

THE FEAST OF ST NICHOLAS AT THE PATRIARCHATE (2016)

A. In the town of Beit Jala

On Monday, the 6th/19th of December 2016, the Patriarchate observed the memory of St Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, Lycia, at St Nicholas Church of the Rum Orthodox, Arabic-speaking Community of the town of Beit Jala, adjacent to Bethlehem.

St Nicholas had lived in the 4th c. AD. He was imprisoned by Diocletian and Maximinus, tortured and liberated when Constantine the Great, with the Edict of Milan in 312 AD, proclaimed that Christianity would be treated benevolently. He was one of the great Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council, in 324 AD, who fervently supported the doctrine of the *homoousion*, the same essence between the Son and the Father.

The divine Liturgy was led by H.B. Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, who had as concelebrants Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina and Methodios of Tabor, and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis; Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the Arabic-speaking priests of the Church, presbyters Sahuan, Paul Alame and Joseph Hondali, and Archdeacon Markos. The Parish Choir sang for a crowd of Orthodox. To the congregation, His Beatitude delivered a sermon in Greek.

“The canon of faith, the image of meekness, St Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, Lycia, gathered all of us here”, said the Patriarch, “in order to observe his sacred memory on a day that coincides with preparations of the celebration of Christ’s incarnation in Bethlehem”.

St Nicholas, the Patriarch added, is recognized as a teacher of moderation, in other words a pedagogue of the faithful in the salvation of their souls. This means that Christians must

excel in virtue, according to the Apostle Peter, who says: *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.* (2, Peter 1, 5-7).

St Nicholas, the most fervent protector of the Church of Christ, His Beatitude added, “invites us to celebrate the great mystery of the Nativity of Christ with spirituality and not in social, secular and cultural terms. Christmas, Patriarch Theophilos said, is not a cultural event but one that pertains to the fall of sin and the restoration of the salvation of the human kind.

After the divine Liturgy, His Beatitude, accompanied by the town’s Boy Scouts, visited the Community Office before joining lunch hosted by Archimandrite Narcissus and the Community.

B. In the Old City of Jerusalem

The memory of St Nicholas was also observed with Vespers and Divine Liturgy on the morning of the same day, at the homonymous Monastery in the Old City of Jerusalem, led by Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, who had as concelebrants Archimandrite Leontios and Hierodeacon Agapios.

On the conclusion of the liturgy, Archimandrite Aristovoulos distributed blessings among the pilgrims and hosted Primate to a festive reception.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/81NBR7sNMWY>

