



My Beloved Ones,

Soon we will be blessed to celebrate once more the Dormition of the Theotokos, in which we will gather together to honor the life of our Ever-Virgin Mary.

We know that after our Lord's Resurrection, the Panagia lived with and accompanied St. John the Beloved Disciple on his mission to Ephesus. However, before her death, she lived in Jerusalem, and that all those in the early earthly Church sought her blessings, and looked to her as an example of how to live as a Christian.

When the time came for her to depart this life, she was approached by an angel. Filled with joy at the idea of seeing once again her Son and her God, she went to the Mount of Olives and prayed unendingly. When she returned to her home, she prepared herself, and the power of the Holy Spirit brought to her all the Apostles from all the corners of the world. The Apostles did not understand the reason they suddenly appeared among one another, and they were of course deeply sad to hear Mary say she was prepared to pass from this life. Mary consoled them not to be unhappy: she was rejoining Jesus Christ. She selflessly prayed for the peace of the world, lifted up her hands, and offered her spirit to God, just as she had offered her life.

Though we do not read of the Dormition in Scripture, this feast points the way to the Resurrection of the Dead. We too must pass from this world to the next, but like the Virgin Mary, we shall all be raised bodily to life, when we stand before the King of All.

My brothers and sisters, for the remainder of this Fast and Feast, I ask you to think on all two important lessons our beloved Mother has taught us through her Falling Asleep: to put God and the concerns of others before our own. She was greeted by angels at both the Annunciation and before her Dormition, and both times she accepted the Will of God; as should we all, if we are to live in Communion with Him.

I also hope that each of you in the coming days will continue to ask for her intercessions. The days of being able to speak to her face-to-face have long passed, but she has never ceased to pray for us Christians. She is the mother of our Lord, who willingly gave Himself for us, and so we too are her children.

**+ALEXIOS**

Metropolitan of Atlanta