



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF ATLANTA

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΤΛΑΝΤΑΣ



Christ Taking Leave of His Mother by El Greco (1585)

My Beloved Ones,

As we approach the end of July, we are blessed to participate in the Fast which precedes the Dormition of the Virgin Mary. As we prepare, I would like us to consider two feasts, both of which are about the power of faith, and the need to submit to the will of God. This Sunday, July 25th, we are blessed to honor the Dormition of St. Anna. Now, the Virgin Mary's mother has several Feast Days, the most well-known of which is also the feast of her husband St. Joachim (September 9th). Tradition tells us that St. Anne did not live to witness the Annunciation, but I believe that her influence on Christ's earthly life can be felt.

Shunned by their neighbors for their childlessness, Saints Joachim and Anna prayed to God, promising to consecrate their child to the Temple, which they did when the Virgin Mary turned twelve years of age. Now let us consider how painful this must have been. Yes, it was an honor, and Ss. Joachim and Anna were both honest, faithful individuals who had made a promise to God. This does not mean however, that they were not human beings whose hearts were made of stone. Imagine when they first left Mary in the Temple and then returned to their home without her. Now, let us think forward to our Lord's Passion, and His Mother standing at the foot of the Cross. Perhaps the Virgin Mary now better understood not only her parents' pain, but also their pride—for they all knew that their desires in life were nothing compared to their place in God's salvific mission.

Thinking of the Lord's Cross, on Sunday August 1st, our Church observes the Procession of the Precious Cross, of which the Horologion tells us, *"Because of the many diseases that occur in the month of August, the custom prevailed of old in Constantinople to carry the precious Wood of the Cross in procession throughout the city for its sanctification and its deliverance from illnesses. It was brought forth from the imperial treasury on the last day of July and placed upon the Holy Table of the Great Church of the Holy Wisdom; and... until the Dormition of the Theotokos, it was carried in procession throughout the city and was set forth for veneration before the people."* Though this feast is not as widely celebrated as the Holy Cross Feasts of September 14th and Great Lent, what better way to strengthen ourselves during this unique worldwide

pandemic than to remind ourselves of the power of our Lord's Cross, which became, through Him, a symbol of life, and not death.

My beloved ones, as we continue through these summer months, let us reflect on the faith of these two holy women, who understood that the mind of God is greater than our own human reason, and therefore submitted to His loving Will, knowing that His plans for them were greater than anything they could have imagined.

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta