

participation in the Holy Mysteries. Our Church engages in ecumenical activity for the purpose of achieving of such communion among divided Churches, as well as renewing the internal unity of the Kyivan Metropolitanate.

4. "be Church—A New Creation

309 In his mercy, God the Father consummated the fullness of creation in Jesus Christ, the New Adam. Christ entrusted the sharing of this fullness to the apostles: "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15). The Church—the bearer of a new creation—acts "in this world," even though she herself is not of this world (see Jn 17:14-16). She is the sign of "a new heaven and a new earth." "The establishment of the Church is the same as the creation of a new universe, and as the prophet Isaiah says, a new heaven ... a new earth is created ... and a new humanity is created, renewed according to the Creator's image."²⁷¹ The Church refers to these new people in the image of the Creator as saints, divinized by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

310 In the assembly of all the saints, the first place belongs to the most holy Mother of God. She is the "icon of the Church, the symbol and anticipation of humanity transfigured by grace, the model and the unfailing hope for all those who direct their steps towards the heavenly Jerusalem."²⁷² Standing together with her before the heavenly throne are "the apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, ascetics, and every righteous soul that finished this life in faith."²⁷³ They are all living icons of God, witnesses and bearers of the new creation. They stand before God in unceasing prayer; and they are present among us by the grace of God in their relics and icons.

a. Devotion to the Most Holy Mother of God

311 In unified conciliar fashion, the Church professes Mary, the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be the God-bearing One (Ukrainian: Bohoro-dytsia) or Mother of God and Ever-Virgin; and the Church venerates her in the feasts of the liturgical year and in icons. At Marian feasts, the Church prayerfully commemorates the saving events of the life of

²⁵¹ GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, 13: PG 44,1049-1052.

²⁵² JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Letter Orientals Lumen* [Light of the East], 6.

²⁵³ See *Liturgicon, Divine Liturgy of our Holy Father John Chrysostom, Anaphora*.

the Mother of God: the Conception by Saint Anne,²⁷⁴ the Mother of God's Nativity, her Entrance into the Temple, the Annunciation, Encounter in the Temple, and her Dormition. The Church sees in her the perfect model for our growth in holiness.

312 The Icon of the Sign portrays Christ in the womb of the Virgin, as foretold by the prophet Isaiah (see Is 7:14). The icon *Hodegetria* (from the Greek, meaning *the one who shows the way*) portrays the Mother God who points to Christ, "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6). The icon of *Tenderness* (Tender-Emotion) portrays the intimate communion of Mother and Son. The icon of the *Mother of God of Perpetual Help* presents the Divine Child contemplating his *future Passion* emphasizes the co-suffering of the Mother of God in the Passion of her Son. The icon called *Oranta* (from the Latin, meaning *she who prays*) portrays the most holy Mother of God with arms uplifted in prayer interceding for the human race before the heavenly Father.

313 With boldness, the Church addresses the Mother of God, the first to be divinized by grace, with the words, "Most holy Mother of God, save us." The Church does so with the understanding that it is God's gran that saves and acts in her. Her peaceful death, tranquil as sleep in the fullness of grace, became an awakening into heaven itself; it is appropriately called the Dormition (Falling-Asleep). The Dormition of the Mother of God is portrayed on the icon of the feast as a birth into heaven: Christ holds in his arms the soul of Mary, wrapped in swaddling clothes. In the celebration of the Dormition, the Church professes that in her death the Mother of God did not undergo bodily corruption, but has been "translated from earth to heaven,"²⁷⁵ "raised body and soul into heavenly glory by the Lord."²⁷⁶ From among the human race, the Mother of God was the first to be glorified in her body. This is an image of our own resurrection as well. The Mother of God, being the Mother of Life, was transferred to Life; and "in her Dormition she did

²⁷⁴ With the decree *Ineffabilis Deus [Ineffable God]* (December 8, 1854), Pope Pius IX promulgated the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the most-pure Virgin Mary. "be most blessed Virgin Mary was from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin." (Denziger 2803; also Catechism of the Catholic Church, 491).

²⁷⁵ Menaion, Dormition of our Most Holy Lady, the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary (August 15/28), Vespers, Stichera at Psalm 140.

²⁷⁶ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 966; see also 974. With the Apostolic constitution *Munificentissimus Deus [Most-Bountiful God]* (November 1, 1950) Pope Pius XII promulgated the dogma stating that "the Immaculate Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.'