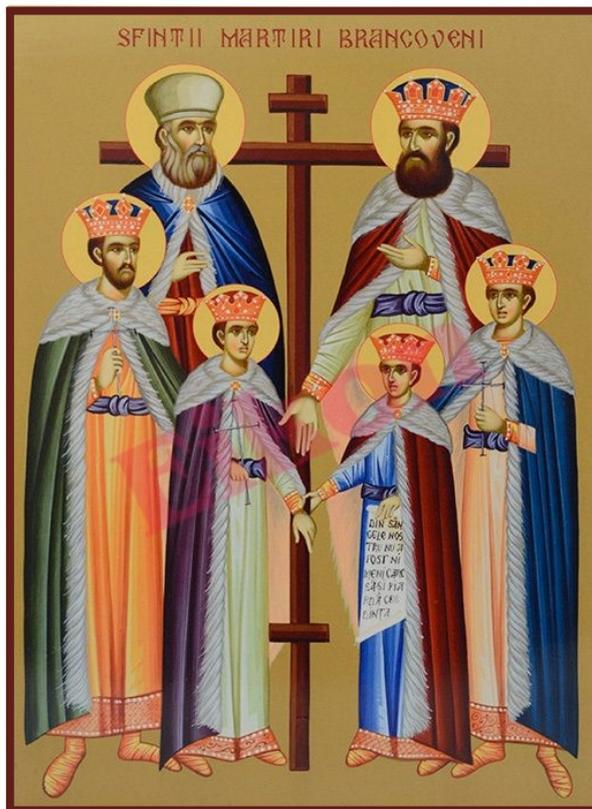
*“My service is to endure the needs and to suffer the hardships and even to shed my blood in the name of Christ and of God our Lord, for faith” (Letter to Czar Peter the Great of Russia).*

On August 16 the Orthodox Church honors the Holy Brâncoveanu Martyrs: Prince Constantine Brancoveanu, Voivode of the Romanian Land (Wallachia), and his four sons, Constantin, Ștefan, Radu, Matei, and also his son-in-law, Grand councilor Ianache Văcărescu. In 1714, they were all beheaded by the Turkish sultan Ahmed III for refusing to renounce the Christian Orthodox faith.

St. Constantine Brâncoveanu was born in 1654 to a noble Romanian family, Prince Matthew (Papa) Basarab and Stanca, neé Cantacuzino. When his parents died, he was first raised and educated by his maternal grandfather, Pos-telnic (Chamberlain) Constantine Cantacuzino (1598-1663), then by his maternal uncle, Stolnic (Seneschal) Constantine Cantacuzino, who had studied at the University of Constantinople, and was the first Romanian to ever graduate from the University of Padua (established in 1222) — the largest and one of the most prestigious universities in early modern Europe. When another uncle, Prince Serban Cantacuzino died on October 19, 1688, Constantine was chosen to succeed him as Prince of Wallachia.

St Constantine was a wise and just ruler who was guided by Christian principles, and worked for the benefit of his people. His philanthropy extended not only into Romanian lands, such as Transylvania and Moldavia, (where the population was mostly Romanian and the faith was mainly Orthodox), but also into remote lands such as Georgia or Syria (Aleppo), where the Orthodox believers were in need of Christian religious books .

The beginning of his reign took place under the luminous sign of the second printing of the so-called “Bucharest Bible” (1688) - the first Bible published entirely in Romanian. A promoter of education, he reorganized the old School of St Sava’s Monastery in Bucharest (1694)



which he turned it into a New “Academia Domneasca” (Royal Academy). This superior school — the precursor of the University of Bucharest (1864) — was a “public college for Romanians and foreigners”, whose curriculum was similar to those of the European universities. He also opened several schools at the Old St. George and Colțea monasteries, both in Bucharest, as well as at the Monastery of Sâmbăta de Sus, in Făgăraș County, Transylvania, where courses were taught either in Romanian or Slavonic.

Throughout his reign (1688-1714), St. Constantine assumed the role of protector of the printing houses in both Wallachia and Transylvania. From Istanbul he brought the future Metropolitan Anthimus of Iberia (Georgia), under whose guidance numerous books were to be printed in Romanian, Greek, Slavonic, Georgian and even Arabic.

