

HIS BEATITUDE THEOPHILOS III SERMON AT SAINT GEORGE'S ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH.

May 6, 2015

“The one who saved the children from the furnace became man and suffered like a mortal. And through His passion, He dresses mortality with the grace of incorruption. The one who is the blessed and most glorified God of our fathers,” says Saint John of Damascus.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Great Martyr Saint George was dressed in the grace of our risen Lord Jesus Christ, and we gather together on this joyful paschal day of *mesopentikosti* (i.e. the middle of Pentecost), in this sacred church of the delegation of our sister church of Romania in Jerusalem so that we, in the framework of the Divine Liturgy and Holy Eucharist, may confess with the Psalmist, “the Lord reigned through his resurrection and He dressed us with grace” (Psalm 92:1).

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who saved creation from the furnace, indeed suffered as a mortal who became man for us. Through His passion on the cross and through His resurrection, He resurrects our human nature in Him, which had been corrupted and delivered to the power of death. This means that the resurrection of Christ opened the way and the horizon for the real existence of man. For as Saint Basil says, “He rose on the third day and opened for every man the way to resurrection from death.” In the words of the hymnographer, “Lord, you

tasted death according to the flesh, and you cut the bitterness of death by your resurrection and strengthened us, restoring victory over the old curse" (book of Pentecost, Sunday of the Paralytic, Kathisma of Matins).

The great martyr George, who is honoured today, became a participant in the passion of the Cross of Christ and His resurrection because he was a zealot for the eternal kingdom, i.e. for the grace of incorruption.

The martyrdom by either blood or by consciousness of all friends of Christ, including the Great Martyr Saint George, serves as a strong and undeniable witness throughout the ages of the history of humankind. On one side, His resurrection gives an answer to the existential death of man. From another side, it determines the fullness and purpose of the life of the man who lives in Christ because man was created by God "according to His image and likeness" (Gen 1:26). On this point, the distinguished father of the Church Saint Gregory the Theologian says, "Christ becomes poor by receiving my flesh so that I become rich in his divinity. The complete becomes empty. He humbles himself of His glory so that I become full in Him. What richness of mercy is this! What is this kind of mystery which happens to me? I received the image and I did not preserve it; He receives my flesh so that he saves the image and makes the flesh eternal."

The Great Martyr Saint George, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, i.e. the Spirit of Christ, and looking toward heavenly realities, brought himself in front of the idolater persecutor, the Roman emperor Diocletian, and said courageously, according to the witness of his servant Pasicrates, "Be ashamed, all of you who foolishly deny the son of God and Creator of all. You who make into gods the filthy demons and idols which are empty of life and spirit and speech. If you are convinced by me and if you abandon darkness, come to the holy light, and abandon the false religion. Come to the truth, which is the knowledge of our

real God, the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom you will reach blessed glory, which is eternity. Your glory is vain like the grass that dries up. I am not quiet and I cannot tolerate when God is defamed. For me, the first and most honoured name is to be called Christian and a servant of Christ, through whom we pass this current life and land at the port of eternal life – the kingdom of Christ.

This confession of Saint George shows that he became the faithful friend of Christ until even martyrdom. He became an imitator of the passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave his soul for the life of the world. In addition to this, the confession of Saint George is a living witness of the real Light, which dissolves the darkness. For as Saint John the Evangelist says “In Him there was life, and this life was the light of men, and the light shines through darkness and the darkness cannot prevail over it” (John 1:4-5). The light of Christ shined over even those darkened by the sin and deceit of men, enlightening them. But there were men living in darkness who did not understand and did not embrace it. However, they could not destroy it and have victory over it. This happens exactly today in our time, in our Christian reality.

Today, my dear brothers and sisters, on this occasion of the memory of the Great Martyr Saint George, we are joyful. The Church of Holy Zion is glad, as is the pure Theotokos and Mother of God, in light of the unity of the one holy catholic and apostolic Orthodox Church in this gathering of the Eucharist and of communion of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world. “But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His son, cleanses us from all sin”

(1 John 1:7).

Let us beseech the Great Martyr of the love of Christ, Saint George, and let us say with the hymnographer, "You blessed martyr, you are indeed shined upon by the light of the holy trinity, as an undefeated martyr and as a defender of piety, a victor, crowned by God. You who are in heaven, save those who honour you and grant peace in the world and in our region, through your intercessions. Christ is Risen!"

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem