

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

1 As the all-[holy glorious](#) mother of [God](#) and ever-virgin Mary, as was her wont, was
2 going to the [holy](#) tomb of our Lord to burn [incense](#), and bending her [holy](#) knees,
3 she was importunate that Christ our God who had been born of her should return to
4 her. And the [Jews](#), seeing her lingering by the divine sepulchre, came to the
5 chief [priests](#), saying: Mary goes every day to the tomb. And the chief [priests](#),
6 having summoned the guards set by them not to allow anyone to [pray](#) at
7 the [holy](#) sepulchre, inquired about her, whether in [truth](#) it were so. And the guards
8 answered and said that they had seen no such thing, God having not allowed them
9 to see her when there. And on one of the days, it being the preparation,
10 the [holy](#) Mary, as was her wont, came to the sepulchre; and while she was [praying](#),
11 it came to pass that the heavens were opened, and the archangel Gabriel came
12 down to her and said: Hail, you that brought forth Christ our God!
13 Your [prayer](#) having come through to the heavens to Him who was born of you, has
14 been accepted; and from this time, according to your request, you having left the
15 world, shall go to the heavenly places to your Son, into the [true](#) and everlasting
16 life.
17 And having heard this from the [holy](#) archangel, she returned to [holy Bethlehem](#),
18 having along with her three [virgins](#)¹ who ministered unto her. And after having

¹ According to the First Latin Form account of the “Passing of the Blessed Virgin Mary” (authored by Joseph who secured the Lord’s Body and provided a tomb) the three virgins names are: Sepphora, Abigea, and Zaël.

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19 rested a short time, she sat up and said to the [virgins](#): Bring me a censer, that I
20 may [pray](#). And they brought it, as they had been commanded. And she [prayed](#),
21 saying: My Lord [Jesus Christ](#), who deigned through Your supreme goodness to be
22 born of me, hear my voice, and send me Your apostle John, in order that, seeing
23 him, I may partake of [joy](#); and send me also the rest of Your [apostles](#), both those
24 who have already gone to You, and those in the world that now is, in whatever
25 country they may be, through Your [holy](#) commandment, in order that, having
26 beheld them, I may bless Your name much to be praised; for I am confident that
27 You hear Your servant in everything.

28 And while she was [praying](#), I John came, the [Holy Spirit](#) having snatched me up by
29 a cloud from Ephesus, and set me in the place where the mother of my Lord was
30 lying. And having gone in beside her, and [glorified](#) Him who had been born of her,
31 I said: Hail, mother of my Lord, who brought forth Christ our [God](#), [rejoice](#) that in
32 great [glory](#) you are going out of this life. And the [holy](#) mother of
33 God [glorified God](#), because I John had come to her, remembering the voice of the
34 Lord, saying: Behold your mother, and, Behold your son. [John 19:26-27](#) And the
35 three [virgins](#) came and worshipped. And the [holy](#) mother of God says to me: Pray,
36 and cast [incense](#). And I [prayed](#) thus: Lord [Jesus Christ](#), who has done wonderful
37 things, now also do wonderful things before her who brought You forth; and let
38 Your mother depart from this life; and let those who crucified You, and who have

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39 not [believed](#) in You, be confounded. And after I had ended the [prayer](#), [holy](#) Mary
40 said to me: Bring me the censer. And having cast [incense](#), she said, Glory to You,
41 my God and my Lord, because there has been fulfilled in me whatsoever You
42 promised to me before you ascended into the heavens, that when I should depart
43 from this world You would come to me, and the multitude of Your [angels](#),
44 with [glory](#). And I John say to her: [Jesus Christ](#) our Lord and our God is coming,
45 and you see Him, as He promised to you. And the [holy](#) mother of God answered
46 and said to me: The [Jews](#) have [sworn](#) that after I have died they will burn my body.
47 And I answered and said to her: Your [holy](#) and precious body will by no means see
48 corruption. And she answered and said to me: Bring a censer, and cast [incense](#),
49 and [pray](#). And there came a voice out of the heavens saying the [Amen](#). And I John
50 heard this voice; and the [Holy Spirit](#) said to me: John, have you heard this voice
51 that spoke in the heaven after the [prayer](#) was ended? And I answered and said: Yes,
52 I heard. And the [Holy Spirit](#) said to me: This voice which you heard denotes that
53 the appearance of your brethren the [apostles](#) is at hand, and of the [holy](#) powers that
54 they are coming hither today.