He also built and restored many churches and monasteries, such as the churches of Potlogi and Mogosoia, the monasteries of Brâncoveni and Hurezi, as well as the new Church of St. George in Bucharest, where his holy relics rest. With the financial support of St. Constantine, some of these monasteries organized their own libraries. Those libraries — such the one at the Hurezi Monastery — have soon become famous due to the large number of important rare books brought by St. Constantine from Western Europe.

In 1714, after a reign of twenty-five years, St. Constantine, his sons, and his son-in-law, Ianache, were arrested by soldiers of the Ottoman Empire sent to Bucharest by Sultan Ahmed III (1703-1730). The prisoners were brought to Constantinople, where they were tortured for four months. Prince Constantine was told that if he and his sons wanted to escape death, they would have to convert to Islam and pay a large sum of money. Constantine did not have the money required by the Turks, nor did he wish to convert to the Moslem faith.

Seeing that neither tortures nor threats would induce the prisoners to forsake Christ, the Sultan sentenced them to



death. The execution took place on one of the most sacred days of celebration for Orthodox Christians: August 15, the very day of the Feast of Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos. It was the day when his wife, Princess Marica, used to celebrate not only her own name-day but also Prince Constantine's birthday. He had just turned sixty. Thus, the happiest day in the Brâncoveanu's family was to become the most tragic one.

Dressed only in long shirts and chained, beaten, tortured and starved, exhausted by pain and suffering, the six martyrs were brought before Sultan Ahmed, who asked them to renounce Christianity, in order to save their lives. St. Constantine Brâncoveanu answered, without hesitation:

*„Your Highness: My wealth, as much as it was, you have taken it from me, but my Christian faith is something I will not relinquish. I have been born and lived in it; it is in my faith ( as a Christian) that I shall die. I have filled the land of my country with Christian churches and, now, attaining an old age, you would have me worship in your Turkish djamis? No, Your Highness. I have defended my land; I have kept my faith. It is in my (Christian) faith that I want to close my eyes, me and my sons.”*

After that, he encouraged his sons:

*„My children, be brave! — he said. — We have lost everything*

*we had in this earthly world. All we have left is our souls. Let us not lose them too, but bring them pure before our Savior Jesus Christ. Let us wash our sins with our blood!”*

Following these words, the sultan ordered that the execution began with Constantine's sons. The first to be beheaded was treasurer Ianache Văcărescu, followed by the Voivode's four sons: Constantine, Ștefan, Radu, and then the youngest one, Matei. Horrified by his brothers' death, he faltered in great fear. His father told him to follow his brothers:

*“There has never been anyone in our family who lost his faith. If it is possible, one should rather die a thousand times, than deny the faith of his ancestors, for a few years more on earth”.*

Then the 14-year-old child put his head on the stock and said to the executioner: *“I want to die a Christian. Strike.”* Petrified with pain, the Voivode murmured: *“Lord, may Thy will be done!”*, after which they beheaded him, too.

All this tragedy took place under the eyes of Princess Marica Brâncoveanu, who was forced by the sultan to attend the cruel and frightening "show". And yet, the Sultan's diabolical cruelty would not be satisfied unless all the Christian ambassadors of the great European powers had received the humiliating lesson of witnessing the defeat the well-known Romanian Christian prince, whom

whom the Turks used to call the “Prince of Gold” (Altin Bei). Although most of them were Christians, none of them (not even the representative of the Orthodox Russia) had the decency to protest or to decline the honor of attending such a bloody and gruesome spectacle. And yet, one of them, Baron George Goltz, Ambassador of Poland in Constantinople, has left us an eloquent testimony on the echoes of the Brâncoveanu’s martyrdom among European chancelleries of that time:

