

THE FEAST OF THE APPEARANCE OF THE SIGN OF THE PRECIOUS CROSS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, 7th/20th May 2017, the Feast of the Appearance of the Sign of the Precious Cross in the Heavens was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

At this Feast, the Church, and especially in Jerusalem, celebrates the fact that at the time of Cyril the Katechist Archbishop of Jerusalem in 351 A.D., on Pentecost day around the ninth hour of the morning, the Precious Cross appeared brighter than the sun rays, and it was visible from the Horrendous Golgotha to the Mount of Olives; the event caused the surprise, marvel and awe of many people who came out in the streets and gazed at the sight in heaven for a long time, as described by the eye witness of the event, Cyril Archbishop of Jerusalem, in his Letter to Emperor Constantius, Son of Saint Constantine the Great.

In commemoration of this wondrous event, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the Horrendous Golgotha, led by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, with concelebrants Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, first among whom was Archimandrite Ieronymos, and Hierodeacons, at the singing of the Choir Leader of the Most Holy Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the students of the Patriarchal School of Zion, with the participation of a crowd of pilgrims mainly from Greece and other Orthodox countries as well.

The Divine Liturgy in the Horrendous Golgotha was followed by a thrice litany around the Holy Sepulchre and then the officiating Metropolitan read the afore mentioned Letter in Greek.

After the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy the Episcopal

Entourage and many of the pilgrims went to the Patriarchate and paid their respect to His Beatitude at the Reception Hall.

Therein, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias gave the following address:

"Your Beatitude, Father and Master,

Twenty centuries ago the cross was a means of dishonest punishment and atrocious death. The Romans condemned the worst criminals to crucifixion.

Today the Cross dominates the lives of faithful Christians in our Church life as a whole, as a means of sacrifice, salvation, joy, sanctification and grace. As St. Chrysostom writes, "this cursed and abhorrent symbol of the worst punishment has now become desirable and adorable". You see it everywhere. "At the Holy Altar, at the ordination of Priests, at the Divine Liturgy, at homes. So much coveted to all has this wondrous gift, this unspeakable grace, become".

The Lord Himself revealed in various occasions with supernatural events and wondrous revelations, in a vociferous manner, that the sign of the cross is His symbol and the invincible trophy of the faithful.

- 1. The known ecclesiastic historian Eusevios of Caesarea (340), contemporary of St. Constantine the Great, describes vigorously and undeniably the event of the appearance of the luminous Cross to Constantine the Great with the sign "conquer by this" an appearance made at noon, in the day light, in front of all the men of his army.*
- 2. Despite the above mentioned supernatural appearance of the sign of the Cross, there was another one, again in front of numerous eye witnesses, when Constantius the Son of Constantine the Great was Emperor, and St. Cyril was the Archbishop of Jerusalem. The miracle is narrated by St. Cyril himself to the Emperor with a Letter of*

his, where he mentions that on that day (7 May 346 A.D., at the time of Pentecost), around the third hour (9 a.m.), the sign of the Cross appeared in the sky, huge, luminous, spreading from Holy Golgotha to the Mount of Olives. It was not just one or two people that saw this, but all the citizens of Jerusalem. And it did not appear for one instant only, but for hours on end it was floating in Heaven. And it was so bright, that it surpassed the sun rays in brightness, that is why they were able to see it at noon, in the day light. The people of the city that saw this miracle ran to the Church of the Resurrection. All made haste to glorify our Lord Jesus Christ in one voice, having now been taught by the events themselves that the noblest doctrine of the Christians is not based on human wisdom, which convinces with words and logic, but to the proofs, given by the spiritual gifts and the miraculous powers. And the doctrine is not being preached only by people, but is also witnessed by God Himself, from Heaven.

If 14th September is the Feast of the Elevation of the Sacred and Life-giving Cross, a feast when human hands, of Patriarchs and Kings, elevated the Sacred Cross, projecting It as the symbol of the Christian faith and "the key hole to Paradise", because It is our reference point to Him who shed His All-holy Blood on It, the 7th May is another feast of His Elevation, not by human hands this time, but by the "hands" of God Himself. Because He wanted, when the Christian faith had already been accepted and spread, to reveal the Cross in the Heavens, as an extension, so to speak, of His revelation at the reign of Constantine the Great with the known "conquer by it". The hymnography of our Church propounds this event and spreads it around all its parameters: "The godly ranks of the faithful are exultant, for today a heavenly Cross is seen throughout the world. Gleaming with light unapproachable, the heaven shineth; bright is the air, fair the face of all the earth; singing godly songs , the Church of Christ doth

venerate and honour that which protecteth her with strength from Heaven, the most divine and exceeding wondrous Cross”(stichiron of Vespers).

The venerable Jerusalem Patriarchate, following the order and works of the Orthodox Church, honours the feasts among which is today’s feast of “the appearance of the sign of the Precious Cross in Heaven”, which has influenced Orthodoxy around the world, despite the fact that it is a local feast.

Pray, Your Beatitude, that our venerable Brotherhood may continue this tradition to the ages to come.”

The address was followed by the festal reception and the brotherly Hagiotaphite osculation. Finally, His Beatitude offered the pilgrims Easter blessings from Jerusalem.

From Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/rB9GMDaSuRY>

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