



Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians
of Greece
Holy Metropolis of Oropos and Phyle



Festal Message

On the Occasion of the All-Venerable Dormition of the Most Holy *Theotokos*, 2015

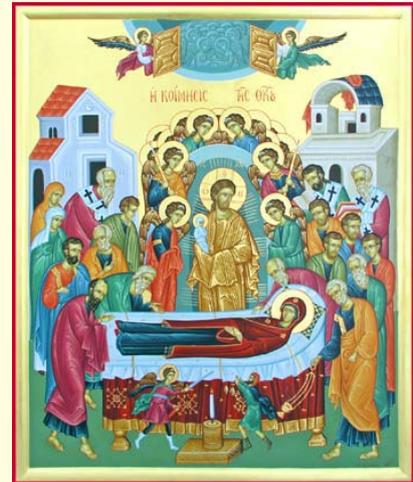
Admonitions of the *Theotokos*

“Born of a Woman”; “also with Him were many women who ministered unto Him”

(Galatians 4:4; cf. St. Luke 8:2-3)

*Reverend fellow Presbyters and Ministers;
Beloved and pious children of our Church:*

On this, the great and universal Feast of the Dormition of our *Panagia*; when the Gates of Heaven open to receive the Celestial Gate and the living Heaven of the Godhead; at this time, when we are called to praise the Song of the Bodiless Powers and the immaculate dwelling place of the Holy Trinity;



Today, I am saying, we are once again given the opportunity to explore in greater depth the soteriological work of our Lord and the place of woman in the unfolding of this work.

This *place* and the *relationship* between Christ and woman are strangely betrayed in our days even by those women who assuredly believe in Christ and take part in the life of the Church, but not always in a profound or substantial way; that is, not “sitting” with devotion and heartfelt love “at the feet of Jesus.”

What is needed, then, is a reminder to both men and women, that men, on the one hand, not lose their respect for women or a sense of the **sanctity** with which our Lord crowned women; and that women, on the other hand, cultivate gratitude to our Savior and preserve the heavenly treasure of that very **sanctity**, that they might, as other Mothers of the Lord, bear Christ within them and be magnified together with the *Panagia*.

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The incredible abyss of contempt in which woman was held before the coming of Christ can be grasped only by the incredible height of glory to which our Lord subsequently raised her. The unfathomable denigration of woman could be known only to Him, Who unfathomably hallowed her.

Precisely for this reason, His work begins “of a woman”: He enters time and history “of a woman,” he appropriates and deifies mankind “of a woman,” and renews creation “of a woman.”

Christ constantly displayed such all-pure love and a compassionate and tender attitude towards women in divers ways throughout His earthly life.

Women, for their part, reciprocated with devotion and gratitude, demonstrating self-sacrifice, at a time when men were either secret disciples that would come “by night” or else were hiding themselves in fear.



As He travelled and preached, “many women” also accompanied Him, “which ministered unto him of their substance.” With self-sacrifice, and at their own expense, they ministered to Christ and the choir of the Apostles, that the latter might concentrate on their work without distraction. Indeed, since some of the women were wealthy, they contributed to the Disciples’ purse, so that there would be a sufficient amount to give as alms to their impoverished countrymen.

Our Lord did not turn away from even the women who were the outcasts of society or those of ill repute, but rather, by His Divine compassion, led them to the light of repentance and of Divine glory.

The Apostle Peter’s mother-in-law, Mary Magdalene, the widow with her deceased only son, the Canaanite woman, the woman who was bowed over with a spirit of infirmity, the daughter of Jairus, the woman with an issue of blood, the adulteress, the sinful woman at His feet, Martha and Mary, the Samaritan woman, the many women who were present at His Passion, the Myrrh-bearing women, with the *Theotokos* at their head, “and many others,” constitute the unerring witnesses of the place of women in the work of our Lord and their relationship to His Theandric Person.

These many women and countless others, who jostled through the throng of simple people surrounding Christ, seeking from Him a bless-

ing, healing, a gesture of consolation, a look of acceptance, a gentle stroking of their children's heads, remission of sins, a word of encouragement, tenderness, a miracle, compassion... all together and each individually constantly repeated that wonderful phrase: "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked!"

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One wonders why, in our own days, we do not see, to the extent that we should, this throng surrounding our Lord?

This question, in our tragic age, expresses an anguished hope.

A good "sign of the times," a tone of spring-like hope, a breeze of consolation, would be an increase in the number of women who, moved by profound love and fervent gratitude to Christ, the All-Luminous Bridegroom of our souls, would call out with a great voice: "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked!"

May Orthodox Christian women understand their duty and responsibility.

The salvation of the world depends on them and this "voice" of theirs.

Why are they delaying?

They owe it to us!

The *Theotokos* is calling us to remembrance...

†*Metropolitan Cyprian
of Oropos and Phyle*