55 And at this I John [prayed](#).

56 And the [Holy Spirit](#) said to the [apostles](#): Let all of you together, having come by
57 the clouds from the ends of the world, be assembled to [holy Bethlehem](#) by a
58 whirlwind, on account of the mother of [our Lord Jesus Christ](#); Peter

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59 from [Rome](#), [Paul](#) from Tiberia, Thomas from Hither India, James from Jerusalem.
60 Andrew, Peter's brother, and Philip, Luke, and Simon the Cananæan, and
61 Thaddæus who had fallen asleep, were raised by the [Holy Spirit](#) out of their tombs;
62 to whom the [Holy Spirit](#) said: Do not think that it is now the resurrection; but on
63 this account you have risen out of your tombs, that you may go to give greeting to
64 the [honour](#) and wonder-working of the mother of [our Lord and Saviour Jesus](#)
65 [Christ](#), because the day of her departure is at hand, of her going up into the
66 heavens. And Mark likewise coming round, was present from [Alexandria](#); he also
67 with the rest, as has been said before, from each country. And Peter being lifted up
68 by a cloud, stood between heaven and earth, the [Holy Spirit](#) keeping him steady.
69 And at the same time, the rest of the [apostles](#) also, having been snatched up in
70 clouds, were found along with Peter. And thus by the [Holy Spirit](#), as has been said,
71 they all came together.

72 And having gone in beside the mother of our Lord and [God](#), and having adored, we
73 said: Fear not, nor grieve; God the Lord, who was born of you, will take you out of
74 this world with [glory](#). And rejoicing in God her Saviour, she sat up in the bed, and
75 says to the [apostles](#): Now have I [believed](#) that our Master and God is coming from
76 heaven, and I shall behold Him, and thus depart from this life, as I have seen that
77 you have come. And I wish you to tell me how you [knew](#) that I was departing and
78 came to me, and from what countries and through what distance you have come

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79 hither, that you have thus made haste to visit me. For neither has He who was born
80 of me, [our Lord Jesus Christ](#), the [God](#) of the [universe](#), concealed it; for I am
81 persuaded even now that He is the Son of the Most High.

82 And Peter answered and said to the [apostles](#): Let us each, according to what
83 the [Holy Spirit](#) announced and commanded us, give full information to the mother
84 of our Lord. And I John answered and said: Just as I was going in to the [holy](#) altar
85 in [Ephesus](#) to perform divine service, the [Holy Spirit](#) says to me, The time of the
86 departure of the mother of your Lord is at hand; go to [Bethlehem](#) to salute her. And
87 a cloud of light snatched me up, and set me down in the door where you are lying.

88 Peter also answered: And I, living in [Rome](#), about dawn heard a voice through
89 the [Holy Spirit](#) saying to me, The mother of your Lord is to depart, as the time is at
90 hand; go to [Bethlehem](#) to salute her. And, behold, a cloud of light snatched me up;
91 and I beheld also the other [apostles](#) coming to me on clouds, and a voice saying to
92 me, Go all to [Bethlehem](#). And [Paul](#) also answered and said: And I, living in a city
93 at no great distance from [Rome](#), called the country of Tiberia, heard the [Holy](#)
94 [Spirit](#) saying to me, The mother of your Lord, having left this world, is making her
95 course to the celestial regions through her departure; but go also to [Bethlehem](#) to
96 salute her. And, behold, a cloud of light having snatched me up, set me down in the
97 same place as you. And Thomas also answered and said: And I, traversing the
98 country of the Indians, when the preaching was prevailing by the [grace](#) of [Christ](#),

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99 and the king's sister's son Labdanus by name, was about to be sealed by me in the
100 palace, on a sudden the [Holy Spirit](#) says to me, Go also, Thomas, to [Bethlehem](#) to
101 salute the mother of your Lord, because she is taking her departure to the heavens.
102 And a cloud of light having snatched me up, set me down beside you. And Mark
103 also answered and said: And when I was finishing the canon of the third *day* in the
104 city of Alexandria, just as I was [praying](#), the [Holy Spirit](#) snatched me up, and
105 brought me to you. And James also answered and said: While I was in Jerusalem,
106 the [Holy Spirit](#) commanded me, saying, Go to [Bethlehem](#), because the mother of
107 your Lord is taking her departure. And, behold, a cloud of light having snatched
108 me up, set me beside you. And Matthew also answered and said: I
109 have [glorified](#) and do glorify [God](#), because when I was in a boat and overtaken by
110 a storm, the sea raging with its waves, on a sudden a cloud of light overshadowing
111 the stormy billow, changed it to a calm, and having snatched me up, set me down
112 beside you. And those who had come before likewise answered, and gave an
113 account of how they had come. And Bartholomew said: I was in the Thebais
114 proclaiming the word, and behold the [Holy Spirit](#) says to me, The mother of your
115 Lord is taking her departure; go, then, to salute her in [Bethlehem](#). And, behold, a
116 cloud of light having snatched me up, brought me to you.

117 The [apostles](#) said all these things to the [holy](#) mother of [God](#), why they had come,
118 and in what way; and she stretched her hands to heaven and [prayed](#), saying: I

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119 adore, and praise, and glorify Your much to be praised name, O Lord, because You
120 have looked upon the lowliness of Your handmaiden, and because You that are
121 mighty has done great things for me; and, behold, all generations shall count me
122 blessed. [Luke 1:48](#) And after the [prayer](#) she said to the [apostles](#): Cast [incense](#),
123 and [pray](#). And when they had [prayed](#), there was thunder from heaven, and there
124 came a fearful voice, as if of chariots; and, behold, a multitude of a host
125 of [angels](#) and powers, and a voice, as if of the [Son of man](#), was heard, and the
126 seraphim in a circle round the house where the [holy](#), spotless mother of [God](#) and
127 virgin was lying, so that all who were in [Bethlehem](#) beheld all the wonderful
128 things, and came to Jerusalem and reported all the wonderful things that had come
129 to pass. And it came to pass, when the voice was heard, that the sun and the moon
130 suddenly appeared about the house; and an assembly of the [first-born saints](#) stood
131 beside the house where the mother of the Lord was lying, for her [honour](#) and [glory](#).
132 And I beheld also that many signs came to pass, the blind seeing, the deaf hearing,
133 the lame walking, [lepers](#) cleansed, and those possessed by unclean spirits cured;
134 and every one who was under disease and sickness, touching the outside of the
135 wall of the house where she was lying, cried out: Holy Mary, who brought forth
136 Christ our [God](#), have mercy upon us. And they were straightway cured. And great
137 multitudes out of every country living in Jerusalem for the sake of [prayer](#), having
138 heard of the signs that had come to pass in [Bethlehem](#) through the mother of the

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139 Lord, came to the place seeking the cure of various diseases, which also they
140 obtained. And there was [joy](#) unspeakable on that day among the multitude of those
141 who had been cured, as well as of those who looked on, glorifying Christ our God
142 and His mother. And all Jerusalem from [Bethlehem](#) kept festival with psalms and
143 spiritual songs.

144 And the [priests](#) of the [Jews](#), along with their people, were astonished at the things
145 which had come to pass; and being moved with the heaviest [hatred](#), and again with
146 frivolous reasoning, having made an assembly, they determine to send against
147 the [holy](#) mother of [God](#) and the [holy apostles](#) who were there in [Bethlehem](#). And
148 accordingly the multitude of the [Jews](#), having directed their course to [Bethlehem](#),
149 when at the distance of one mile it came to pass that they beheld a frightful vision,
150 and their feet were held fast; and after this they returned to their fellow-
151 countrymen, and reported all the frightful vision to the chief [priests](#). And they, still
152 more boiling with rage, go to the [procurator](#), crying out and saying: The nation of
153 the [Jews](#) has been ruined by this [woman](#); chase her from [Bethlehem](#) and the
154 province of Jerusalem. And the [procurator](#), astonished at the wonderful things, said
155 to them: I will chase her neither from [Bethlehem](#) nor from any other place. And
156 the [Jews](#) continued crying out, and adjuring him by the health of [Tiberius Cæsar](#) to
157 bring the [apostles](#) out of [Bethlehem](#). And if you do not do so, we shall report it to
158 the Cæsar. Accordingly, being compelled, he sends a tribune of the soldiers against

