

THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday February 12/25, 2018, the Jerusalem Patriarchate celebrated the victory and triumph of the Church through the restoration of the holy icons, after the harassment caused by iconoclasm, during the reign of the reverend Empress Theodora Augusta and her son Emperor Michail III, in 842 A.D.

The restoration of the icons in the holy Churches is celebrated as a feast of Orthodoxy because the icons depict and confirm the incarnate presence of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on earth, Who is the icon of His invisible Father.

This feast was celebrated by the Patriarchate as "Parresia", namely a great feast with the presence of the full congregation at the All-holy Church of the Resurrection, with Vespers in the evening and the Divine Liturgy in the morning of the feast. The services were officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants in the morning the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Most Reverend Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Methodios of Tabor, Theodosios of Sebastiya, Demetrios of Lydda and Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod, and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks present with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacons Anastasios and Sophrony, and Priests from other Churches. The right choir was led by Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the left by Mr. George Alvanos. The service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and a congregation of monks, nuns, local faithful and pilgrims from Greece, Russia and other Orthodox countries.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a procession of the Holy Icons three times around the Sacred Edicule and then around the Shrines, which ended by the reading of the Synodical Canon of Orthodoxy from the Triodion opposite the Sacred Edicule. Finally the Patriarchal entourage and the congregation returned to the Patriarchate, where His Beatitude addressed the faithful as follows;

“Restoring to the churches the representations of Thy flesh, O Lord, we ascribe to them an honour that is relative, and so express the great mystery of Thy dispensation. For Thou hast not appeared to us, O loving Lord, merely in outward semblance, as say the followers of Mani, who are enemies of God, but in the full and true reality of the flesh; and so the icons that depict Thy flesh lead us to the desire and love of Thee” the melodist of the Church exclaims

Your Excellency, Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Noble Christians and pilgrims,

A joyful and gleeful day is this day in the Church of Christ, on the Feast of Orthodoxy, namely the restoration of the holy icons and their veneration.

The commemoration of this event does not only refer to the restoration of the icons, but also to the healthy faith of our Orthodox Church, the faith that has been delivered to us by the Prophets, the Apostles, the Holy and God-bearer Fathers of the Church, who martyred for her with their own blood. The hymn writer of the Church says “but we shall glory in the icon of the Word made flesh, which we venerate, but worship not as an idol”.

The well-approved St. Basil the Great says; “the honour goes to the prototype of the icon”. In other words, by venerating the icons we honour the persons who are depicted and the

events of the sacred history, namely the great and salvific mystery of the divine providence, as so clearly the hymn writer explains saying; “Restoring to the churches the representations of Thy flesh, O Lord, we ascribe to them an honour that is relative”. According to St. Theodoros of the Studion, “by venerating the icon of Christ, we venerate Him relatively”. Also St. Tarasios, Patriarch of Constantinople says; “I am a venerator [of the icons] relatively, not worshipping them”.

The fallacy of the iconoclasm, which harassed the Church for a long time, aimed at the enforcement of the irreverent religion of the people holding the false belief of a self-chosen worship [superstition]. It is exactly similar to our contemporary reality, imposed by the visible rulers of this world (Eph. 6:12), who ostensibly in the name of the human rights, impose by law “the detestable idolatry of the time that is past” (1 Peter 4:3), according to the Apostle Peter. And according to the Psalmist: “And man, being in honour, did not understand; he is compared to the mindless cattle, and is become like unto them” (Psalm 48:21).

We, my dear Brothers, “who follow in the footsteps of the faith” (Romans 4:12) and “the rule” (Gal. 6:16) of our Holy Fathers who had received the Divine Knowledge, “we know one Lord and God, glorified in Three Persons and Him alone we worship; we have one faith, one baptism, and we are clothed in Christ. This our salvation we confess in deed and word, and we depict it in the holy icons”. This same Lord, we entreat Thee, grant peace to Thy people and Thy Church, so that we may be deemed worthy to go through the Holy and Great Lent and celebrate Thy glorious Resurrection. Amen. Many happy returns!”

From Secretariat-General

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