

THE FEAST OF ST. JAMES THE BROTHER OF GOD AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday 23rd October/5th November 2017, the Patriarchate celebrated the memory of the glorious St. James the Brother of God and first Hierarch of Jerusalem at his Holy Church, located between the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and the Church of the Resurrection, being the Cathedral of the Greek-Orthodox Arab-speaking Community of the Patriarchate in Jerusalem.

In this Holy Church Vespers in the evening was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Patriarchal Commissioner Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios and Archdeacon Mark. In the choir, the choir leader of the Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos sang on the right in Greek and the Arab-speaking choir of St. James sang on the left, with the participation in prayer of members of the Arab-speaking Community in Jerusalem, monks, nuns and noble pilgrims.

In the morning of the feast, the Divine Liturgy was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the the Patriarchal Commissioner Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios and Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Anastasios, and again the choir leader of the Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the left choir singer Mr. George Alvanos and the students of the Patriarchal

School of Zion sang on the right in Greek, and the Arab-speaking choir of St. James under Mr. Rimon Kamar on the left. Present was the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, as well as a noble contrite Congregation of many noble pilgrims from Greece, Cyprus, Russia, Romania.

His Beatitude preached the divine word to this noble congregation as follows:

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into diverse temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:1-4). Brethren, consider your trials and sorrows a cause of perfect joy. And you will rejoice in these sorrows and temptations, when you have the knowledge that the trial of your faith through sorrows creates the stable patience as a safe and complete result, and may this patience be firm and steadfast, so that it will produce the full fruit of your perfection, so that you are whole in everything, lacking nothing, St. James teaches.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

Blessed is our God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has deemed us worthy in this glorious day, to celebrate the sacred memory of the righteous and faithful martyr of Christ, James the brother of God and first Hierarch of Jerusalem.

Our Father among the saints James, has a special rank in the Holy Church of Christ, because he fulfils the "apostolic" the "hierarchical" and the "synodical" axioms, as well as that of the martyr. This is precisely what the hymn writer of the church notes by saying: "As a disciple of the Lord, O righteous one, thou hast received the Gospel. As a Martyr thou art never turned away. As the Brother of God thou hast

boldness. As a hierarch thou canst intercede."

In his catholic epistle, among other things, the Saint Hierarch urges us to treat the various temptations with joy. And this is so, because the "trying of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:3). In other words, the pure and genuine faith is made manifest through the temptations and the trials of those who love God. "The temptations are therefore cause of all joy for the wise men, for their testing is made clear through them", the interpreter St. Theophylactos says.

The patience in Christ, that St. James teaches us, has nothing to do with the stoic apathy through which man becomes insensitive to sorrows to some extent, accepting them pathetically and unsurprisingly. The patience of the Christians is the triumphant overcoming of sorrows, removing nothing from the faithful's activity, but on the contrary, strengthening his faith, motivating him towards grateful thanksgiving to God and reinforcing his vigour and zeal. And when we patiently endure any kind of trial, as if it were provided by God, no matter how long it lasts, and when we accept that in all obedience up to the point that we do not lose our internal peace, but we feel joy through it, then definitely our patience will have a perfect outcome.

And this perfect outcome is nothing else but the accomplishment of spiritual maturity, by which we will have the fullness of gifts and moral perfection of Christ, as St. Paul preaches: "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). And according to St. James: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1:12).

"The crown of life", namely the eternal life in Christ, did St. James the Apostle receive through his martyr's blood,

which made him an example of perfect patience and obedience, an example to be imitated. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" St. Paul preaches (Romans 14:17).

It is precisely this righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit that we follow, all of us who acknowledge that the Church is not a worldly organization on earth, but it is the very mystical body of Christ. "Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23).

Today's honoured Hierarch of our Church calls us to submit to God and resist the workings of the devil, drawing nigh to God and purifying our hearts. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (James 4:7-8).

St. James says this, addressing mainly those Christians, whose faith is dubious and resembles the waves of the sea; to those who wish to enjoy both the worldly pleasures and the gifts of God at the same time; to those who simultaneously worship God and mammon. For this, he underlines that: "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8). Interpreting St. James' words, St. Athanasios the Great says: Double minded are those who "without having one robust opinion, they change their mind and at times they support their words, and after a while they deprecate their own words, and again they support what they had decried earlier."

My dear brothers and sisters, the days in which we live "are evil" (Eph. 5:16), therefore let us hear St. Paul saying: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15-16). And with St. James the brother of God let us say: "behold, we consider happy those who show patience; behold we bless those who endure".

Let us entreat St. James, who as the brother of God has the boldness to intercede, and as a Hierarch, to intercede to Christ our God for the salvation of our souls and for the cessation of the war in our region, and for the peace in the hearts of those who dwell in the Holy City. Amen."

From Secretariat-General

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