

Although this feast is called "The Dormition of the Mother of God", it is more a celebration of the victory over death. Because what's happening? The Mother of God 'dies' and 3 days later her body is no longer in the grave; she ascended to heaven, just like Jesus Christ.

But first let me expound a bit who the Mother of God's was. It started with the Saints Joachim and Anna, who, through intense prayer and a great sacrifice, had a child in old age. Their sacrifice was the promise that, should they still have a child, they would return it to God. And so it happened. Mary is born and when she is three years old, Joachim and Anna give her to the priests of the temple to grow up there. When she is old enough to have children of her own, 13 years old, she is married off to a widower, Joseph of Nazareth. Soon after, the Archangel Gabriel appears to her to inform her that she is going to give birth to a child, knowing, of course, that she has never been with a man. Her first objection to the Archangel's communication is; that can not be true, but in the end she says, "Let it be done according to Thy will," though she does not understand it. In doing so she invalidates the sin of Eve, who put her own will above God's. Then we have the Birth of her Son in the stable, because there is no place for Him in the world. And there are Simeon and Anna, when Joseph and Mary want to dedicate the child to God they are told "A sword will pierce your heart" Then Mary witnesses her son's life and finally watches her son being crucified. Then, of course, there is the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the Descent of the Holy Spirit, and Mary is a witness to all of this. After that follows a time when the Church on earth takes shape, the primitive church, the church led by the apostles. The Mother of God is the center of this, although you don't read that in the Holy Scriptures. It was her of whom Christ was born, she had seen Him grow up, it was her who had panicked when He was missing after the visit to Jerusalem. She was one of the few who had stood at the cross. She knew Him like no other and so it was her who could tell about Him. She was the center of the early Christian community, not only because she knew so much about Him, but above all because of her spirituality; obedience and humility. She embodied the Spirit of Christ. Therefore, she was the center and main source of inspiration of the early church. People came from far and wide to hear and see her; the woman of whom Christ was born. She was the inspiration of the early church, not only because Christ was born of her, but also because of her example; So this is a Christian. And despite all this she was always in the background and it is only the stepbrother of Jesus, the holy Apostle James, who writes about her. Mary, the Mother of God, became the personification of what a Christian can be. The leader of all Christians. And what that is became clear when she died, or when she fell asleep. An angel appeared to her and told her of her imminent death and that it would take place in three days. Miraculously, the apostles, who had spread throughout the then known world to preach the gospel, were in Jerusalem within three days to be with her during her departure. In a long procession she was escorted from her home to her grave. Only Thomas was not

there and when he arrived in Jerusalem three days later he wanted to see her one more time. Her grave was opened so Thomas could see her but...the grave turned out to be empty. She had ascended to Heaven with her body. That is the feast we celebrate today. She had joined Christ with her body. This shows once again how important the body is to us Christians. Body and mind are one, the body is considered to be the temple of the Holy Spirit. Maria has made this happen like no other. Her purity consists in that with all her heart she wanted only to serve Christ and only to do His Will and thereby invalidate the sin of Eve.

Finally, I do not want to withhold from you how the Dormition of the Mother of God is celebrated in Jerusalem. On the 12th of August, the icon of the Dormition of the Mother of God, a kind of epithaphion, is carried in procession from the Jerusalem Patriarchate Church to the Garden of Getsamene, where her tomb is located. Three days later, the procession reverses into Jerusalem to the Church of the Resurrection. Because that's what it is, the resurrection of the human Mary, the Mother of God.