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159 the [apostles](#) to [Bethlehem](#). And the [Holy Spirit](#) says to the [apostles](#) and the mother
160 of the Lord: Behold, the [procurator](#) has sent a tribune against you, the [Jews](#) having
161 made an uproar. Go forth therefore from [Bethlehem](#), and [fear](#) not: for, behold, by a
162 cloud I shall bring you to Jerusalem; for the power of the [Father](#), and the [Son](#), and
163 the [Holy Spirit](#) is with you. The [apostles](#) therefore rose up immediately, and went
164 forth from the house, carrying the bed of the Lady the mother of [God](#), and directed
165 their course to Jerusalem; and immediately, as the [Holy Spirit](#) had said, being lifted
166 up by a cloud, they were found in Jerusalem in the house of the Lady. And they
167 stood up, and for five days made an unceasing singing of praise. And when the
168 tribune came to [Bethlehem](#), and found there neither the mother of the Lord nor
169 the [apostles](#), he laid hold of the Bethlehemites, saying to them: Did you not come
170 telling the [procurator](#) and the [priests](#) all the signs and wonders that had come to
171 pass, and how the [apostles](#) had come out of every country? Where are they, then?
172 Come, go to the [procurator](#) at Jerusalem. For the tribune did not [know](#) of the
173 departure of the [apostles](#) and the Lord's mother to Jerusalem. The tribune then,
174 having taken the Bethlehemites, went in to the [procurator](#), saying that he had found
175 no one. And after five days it was [known](#) to the [procurator](#), and the [priests](#), and all
176 the city, that the Lord's mother was in her own house in Jerusalem, along with
177 the [apostles](#), from the signs and wonders that came to pass there. And a multitude
178 of [men](#) and [women](#) and [virgins](#) came together, and cried out: Holy virgin, that

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179 brought forth Christ our [God](#), do not forget the generation of men. And when these
180 things came to pass, the people of the [Jews](#), with the [priests](#) also, being the more
181 moved with [hatred](#), took wood and fire, and came up, wishing to burn the house
182 where the Lord's mother was living with the [apostles](#). And the [procurator](#) stood
183 looking at the sight from afar off. And when the people of the [Jews](#) came to the
184 door of the house, behold, suddenly a power of fire coming forth from within, by
185 means of an [angel](#), burnt up a great multitude of the [Jews](#). And there was
186 great [fear](#) throughout all the city; and they [glorified God](#), who had been born of
187 her. And when the [procurator](#) saw what had come to pass, he cried out to all the
188 people, saying: Truly he who was born of the virgin, whom you have thought of
189 driving away, is the [Son of God](#); for these signs are those of the [true](#) God. And
190 there was a division among the [Jews](#); and many [believed](#) in the name of [our Lord](#)
191 [Jesus Christ](#), in consequence of the signs that had come to pass.

192 And after all these wonderful things had come to pass through the mother of [God](#),
193 and ever-virgin Mary the mother of the Lord, while we the [apostles](#) were with her
194 in Jerusalem, the [Holy Spirit](#) said to us: You [know](#) that on the Lord's day the good
195 news was brought to the Virgin Mary by the archangel Gabriel; and on the Lord's
196 day the Saviour was born in [Bethlehem](#); and on the Lord's day the children of
197 Jerusalem came forth with palm branches to meet him, saying, [Hosanna](#) in the
198 highest, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord; and on the Lord's day

