



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

The Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos 2015

The Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy
Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate,
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 Greek Orthodox Communities of our
Holy Metropolis of New Jersey

My Beloved in the Lord,

“Neither the grave nor death could contain the Theotokos, the unshakable hope, ever vigilant in intercession and protection. As Mother of life, He who dwelt in the ever-virginal womb transposed her to life.” (Kontakion)

Today the bells of the Church hearken to us, the angelic trumpets sound, let each of us come to offer honor to our Most Holy Lady as we celebrate her passing from life to Life, her blessed Kimisis. As we joyously celebrate this Pascha of the Summer, may our hymns be lifted up into the highest places, such that the entire earth is filled with the sound of our timeless Orthodox chanting, for today we honor one unlike any other born of men; today we honor the Theotokos, the God-bearer, our fervent intercessor before the Lord of Glory, His Holy Mother, our Protectress, Champion and Fortress, the sweetness of Christians, safe harbor of our need, Guide and Model of Holiness.

Today is not a sad day or a day of mourning and weeping over the curse of death, *for when is there sadness after the fast?* For the bonds of death and the gates of Hades have been annihilated by our Lord and God, Jesus Christ. Today is a day of wonderment, a day of paradox, a day of astonishment! For the one who contained the uncontainable, and the one who allowed us, by her perfect obedience to Almighty God, to travel upon the road to redemption and salvation, has made the journey to the grave. In her own death, she not only prepared herself through prayer to her Lord (and Son), but consoled all of us, in a loving and comforting way, as only a Mother can, for her departure and reunion with her Son and our God. The Mother of God was not spared the end of this *fallen life*; she was from her birth wholly human –with our faults and

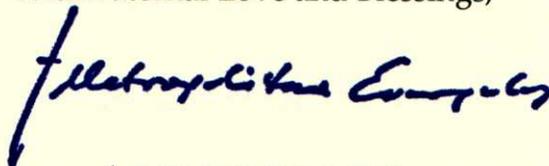
fallen nature. Yet, *she chose* the path of righteousness and salvation! Then without complaint or derision, over this fallen world and life, she accepted the same end, death, which all mankind must endure in this earthly life.

This falling asleep of our Holy Lady which we commemorate today is not a sleep unto death, or unto suffering and darkness, but is rather a falling asleep, painless, unashamed and peaceful; the very thing we continually pray for in our own lives. For being utterly pure in heart, body and mind, she was granted such an end to her earthly life, and such a beginning to her eternal one; thus she stands in the presence of the Master, her own Son, the only begotten Son of God. Indeed her holiness, and her special privilege are evident to all who know the story of her falling asleep, a privilege that places her even above the Holy Angels: for after the Holy Apostles buried her body in that most honorable Garden, where her only Son suffered the contemplation of His own death, she was raised up by Him in three days, being translated to eternal glory.

Therefore we stand in wonder as we look upon the icon of our All Holy and Pure Mother of God, the Theotokos, for in her we see one who lived according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 1:1), a life of obedience to the will of God. In that obedience she found solace, in that obedience she found strength, and in that obedience she found Life. Indeed, by disobedience Eve brought sin, death and alienation into the world; conversely, this new Eve, this Mary, this Theotokos, brought forgiveness, resurrection and communion to all who would believe in His Name.

I pray that our blessed and most holy Mother, the Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, will always intercede for each and every one of you, and that we may, through her prayers and intercessions, come to the knowledge of the Truth; which is Christ our God.

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Metropolitan Evangelos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long vertical stroke on the left side.

† EVANGELOS
Metropolitan of New Jersey