

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On this blessed Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos we commemorate the Ever-Virgin Mary for offering her life to God as a witness of the power of grace. Through her holiness of life and her love of Him, she experienced His grace and became one who showed compassion to all she encountered. Because of her unique relationship with our Lord, she has and continues to show compassion to all in need who seek her intercessions for mercy and salvation from God.

The Theotokos is compassionate because she is the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ who revealed to us the grace of God through His ministry and teaching. She carried the Compassionate Savior in her womb. In the Holy Scriptures we read how our Lord saw the physical and spiritual needs of many, and He had compassion. They were like sheep without a shepherd (Mark 6:34). They were hungry, blind, sick, suffering and rejected. He felt and understood their struggles and needs, and in compassion He blessed their lives through the power of grace.

The Virgin Mary shows us compassion because the holiness of her life led her to experience the abundance of God's love. She was chosen to be the Mother of God because of her holiness; but this was also the nature of her entire life. In the beautiful hymns of this Feast of her Dormition, we celebrate her holiness and splendor. We give thanks to God for her purity of heart and her tremendous faith that led her to dedicate her life to sharing His grace. We join with all generations in calling her blessed!

We also join together in our services and hymns, seeking the compassion and intercessions of the Theotokos. We ask her to hasten quickly to our aid. We fervently pray to her, crying from the depths of our souls, asking for compassion. We call her a merciful spring, a shelter, covering, and refuge. We proclaim to the world that she is a protection for the oppressed, food for the hungry, comfort for the estranged and those in pain, a staff to the blind, a visitation for the sick, and aid for the orphaned. In our time of need, we ask her to come and bring help, to lead us compassionately to Christ for healing, hope, and salvation.

As we commemorate the life and Dormition of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, we do so in joy and hope. This is a feast of compassion. We are inspired by the witness of her beautiful life. We are emboldened by the power of grace through her dedication to God. We are comforted by her compassion for us and her constant intercessions for our needs. She guides us through the love of God in showing compassion to others.

May the Virgin Mother of our Lord, a protection of all Christians, grant you help in your time of need, and may her witness inspire you to live in compassion so that others may find hope and salvation in Christ.

With paternal love in Him,

†DEMETRIOS

Archbishop of America