

# **THE DEPOSITION OF THE SACRED ROBE OF THE THEOTOKOS IN VLACHERNAE**

**—Commemorated July 2nd—**

The sacred robe of the Mother of God was transferred from Palestine to Constantinople in the year 458 AD, during the reign of Leo the Great. At that time, two patricians from Constantinople, named Galbios and Candidos, embarked on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Having arrived in Galilee, they ended up lodging at the home of an elderly widow, a devout Christian woman of Jewish descent. During their brief stay there, they witnessed many Christians coming to offer candles and incense at a small shrine in her house. After questioning the widow about this, she revealed to them that within a wooden reliquary there was the robe of the Most-Holy Theotokos. Prior to her dormition, the Mother of God gave her sacred garments as a blessing to two virgins who attended to her after the Ascension of the Lord. This old widow was of the family of one of those two virgins, and from one generation to the next the sacred robe had come into her possession.

God permitted for these two men to take the sacred garment by stealth back to Constantinople for the profit of many. When they visited Jerusalem, they had a wooden box constructed that looked similar to the reliquary in the widow's shrine. Upon returning to the widow's home, they took the wooden box containing the robe of the Panagia back with them to Constantinople, leaving the box they had constructed in its stead. They then built a church dedicated to the Apostles Peter and Mark on a property they owned named Vlachernae, and secretly enshrined the garment therein. However, on account of the multitude of miracles that began to take place, they revealed this treasure to Emperor Leo, who proceeded to build a church at that same site, in honor of the Theotokos. The Emperor himself wrapped the sacred robe with a regal purple cloak, then deposited it in a case, and secured it with imperial seals.

The sacred robe of the Theotokos was woven from wool. Such wool fabric typically begins to deteriorate within six months, as it is eaten by moths. The sacred robe of the Mother of God, however, remained intact to serve as testimony of her incorrupt virginity. Many years later when the reliquary containing the sacred robe was opened, the regal purple cloak was found deteriorated from the passage of time; however, the Panagia's robe was found intact, and in the same condition as it was when initially placed there. The Panagia's robe was woven from wool that was not dyed, an indicator of her utmost humility. Whereas the shawl she wore was red, an indicator of her perpetual virginity. For, according to the ancient Jewish tradition, virgins would wear a shawl that was red, whereas once they were married they would wear a shawl that was white.