

THE MOTHER OF LIFE

Most people shy away from the sight and talk of death. Yet “it is appointed unto man once to die,” and of all the appointments of life this one must be kept. As a Christian, we must prepare ourselves for this great reality of earthly life. We are reminded of our mortality as the Church observes the great feast of the REPOSE OF THE THEOTOKO.

The Sacred Scriptures are silent about the last days of the Birthgiver of God. Tradition, however, tells us about her departure from this life to Heaven. The Apostles are said to have gathered for her repose, and all came as she “passed over into life,” except for St. Thomas. When he does put in an appearance, the tomb is said to be empty.

Iconography tells the rest of the story. The Figure of Christ is in the background, holding an infant in His arms. This was the iconographer’s unique way of depicting the spirit of the Holy Virgin being received into the realm of eternity by her Son. Angels are often shown hovering over, while the apostolic group lingers close to the bier. Her internment is said to be in the Garden of Gethsemane at Jerusalem, although Ephesus has long claimed to be the place of burial.

A fasting period precedes the observance of this festival in the Church. Perhaps this is the church’s way of directing our thoughts to our own falling asleep in the Lord. Let us, then, observe the feast, and let us so live as to one day join the Holy Virgin in the Kingdom of her Son.