

THE FEAST OF ST THEODOSIOS THE CENOBIARCH

On Friday the 11th/24th of January 2014, the feast of Hosios Theodosios the Cenobiarch was observed at the Monastery he had founded in the desert of Judea, to the south of the city of Bethlehem and the Village of the Shepherds – Beit Sahur.

As is well known, this historical Monastery was founded by St Theodosios on the site and the cavern where the Church accepts that the three wise men spent the night before leaving for their own country by another way (Matthew 2, 12), after he arrived at the Holy Land and dwelled for a short time at the Monastery of Theotokos near Jerusalem, founded by the pious pilgrim Ikelia.

The Monastery was founded by St Theodosios in response to a request by monks in the desert to follow his spiritual guidance. The Monastery used to be a Coenobium, that is, it received novice monks who would go on for years communicating with and obeying the Hegoumen, living among each other and sharing prayers, food and work. Work was a condition of admittance to the Coenobium of St Theodosios, the Monastery's motto being "no one slothful shall enter". With their manual work, the monks used to help the poor and maintain charitable institutions, i.e. a nursing home and a poorhouse. The Monastery also maintained a School for educating the monks.

Upon the completion of their diaconate at the Monastery, the monks would proceed to a Lavra, i.e. the Lavra of St Sava and St Efthymios, for more intensive monastic practice in prayer and isolation.

At this Monastery, St Theodosios had gathered 700 monks of different nationality, Greeks, Iberians, Armenians etc, praying together in their own dialect during Matins and in

Greek during the Divine Liturgy.

St Theodosios, working together with his contemporary and fellow countryman, Hosios Sava the Consecrated, contributed greatly to the fight against the heresy of monophysitism and the prevalence of the Christological dogma of the fourth Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon in 451 AD, namely the existence in Christ Our Lord of a single hypostasis and two natures, the divine and the human, the human willingly obeying the divine.

In later years, namely the 7th c. AD, St Modestos, who was to become Patriarch of Jerusalem, St Sophronios, also Patriarch of Jerusalem, as well as Hosios John Moschos, author of the 'Leimonarion' [Spiritual Meadow], led an ascetic life in this Holy Monastery.

At the Cavern of the Magi, which had through the centuries served as a Cemetery, lies the tomb of St Theodosios, of his mother Evlogia, of St Savva's mother, Sophia, of the mother of the Holy Anargyroi, Cosmas and Damianos, namely St Theodotis, and of Hosia Maria, wife of St Xenophon and mother of St John Arkadios and St John Moschos.

Leading a rich spiritual life and having survived the ferocities of human history, the Monastery was renovated in the 20th c. by monks Leontios and Galaktion of Crete, and by Hagiotaphite Archimandrite Bartholomew of Chios, all buried in the Monastery, and by Archimandrite Ierotheos, the Hegoumen for the past thirty years.

On the morning of the aforementioned day, His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, led the Divine Liturgy at the Monastery. Co-officiating were His Eminence Isychios, Metropolitan of Kapitolias; their Eminences Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, Theophylaktos of Jordan and Theodosios of Sevasteia, as well as Hieromonks, including the Hegoumen of the Monastery of the Shepherds in Beit Sahur,

Archimandrite Ignatios, and of the Monastery of Hosios Sava, f. Evdokimos. Praying with them were Arab-speaking Presbyters and Hierodeacons, amid Greek chanting by monk Iacovos of Mount Athos and Hagiosabbaite monk Efrosynos. Members of the choir of the Village of the Shepherds chanted in Arabic. A crowd of people, nuns and pilgrims attended the service, mostly from the nearby town of the Village of the Shepherds.

His Beatitude preached the Word of God to the pious congregation in Greek. In Arabic, the speech may be read here: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2014/01/24/3350>

The Divine Liturgy and the Apolysis were followed by a procession around the Church and in the cavern of the Holy Monastery where lies the tomb of the Hosios, as well as in the forecourt of the Monastery, where a memorial service was held for its proprietors on the tomb of the late Archbishop Bartholomew of Madava.

A reception at the Hegoumen's Quarter was followed by lunch, hosted by the Elder Hegoumen, Archimandrite Ierotheos.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/yejv0NqR8rE>

