

THE BELT OF THE MOST-HOLY THEOTOKOS

—Commemorated August 31st—

After the Dormition of the Ever-Virgin Mary, her venerable belt remained in Jerusalem up until the year 530 AD, at which time Emperor Arkadios decided to transfer the venerable belt of the Most-Holy Theotokos to Constantinople. Upon receiving it, he placed it in a reliquary and proceeded to deposit it in a church dedicated to the Most-Holy Mother of God, located in Chalkoproti, where it was henceforth kept.

Approximately three-hundred and fifty years later (in 886 AD), Emperor Leo opened this reliquary in order to bless his wife Zoe with the Panagia's belt. For, the Empress, who was being plagued by an unclean spirit at the time, had seen a vision in which she had been told that she would become well, if she was blessed with the sacred belt. When the reliquary was opened, the sacred belt was found in pristine condition, unaltered by the passage of time, as if it had just been knitted. A document bearing the imperial seal was also discovered, noting the year and the day in which the sacred belt had been brought to Constantinople, and further stating that it had been deposited in the reliquary by the hands of Emperor Arkadios himself. After Emperor Leo venerated the sacred belt, the Patriarch took it and placed it over the Empress, and she was immediately freed from the evil spirit. Everyone in attendance who witnessed this miraculous healing proceeded to praise and glorify Christ the Savior and His Immaculate Mother with hymns of thanksgiving, and in following the sacred belt was once again deposited back into the same reliquary.

Many years later, the sacred belt of the Theotokos was plundered by the Bulgarians, and it remained in their possession up until 1101 AD when it was recaptured by King Lazarus of Serbia. King Lazarus subsequently gifted it to the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos, where it remains and continues to perform many miracles (particularly for those seeking to conceive) up until today.