

# THE ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN

## ACCORDING TO SAINT THEODOSIUS

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Saint Theodosius, the 33rd Patriarch of Alexandria, was elevated to the Patriarchate in 535 A.D. and reposed in the Lord in 566 A.D. The account of his life in the Synxarion (Paoni 28), differs drastically from the account of the Encyclopedia Britannica, and other independent sources. According to the latter, he was summoned to Constantinople by the Emperor Justinian in December 536 A.D. in an attempt to win him over to the Chalcedonian faith, but he refused to be swayed. He was not forced to abandon his belief, but was effectively prevented from administering his Patriarchate by being detained for the rest of his life under Imperial surveillance in Constantinople together with some of his clergy.

The Emperor sent a series of Chalcedonian "Patriarchs" to Alexandria in an unsuccessful attempt to destroy Egyptian "Monophysitism". During his exile in Constantinople, the Empress Theodora (Justinian's wife, who was Orthodox), devoted her self to ease his life in exile, while he devoted his time to writing to his faithful believers in Egypt. His non-Chalcedonian faith was sincere and deep rooted, he remained dedicated to it till the end of his life even while living among Chalcedonians. While avoiding confrontation with the Chalcedonian Emperor, he still succeeded in aiding and influencing independent churches in Antioch, Syria and Egypt, while advancing their missionary activity. He was assisted in this by Saint Severus who was exiled in Egypt at the time. After Severus' death, St. Theodosius became the principal spokesman of the non Chalcedonian churches.

On the accession of Emperor Justin II<sup>1</sup> in 565, St Theodosius was given permission to return to Alexandria, but he reposed in the Lord before departure, and was buried in Constantinople with Patriarchal honours.

St Theodosius was a man of great learning and a great writer. He wrote numerous treatises against the heresies of the "Tritheists", the "Agnostae"

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<sup>1</sup>This Emperor was sympathetic to the non Chalcedonian cause, probably under the influence of the Queen mother Theodora.

and the "Phantasiastes". He wrote several Coptic sermons as well as expositions of the non Chalcedonian doctrines addressed to the leading Byzantine figures.

### **THE MANUSCRIPT:**

The composition we are about to discuss, begins by an introduction in the form of a sermon, and ends by a conclusion in the same form. These two parts, between which is inserted the marvelous story of the Virgin's last days, can be deleted without the main of the narrative losing its interest or its clarity. We shall only refer to the narrative part and the concluding sermon in this article.

The manuscript exists in two versions, a Greek one kept in the Vatican, and a Coptic version, probably a translation of the former. The composition was translated to French and published in both Coptic and French by Marius Chaine in "*REVUE DE L'ORIENT CHRETIEN*" under the title, "*Sermon de Theodose*" in 1923.

The translator notes that although the writer has drawn on various writings that existed in his time, yet, the largest part of this work is his own. Although the subject he dealt with was then known to everybody, yet, his work is something original. "The form is of the best literary quality. The style is refined, brilliant, easy, rich, expressive in the strictly preaching part, as it is lively fluent, full of movement and colour in the strictly narrative one." The translator feels that this work prevails over that attributed to Melitus, Bishop of Sardes<sup>2</sup>, because he avoids exaggerations, details far too improbable, sometimes extravagant that mar the latter. "His characters also always have a dignified behaviour, a correct language, in harmony with their condition or their position. The frame in which the facts he tells unfold is not in the least fictitious, it is that of reality and when the super-natural element appears, it is always brought about in the most simple way.

### **THE MANUSCRIPT'S AUTHENTICITY:**

The title of the manuscript attributes it to Saint Theodosius Patriarch of Alexandria. The translator firmly believes that it is a work of Saint Theodosius the 33rd Patriarch of Alexandria and sees nothing in its contents that stands

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<sup>2</sup>This is the story in our Synxarion for the 16<sup>th</sup> of Misra.

against this. "Theodosius did not lack the literary ability or the Theological knowledge that this document reveals." He was the editor of the letters and discourses of the Patriarch Timothy (whom he succeeded) and the "History of the Patriarchs" describes him as being an authority in the art of writing.

Certain passages in the manuscript appear to be directed against the heresy of the "Phantasiastes", which appeared during St. Theodosius' days and against which he struggled during his life.

The translator further tells us: "On the whole of this composition, in its structure, nothing contradicts the literary talent that is typical of Theodosius. Nothing in its doctrine nor in the story is against admitting that he is the author." He concludes the matter by these words: "Finally, all that we know of this Patriarch, of his knowledge, his talents, his faith, his struggles, and all that we learn about his life both in Egypt and in Constantinople, seem to militate in favour of this composition's authenticity."

### **THE ASSUMPTION TRADITION:**

The account of the assumption according to St. Theodosius differs from that recorded in the current version of the Synxarion. However, it is the only account that explains the fact that the Coptic Church has always had two separate feasts; one for the "Dormition of the Virgin" celebrated on the 21st of Tobe (January 30) and another feast for the "Assumption of the Virgin" celebrated on the 16th of Misra (August 22).

The translator observes that "The Assumption was celebrated in Theodosius' days, he witnessed it, he adopted it, he could not fail to propagate it among his fellow believers, and to write for them an account about it for that purpose.

This faith, which was in the tradition of the militant church right from the Apostolic days, existed also in the believers' tradition. It was always popular especially in the Orient." This means that Saint Theodosius was not inventing a new tradition, but rather defining and documenting a tradition that existed in the church since the Apostolic time.

It is interesting to note that at the end of the 6th century, the Emperor Maurice who came to power 15 years after St. Theodosius' repose decreed that the Assumption of the Virgin be solemnly celebrated on August 15. One cannot resist the idea that during his long exile in Constantinople, this great Coptic Saint helped to propagate this Apostolic tradition which was popular in the Orient to the Western Church.

As for the sources that our great saint consulted in writing his account about the last days of the holy Virgin, her dormition, and her assumption, the Saint himself tells us that he followed "the story in the old documents from Jerusalem that I found in St. Mark's library in Alexandria."

## **THE VIRGIN'S LAST DAYS ON EARTH:**

Mary, the holy Virgin, lived in Jerusalem in a remote place where a crowd of virgins were under her supervision. She taught them about purity and the fear of the Lord. The Apostles Peter and John stayed by her, accomplishing her orders and her evangelic precepts. She was to them a guide in the way of a wise pilot.

Then it came to pass that one day, it was the 20th of Tobe, the Apostles went near her to be given her blessing as usual. They found her disconcerted, they said to her, "what befalls you today O mother of Life, that your face is so sad?" She answered them saying, "this happened to me this night after I finished my little meeting; I slept a little and I saw a handsome young man of about thirty years of age, ten thousand times more bright than the sun. I saw you also standing on his right side carrying clothes in your hands and holding them out to me. The young man spoke and said to me, 'Do you know who I am whilst I make myself visible?' It was my Son. I said unto Him, 'My Lord art Thou Jesus, my son, the true Son of God?' He replied, 'I am' I added, 'My Lord, for what purpose are these clothes in the hands of thy disciples, that they are holding out to me?' He said to me, 'their purpose is your shrouding when you leave your body.' Having thus spoken He vanished from my sight. That is why I am full of fear O my sons because of this path which is extremely narrow. I have heard my Son many times while He taught the children of men calling on them to repent saying, 'A river of fire is on the path sending up great waves higher than all the mountains, all flesh, whether righteous or guilty, must come to cross it. Will I be able to save myself from it O my sons? What shall I say of the soul and body's separation? O how full of fear and terror is this moment! It is said that two powers accompany the soul, one of them is the light, the other is the hideous darkness full of horror and dread. If the soul is righteous she is guided with sympathetic and kindly encouragements, and it feels that her Creator is at peace with her. If it is a sinful soul, those to whom belongs the light withdraw and those to whom belongs the darkness come near her in anger, beating each other, scourging themselves, grinding their teeth, their mouths throwing flames of fire at her and she, knowing that her deeds are wicked, feels that God is not at peace

