

## **THE ORTHODOX WEEKLY BULETIN . . . . VESTAL, CLIFFWOOD, NEW JERSEY**

### **FEAST OF THE DORMITION**

#### **“REJOICE, I WILL BE WITH YOU ALWAYS”**

One may wonder what became of the Theotokos after her Son ascended into heaven? We know that she was entrusted to the care of the Apostle John. The book of Acts mentions her being with the apostles on the first Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon them in the form of tongues of fire. Other than that, it is thought that she spent most of her time in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas, visiting the meaningful places that were significant in the earthly life of Christ. Sacred tradition tells us that she spent much time praying on the Mount of Olives and in the Garden of Gethsemane, asking God to take her from this world and reunite her with her beloved Son.

One day, her prayers were answered. The Archangel Gabriel appeared to her, telling her that in three days, her earthly existence would come to an end. She received this news joyfully, and returned to John's home in Jerusalem, fervently hoping to see all of the apostles one final time.

God was to fulfill her desire. All of Christ's faithful followers, with the exception of Thomas, managed to be with her when she peacefully commended her soul into God's hands. She was buried in the Garden of Gethsemane near the tombs of her parents, Joachim and Anna.

Three days later, the Apostle Thomas arrived, wanting to pay his respects to the Theotokos. When the Virgin's tomb was opened, only the winding sheet was found. Her body was not there! Later that evening, the apostles had a vision of the Mother of God, surrounded by a multitude of angelic hosts. She left them with these words: 'REJOICE I WILL BE WITH YOU ALWAYS.' This is why we continue to pray to her and ask her to intercede on our behalf.

The exact age of the Theotokos at the time of her falling asleep cannot be stated definitively. The popular belief, however, is she was at least 60 years of age.

