



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

THE DORMITION OF OUR MOST HOLY LADY THEOTOKOS 2011

The Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy,
Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Esteemed Members of the Metropolitan Council, Esteemed Members of the Parish Councils, Philoptochos Societies, Faculty and Students of the Catechetical and Greek Afternoon Schools, Directors and Participants of all Youth Organizations, and all devout Orthodox Christians of the Greek Orthodox Communities of our Holy Metropolis of New Jersey

"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." (Apolytikon --From the Feast)

"Neither the grave nor death could contain the Theotokos, the unshakable hope, ever vigilant in intercession and protection. As Mother of life, He who dwelt in the ever-virginal womb transposed her to life." (Kontakion --From the Feast)

My Beloved,

Today we bear witnesses to the Divine majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Resurrection, as we lay to rest the body of our blessed Panagia, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. This event in the life of the Theotokos is not a death unto oblivion but rather, it is an awaking into the Resurrection of Christ. In fact, it is for this very reason that the Church chooses to refer to this event as the Falling-Asleep (or Kimisis) of the Theotokos.

Saint Paul the Apostle tells us in his first Epistle to the Corinthians that, *"For since by man came death, by Man also came the Resurrection. For as in Adam all [must] die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."* (1 Cor. 15: 21-22) Today is not a dark day; a day of mourning and weeping over the curse of death, *for when is there sadness after the fast?* The bonds of death and the gates of Hades have been annihilated by the Son of our beloved Theotokos. Today is a day of wonderment, a day of paradox, a day of astonishment! For the one who contained the uncontainable, the one who brought joy to the world upon the day of her own birth, the one who allowed us, by her obedience to the Almighty God, to travel upon the road to redemption and salvation, has made the journey to the grave. In the face of her own death she prepared herself through prayer to her Lord (and Son). Consoling all of us, in a loving and comforting way, as only Mother can, preparing us for her departure and reunion with her Son and our God. Our Panagia was not spared the end of this fallen life; she was from her birth wholly human –with our faults and fallen nature. Yet, *she chose* the path of righteousness and salvation! Then without complaint or derision, over this fallen world and life, she accepted the same end as all mankind must endure in this life, death. Not a death into oblivion, not a death of condemnation, but a *Falling-Asleep* in anticipation of the Resurrection and glorious second coming of Christ our true God.

We as Orthodox Christians must look to Mary, the Theotokos as an example of what one can accomplish, through and in Christ the Lord. She accomplished these things not as a sinless one –outside of the fallen nature of mankind, not through an "immaculate conception" rather in spite of our fallen nature, and through faith in Christ, her Son and our God. Truly today we do not celebrate a death, what we celebrate my beloved, is her *Falling Asleep* (the Koimisis), and awaking into the blessedness of new life in Christ our God.

I pray that our blessed and most holy Mother, the Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, always intercede for each and every one of you, and for our beloved and Holy Metropolis of New Jersey. That we may, through her prayers and intercessions, come to the knowledge of the Truth; which is Christ, her Son, and our God.

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

† EVANGELOS
Metropolitan of New Jersey