

THE FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE (2017)

On Monday, 15th/28th August 2017, the Patriarchate celebrated in great festivity the feast of the Dormition of Theotokos according to its typical order of worship at the Tomb of Theotokos in Gethsemane.

Therein, with the Tomb of Theotokos being the Holy Altar, Matins and the Divine Liturgy were celebrated, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias and Timotheos of Bozra, the Most Reverend Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Demetrios of Lydda and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, and the visiting Most Reverend Metropolitan Panteleimon of Maronia and Komotini of the Church of Greece, and Cyril of Erythra of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, visiting Hieromonks and Presbyters from other Orthodox Churches, Archdeacon Mark and the Hierodeacons Anastasios and Agapios. Singing were the choir leader of the All-holy Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos in Greek and Russian and the choir of St. James the Brother of God Cathedral under Mr. George Kamar in Arabic, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos with the participation of a noble congregation of locals, Arab-speaking faithful from Jerusalem and the occupied territories and pilgrims from Greece, Cyprus, Russia, Ukraine and Romania.

His Beatitude preached the divine word to this congregation as follows:

"The group of the Disciples is gathered to bury the Mother of God, having come from places afar, by the mighty Spirit" the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Tomb of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary has gathered us all from all over the earth in the Holy City of Jerusalem, in order to celebrate the memory of the Dormition of Theotokos Maria on the one hand; and Her metastasis towards life, namely Her Son and Son of God our Lord Jesus Christ on the other.

Today's feast has a special significance not only for our Christian faith, but for the Church of Christ as a whole, and the local Church of Jerusalem in particular. And this is so, because according to St. John Damascene, "This [the Church of Jerusalem] the mother of Churches all over the earth has become the dwelling place of the Mother of God after the Son's rising from the dead. And with angelic and apostolic hymns, Her God-receiving body was brought and buried in Gethsemane, in which place the angelic chorea and hymns remained unceasing for three days".

Our Holy Church and its faithful members participate in this angelic and apostolic experience today, perceptibly and mystically through the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the Divine Liturgy that is celebrated in this very Tomb of the Mother of God, which has hosted the indeed God-receiving body of the All-Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.

This Tomb of Theotokos is a token and undeniable witness of the paradox miracle of the Dormition and Metastasis in Heaven of the immaculate body of Theotokos Mary the Full of Grace, as the hymn writer says: "O strange wonder, great and marvellous! For the fount of life is laid within a sepulchre; a ladder to Heaven's heights doth the small grave become. Be glad, O

Gethsemane, the sanctuary of Her that gave birth to God. Ye faithful, let us cry out, possessing as our commander great Gabriel: Maiden Full of Grace, rejoice thou, with thee is the Lord our God, Who abundantly granteth His great mercy to the world through thee."

The grace of the All-Holy Theotokos flows unceasingly as neither the divine power is confined inside the tomb, nor is there a restriction to the benefactions of the Mother of God, therefore my dear ones, let us hear St. John Damascene saying: "Let us therefore make our memory a safe for Theotokos. Through Whom the Holy Spirit has granted us humans our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, to Whom belongs the glory and the power, together with the Father without beginning and the All-Holy and Life-Giving Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen. Many Happy Returns."

After the Service, the Hegoumen of the Shrine, Most Reverend Archbishop Dorotheos of Avela offered a reception to the Patriarchal Entourage and others from the congregation at the Hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General

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