

THE FEAST OF THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, 20th February/5th March 2017, the Feast of Orthodoxy was celebrated by the Patriarchate. The Feast is about the setting up of the holy icons in the Churches of the Byzantine Empire after the more than a century harsh persecution by the iconoclasts, who had denied the veneration of icons under the influence of other religions.

The church has adopted the holy icons as a confirmation of the earthly visible incarnate presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Church Fathers confessed this doctrine especially during the 7th Ecumenical Synod, supporting that the denial of the holy icons means the denial of the earthly incarnate presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. The victory of the holy icons, being perceived as a victory of Orthodoxy, was celebrated by the Patriarchate according to the rules of worship of the Typikon.

1. In the evening

The 9th Hour was read at the monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and bells tolling, the descend to the Most Holy Church of the Resurrection took place.

Therein, His Beatitude, the Archbishops and Hagiotaphite Hieromonks were received at the Deposition Shrine, while the choir singers were chanting the troparion "We venerate you most pure image Good One".

After entering the Catholicon, there was the veneration of the Fathers of the Synod and the Archbishops at Golgotha, and bells tolling, the deacons followed the incense procedure around the Most Holy Shrines.

Following the incense procedure, Great Vespers began, with the

Great Entrance and the Blessing of the bread, with the singing of the Choir Leader of the Most Holy Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos on the right, and Mr. George Alvanos on the left, and the praying noble congregation of monks, nuns, and laity, locals and pilgrims. At the end of Vespers all headed to the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood quarters.

2. On the Day of the Feast

The descend of the Patriarchal Entourage at the Most Holy Church of the Resurrection was at 7:00 a.m. on Sunday morning.

Upon entering, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, who led the celebration, venerated the Holy Deposition and the Holy Sepulchre and upon entering the Catholicon, the Priests prayed to receive the blessing by His Beatitude following His Beatitude's prayer to receive the blessing, and after the Episcopal osculation in the Holy Altar they all returned to the Catholicon to start the Divine Liturgy. Concelebrants with His Beatitude who led the Service, were: the Patriarchal Commissioner Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Most Reverend Archbishops, Theophanis of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina and Geronda Secretary-General, Theodosios of Sebastia, Demetrios of Lydda and Secretary of the Holy Synod, Makarios of Qatar, and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis; Hieromonks, first among whom was Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, and Hierodeacons Mark, Anastasios and Agapios. Singing was the Choir Leader of the Most Holy Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos on the right, and Mr. George Alvanos on the left, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, and the praying noble congregation of monks, nuns, and pilgrims from Greece, Russia and other Orthodox countries.

Following the dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, there was the procession of the Holy Icons three times around the Holy

Edicule and then around the Shrines. At the end of the procession, there was the reading of the Synodico of Orthodoxy opposite the Holy Edicule, which proclaims "anathema" to the disclaimers of the Holy Icons and all heretics, and "everlasting remembrance" to the defenders of the Holy Icons, the Holy Patriarchs Photios, Ignatios, Tarassios, the noble Emperor Mihail and Empress Theodora and all those who venerate these items of worship.

After all the above, the Patriarchal Entourage headed to the Patriarchate where His Beatitude gave the following address:

"Though infinite in your Divine nature, Master, You condescended to be Incarnate in these last days, and became finite, for by putting on the body you put on also its natures. Therefore we present the likeness of your image, and venerate it in honour of its prototype, ascending towards your love where we partake of the grace of healing, following the divine traditions of the Apostles" the hymn writer of the church exclaims.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece,

Reverend holy Fathers and Brothers,

Noble Christians and pilgrims,

The grace of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ has deemed us worthy to celebrate the victory of Orthodoxy, meaning the veneration and the setting up of the holy and sacred icons, by the memorable Emperor of Constantinople Mihail and his mother Theodora, at the time of the Patriarch of Jerusalem and Confessor, Saint Methodios, .

This historic and indeed great fact in the life of the visible to the world institution of the Church, is not related to national ceremonies of our Christian faith but to the safe conduct of the doctrine of the Incarnation of God the Logos, our Lord Jesus Christ. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt

among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14), St. John the Evangelist says.

Moreover, the Church of Christ has highlighted a multitude of Saint Martyrs, who became conformable to the passion of Crucifixion of Christ, denouncing and fighting against the religion of the idols as well as the worshiping of creation as the hymn writer of the church says: "For having firmly refused to worship creation apart from you, Master and Creator, they evangelically renounced the world, imitating Your passion which they had prophesied".

The commemorated feast on today's First Sunday of the Great Lent, regarding the triumph of the vigorous Orthodox Faith on the veneration of the icons and the liturgical items in general, should not be misinterpreted as an act of intolerance, but on the contrary, as the fight in favour of the living truth of Christ "I am the truth" (John 14:6) says the Lord, against the "profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6:20) which stem from the father of lies of this era. "The triumphant assembly and Church of the Lord rejoices – says the hymn writer – beholding the people of God who cry aloud with one accord: Blessed are Thou, Lord, in the temple of Thy glory!" Amen. Many happy returns and have a blessed Great Lent."

The Feast concluded with the Episcopal osculation and the kissing of His Beatitude's hand.

The above mentioned Services were broadcast live by the Radio Station of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and in video form on youtube and facebook.

From Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/TjdG0wkiuaI>

<http://youtu.be/UAYrfysvMQk>

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