with her. Woe betide me my children! Who will be able to give me confidence that God is at peace with me till I am delivered from this moment? I have been taught also that there is a hazy darkness on this passageway where pitiless dispensers of justice have a face with darting eyes. These are the ones that God sent to show the impious their way. Will I be relieved of those? There is also in this place the worm that never dies, the one that gnaws at the impious more than all the cankers. O my beloved sons, would to God I will be saved of all that other danger! I have been taught again O my sons that there is a fire that is never quenched, neither the waters of the sea, nor the rivers, nor the springs nor the rain water can quiet down this fire's flame; but it is said that three drops of tears extinguish it. Blessed is the soul that shed tears on her sins while she is still in this world, before reaching that fire. Woe betide me as long as I have not transmigrated, because of the prince of darkness, that one who comes always in time to drag everyone at his feet with the exception of those who fly up with wings of light; their good deeds. Who then will be able to strengthen me to face up this sentence of the judges of truth, 'Take this soul and give her according to her deeds' All this my sons is to me a motive of fear that comes from all sides. But may the will of God be accomplished in me."

Hearing this, they lifted up their faces and cried with grief, "Lord, we have not even yet forgotten the first affliction which is Thy life-giving suffering, and here is the second one that will soon reach us. Woe betide us if what makes us orphans comes to strike us."

In this state of mind they heard a knock on the door of the place where they were. When they opened, crowds of virgins from the Mount of Olives entered, having in their hands a selection of thuribles with lamps. When they came in they venerated the holy Virgin Mary who questioned them saying, "Why is this big agony you are suffering for me today my beloved daughters?" They replied saying, "O our sovereign, it came to pass that in the middle of the night, while we were reaching the end of our small gathering, we heard a voice saying, 'I say this unto you, O virgins of the Mount of Olives, rise, go to Jerusalem to Mary the Virgin the mother of Life, for tomorrow she will be leaving her body.'" That is why we have been unable to remain insensible to God's command. Here we are gathered together. When she heard this, Mary the holy Virgin gave thanks to God. Then she said to us, "withdraw a little my children until the Lord whom my soul loves reveals Himself."

## THE VIRGIN'S LAST PRAYER<sup>3</sup>:

Then, opening her mouth, she made this prayer, "I give thanks to Thee, O my Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, who came out of the Father's mouth, who stayed nine months in my womb. I bless Thee, treasure of all good, Thou, that owns all flesh, in whose mouth I gave my milk. I bless Thee, Thou that can be carried, and cannot be contained. Thou, that by a word of Thy power, bears all things, and that I bore in my hands. I bless Thee, Thou, the Patriarchs' life, who was with Abraham, Thou that comforted Isaiah, that expanded Israel. I bless Thee, Thou, the prophecy of the prophets, who came to fulfill them. I bless Thee, Thou, the judges' call and the salvation in struggles. I bless Thee, Thou, the crown of the kings of truth, whose judgments are righteous. I bless Thee, Thou, the Angels' song and the Archangels' hymn. I bless Thee, Thou the Cherubim's trumpet and the Seraphims' clamor. I bless Thee, Thou, the martyrs' courage and the glory of their crown. I bless Thee, Thou, the virgins' pledge and the light of their lamps. I bless Thee, Thou, the Apostles' preaching and the spreading of the fragrance of their sanctity. I bless Thee, Thou who art my Lord and my Son at the same time. I pray and beseech Thy kindness, be my help and forsake me not. Make my soul leave this prison that I may bear witness to Thee. Let the fire calm down and may Thy mercy go ahead of me. Let the darkness drift away and Thy light appear. Shut the mouth of the enemy who wants to adjoin me to him. Let those who venerate Thy mother's peace come forward, the worm that never dies quickly perish<sup>4</sup> and may Thy living mercy strengthen my soul. Yea, my Lord, my God and my Son all in One. At this hour, cast a glance at me whose heart is full of fear and terror. Come unto me, Thou that art the love of my soul. Let Thine Holy Spirit lead me into the straightforward path. Let me worship Thy presence in truth, Lord my God, so that I reveal Thee with the aid of the psalms of Thine truth, Thou to whom is due the glory of Thy Father, who is goodness itself and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen."

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<sup>3</sup>This is one of the most magnificent pieces of literature that I have read, almost liturgical in its grandeur. (*The editor*)

<sup>4</sup>Note the similarity to the "Prayer said on the grave" in our current funeral service.

