

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE D. LITURGY AT THE VILLAGE OF THE 10 LEPERS

On Friday 28th January / 10th February 2017, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos led the Festal Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of St. George, located in the village of the 10 Lepers, north of Neapolis at the Samaria region.

This Holy Church is built inside a cave, where the lepers who were healed by the Lord lived, and of whom one returned to thank the Lord (Luke 17: 12-19).

Upon arrival at the village, His Beatitude was warmly received by the Scouts, who escorted Him at the Holy Church of the Shrine of St. George.

Therein, He was received by the Priests who were dressed in their liturgical vestments and the caretaker of the Monastery, Hagiotaphite Monk Vissarion. Having put on His cloak, H.B. led Matins followed by the Divine Liturgy, with concelebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Archimandrite Stephen Legate of the Holy Sepulchre in Moscow, Archimandrite Ignatios Hegoumen of the Shrine of the Shepherds, Archimandrite Chrysostom Hegoumen of the Shrine of Cana, Archimandrite Ioustinos Hegoumen of the Shrine of Jacob's Well, Archimandrite Leontios Hegoumen at Rafidia, Fr. Georgios Tzifna, Fr. Nasser, Fr. Andrew, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Anastasios, at the singing of Archimandrite Leontios in Greek and Arabic on the right, and members of the parish on the left, and the praying members of

the parish of this village.

To this small congregation His Beatitude gave the following Sermon:

“And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us”, Luke the Evangelist mentions (Luke 17: 12-19).

Beloved Brothers in Christ,

Noble Christians and beloved children,

God’s infinite mercy gathered us all in this holy hagiographic place and shrine of the healing and cleansing of the ten leper men by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in order to thank and glorify His Holy Name in celebration and worship through the Divine Liturgy. In addition, in order to honour the great and God-anointed King and Queen and equal to the Apostles, Constantine and Helen, who highlighted this shrine by erecting a magnificent Church and Holy Monastery, which have been preserved throughout the centuries by the venerable Patriarchate Rum Orthodox, and the Order of the Monks of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood.

The enduring presence of a small congregation, meaning the Christian community, here, is an irrefutable witness of the mission of the Church of Jerusalem, that is the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which is no other than the evangelizing of the infinite mercy and philanthropy of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to St. Luke the Evangelist, Jesus Christ was on his way to Jerusalem through Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a certain town – the one named Bourkin – ten leper men met him, who stood afar off and with loud voices they said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us (Luke 17:11-13).

Leprosy and its symptoms are described in the Old Testament in the book of Leviticus (13:1, 14:57). The sufferers of this illness were considered unclean by the Mosaic Law because they were highly contagious, that is why they were placed in quarantine by the rest of the people. This is confirmed by the fact that the ten lepers "stood afar off, and they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us". This also shows that just as the other people abhorred the lepers for their impurity, Jesus also would abhor them. But it is exactly at this point where the great mercy and the infinite philanthropy of our God and Saviour Jesus are revealed, "Who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4), according to St. Paul. And again according to St. Paul, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (Eph. 2:4-5).

The condition of the ten lepers, my beloved, before and after their healing by Christ shows two things: On the one hand the emptiness of the man who lives away from God and without faith. On the other hand, the fullness of the man in God, who approaches in the faith of our God and Saviour, Christ. And while emptiness bears sorrow and despair, meaning hopelessness, the state of fullness, on the contrary, bears gladness and gleefulness, meaning, hope, in the hearts of the people.

The illness of leprosy in this situation means the state of sin and its results. And we say this because sin reveals itself as an illness in both soul and body. This very psychosomatic illness is promoted by our contemporary society through "globalization". And "Globalization" is the term that aims to the isolation and alienation of man from the source of life, light and salvation, our Lord and God the Saviour Jesus Christ, as well as His Holy Church, which "Christ loved...and gave himself for it...That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to

himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27).

The great therefore mystery of the Church becomes comprehensive through faith. "For we walk by faith, not by sight", the wise St. Paul proclaims (2 Cor. 5:7). This means that we spend our present life by faith, without seeing face to face our Lord Jesus Christ as the ten lepers saw him, especially as "the stranger who returned to give glory to God" (Luke 17:18). "And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole" (Luke 17:19). Let us note that the faith of this stranger, meaning the Samaritan leper, is inseparable to his gratitude and thanksgiving to Christ for the healing that he received by Him.

In other words, the leper who gratefully thanked Christ sustained the bond with his benefactor, while the remaining nine lepers, due to their ingratitude and thanklessness, broke their bond with Christ. Because of this, St. Paul and his associates returned to the towns where he had preached the gospel of Christ, in order to support the faith of his disciples, according to St. Luke who says: "And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:21-22).

Precisely this, my dear brothers, is done by the Holy, for us Orthodox, Church, through the liturgical and worshipping cycle of the readings of the Scriptures in general, and the Gospel in particular. According to them, for example, we are going through the week of the Publican and the Pharisee, that is, the first week of the liturgical book of the contrite Triodion, which prepares us for the bright and salvific feast of Easter.

Today's festal memory of the healing of the ten lepers calls us through the words of St. Paul to examine ourselves, in order to know, that if we keep our faith alive, Christ is in our midst. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates" (2 Cor. 13:5).

Let us implore Theotokos the Mother of our God, the Most Blessed and Ever-Virgin Mary, so that together with Saints Ephraim the Syrian and Palladios of Helenoupolis, entreat our Lord and God the Father, to have mercy on our souls, and grant peace to the world and our tested region. Amen. May you have a good preparation for the scope of the Great Lent."

For the Sermon in Arabic please follow the link:
<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2017/02/10/27714>

After the Divine Liturgy the caretaker of the Monastery Monk Vissarion offered a meal to the Patriarchal Entourage and all the congregation.

From Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/yk-BBQvWFIE>

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