

SERMON OF HIS BEATITUDE AT THE METOCHION OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN JERUSALEM ON THE FEAST OF THE HOLY AND GLORIOUS GREAT MARTYR GEORGE THE TROPHY-BEARER

HIS BEATITUDE THEOPHILOS III

PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

Sunday 7 May 2017

Dear Father Theophilos,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers and Monastics,

Beloved Pilgrims and Faithful,

Christ is risen!

In this joyful Paschal season, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy and Glorious Great Martyr, Saint George, who was “a companion of the resurrection” of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ’s resurrection from the dead has inaugurated new life, and in this new life Saint George participated and showed to others because he was illuminated by the uncreated Light of the resurrection.

And we sing on his feast:

*Since thou art limpidly illuminated
with the whole light of the Trinity, O all-blessed George,
as an invincible Martyr, as a champion of piety,
as a divinely crowned victor,
save by thine intercessions,
O Heaven-dweller, them that honour thee.*

(Matins, Second Canon)

The resurrection of Christ is the event that makes clear the fundamental truth of the Christian faith. Holy Pascha, the Feast of Feasts for the Orthodox Christians, is the crown of the year and the crown of creation. As Saint Gregory Palamas says, in a typical, but rich play on words, the *anastasis* – that is the *resurrection* – means *anaplasia* – which is remaking – as well as *anakenisis* – which means *renewal*. And it also means *anazoosis* – which is bestowal of new life. All these concepts are deeply related to the resurrection.

Saint Gregory tells us further that “the resurrection of the Lord is the regeneration of human nature. It is the re-birth and re-creation of the first Adam, whom sin led to death, and who because of death, again was made to retrace his steps on earth from which he was made. The resurrection is the return to immortal life” (*Sermon on Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing women*).

And our Lord Jesus Christ says this in the Gospel of Saint John, when he assures us “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, even though he die, will live, and he who lives and believes in me will never die*” (*John 11:25-26*).

The Saints are those whose life is the confirmation of the

resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. They lead us in our return to immortal life. The Saints of the Church in general, and the martyrs of the Gospel *kerygma* (preaching) in particular, are those who imitated the life of Christ in their lives, and in this way they have attained immortality and incorruption. They are more than our inspiration; they are the confirmation for us of our won journey to *theosis* – of our own spiritual pilgrimage to union with God. That which the Saints have attained, we also can attain.

Of this sharing in the unapproachable glory of God, Saint George shows us the way. As we sing on his feast:

*Since thou hast now laid hold on that blessed life
that is his in Christ, for which thou foughtest
even unto blood, O glorious George,
ask that they who praise thee with faith
may be saved from every adversity, O prizewinner.*

(Matins, Second Canon)

So the Saints build up the Body of Christ, the Church, by being the bridge between the Church militant here on earth, and the Church triumphant in heaven.

As we gather on this joyful feast, we show our common witness that we, as Orthodox Sister Churches bear to the world. Christ is the head of the Church, Christ who has been raised from the dead, and who is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Cor. 15:20), and we are united in this conviction. The Spirit-filled Fathers and Councils of the Church have established us in our common life, and given us a framework for our witness and mission that ensures the right relationship of all in the Body of Christ. As we worship today in communion with the Mother Church of Jerusalem, we give thanks to Almighty God for this gift of communion within the

One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

May our risen Lord, who made His faithful servant Saint George a companion of his resurrection, bring us also with all the saints into the fullness of glory and eternal life. And may God bless the faithful children of the Orthodox Church of Romania, and all the peoples of our beloved Holy Land in this joyful Paschal season.

Christ is risen!

Amen.