

THE FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF THEOTOKOS AT THEOTOKOS' TOMB

On Wednesday August 15/28, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Dormition of Theotokos in all reverence and brilliance at Theotokos' Tomb in Gethsemane.

According to the typikon order and the Status Quo of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, at the Church of the Dormition of Theotokos above and around Her Tomb, Vespers was held in the evening led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, and the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the morning, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitans; Timotheos of Boszra, Panteleimon of Veroia, and Timotheos of Thessaliodida and Fanariofersala from the Church of Greece, the Most Reverend Archbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina, Demetrios of Lydda, Philoumenos of Pella, and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, visiting Priests of the brotherly Orthodox Christian Churches, Archdeacon Mark and other Deacons. The chanting was delivered by Mr. Emanuel Daskalakis, choir leader in Thessalonica, and the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, local faithful and pilgrims who prayed in contrition from Palestine, Greece, Russia, Romania, Cyprus and other countries.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude read the following Sermon;

“She that is higher than the Heavens, and more glorious than the Cherubim, and more honourable than all creation; she that because of her exceeding purity became the vessel of the everlasting Essence, today committeth her all-holy soul into the hands of her Son. With her, all things are filled with

joy, and she granteth us great mercy" the hymn writer of the church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and Pilgrims

The Mother of God and Theotokos, the Most Blessed and Ever-Virgin Mary, has gathered all of us from the ends of the earth in this most sacred place, her Tomb, in order to celebrate the passage of her soul and pure body from earth to heavens, namely her Dormition.

The Mother of God is especially honoured and blessed, "for in her, the Uncontainable One, Christ our God, was pleased to be contained"; in other words, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ and Saviour of the world became incarnate and was born through her pure blood.

The Ever-Virgin Mary from Nazareth, who became the Mother of God, is the only one among women who is magnified and blessed by all generations, according to her own true testimony; "for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name" (Luke 1:48-49). And this – according to the established interpreters – is owed to Mariam's outmost humility; "this word was spoken to Maria neither in a simple manner, nor without judgment, but due to her exceeding humility, which God loves, and raises up the one who humbles himself and makes himself a slave, as an imitator of God...and in Isaiah He says: " but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isaiah 66:2). The without corruption death in flesh of "the fountain of life" namely the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, became a passport from the earthly and perishable life to the divine and indeed changeless one, as the hymn writer says; "Thy death was a passage to an everlasting and better life, O pure and immaculate Virgin, and it translated

thee from the perishable to the verily divine and changeless life, that in gladness thou mightest look upon thy Son and Lord”.

The great mystery of the incarnation in one hypostasis God the Word our Lord Jesus Christ from the pure blood of Theotokos Mary in the Holy Spirit on the one hand; and the mystery of the dormition or rather of the sacred translation of our Lady the Most Glorious Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary on the other, constitutes the incomprehensible essence and the purpose of the mystical and God-human body of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of ours, to which we consider ourselves to be members.

Today’s top celebration of the Mother of God my brothers and sisters calls and urges us to hear her words saying; “For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation” (Luke 1:49-50). In this instance the pure and Virgin Mary talks about God’s compassion and mercy towards all the pious people who fear God. “His mercy (God’s) is not only upon me but upon all those who fear Him” St. Theophylaktos comments.

And praying for the perfection of the Christians in Christ, St. Paul says; “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you...That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph. 3:14-19).

This fullness of the knowledge and love of Christ was familiar only to the Ever-Virgin Theotokos Maria, who became the Mother of God the Word the Christ, and therefore we say along with the hymn writer: “Rejoice thou full of grace, Virgin Mother of

God, Bride unwedded, the Lord is with Thee. Intercede to your Son and our God to save our souls and grant peace to our tested region. Amen. Many Happy Returns!"

Immediately after the Sermon most of the faithful present received the Holy Communion.

After Dismissal, the Patriarchal Entourage went up to the Hegoumeneion, where the Hegoumen Most Reverend Archbishop Dorotheos of Avela offered them a refreshing reception, accepting the wishes and praises of His Beatitude for the order and nobility in which the Feast was organized.

2. In the town Abud

On this day, in town Abud near Ramallah and at the Byzantine Church of the Dormition of Theotokos, the Feast of the Dormition was festively celebrated led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia.

From Secretariat-General