

THE FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday August 15/28, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Dormition of Theotokos at her Tomb in Gethsemane.

For this Feast the Church teaches that the Theotokos slept in the Lord in a natural death, but she was taken up in heaven both in soul and body, and was placed at the right hand side of her Son, where she has become the first human of the triumphant Church and intercedes unceasingly for those who ask for her help in reverence and piety.

The Divine Liturgy for the Feast was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitans Isychios of Kapitolias and Timotheos of Bostra and Exarch of the Holy Sepulchre in Nicosia, the Most Reverend Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, and Demetrios of Lydda, the visiting Most Reverend Bishop Cyril of Erythra from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Deacons, and visiting Priests. The choir was led by the choir leader of the Patriarchate Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos with the help of Archimandrite Demetrios, while the service was attended by a large congregation and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"On Thine honoured Dormition now, all the Heavens are jubilant, and the hosts of Angels exceedingly rejoice, as all the earth maketh mercy, singing dirges to thee in joy, Mother of the Lord of all, O thou all-holy Virgin Maid, who hast not known man, who hast truly delivered all the race of fallen mankind from the sentence passed on our forefathers long ago";

the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims,

Today “*the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven,*” (Hebrews 12:23) *is jubilant along with the earthly Church, on the festal commemoration of the sacred Metastasis of our Lady the Most Glorious Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary; therefore together with Archangel Gabriel exclaims in joy “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women”* (Luke 1:28); “*rejoice O vessel of the divinity; rejoice thou who alone hast delivered the earthly things unto heaven; rejoice O thou who after childbirth art virgin, and who after death art living, do thou, O Theotokos ever save thine inheritance*”. And the hymn writer says: “*He that strangely dwelt in thine immaculate womb when He became incarnate, the Same received thine all-sacred spirit and gave it rest in Himself as a Son behoden to His Mother. Wherefore, we praise thee, the Virgin, and supremely exalt thee unto all the ages*”.

Indeed the Teotokos is the one who is living after death. And this is because her natural death was a death that actually brought life, a death that introduced her to the glory of the true life of her Only Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Interpreting this paradox event, St. Cosmas the hymn writer says: “the bounds of nature are overcome in thee, O immaculate Virgin”.

In other words, the natural biological death of the Ever-Virgin Mary could not cause any corruption of her God-receiving body, but on the contrary, it became – according to St. Cosmas – , “a passage to an everlasting and better life”.

And according to St. John Damascene, it had to be so, for the One who hosted in her womb God the Word, to dwell in the

divine dwelling places of her Son...it had to be so, for the One who preserved her virginity during labour, to preserve her body incorruptible after her death (Speech 2 on the Dormition).

During this time of thanksgiving the sacred Tomb of the Theotokos calls all of us who have indiscriminate faith, to draw nigh and partake of the divine gifts from the “spring of gleefulness”, namely the Theotokos, according to St. John Damascene.

“ Every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isaiah 55:1).

Once again my dear brothers and sisters, the Tomb of the Theotokos in Gethsemane calls us through the words of St. John Damascene which say: “I called upon all, through the gospel; the one that thirsts for the healing of his illness, for freedom from the passions of his soul, for the redemption of his sins, for deliverance from all kinds of calamities, for the repose in the kingdom of heaven, let him draw nigh unto me in faith, and take upon himself the path of grace which has great power and many uses” (Speech 2 on the Dormition).

Come therefore, all ye faithful, who are gathered here from near and afar, let us entreat the Most Blessed Theotokos, the immaculate Ever-Virgin and say along with the hymn writer: “Graciously receive from us this funeral hymn, O Mother of the Living God, and overshadow us with thy divine and light-bringing grace; grant victory to our hierarchs, peace to the people that loveth Christ, and forgiveness unto us that sing, and the salvation of our souls”. Amen.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen Most Reverend Archbishop Dorotheos of Avela offered a reception to the clergy and many of the congregation at the hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General

