



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΦΡΑΓΚΙΣΚΟΥ

Encyclical for the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos 2018

“The Virgin is holding the Creator in her arms as an infant.”
Saint Photios the Great, Homily XVII

Dearly Beloved,

We are accustomed to seeing and venerating icons of the Virgin Mary holding Jesus Christ. As we contemplate and prepare for the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos over the next two weeks, we are challenged by the converse of the above statement from the great Saint, theologian, and Patriarch Photios. In the icon of the Feast of the Dormition, the Creator holds the Virgin in His arms.

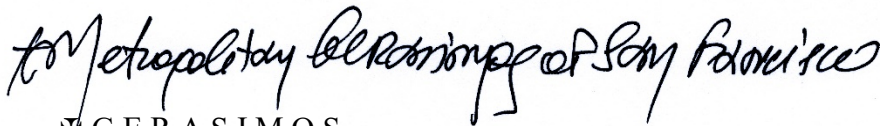
As Orthodox Christians, we proclaim that the translation of Mary into the heavens at the time of her falling asleep is a great mystery and miracle. Tradition holds that at her falling asleep, the Lord entered the room and received her soul from the Archangel Michael, while an angelic choir sang nearby. We believe that Mary passed through death unharmed and already dwells with her Son in the kingdom that is to come. The icon for the Feast presents our hope to pass through death and into eternal life with Christ. We can only sing praises to God when we encounter this miracle.

In our life’s experiences, the time will come when we will face the death of a loved one. As Orthodox Christians, however, we look upon death in a different way. The Dormition of the Theotokos is a reminder that we too, will depart from this life *“to the source of life.”* We must also call to mind the words Saint Paul uses when instructing the Philippians about death: *“For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”*

These first two weeks in August always provide us the opportunity to grow in faith and be strengthened by the intercessions of the Holy Mother of God. Let us contemplate the mystery and the miracle of the Dormition of the Theotokos. Observe the fast. Attend the Paraklesis services and sing praises to the Almighty God and to the Virgin Mary. Take time to submit your name and the names of your loved ones so that we might pray for your ***“health, salvation, visitation, pardon and remission of sins”***

For you, the faithful stewards of our Holy Metropolis, I ceaselessly pray: ***“commemorating our most Holy, Pure, Blessed and Glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, with all the saints let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.”***

With Love in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

✠ GERASIMOS
Metropolitan of San Francisco