## **THE VIRGIN'S DORMITION:**

When she finished this prayer, they too said the Amen. Then, unexpectedly, thunders and lightening shook the whole place on its foundation. Amidst them appeared the Lord Jesus in a chariot of light. Moses was ahead of Him with the rest of the prophets, David the king, and the kings of truth. All the place became bright as a fire too dreadful to be endured. They all fell to the ground as if dead, in the midst of all these things. But He, the Lord Jesus, speaking in a soft voice was saying, "Hail, my Mother the Virgin, hail my holy Apostles, hail virgins gathered in this place." At this moment, fear left them. They were on the ground, They worshiped Him. He said to His Mother, "I heard your prayer and your supplication. It came to my throne of glory by the right hand of my Father and the Holy Spirit. At last, O my Mother, the Virgin, rise, let us go from here. Why do you remain in this house of sinners while the residences of the righteous are ready for you? O most fair Mother, depart from here. Why would I leave you in the earthly Jerusalem which has killed prophets and stoned those who were sent to her. You are impatiently expected in the celestial Jerusalem, My Father's and the Holy Spirit's City. Rise, my beloved Mother, let us go away from here. How can I leave you in this house of soil and bricks, while the porticos of precious stones are open before you. How can I wait, my most fair mother, you who have been a dwelling place for me on earth, while the heaven of heavens, my real dwelling place together with my Father and the Holy spirit is fervently desiring you? O my beloved Mother rise and let us go away from here. My living Father and the Holy Spirit urge me to lead you to them, for you have borne their unity, that unity of my Divine nature that rested in you. O my beloved Mother, rise and let us go away from here, from this house of tears into the city of joy. From this region of death into the land of the living. For these reasons, O my beloved mother, rise, let us go away from here."

While He was thus speaking, the Apostles could not bear the ordeal they were going to pass through. They started crying bitterly with a loud voice saying, "O our Lord, Thou art now going to take her away from among us, and we will be orphans. Before taking her away, take us near Thee, so that we no longer see our own loss." And the virgins also cried, all of them and mourned. But she turned her face towards them and said, "My children, why do you cry and sadden my spirit? Is it not written that it is necessary that all flesh go through death? I too must return to earth like all inhabitants of this world. Take heart, He is with you at all times, He will not leave you orphans, He said so." After that, speaking to the virgins she said, "My good daughters, keep the covenant

you established with your true betrothed, the Christ, put oil in your lamps so that when He comes, He will find you awake and ready to go with Him to the wedding banquet." Then she said to our Saviour, "O my beloved Son, I pray Thee, after my transmigration, comfort them all, for surely their heart is broken by the evils their hearts witnessed and that Thou endured at the hands of the Jews. We have seen Thy body soaked with blood when Thou wert transfixed with nails and also pierced with a spear. We have seen Thee, when, to quench Thy thirst, they gave Thee gall instead of water, when a crown of thorns was put on Thy head, when they stabbed Thee for the salvation of us all. It is only because Thou hast risen, that Thou hast given them Joy. Without Thy resurrection, all would have died. Until now, I have been for them a solace, thanks to Thy goodness."

Our Lord and God replied to His Mother saying, "O my most fair Mother, when Adam disobeyed my commandment, I passed sentence on him saying, 'Adam you are dust and unto dust you shall return. And I myself have known death in the flesh, the flesh which I have taken from you and made one with my Divinity<sup>5</sup>. I did not want you to go through death, I wanted to raise you like Enoch and Elijah but even they must also know death at the end. But if what happened to them happens to you, wicked men will think that you are a celestial power that came down on earth and that the incarnation's plan, the way it has been carried out is but an illusion<sup>6</sup>. I know men's innermost feelings and thoughts."

Having said that, the Saviour, turning towards the Apostles said also, "Trust me my companions the Apostles, I will not keep her away from you for a long time. Soon she will reveal herself to you. When two hundred and six days would have elapsed, counting from the day of her dormition to the day of her holy Assumption, I will lead her to you in the same body, the same you are seeing now with you, to take her to the highest heaven, by my Father and the Holy Spirit, to remain there praying for you all."<sup>7</sup> Having said that, He added, "Rise and go to the holy place, you will find on the altar of incense clothes and perfumes from heaven that my good Father and the Holy Spirit

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<sup>5</sup>Note the similarity to the Confession the priest says at the end of the Liturgy.

