

My Beloved Ones,

This week we are blessed to celebrate once more the Dormition of the Theotokos. The Dormition is one of the few Great Feasts of the year which is not inspired by an event in scripture. Instead, Holy Tradition speaks of the falling asleep of our beautiful Panagia.

After our Lord's Resurrection, the Virgin Mary lived with John the Beloved Disciple. We know that she accompanied John on his ministry to the Church in Ephesus, but during the ten years after the Resurrection and the time before her death, we are told that she lived in Jerusalem, and that all those turned to the Lord sought her blessings and her spiritual wisdom.

When the time came for her to depart this life, she was approached by an angel. Filled with joy at seeing 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—from all the corners of the world—all the Apostles.

The Apostles did not understand the reason they suddenly appeared to one another, and they were of course deeply sad when they learned the reason. 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.

The circumstances of her burial—how she was discovered to have been taken bodily into heaven—are known to us Orthodox Christians. Most importantly, they point the way to the Resurrection of the Dead for all: we must pass from this world to the next, but Mary was given a foretaste of how 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 by her Falling Asleep: to put God and the concerns of others before our own. She was greeted by angels both at 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 long passed, but she has never ceased to pray for us Christians, who are all her spiritual children.

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta

