



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

## ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

### Dormition of the Theotokos 2018

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,

On the feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos we find both a time for mourning and a time for celebration. We, of course, mourn the falling asleep of the Theotokos, the one who bore God. It would also be appropriate, however, to celebrate this day since, in the Dormition of the Theotokos, we gain an advocate before her Son and our God. She stands above all of the other saints of the Church since she, as the Mother of God, is also our common Mother. She protects us in times of danger, comforts us in times of grief, and guides us throughout the course of our lives to the ineffable glory of her Son, our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ.

There are few words in language sweeter than that of *“mother”*. Sweeter yet is this word when we think of the Mother of God as our common mother. Unlike all other mothers, whose children are limited to a certain number, the Panagia takes us all under her shelter as our mother. She did this as a response to a request of God who wanted to bring order back to the human race. From the moment humanity disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, it distanced itself from His love and from His mercy, choosing instead a road separate from God and, ultimately, a road that led to death. Man had freely chosen to distance himself from God who respected the freedom of man and since God respected man’s freedom, He did not force man to do otherwise since He did not want to intervene in a way that would abolish the freedom of humanity. He only wanted to intervene by utilizing the freedom of humanity which was accomplished in the person of the Panagia.

She did not have to do this, but in her unending and limitless love for God, she gave her unequivocal *“yes”* to the Lord when she said, *“Behold, the handmaiden of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word”* (Lk. 1:38). It was this answer to the Lord that opened the possibility for humanity to be saved through the Son of God who would be born of the Theotokos. It was through her free and willing decision that the curse of humanity started to reverse thus opening the Gates of Paradise to us all. So bountiful was her love for the Lord that she brought forth God

in the flesh! It is for this reason we chant, *“In giving birth you retained your virginity, and in dormition you did not forsake the world, O Theotokos. You were translated unto life, being the Mother of Life”* (from the Apolytikion of the Dormition) since, as our loving Mother, she now stands as a continuous intercessor for our souls before the judgement seat of Christ.

It is the example of the Panagia for which we should strive for all the days of our lives because she shows us faith, dedication, and love for God and for our neighbors. She shows us how trusting in the Lord translates to an abundance of spiritual gifts. And she shows us how even the seemingly impossible becomes possible through God. It is my fervent prayer that we all become imitators of the holiness, faith, and love of the Panagia so that we too may experience the Kingdom to come. Praying that the Theotokos guards and guides you each and every day of your lives, 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. The word "Metropolitan" is written in a larger, more prominent script, and "Evangelos" is written below it in a similar but slightly smaller script. The signature is centered on the page.

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