



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

Kimisis Tis Theotokou 2016

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 of the Youth Organizations, and all devout
Orthodox Christians of the Greek Orthodox Communities of our
Holy Metropolis of New Jersey

My Beloved,

*“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.
And thus by virtue of your intercessions you deliver our souls from death.”*
(Apolytikion of the Feast)

We have just spent two weeks of fasting and prayer in preparation for today’s feast of the Dormition, the repose of the Most Holy Virgin Mother of God. We have prayed sincerely to the Theotokos through the supplication service asking for Her help and saying with poetic words of faith: *“A protection and shelter, I have with you in my life, You, the Theotokos and the Virgin, pilot me towards your port; for you are the cause, the cause of that which is good, support of the faithful, the only all-praised One.”* (Small Paraklesis)

Once again this Feast of the Church celebrates life, and in particular, the triumph of life over death. Let us look inside Her tomb and find it empty. This is not the first time. Once again, the emptiness of a tomb becomes the starting point of God’s glorification because death is clearly no longer an end, but the beginning of life within Life. As Saint John of Damascus wrote: *“Today the heavenly table, she who contained the bread of life, the fire of the Godhead, without knowing man, was assumed from earth to heaven, and the gates of heaven opened wide to receive the gate of God from the East.”*

And because the Theotokos gave life to the source of Life, she was offered the first taste of what would become a new destiny, that of life in Christ. Death happens at the crossroads of our two lives: our personal destiny meeting with God’s promise of union with the source of

Life. But before this union could become a reality, Christ had to give His life for “*the life of the world.*”

As we celebrate the Dormition, or *Kimisis*, of the Theotokos, we know from apostolic tradition and from the experience of the Church—not only of saints but also of sinners, whom the Theotokos has sought with her love, mercy, and compassion—that she has already been resurrected in the flesh, and has entered into the life that will be revealed to us at the end of time. Therefore, we can joyfully celebrate the Dormition of the Theotokos, when the chains of the body fell from her, when she was freed from the bonds of created existence, when she departed from the narrow confines of this fallen world, and in full glory, in her full unspeakable beauty, in her full purity stood before the face of Her Son and God, before the face of God the Father.

Because today is a celebration of life, I would like to speak more directly to our youth and to remind you all how much our Church depends on you and on your commitment. As the Holy and Great Council noted in its *Message*: “*The Orthodox Church addresses herself to young people who seek for a plenitude of life replete with freedom, justice, creativity and also love. She invites them to join themselves consciously with the Church of Him who is Truth and Life. To come, offering to the ecclesial body their vitality, their anxieties, their concerns and their expectations. Young people are not only the future, but also the dynamic and creative present of the Church, both on a local and on a world-wide level.*”

Wishing all of you a blessed Feast of the Dormition, and praying that we may all share in the mystery of the Theotokos as the triumph of Life which makes this celebration so precious in the Orthodox Church, 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