

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL IN CAPERNAUM (2017)

On Wednesday, 29th June/12th July 2017, the memory of the Holy glorious and leaders of the Apostles, Peter and Paul was celebrated by the Patriarchate at their Holy Monastery at the North-west shore of the Sea of Tiberias.

This Monastery holds a splendid Church which was built by the memorable Patriarch of Jerusalem Damianos in 1931. From 1967 onward, the Church and its surrounding area were under the care of the memorable Hagiotaphite Metropolitan Germanos of Petra, who highlighted the area with archaeological excavations, with the help of the memorable Hagiotaphite Hegoumen and Hieromonk Philipos, and after him, the memorable Monk Thadeos, the memorable Nun Eudocia from Australia and the memorable Nun Eulogia.

For the last 20 years, the Hagiotaphite Monk Eirinarchos has been taking care of the Monastery with Byzantine murals on the Church walls and the cultivation of the surrounding area.

At the Holy Church of this Monastery, the Divine Liturgy was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Geronda Secretary-General, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, at the singing of Archimandrite Aristovoulos and his choir in Greek, Arabic, Russian and Romanian.

His Beatitude preached the Divine Word to the Congregation as follows:

“The most solemn festival of the Apostles is come to the

Church of Christ, bringing us salvation. Therefore let us mystically clap our hands and cry out to them: Rejoice, ye luminaries for those in darkness; ye are rays of the Sun. Rejoice Peter and Paul, ye indestructible foundations of the divine doctrines, ye friends of Christ, ye precious vessels. Be ye present invisibly in our midst and deem us worthy of immaterial gifts, as we acclaim your feast with songs” the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble pilgrims,

The most venerable annual memory of the leaders of the Apostles Peter and Paul has gathered us all in this Holy place of the Hagiographic town of Capernaum, in order to rend glory and thanksgiving to our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who has philanthropically benefited the race of humans through His mighty and bright luminaries, who illumined all Universe by the word of the Gospel of love and peace.

“Who or what can be mightier than Peter? Who or what can be equal to Paul? Both of whom did conquer all creation in heaven and earth by their word and deeds; they were bound in the body of clay but were highlighted more benign than the angels. What therefore can we say to the teachers of the heavenly and earthly creation? I cannot find proper words to praise those who have praised our race, who have perambulated all earth and sea, and eradicated the roots of our sins, and have sown the seeds of reverence into the hearts of the disobedient men” St. Chrysostom says.

Indeed, my dear ones, “we cannot find proper words to praise those who have praised our human race”. And this is so, because Peter confessed that Christ is the Son of the Living God (Mat. 16:16), while Paul “was caught up in paradise and heard unspeakable words which is not lawful of a man to utter” (2 Cor. 12:4).

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself told Peter: "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also 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.

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 16:17-19). As for Paul, Christ said "he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16).

In other words, these Holy Apostles were proclaimed pillars of the Church and mighty luminaries of the Universe, namely its teachers, or as St. Chrysostom says, "the vessels of the Holy Spirit, the interpreters of the Holy Trinity, the lecturers of the Providence of the Divine Word".

And Saints Peter and Paul were proclaimed "lecturers of the Providence of the Divine Word" because they were the ones who showed us "what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" (Eph. 3:18) of Christ's condescension of mercy. Moreover, they are recognized as the spiritual architects of the Church life on earth, namely of the conformation/configuration of its management and hierarchical Spirit. Let us hear Paul saying: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12). And in another verse: "But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you" (2 Cor. 10:13). [We will not boast for toils in places outside our jurisdiction, but we will boast for things within our jurisdiction, which God has appointed to us as the district of our mission]. Let us also hear Peter saying: "The

elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ...Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:1-3).

The leaders of the Apostles Peter and Paul are especially honoured by the Holy Church of Christ, not by assuming that they surpass the other Apostles of the Gospel in the power and action of the Holy Spirit, but rather because they were highlighted by the diversity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as wise Paul and St. Peter preach: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal" (1 Cor. 12:4-7) according to Paul. And "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10) according to Peter.

These mighty men of our faith in Christ, namely Peter the rock of the faith (Mat. 16:18) and Paul the chosen vessel (Acts 9:15) according to the proclamation and witness of the Lord, are we called to imitate towards their sacred zeal and outmost love for Christ. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" – Paul says – "and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Hence, together with the hymn writer and the intercessions of the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary let us say: "Rejoice Peter and Paul, ye indestructible foundations of the divine doctrines, ye friends of Christ, ye precious vessels.

Be ye present invisibly in our midst, and deem us worthy of immaterial gifts, as we acclaim your feast with songs". Amen."

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a reception at the Hegoumeneion and then a fish meal at the outdoor maritime area.

From Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/buyAlmwtYTs>

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