<sup>6</sup>The great saint is referring here to the heresy of the "Phantasiastes" against which he fought during his lifetime

<sup>7</sup>This is echoed in the "Doxology of the Virgin" sung during Vespers, "The adornment of Mary in the highest heaven, at the right hand of her beloved, asking Him on our behalf" (Coptic: Ere psolsel em Mariam Khen nifiowi etsa epchoi)

sent me to honour my beloved mother's body." Having gone there, they brought them to Him. He then said to the Apostles, "spread them out on the couch." When we did so, He said to His Mother, "O queen of all women, come upon them, be relieved of all grief, sorrow and groaning<sup>8</sup>. Go into joy and eternal happiness."

She got up, stretched her hands and said this prayer, "Adonai, Elohi Sabaoth, Messiah, Rabbi, Emmanuel, take me now by Thee my Son. Let the Royal gates of Thy holy palaces open up before me so that I come in to worship Thy presence, O my Master, for Thou art the One to whom is due the glory with Thy Holy Father and Life-giving Holy Spirit, forever and ever Co-Essential with Thee. Amen."<sup>9</sup> Having said these words, she laid down on the clothes, turned her eyes towards her Saviour and at this very instant gave up the ghost in His hands.

He then said to Peter and John, "Make haste, cloth the body of my Mother before I go away from you. They got up and shrouded her sumptuously as He had commanded them to do. As to the Lord, turning His hand towards the east, He brought three green palm branches and perfumes from the Paradise of Joy, then, turning once more, He brought three olive branches from the olive tree where the dove had brought a branch to Noah to make him know that the Lord had pity on the world. When the Apostles had placed them on the holy body of the Virgin, the Lord said to them, "Carry the body of my holy Mother, put it in the tomb of stone, close the tomb and stay by it in prayer until I have fixed the time of her Assumption. In two hundred and six days time, I will come with her blessed soul to unite her with her body and raise her gloriously to heaven by my good Father and the Holy Spirit."<sup>10</sup> Having said these words, He gave them His peace and gloriously went up into heaven.

## **THE BURIAL OF THE VIRGIN:**

As for the apostles, they carried away her holy body and went out with it

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<sup>8</sup>This is taken word for word from the "Prayer for the Departed"

<sup>9</sup>Notice the similarity to the endings of our Liturgical prayers.

<sup>10</sup>Some people are scandalized by the notion that the Virgin's soul and body were united and that she was taken alive to heaven, but the book of Revelation tells us that this will happen to the two witnesses (Enoch and Elijah), who, three and a half days after their death, will be resurrected and will ascend into heaven.(Rev 11: 11-12). Both the Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches teach this tradition without hesitation.

accompanied by all those who had joined them. They took her away solemnly and calmly to Josephat's field. They came near a group of Jews that had gathered. When they saw them marching calmly and in silence they said to one another, "Who is that dead person and who are those that carry the body in such an orderly manner? It must be a new custom in Israel." But one of them, a Galilean having a good knowledge of the apostles and upon whom the Holy spirit had come, said to them, "That body they are carrying is Mary's body, Joachim and Anna's daughter, who gave birth to the Messiah, the Christ; He who healed your sick ones, who gave light to your eyes, who brought back to life your dead. We believe that as He raised the dead, He will also raise His Mother from death and take her to heaven with Him."

When the Jews heard him, they were filled with confusion and said, "What are we going to do? The error is still among us as it appears from the words of the one who spoke to us; but hurry up, let us light a fire to burn that body, or else, if we let it be buried in the vicinity, we will have evidence of miracles, because of it; crowds believing in Him will gather together and, joining forces with the Romans will rule over our cities and humiliate our race." Having said thus, they quickly lighted a fire by means of lamps and went after the apostles to burn the holy body of the blessed Virgin. As to the apostles, seeing what was happening, human fear took hold of them, they put down the stretcher on which was the body and ran away. But as the Jews were about to reach the stretcher, they were plunged into obscurity and darkness, having become blinded. The fire they had prepared to burn the Virgin's body hurt a number of them. When sparks of fire fell down on them they screamed saying, "Woe betide us O Christ our Master. We have sinned against heaven and against Thee. Forgive us, for we are Abraham's children. If Thou grant us our eyes' light, we will come to know Thy Divinity's glory and we will believe in Thee and in Thy mother the Virgin, for she is our sister." Then, having thus spoken, Christ had pity on them. He relieved them of their blindness and their error. Many of them joined us glorifying the Holy Trinity. As for the Apostles, they went back to Jerusalem praising God for all His marvelous graces. They often went back to the place where they had left the stretcher and sang songs and hymns as is suitable to God and went on doing this until the Virgin's glorious Assumption.

## **THE VIRGIN'S ASSUMPTION:**

Now, it came to pass that when the 206 days were completed, they all got up and went by her holy mortal remains. It was the night of the 15'th of Misra and the morning of the 16'th. They spent all night awake, vigilant and praying<sup>11</sup>. At 10 O'clock that night, we heard thunders and shrieks of jubilation. It was a choir of angels going down on the grave, then the psalmist David playing on the harp said, "Arise O Lord into Thy rest, Thou and the arc of Thy holy resting place."<sup>12</sup> At this very instant, the place became full of fire; the Lord revealed Himself on the Cherubim's chariot, with the Virgin's soul in His bosom, adorned with her heavenly garment<sup>13</sup>. Full of fear, the Apostles fell like dead on the ground. When He had helped them on their feet, banishing their fear, He said to them, "Hail my fellow brothers and the virgins here present with you, rise to see my Mother's glory." Then He shouted over the tomb saying, "Arise, O holy body that has been for me a temple, take this soul that has been my every day tabernacle. Arise O mortal body according to your nature, take your immortal soul to be altogether immortal, so that I take you to the abode of the living. Arise, O corruptible and perishable body according to nature, take your imperishable soul and be altogether everlastingly imperishable and eternal. Arise! why are you lying in the grave? Array yourself in your soul in order to come with me to my Father, Goodness itself, and the Holy Spirit, as they yearn fervently for you. Arise, O body that had built up within you my flesh, without knowing it, take your soul that has been for me a dwelling place. Arise, you who are free, go and proclaim to the whole world that liberty with which I bought all my creation. Arise, O holy body, get united to that blessed soul, regard her as your resurrection in the face of all the creation. The inhabitants of heaven will carry you away when they will see you arrayed in your immortal soul. They will say to each other, 'Who is this one that has risen from the dead ahead of all the universe,

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<sup>11</sup>This is probably the root of the Coptic tradition of holding an all night vigil on the eve of the feast of the assumption of the holy Virgin. It is interesting to know that the same tradition is observed by the monks of the Monastery of Saint Maurice in *Valais, Switzerland*, the oldest monastery in Europe, which adopts many of the Coptic rules, and is adorned by Coptic crosses.

<sup>12</sup>All the Apostolic Churches understand this psalm as referring to the resurrection of the Lord, and the Virgin, the true "Arc of Holiness." Our Saturday Theotokia agrees with this, for in the "First Hails" (Arabic: Al Shirat al Oula) we sing: "Therefore, we also keep a feast, both spiritual and prophetic, proclaiming with King David and saying 'Arise O Lord unto Thy rest, Thou and the Arc of Thy Holiness, which is you, O Mary.'" I have no doubt that the feast referred to, is non other than the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin, which is prophetic in the sense that it was predicted for us in the Psalm.

<sup>13</sup>This "heavenly garment" in which the soul is wrapped, is probably the reason why in our funeral tradition, a white garment carried by little children follows the casket in the funeral procession "Bisat al rahma" The little children probably symbolize the angels carrying the soul in its heavenly garment.

arrayed and adorned in this manner? Could it be the house of the Lord, the gate of heaven?<sup>14</sup> Let us sing a song of praise to our God on her behalf, for the Lord loves her more than all the dwellings of Jacob, which is the choir of the saints.' My Living Father and the Holy Spirit will embrace you, to receive and keep you, for you have been a dwelling for their unique nature. The four beasts, the chariot of the Trinity's throne, that are full of eyes on all sides will be indeed amazed, when they will see you clothed and adorned with my Divinity's glory. Arise, to be united with your soul as of old, I am waiting for you."

