

# THE FEAST OF ST. THEODOSIUS THE CENOBIARCH

On Wednesday, January 11/24, 2018, the Patriarchate commemorated our Father among the Saints Theodosius at the Holy Monastery founded by him in the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. in the desert of Judea, between Beit Sahour and the Holy Monastery of St. Savvas the Sanctified.

Having come from his hometown Cappadocia to the Holy Land, St. Theodosius lived in asceticism at the Holy Monastery of Ikelia near Jerusalem and later at the cave via which the Magi "returned to their country following another way".

At this Monastery which had four Churches, the Saint gathered 700 Monks and became the leader of the Coenobitic Monastic life in Palestine and the protector of the doctrine regarding the two natures of Christ in the 4<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Synod of Chalcedon, along with his co-patriot Savvas the Sanctified, who was the leader of the monastic life in Lavrae in Palestine.

At the Holy Church of this Monastery the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Arab-speaking Priests of our Patriarchate. The right choir was led by the choir leader of the All-holy Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos in Greek, Russian and Romanian and the left choir by members of the Arab-speaking congregation in Arabic. The Service was attended by a noble congregation of local faithful mainly from Beit Sahour and many pilgrims.

His Beatitude preached the Divine Word to this congregation as

follows;

*“By imitating the obedience and unexampled humility of Christ, Who bowed His head before the Forerunner, O Father Theodosius, thou wast led up to an unshakeable tower of virtues”. The hymn writer of the Church proclaims.*

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

*Noble Christians and pilgrims,*

*Our Father among the Saints Theodosius, the master of the desert, who while being in human form became co-citizen of the angels, has gathered us all at the place of his asceticism and burial, in order to celebrate his commemoration.*

*St. Theodosius’ life of monasticism and asceticism is distinguished for his utmost obedience and perfect humility, in imitation of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

*St. Theodosius’ virtues in Christ made him not only “an unshakeable tower” but also a wonder worker, according to his biographer, who narrates the infinite miracles of the saint. St. Simeon the Stylite was the one who taught our Father Theodosius the life in Christ, namely the angelic life on earth.*

*The life in Christ of those who were great in asceticism such as our Holy Father Theodosius, is a continuation and an extension of the sacred history on earth, namely the mystery of the Divine Providence, which has been preached and evangelized by the Prophets, Apostles and Evangelists who were bearers of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the object of all the saints and especially of the desert fathers’ desire and love for God, has always been the humankind’s incorruption in Christ, by Christ’s resurrection, and they eagerly sought their change in Christ, the new Adam; they sought “theosis” (deification). “The Lord...transformed the heavenly things into the heavenly life” St. Isidoros Ploisiotis says.*

*Our Holy Father Theodosius received this transformation, namely the heavenly life, as shown by the preserved to this day incorrupt relic of his head, the irrefutable token of the faith of our Holy Church in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is also confirmed by St. Theodosius' hymn writer, when referring to the Saint's disciple Basil who was resurrected from the dead; "Imitating the voluntary death of Christ, the renowned Basil, thy disciple, inaugurateth the new tomb in exceeding joy, O Father Theodosius". This is one of the many miracles St. Theodosius worked while still alive, as his Synaxarist says: "once in Jerusalem, he received schooling by great and holy men of the desert. Having mastered the ultimate abstinence, so that he would eat only once a week, and for thirty years he had not tasted bread, and having acquired the virtue in Christ, he became so great that he could work odd miracles."*

*St. Theodosius is distinguished among the desert fathers, because he became a bloodless Martyr of the mystery of reverence, namely of our healthy Orthodox faith. He preached the two natures of the God-man our Lord Jesus Christ, boldly and vigorously, while the heretic followers of Nestorianism denied them. Let us hear the hymn writer referring to this issue: "Calling thy teachings to remembrance, O Theodosius, we proclaim Christ in two essences, acknowledging the two natural wills and energies and authorities in God Who was baptized in the flesh".*

*In other words, my dear brothers, our Father among the Saints Theodosius did not only become a master of the desert, but also a teacher and pastor of the Church, for which Christ was willingly seen in the flesh, being baptized in the river Jordan by St. John the Baptist, and was crucified in the flesh in Golgotha.*

*The Holy Church of Christ and thus the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood rejoice and are glad in this Feast, because the holy feasts of the Church are a foretaste of the heavenly joy.*

*“A foretaste of the heavenly joy, namely of the heavenly Church is today’s feast” according to the God-bearing Fathers.*

*St. Theodosius became a communicant of this foretaste of the eternal joy of the kingdom of heaven, and he calls all of us who honour his commemoration, to become participants of the universal salvation through our Incarnate Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Participants and communicants of this eternal joy were our holy fathers, the flowers of the desert, the co-patriots of St. Theodosius, Euthymios the great, Savvas the Sanctified, John the George the Chozevites, Theokletos and Martyrios along with Gerasimos of the Jordan and John the New Chozevite.*

*Having become martyrs of consciousness, and evangelists of Christ, they did not come from the desert where John had been preaching the baptism of repentance, but from the font of the Church. They were born of the Holy Spirit and became citizens of the desert, succeeding our Lord Jesus Christ by keeping and working His commandments.*

*This holy consignment of St. John the Baptist and his imitators, namely the newer citizens of the desert, has been preserved all along by the venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, which has given many martyrs of the blood of Christ’s love, both in the past and the contemporary era. For this reason “the gates of hell shall not prevail against” the Church of Christ (Mat. 16.18).*

*Let us entreat our holy father Theodosius, who has boldness before Christ our God, so that through his prayers, along with those of the Most Blessed and Ever-Virgin Mary our Lady Theotokos, we may be found worthy of the mercy of our souls and the peace of the whole world, as well as of the peace in our region. And let us say along with the hymn writer; “Forget not thy flock even now, O all-blessed Theodosius; but by thine intercessions with the Lord, save us we pray.” Amen. Many happy returns!*

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a prayer at the Cave of the Magi, a Holy Litany around the Church and a memorial service of the renovators of the Holy Church, Archbishop Bartholomew of Madaba, and Monks Leontios and Galaction.

Archimandrite Ierotheos, who has served the Monastery for forty years and renovated it, offered a meal at noon.

### **From Secretariat-General**

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