



My Beloved Ones,

This coming Tuesday we will be blessed to celebrate once more the Dormition of the Theotokos. The Dormition is one of the few Great Feasts of the liturgical year which is not directly inspired by an event in scripture. Instead, we have Holy Tradition to speak about 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 mission to 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 instruction in spiritual matters.

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—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 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.

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 of us: we must pass from this world to the next, but Mary was given a foretaste of how 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 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