02/09/2024

The feast of the Dormition of our Lady the Theotokos



On Wednesday, the 15th / 28th of August 2024, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos in the Holy Church of the Dormition, built in AD 317, containing the sacred Tomb of the Theotokos.

During this feast, the whole Church, especially that of Jerusalem, remembers that the Mother of God, daughter of the Holy Ancestors of God Joachim and Anna and mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, fell asleep on the ground of Zion and was buried by the “God’s Spirit” gathered Holy Apostles in Gethsemane. The Lord took her God-bearing body in His hands and made her sit down at His right hand, so that there, above the heavenly orders, first after God of the triumphant Church, she prays for those who honour her and for the whole world.

In honour of the Dormition of the Theotokos, the Divine Liturgy at her Tomb was presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with con-celebrants their Eminences, the Metropolitans Hesychios of Capitolias and

Timotheos of Bostra, the Archbishops, Theophanes of Gerash, Dimitrios of Lydda, Aristovoulos of Madaba, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks and Priests, representatives of the Patriarchates of Romania and Russia, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacons Eulogios and Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon with the help of the monks serving at the shrine in Greek and Saint James' Byzantine choir in Arabic. The service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos and members of the Consulate General, local faithful Christians and pilgrims.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"The Most High hath sanctified His tabernacle " (Ps. 46,5) "God's place is a mountain; this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it forever", (Cf. Ps. 68, 16-17), David exclaims.

Dear brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The grace of the indeed good Lady, of the Mother of the only good God, gathered us all from the ends of the earth, in this sacred Theotokos' monument, to celebrate her Dormition.

Our glorious and most blessed Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary is the embodiment of the human race and the pride of all creation, her praiser Saint John of Damascus says. And this is because "from the immaculate and unblemished blood of the holy Virgin, the Son and Word of God the Father took on flesh enlivened by a rational and intelligent soul".

And from her came one Christ, one Lord, one Son, God and man, God and man perfect and man perfect, all God, all man, one being composed of two perfect natures of divinity and humanity... there is no confusion of beings, no division of existence".

In the incomprehensible mystery for the human intellect of the incarnation of the Word of God, of man's salvation, the Ever-Virgin Mary becomes a participant and an accomplice. For she is revealed as the Theotokos and Mother of God, that is, of the Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Virgin Mary, as St. Damascene says, is "the only one indeed who superhumanly, supremely and indescribably contained God the Word, about whom glorious things are talked about".

Today the Holy Church of Christ and the city of Jerusalem celebrate the solemn memory of the Dormition and Metastasis of our Most blessed Lady and Ever-Virgin Mary together with the angelic orders that accompanied her in the hands of her Son, as the hymnographer proclaims: “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” (Vespers, Entreaty, Troparion 2).

The Dormition of the Virgin Mary, my beloved brothers and sisters, is a paradoxical and inexplicable miracle. This is because the source of Immortal and eternal life, namely Christ, is placed in a monument and the grave carved in stone becomes a ladder towards heaven. It is noteworthy here that Jacob dreamed of this ladder according to the testimony of the Bible of Genesis: ” And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it” (Genesis 28:12).

According to the Prophet Ezekiel, the Ever-Virgin Mary is the closed gate facing the east: “Then said the Lord unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut” (Ezekiel 44,2).

We refer to the Prophets, because according to Saint Gregory Palamas: “This is the foundation of the prophets, the beginning of the Apostles, the foundation of the witnesses, the foundation of the teachers… This is the principle, source, and root of the secret goods. This all-holy summit and finish”. [And more simply: This is the foundation of the prophets, the beginning of the Apostles, the foundation of the martyrs, the foundations of the teachers… This is the beginning source and root of the secret goods. This is the peak and end of every saint”.

“This all-holy peak and consummation”, there was no need for it to remain on earth, therefore it was taken straight from the grave to the heavenly space, just as her Son and God our Lord Jesus Christ, Saint Gregory points out. According to the hymnographer of the Church, “If her incomprehensible Fruit by reason of Whom she became a Heaven, willingly underwent burial as a mortal, how shall she who virginally conceived Him refuse burial?” (Matins, Ode 4, Canon 2, Troparion 4).

Let us also listen to St. John of Damascus saying: “How is the source of life changed to life through death! Oh, how in the interest of the mountains, which transcended

nature, now submits to the same institutions and to death the imperfect submits to the body. For this reason, the mortal reserve, the incorruption was clothed, where even the Master of nature took that of death and did not perish. He dies for flesh and death, dissolves death and destroys incorruption, bestows himself on death, and makes death the source of Resurrection". [And simpler. How the source of life is transferred to life passing through death! How is it that she who overcame the limits of nature in her birth, now bends to the laws and submits to death the immortal body. This must put off mortality and incorruption since the Sovereign of nature did not refuse to submit to death. He dies according to the flesh and with death he abolishes death and with corruption, he grants us incorruption and makes death the source of Resurrection].

We, my beloved brothers, who are blessing the sacred Dormition of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God and our Saviour Christ, entreat her not to stop beseeching her Son and God for our souls and for the peace of the tested earth, which hosts her empty Tomb. Amen. Have many blessed and peaceful returns".

After the end of the Liturgy, the Hegoumen and renovator of the Shrine, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, offered a treat of refreshment at the Rectory.











































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