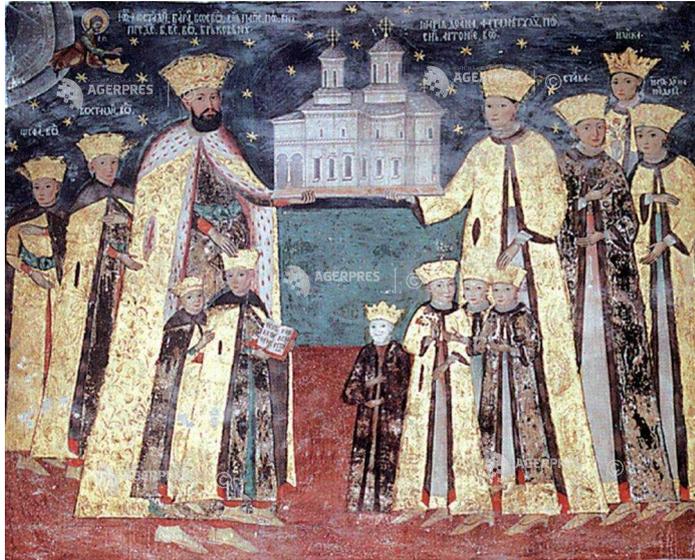
*“History has never had such a bloody slaughter” — he wrote. “The whole world still shudders in horror at having seen this poor prince, who - after he spent most of his days in the riches, enjoying the glory of this world - in the end, swimming in the blood of his entire family, he gave his soul under the edge of the sword.”*

The six decapitated bodies were thrown into the Bosphorus. The heads were carried on sticks along the streets of the city, stuck at one of the gates of the Serai and left there for three days, after which they were thrown into the sea. The holy relics were recovered by pious Christian fishermen who brought them to the Monastery of Dormition of the Theotokos on the island of Halki. There they were secretly kept until the summer of 1720, when Princess Marica brought St Constantine’s holy relics back to his country and secretly buried them in the New Church of St. George, which he had founded in Bucharest.

The white marble tombstone she placed over was very simple, with no inscription, adorned only with an eagle, Wallachia’s coat of arms. She also placed a silver lamp above the tomb. It was only in 1914, when Romanians commemorated the 200th anniversary of the Brâncoveanu’s martyrdom, that archeologist Virgil Drăghicescu of the Romanian Academy discovered the Holy Voivode’s tomb, thanks to the inscription he found on the silver lamp, which no one had noticed until then:

*„This lamp, which was given to the New St. George’s [church], illuminates the place where the bones of the blessed Lord Voivode Io Constantin Brâncoveanu*

*Basarab are resting, and it was made by Her Excellency Princess Maria, who hopes that her bones will also rest here. July, 12 days, year 7228 (= 1720)”.*



Her wish was fulfilled in 1745, when she died and was buried there.

Discovering Brâncoveanu’s tomb was “the greatest reward for my modest work of a lifetime” — as Drăghicescu wrote in a letter to the scholar Dimitrie Onciul.

Prince Constantine Brâncoveanu and his sons were glorified by the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1992, when on June 20 the Holy Synod canonized them and established that their day of celebration as saints should be August 16 of each

year, one day after their unlawful killing.

In 2014, the relics of the Holy Martyr Constantine Brâncoveanu were placed in a new golden silver reliquary. The procession that took place then gave witness of his sacrificial love for Christ, for the Church and the Romanian people, thus becoming the measure of the Romanian dignity in those times of trial.

In his sermon delivered on that occasion, Patriarch Daniel of Romania underlined that “Christ’s Cross has been a source of light and sacrificial love for Saint Constantin Brâncoveanu”. Patriarch Daniel said that, right from the beginning of his rule, the Holy Martyr Constantine Brancoveanu predicted in a rather prophetic way that he would have to suffer many tribulations and even death for Christ: “My service is to endure the needs and to suffer the hardships and even to shed my blood in the name of Christ and of God our Lord, for faith” (Letter to Czar Peter the Great of Russia).

*“Being worthy to suffer a martyr’s death for the right faith and for your people together with your sons Constantin, Ștefan, Radu, Matei and with the counselor Ianache, Oh, right-faithful Voievod Constantin, pray to Christ God to save our souls!”* (Troparion of the Holy Brâncoveanu Martyrs).

**V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai Buga**