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199 He rose from the dead; and on the Lord's day He will come to judge the living and
200 the dead; and on the Lord's day He will come out of heaven, to
201 the [glory](#) and [honour](#) of the departure of the [holy glorious](#) virgin who brought Him
202 forth. And on the same Lord's day the mother of the Lord says to the [apostles](#):
203 Cast [incense](#), because Christ is coming with a host of [angels](#); and, behold, Christ is
204 at hand, sitting on a throne of [cherubim](#). And while we were all [praying](#), there
205 appeared innumerable multitudes of [angels](#), and the Lord mounted
206 upon [cherubim](#) in great power; and, behold, a stream of light coming to
207 the [holy](#) virgin, because of the presence of her only-begotten Son, and all the
208 powers of the heavens fell down and adored Him. And the Lord, speaking to His
209 mother, said: Mary. And she answered and said: Here am I, Lord. And the Lord
210 said to her: Grieve not, but let your heart [rejoice](#) and be glad; for you have
211 found [grace](#) to behold the [glory](#) given to me by my Father. And the [holy](#) mother of
212 God looked up, and saw in Him a [glory](#) which it is impossible for the mouth of
213 man to speak of, or to apprehend. And the Lord remained beside her, saying:
214 Behold, from the present time your precious body will be transferred to paradise,
215 and your [holy soul](#) to the heavens to the treasures of my Father in exceeding
216 brightness, where there is peace and [joy](#) of the [holy angels](#) — and other things
217 besides. And the mother of the Lord answered and said to him: Lay Your right
218 hand upon me, O Lord, and bless me. And the Lord stretched forth His undefiled

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219 right hand, and blessed her. And she laid hold of His undefiled right hand, and
220 kissed it, saying: I adore this right hand, which created the heaven and the earth;
221 and I call upon Your much to be praised name Christ, O [God](#), the King of the ages,
222 the only-begotten of the [Father](#), to receive Your handmaid, Thou who deigned to
223 be brought forth by me, in a low estate, to save the race of men through Your
224 ineffable dispensation; do Thou bestow Your aid upon every man calling upon,
225 or [praying](#) to, or naming the name of, Your handmaid. And while she is saying
226 this, the [apostles](#), having gone up to her feet and adored, say: O mother of the
227 Lord, leave a blessing to the world, since you are going away from it. For you have
228 blessed it, and raised it up when it was ruined, by bringing forth the Light of the
229 world. And the mother of the Lord [prayed](#), and in her [prayer](#) spoke thus: O [God](#),
230 who through Your great goodness hast sent from the heavens Your only-begotten
231 Son to dwell in my [humble](#) body, who hast deigned to be born of me, [humble as I](#)
232 *am*, have mercy upon the world, and every [soul](#) that calls upon Your name. And
233 again she [prayed](#), and said: O Lord, King of the heavens, Son of the living [God](#),
234 accept every man who calls upon Your name, that Your birth may be [glorified](#).
235 And again she [prayed](#), and said: O Lord [Jesus Christ](#), who art all-powerful in
236 heaven and on earth, in this appeal I implore Your [holy](#) name; in every time and
237 place where there is made mention of my name, make that place [holy](#), and glorify
238 those that glorify You through my name, accepting of such [persons](#) all their

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239 offering, and all their supplication, and all their [prayer](#). And when she had
240 thus [prayed](#), the Lord said to His mother: Let your heart [rejoice](#) and be glad; for
241 every favour and every gift has been given to you from my Father in heaven, and
242 from me, and from the [Holy Spirit](#): every [soul](#) that calls upon your name shall not
243 be ashamed, but shall find mercy, and comfort, and support, and confidence, both
244 in the world that now is, and in that which is to come, in the presence of my Father
245 in the heavens. And the Lord turned and said to Peter: The time has come to begin
246 the singing of the hymn. And Peter having begun the singing of the hymn, all the
247 powers of the heavens responded with the Alleluiah. And then the face of the
248 mother of the Lord shone brighter than the light, and she rose up and blessed each
249 of the [apostles](#) with her own hand, and all gave [glory](#) to [God](#); and the Lord
250 stretched forth His undefiled hands, and received her [holy](#) and blameless [soul](#). And
251 with the departure of her blameless [soul](#) the place was filled with perfume and
252 ineffable light; and, behold, a voice out of the heaven was heard, saying: Blessed
253 are you among [women](#). And Peter, and I John, and [Paul](#), and Thomas, ran and
254 wrapped up her precious feet for the consecration; and the twelve [apostles](#) put her
255 precious and [holy](#) body upon a couch, and carried it. And, behold, while they were
256 carrying her, a certain well-born Hebrew, Jephonias by name, running against the
257 body, put his hands upon the couch; and, behold, an [angel](#) of the Lord by invisible
258 power, with a sword of fire, cut off his two hands from his shoulders, and made

