

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY IN THE ARAB-SPEAKING TOWN RENE

On Sunday 25th September/8th October 2017, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of the Greek-Orthodox Arab-speaking Community of Rene.

The town Rene is nearby Nazareth, and it there has always been a Greek-Orthodox Arab-speaking Community there, numbering approximately one thousand two hundred members.

Co-celebrants with His Beatitude at this Divine Liturgy were the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos, the former Master of Ceremonies Archimandrite Porfyrios, the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Tabor Archimandrite Hilarion, the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Tiberias Archimandrite Dionysios, the brother of the Metropolitan of Nazareth Fr. Telemachos, the Head of this parish Presbyter Fr. Simeon, Presbyter Fr. Lazarus and Deacon Anastasios. The choir leader of the All-holy Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos sang in Greek, Arabic and Russian with the choir he has been teaching in Nazareth and a great crowd of Orthodox people participated in reverence.

His Beatitude preached the divine word to this people as follows:

“And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound

in every good work. As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever" (2 Cor. 9:8-9), the wise Apostle Paul preaches.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians

We rend glory and thanksgiving to the Holy Trinitarian God, Who has directed us in the historic city of yours, in order to become communicants of the Holy Table of the divine body and blood of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, in this Eucharistic gathering in the Holy Church of St. George the Great Martyr.

In the second Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul urges the Christian brothers to be willing to offer generously, namely to be charitable, in order to have the grace of God on the one hand, and on the other, to work exceedingly in every good work. "And God is able to bless you abundantly" (2 Cor. 9:8), "His righteousness endures forever" (2 Cor. 9:9).

And like that, the righteousness of God endures forever, because we who bear the name of Christ have put on Christ during the Holy baptism. That is, we have been surrounded with the light of Christ as a garment. "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12) says the Lord.

According to St. Chrysostom, "St. Paul refers to the virtue of good works and charity when he talks about righteousness here; He named charity as righteousness here. And it is right for him to do so, as [charity] burns sins like fire." It is however noteworthy, that the righteousness we are called to apply in our earthly life is the life in Christ, namely to keep the commandments of the Gospel of Christ, as St. Paul teaches by saying: "Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the

readiness that comes from the gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:14-15). And in more detail; Stand upright in the battle, having buckled around your waist with truth as another belt, so that the enlightenment of the truth may give you spiritual strength and agility. And be dressed with righteousness as another breastplate, so that you may be unharmed by every arrow of unrighteousness and you won't be enthralled by any work of injustice against your neighbour. And as new shoes, put on your feet the willingness to act, which is given to the soul by the keeping of the Gospel which gives peace.

And according to Prophet David, God's mercy and righteousness remain to all generations of those who keep His law and remember His commandments, so that they live according to them. "But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children— with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts" (Psalm 103:17-18).

Those whom our Holy Church honours and respects as its saints, are nothing else but "human beings, even as we are" (James 5:17), who guarded and kept the law and the commandments of the Gospel. Behold why our Church projects its Saints throughout the centuries as prototypes and examples to imitate.

The Saints of the Church are our spiritual luminaries, who guide us through the ocean of adversities and the confusion of this century. While the Church the mystical body of Christ, is the safe harbour of the salvation of our souls. "What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?" (Mat. 16:26) says the Lord.

Moreover, the Apostles were called exactly to this by Christ, namely to the preaching of the salvation of the people's souls, as it is clearly witnessed by today's Gospel narrative according to St. Luke: "Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be

afraid; from now on you will fish for people" (Luke 5:10). [Do not be afraid, from now on that I call you to become my apostle, you will continue to fish, not fish but living people instead, whom you will guide to the salvation of their souls by your preaching]. This means that the mission of the Church is the transfiguration of man and the world into Christ, Who has conquered the death of corruption and sin by His Cross and Resurrection. "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). While St. Paul does not hide his pain and suffering for the rebirth of his spiritual children until Christ's character is formed in them: "My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you" he writes to the Galatians 4:19.

On the contrary, those who claim that the Church should conform to the will of the world and thus of man, are no others than those for whom St. Paul prophesizes: "But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people" (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

Today's celebrated St. Euphrosyne, an exemplar of the transfiguration in Christ, is projected to us my dear brothers, who having denounced the things of the world is rejoicing with the saints in heaven and intercedes for us to the pioneer and perfecter of our faith our Lord Jesus Christ, Who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2). To Whom belongs all glory honour and

worship unto the ages. Amen. Many happy returns."

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a reception at the Community's reception hall, at the presence of Mr. Caesar Martzie, representative of the Ministry of Religion of Israel. There were also thanking addresses to His Beatitude for His support to the Community and the purchase of land property for the Community followed by His Beatitude's address as sited below:

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). [Seek peace with all men; seek the sanctification and purity of heart from every passion; because without sanctification no one will see the Lord], St. Paul preaches.

Your Excellency Mr. President of the Church Council,

Honourable members of the Church Committee,

Honourable Ladies and Gentlemen,

Reverend Fathers and Holy Brothers

Our meeting today in the town Rene of Sebastia County, where Christians and Muslims live in peace and harmony, is an event of joy and moral satisfaction. And this is so, because the Lord's commandment is kept here; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke 10:27), and according to St. Paul, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour" (Romans 13:10).

The unceasing and historical presence of the primary institution of the Church through the centuries, which has shed its light to the world on the day of Holy Pentecost, in this very place of the crucified blood and the resurrection of its founder our Lord Jesus Christ, has made the Church of Jerusalem, namely the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate with its

order of monks of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, the undeniable guarantor of the safe-keeping of the All-holy Shrines on the one hand, and on the other, the Christian presence and witness in both the Holy Land and in the outer Middle East district.

Needless to say, within its sacred mission of preaching the principles and values of the Gospel, the Greek-Orthodox Jerusalem Patriarchate has cultivated mutual respect and harmonious co-existence among the three Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Moreover, the good cooperation between the Church vestrymen of your community and our Patriarchate has brought forth the fruits of reorganization to both your community and the young people. We praise and bless this good effort of your vestrymen and that of the fighter and energetic worker of Christ's vineyard, namely the Reverend for you and us Priest and keeper Fr. Sama'an.

Finally, we would like to assure you, my dear brothers and sisters and respected members of your community, that we don't stop our care for you. Therefore, along with the wise Apostle we say: "being reviled, we bless; Being defamed, we intreat" (1 Cor. 4:12,13) and we pray our God and Saviour Jesus Christ so that the fruit of His Spirit, namely love, joy, peace, faith, gentleness and longsuffering (Gal. 5:22) fills the hearts of all of you, by the intercessions of the Most-holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and the prayers of St. George the Great Martyr and St. Euphrosyne. Amen."

From Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/NCLBzc0AHJs>

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