

HIS H.B. INAUGURATES HALL OF THE H. MONASTERY OF ST. GEORGE IN AL KHADER

On Sunday, 16th/29th January 2017, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos led the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Monastery of St. George, named Beitjala, in the village Al Khader between Bethlehem and Hebron.

This Holy Monastery has been in the centre of the village with the name Al Khader, since the middle ages, and is completely inhabited by Muslims who respect the Monastery and its surrounding land, which has not been obtained by any Christian.

In this Holy Monastery, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos led the D. Liturgy on the morning of the above mentioned day, with concelebrants the M. Rev. Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina and Theophylactos of Jordan, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks with preceding the Reverend Archimandrite Ignatios, Hegoumen of the H.Monastery of the Shepherds, the Hegoumen of the H. Monastery of St. George in Al Khader Archimandrite Ananias, Archimandrite Mattheos, Arab-speaking Presbyters, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Anastasios, and many praying faithful Orthodox, who formed a choir singing in Arabic, from the neighbouring towns, that is, Bethlehem and Beit Jala.

His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos preached the Divine Word to this congregation as follows:

“ It was not flesh and blood that inspired thee Peter, but God the Father, to theologize Christ, Son of the Living God, that is why He proclaimed thee blessed, and called thee Peter as a steadfast stone and foundation of the Church” the hymn writer of the Church exclaims.

Beloved Brothers in Christ,

Noble Christians,

Today our Holy Church celebrates the memory of the glorious Saint Apostle Peter, whom "... when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews" (Acts 12:4-7,11) as referenced by St. Luke the Evangelist.

Apostle Peter is distinguished among the Apostles because at Christ's question to his disciples "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter answered saying "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Mat. 16:15-17).

Commenting on these words of the Lord, St. Chrysostom says that "he confessed Him to be the genuine Son", meaning, "by nature and especially he understood Him to be the Son of God", while those before him simply "confessed Him Son of God, having understood Him by virtue, just like the rest of the Saints" Zigavinos says. That is why the hymn writer exclaims: "It was not flesh and blood that inspired thee Peter, but God the Father, to theologize Christ, Son of the Living God".

Moreover, in the Lord's words: "And I say unto thee, That thou

art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mat. 16:18), the reputable Church Fathers say: "we say just as Peter did. You are the Christ, Son of the Living God, we shall become Peter if God the Logos would say unto us, Thou art Peter. Every single imitator of Christ is a rock... and upon each and every one of these rocks, every word of the Church is founded together with a manner of living according to it. In addition, the God-founded Church is in each of the perfected ones (the deified) who sum up the total of those who complete the blessing of words, actions and meanings."

In other words my beloved ones, Apostle Peter is called first of the Apostles, because he was the first of them who confessed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. This means that Peter was distinguished as far as the confession of faith is concerned, and not according to the gift of the Holy Spirit, of which gift all of the Apostles were filled on the day of Pentecost, and by the Holy Spirit "they were filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). This is precisely the meaning of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, that Christ is the head of the Church, meaning of His body, as St. Paul preaches "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:17-18).

These words of St. Paul become comprehensive to each one of us, only when we actively and regularly participate in the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church, and especially the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, which is the steadfast foundation of the visible to the world structure of the Church, meaning the visible organization of the Church.

As such an ordinance, the Church , meaning divine and human, visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly, is the space and

place, or phrased better, the house, where the salvation of man takes place, as our Lord Jesus Christ himself said when he entered the house of the Publican and wealthy Zacchaeus in Jericho. "And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:8-10).

In other words, my dear ones, whoever wants to see who Jesus is (Luke 19:3), he climbs down the tree of sin, just like Zacchaeus of today's Gospel citation, and welcomes Christ, the Son of God in the house of his soul. "For the Son of man is come to seek and save that which is lost" (Luke 19:10). The wealthy Publican Zacchaeus is propounded by the Evangelists as an example to imitate. And this is because Zacchaeus realized the priceless of his soul and for this he wanted to see Jesus. In fact, in Jesus Christ Zacchaeus came to know both the path of salvation and the immortality of the soul. This path of salvation is according to Apostle Peter "the way of truth" (2 Peter 2:2), meaning Christ who said: "I am the way" (John 14:6), "and whither I go ye know, and the way ye know" (John 14:4), "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

The Holy Church of Jerusalem shows this very way to salvation to all who seek it, through the preserved and to this day actively serviced Holy Shrines, monasteries and Churches, as also witnessed by this Holy Shrine, meaning the Holy Monastery of St. George the Triumphant in the Palestinian town of Al Khader, that is, of St. George.

Let us thank our Lord God and beseech the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, to intercede together with St. George for our souls and for peace and righteousness in our oppressed

region of the Middle East. Amen.

And in Arabic, in the link:
<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2017/01/29/27479#more-27479>

After the Divine Liturgy His Beatitude inaugurated the renovated Hall of the Monastery which will be used for the needs of the congregation, to host the Sunday school and other events.

On this occasion, His Beatitude addressed the congregation as follows:

“This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men” (Titus 3:8).

Beloved Brothers,

We rejoice in our Lord Jesus Christ, because we were found worthy by His grace and the intercession of St. George the Great Martyr, that we might with you be refreshed (Romans 15:32). The Sunday Divine Eucharistic Gathering, meaning the Divine Liturgy, is a witness of the mission of the Greek Orthodox (Rum Orthodox) Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The mission of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the preaching of the Gospel of love in Christ, peace and philanthropy, towards every man, without any national, religious or cultural discrimination.

This is exactly what St. Paul teaches addressing the heads of the Churches, “that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works” (Titus 3:8) and “That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:6).

The renovation of this Hall for the spiritual and communal service of the Church in general and the H. Monastery of St. George in particular, is a good and pious work. "For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men" St. Paul says (Romans 14:18).

For this reason, St. Paul adds, let us pursue every single thing contributing to peace and to the spiritual benefit, progress and "things wherewith one may edify another" (Romans 14:19).

We consider it appropriate and a duty of ours to thank all who contributed for the completion of this work, especially though those who offered financial and material donations.

We also express our thanks to the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery Reverend Archimandrite Ananias, who preceded in the materialization of this initiative, taking into consideration the benefit of this shrine, our noble congregation as well as the residents of the Al Khader village.

Finally, we would like once again to repeat the mission of the Patriarchate, which aims for the preservation and the service of the Holy Shrines on the one hand, and the concern of the benefit of its Christian congregation on the other.

May our Lord God, by the prayers of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, together with the intercession of St. George the Great Martyr, bless and establish this good work. Amen.

For the Arabic please follow the link:
<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2017/01/29/27481>

At the end of this ceremony, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Ananias offered a reception and a meal.

From Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/rlme7RlWK-A>

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