

THE FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, August 15/28, 2023, the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos was celebrated by the Patriarchate in the Holy Shrine of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Gethsemane, where her Tomb is also located.

During this feast, the Church remembers that the Theotokos, the mother of Life, died and was buried by the Holy Apostles “in the village of Gethsemane” where the “tomb did not endure death”. Her body, which embodied the Lord of glory, was transferred to the heavens by the Lord, who inhabited her immaculate womb and she remained the “unchangeable hope and protection for all ages”.

This feast was solemnly celebrated and presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Metropolitans Isychios of Capitolas and Timotheos of Bostra, the Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Makarios of Qatar, with the co-prayer of the Hegoumen of the Shrine Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Fr Dometian from the Moscow Patriarchate, Fr Ioannis from the Patriarchate of Romania, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The service was attended by hundreds of pilgrims, at the changing of Hierodeacon Simeon in Greek and Mr Nabil from Saint James the Brother of God parish in Arabic. The Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and the Greek Consulate staff also attended the service.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“In giving birth Thou didst preserve thy virginity, in thy dormition thou didst not forsake the world O Theotokos. Thou wast translated unto life since thou art the Mother of Life; and by thine, intercessions dost thou redeem our souls from death” (Apolytikion of the feast).

Beloved brothers in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The Grace of the Holy Spirit brought us all together from the ends of the earth, in this Tomb of the Theotokos to honour and praise the Dormition of the most praised and most glorious Blessed Lady of ours the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, as the choir of the holy Apostles of old.

“The greatly honoured choir of the Lord’s wise Apostles,” the hymnographer says, “hath wondrously assembled to gloriously bury thine undefiled body, O Theotokos, thou all-hymned Maid. Joining them, the multitudes of Angels have gathered, singing holy hymns to praise thy blessed translation, which we celebrate in faith” (Matins, Kathisma 2).

The Translation, that is, the Dormition of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is none other than her transition from earth to heaven. The Mother of Life, that is, of God the Word and Son of God the Father, and her Son, moved to Life, the cause of Life, to God the Father. Just as the Theotokos preserved her virginity during His birth, so also during her Dormition she preserved the incorruption of her body.

Let’s listen to our holy father Saint John of Damascus saying: Oh, how the source of life is transferred to life passing through death. How does she, who when giving labour overcame the limits of nature, now bends to its laws and submits her immortal body to death. Why must this put off mortality and put on incorruption, since the Master, the Sovereign of nature, did not refuse to submit to death. He dies in the flesh and by death He abolishes death; and by corruption, He

grants us incorruption and makes His death the source of Resurrection.

The moral and spiritual but also saving magnitude of the contribution of the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary to the mystery of the Divine Providence is infinite, a miracle incomprehensible to the human mind. That is why Saint John of Damascus calls the Mother of God "the embodiment of the human race, the pride of all creation".

Graceful and blessed among women (Cf. Luk. 1:28), the Theotokos Mary became the Mother of God, of the Son and Word of God made flesh from her pure blood, and righteously just after her Dormition, appears at the right hand of her Son and God, now dwelling in the city of God in the heavens, as David says to her: "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God" (Ps. 87,2).

We, my beloved brothers, "do not have here a continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13,14), the city of "the living God" (Heb. 12,22), the city of the Son and God of the Immaculate Theotokos our Most Blessed Lady and Ever-Virgin Mary.

And now, standing in front of the holy Tomb of the Theotokos, we beseech her and after the hymnographer, we say: "When thou gavest up thy soul into His hands who once from thee had become man for our sakes, He, as thy Maker and thy God, removed thee unto the joy free of all defilement. With reverence therefore, we piously call thee blest, who alone art pure, untouched by any stain; and as is right, we all confess thee as Theotokos and cry to thee; Pray Christ, to Whom thou hast been translated, to grant our souls His salvation". Amen. Many happy returns".

After the Dismissal, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, who maintains the order and dignity of the Holy Shrine, offered a treat of refreshment at the rectory.

From Secretariat-General