



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Dormition of the Theotokos 2020

The Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy

Esteemed Members of the Metropolitan Council, Esteemed Members of the Parish Councils, Philoptochos Sisterhood, Faculty and Students of the Catechetical and Greek Afternoon Schools, Directors and Participants of all Youth Organizations, and all devout Orthodox Christians of the Communities of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey

My Beloved in the Lord,

There are a multitude of saints and holy people who we venerate in the Orthodox Church who received recognition by the Church as saints for various reasons. Throughout the history of the Church there have been hierarchs, priests, ascetics, martyrs, theologians, and emperors whose lives inspire us and whose deeds prove to be examples for us in our daily devotion to our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ. But there is no greater saint of the Church nor is there any saint who shares more in our struggles than the person of the Theotokos—the Mother of God. It is for this reason that, she who have birth to God in the flesh is known to be *“...more honorable than the Cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim.”*

In commemorating the Dormition of the Theotokos today, we are reminded of the various reasons we honor her and why she is so revered in the Orthodox Church. One of the reasons we honor her is because she is the representative of all humanity before her Son and her God. God did not desire to intervene and to infringe upon humanity’s freedom, even when humanity had fallen. However, it was the pureness of the person of the Panagia and her freely saying “Yes” to God and “Yes” to bearing Christ in her womb that allowed the ancient curse on humanity to be reversed. It was her free-will decision that opened the door of salvation to humanity once more, providing us with a path to become inheritors of the Kingdom of God. Thus, as the one who gave her entire self freely in response to this particular call from God, she has the special position of being the representative for all of humanity as she continually intercedes on our behalf.

Another reason she is so revered by the Orthodox everywhere is because she is not only the Mother of God, but she also is the mother to each and every one of us. One of the most comforting and tender words in any language is that of “mother”. While the role of a mother is usually limited to her own children, the Theotokos took on this role and included all persons as her children. It is her to whom we flee when we are afflicted, when we are in pain, and when we are in despair precisely because in her motherly love that nurtured God, she also guards, protects, and nurtures us. Having endured the horror of seeing her Son and her God crucified on the Cross, she empathizes with us in our agony and she soothes our pain with her loving motherly care and her intercessions before Christ.

Therefore, as we commemorate her Dormition today and although we mourn her falling asleep, we should also rejoice since she provides us a ladder to Paradise. Let us extol her not only for her motherly attributes or the favor she has with her Son as she intercedes for all of humanity, but let us follow her example of her devotion to God. It is this example that we should strive towards every day of our lives as we seek to *“commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.”* Praying the Theotokos continues to guard, guide, and protect you all, I remain,

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Evangelos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'M'.

† E V A N G E L O S
Metropolitan of New Jersey