



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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<http://EntranceMission.org>

The Holy Dormition of the Theotokos August 30, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is in our midst! He is and every shall be!

*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 6:23).*

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now, and only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. (Romans 8:19-24)

St. Paul's "Magnum Opus" is the letter to the Romans. In it, the Holy Apostle explicates and explains the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with meticulous precision. Who is not moved by his description of a world subject to the decay and ravages of sin, sin which is none other than separation from God, rejection of that Union with the One Who alone is Life and Salvation? The wages of sin, he says, is death. Nothing good can come of our separation from the loving Creator Who made us, Who redeems us and Who waits to free us from bondage to sin and ourselves in the sanctification of the All Holy Spirit.

These thoughts come to my mind as I prepare to observe the honorable and solemn Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God. As Orthodox Christians we do not dogmatize about her in any way that limits the truth of her purity and self-giving to the Will of God in this world in which she and we have been and will be surrounded by the mass selfishness of fallen humanity. We do not say that she is born without original sin or that she was in some ontological way above her fellow humanity in some sort of semi-divine sense. No, we say that she was born of her parents Joachim and Anna in the same way each of us was born, and that in her remarkable self-giving to the will of the Father, she too was affected, victimized, by the ravages of the world in its separation from God. She too was subject to the wages of the sin of the world, death. But whereas so many around her went their own way, pursuing their own wants, passions and desires, she chose freely to submit her will to the Will of the Father, saying those most remarkable of all words, "May it be done unto me according to your word!" In that moment, the course of history was changed. The Mother of God stands out from among all human beings who ever were or will be in that she submitted in absolute faith to the One Who would borrow from her own humanity to become incarnate and be born the Savior, Christ the Lord.

Even the all-pure one, the Mother of God, was subject to death. And she becomes the first human being to be taken bodily into heaven. That is why we sometimes call this Feast the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin. When her soul was separated from her body, the Lord received it into His arms. In the Icon of the Dormition, we see the body of the Mother of God lying on a bier with Christ standing over it, holding what appears to be a child wrapped tight in swaddling clothes. That "child" is the soul of the all-pure one. Days later, however, when St. Thomas joins the other Apostles from India, they find her tomb empty. Not only her soul, but also her incorrupt body was taken by the Lord with Him to heaven, where He rejoins them, soul to body, just as He will do for us, Brothers and Sisters.

This is a solemn and beautiful feast, the Feast of the Holy Dormition of the Theotokos! It is a strong reminder of how each of us, like the "Panagia," the "All Holy One", are subject to the ravages of the world, fallen in sin around us. It is a reminder of how the Lord, in His loving kindness and mercy will take our souls into His arms just as He took the soul of His Mother into His arms, and how he will someday in His own time join our souls, preserved by Him, with new recreated and changed bodies to live with Him in His Kingdom, which as we confess every Liturgy, "... will have no end." Let us remember these things, and sing with one mind, "More blessed art thou, O Theotokos, than the Cherubim, and more honorable than the Seraphim! For thou, Mother of Life, hast given birth to God in the flesh!"

Fr. Elias

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