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259 them hang about the couch, lifted up in the air. And at this [miracle](#) which had come
260 to pass all the people of the [Jews](#) who beheld it cried out: Verily, He that was
261 brought forth by you is the [true God](#), O mother of [God](#), ever-virgin Mary. And
262 Jephonias himself, when Peter ordered him, that the wonderful things of God
263 might be showed forth, stood up behind the couch, and cried out: Holy Mary, who
264 brought forth Christ who is [God](#), have mercy upon me. And Peter turned and said
265 to him: In the name of Him who was born of her, your hands which have been
266 taken away from you, will be fixed on again. And immediately, at the word of
267 Peter, the hands hanging by the couch of the Lady came, and were fixed on
268 Jephonias. And he [believed](#), and [glorified](#) Christ, God who had been born of her.
269 And when this [miracle](#) had been done, the [apostles](#) carried the couch, and laid
270 down her precious and [holy](#) body in Gethsemane² in a new tomb. And, behold, a
271 perfume of sweet savour came forth out of the [holy](#) sepulchre of our Lady the
272 mother of [God](#); and for three days the voices of invisible [angels](#) were heard
273 glorifying Christ our [God](#), who had been born of her. And when the third day was

² Source New Advent Encyclopedia: "The apocryphal works of the second to the fourth century are all favourable to the Jerusalem tradition. According to the "Acts of St. John by Prochurus", written (160-70) by Lencius, the Evangelist went to Ephesus accompanied by Prochurus alone and at a very advanced age, i.e. after Mary's death. The two letters "B. Inatii missa S. Joanni", written about 370, show that the Blessed Virgin passed the remainder of her days at Jerusalem. That of Dionysius the Areopagite to the Bishop Titus (363), the "Joannis liber de Dormitione Mariae" (third to fourth century), and the treatise "De transitu B.M. Virginis" (fourth century) place her tomb at Gethsemane.

From an historical standpoint these works, although apocryphal, have a real value, reflecting as they do the tradition of the early centuries. At the beginning of the fifth century a pilgrim from Armenia visited "the tomb of the Virgin in the valley of Josaphat", and about 431 the "Breviarius de Hierusalem" mentions in that valley "the basilica of Holy Mary, which contains her sepulchre". Thenceforth pilgrims of various rites repaired thither to venerate the empty tomb of Mary."

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274 ended, the voices were no longer heard; and from that time forth all [knew](#) that her
275 spotless and precious body had been transferred to paradise.

276 And after it had been transferred, behold, we see [Elisabeth](#) the mother of St. John
277 the Baptist, and Anna the mother of the Lady, and [Abraham](#), and Isaac, and Jacob,
278 and David, singing the Alleluiah³, and all the choirs of the [saints](#) adoring
279 the [holy](#) relics of the mother of the Lord, and the place full of light, than which
280 light nothing could be more brilliant, and an abundance of perfume in that place to
281 which her precious and [holy](#) body had been transferred in paradise, and the melody
282 of those praising Him who had been born of her — sweet melody, of which there is
283 no satiety, such as is given to [virgins](#), and them only, to hear. We [apostles](#),
284 therefore, having beheld the sudden precious translation of
285 her [holy](#) body, [glorified God](#), who had shown us His wonders at the departure of
286 the mother of [our Lord Jesus Christ](#), whose [prayers](#) and good offices may we all be
287 deemed worthy to receive, under her shelter, and support, and protection, both in
288 the world that now is and in that which is to come, glorifying in every time and
289 place her only-begotten Son, along with the Father and the [Holy Spirit](#), for ever
290 and ever. [Amen](#).

³ Source: Abarim Publications' Biblical Dictionary: The verb הלל (halal) means to shine (what exited stars do) or praise and cheer (what exited souls do). It may even denote too much of a good thing: to be raving mad. From the second sense derive: noun הליל (hillul), praise or rejoicing; noun מהלל (mahalel), agent or place of praise, and noun תהלה (tehillah), song of praise. From the third sense come nouns הוללה (holela) and הוללות (holelut), both meaning madness. Etymology of Etymology: From (1) the verb הלל (halal), to shine or praise, and (2) יה (yah), the shortened name of the Lord.