After He said these words upon the tomb of stone, that tomb opened at that very moment. It had been closed as was Noah's Ark which nobody could open save God who had previously closed it. Soon after that, the venerable Virgin's body rose, embraced her soul, like two brothers coming from foreign countries, they were united and became one. At that moment, David the psalmist coming nigh unto them, made the strings of his harp quiver saying, "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." When this was done, the Lord ascended into heaven, blessing the Apostles and those who will abide by His law saying, "Peace be with you my companions. I give also my peace to the tomb that has been the dwelling place of my Mother's body. I will set there forever and ever my blessing, my grace and my support for the visitors whose heart is full of straightforward trust in me and who glorify me in the indivisible unity<sup>15</sup>. I give my peace also to those who, at all times will celebrate my Mother's memory with merciful spirit and righteousness." He blessed them. The Apostles ceased to see them, but the voice of the eternal powers that were singing ahead of them was still ringing in their ears, saying, "Alleluia, praise and honour the Lord, give unto the Lord the glory due unto His holy name. Alleluia. Bring unto the Lord, O ye children of God and sing His praises in His holy temple. Alleluia." Then they understood, that day, these words, "virgins are brought to the king."

These virgins were the soul and body united in one. And why he said, "After her, will be brought all her companions." These are her good deeds. Therefore, they went back to Jerusalem glorifying and giving thanks to the Lord.

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<sup>14</sup>Notice the similarity to the third part of the Theotokia of the Third hour, "O Mother of God, you are the gate of heaven, open to us the door of mercy"

<sup>15</sup>Note the strong non Chalcedonian sentiment.

## **SAINT THEODOSIUS' CONCLUSION:**

We said as much to reveal to you the gifts full of graces, of this holy Virgin, who ascended into glory for us, all of the human race. It is prudent then for us, no matter who we are, to bear her, on this day, fruits worthy of repentance, each of us according to his capabilities. Let us fast to find strength against the pleasures of the flesh. Let us pray to be able to fight against carelessness. Let us be mindful of the holy Scriptures' words, so that we remember the laws of God dictated to us. Let us be meek to inherit the earth (of the living). Let us be peacemakers to be called children of God. Let us be pure in heart, without any blemish to see God face to face, for it is written, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." Let us comfort the afflicted so God sends to us, at all times, his mercy. Let us be compassionate towards the poor, everyone according to his means, so that, at his fearsome seat of justice there will be compassion for us. Let us see to it that the saints' memory be always in our home, so that they also obtain grace for us with Christ, in order that our frail bodies and souls come to salvation. But furthermore, let us solemnize the memory of this blessed Virgin, who is nearer to God than all the choir of the saints.

Listen then attentively, my beloved ones, you doubtless know what we are going to say to you now. When a man of this world associates with a member of the king's court, he is always happy. When he sits to talk to his fellow citizens he often recalls his friendly relationship with the people belonging to the Royal household in such a way that the elderly folks of his town have great respect for him and his enemies are filled with confusion and gripped by fear in front of him. Because it is impossible for all these folks, to approach the king without giving evidence, first, of being associated with a member of his household. How many more tokens of kindness will he obtain for himself, he, who by his efforts, becomes the companion of the king's mother. The king will be sending to him many gifts, for she will be going continuously to the king, her Son. Nobody prevents her from bringing to the king this companion's presents or from convincing Him to hold him in high esteem and increase incessantly His kindness towards him. Among those of the choir of the saints, who is like that? In fact, God rejoices in the company of those close to Him and it is thanks to their prayers that He forgives us. But how much more yet will they get, those who celebrate the holy Virgin's memory on the 21st and the 16th of every month, according to their means! Were it only a glass of cold water to quench somebody's thirst, He does not forget it as He said, "For I was hungry and you gave me meat, I was thirsty and you gave me

drink."

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