

# THE CELEBRATION OF LAZARUS' RESURRECTION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday March 18/31, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the rising from the dead of Holy and Righteous Lazarus by the Lord. Lazarus was the Lord's friend according to the narrative of St. John the Evangelist (John 11:1-46), by which the Lord resurrected Lazarus, whom He loved dearly, and He cried before his tomb in Bethany "giving us an assurance of the common Resurrection before His Passion".

This event was celebrated;

## 1. In Bethany

At the town of Bethany and at the Holy Monastery of Lazarus' sisters Martha and Mary, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and the Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the visiting Bishop Savvas from the Church of Serbia, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark and other Deacons. The choir was formed by choir singers from Cyprus and the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, and a large congregation of pilgrims from all Orthodox countries, Russia, Ukraine, Serbia, Romania, Greece and Cyprus.

His Beatitude preached the Divine Word to this congregation as follows;

*"Before Thine own death, O Christ, Thou hast raised from hell Lazarus that was four days dead, and hast taken the dominion of death. Through this one man whom Thou hast loved, Thou hast*

foretold the deliverance of all men from corruption. We therefore worship Thine almighty power and cry: Blessed art Thou, O Saviour, have mercy on us"; the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble pilgrims

The joy of all people, Christ the truth, the light, the life and the resurrection of the world, has gathered us from the ends of the world, in this sacred place of Bethany, to celebrate the resurrection of Holy and Righteous, and friend of Christ Lazarus, Martha and Mary's brother, who was dead for four days.

According to St. John the Evangelist, Lazarus' sister Mary, is the one who anointed the Lord's feet with ointment, and wiped them with her hair. Her brother Lazarus was gravely ill. So they sent unto Him (Jesus) "saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (John 11:2-4).

This event of Lazarus' rising from the dead took place in Bethany, a little while before the Passion on the Cross and the Resurrection of our Saviour Christ, at the presence of His disciples. And this happened so that there would be "an assurance of the resurrection" as the hymn writer says: "Giving us before Thy Passion an assurance of the general resurrection, Thou hast raised Lazarus from the dead, O Christ our God. Therefore, like the children, we also carry tokens of victory, and cry to Thee, the Conqueror of death; Hosanna in the highest; blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord"

Christ my beloved brothers is the Lord of life and death, as St. Paul says: "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and

living" (Romans 14:9).

In other words, the death of God the Word, Jesus Christ, is the one that interprets precisely and answers on the great mystery of corruption and death of our human nature.

And we say this, because Christ's death on the Cross is relevant to the common regeneration of the human nature, namely the "freedom from corruption" of the human nature. For this reason the hymn writer of the Church says: "And Lazarus became the first-fruits of the regeneration of the world".

However, the specific meaning of freedom is not possible to be comprehended, much more so, it is impossible to be understood in a philosophical manner through human logical criteria. It is only in Christ and by Christ that we can comprehend the width and depth of freedom as St. Paul preaches saying: "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57), and in more detail, let us praise God in thanksgiving, for He gives us the victory over death and corruption through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Only the faith in Christ's resurrection allows us to understand the words of St. John the Evangelist who says: "and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4-5). "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19).

By Lazarus' rising from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ revealed His almighty dominion over the world and its corruption. Moreover, He revealed the light of eternal life, namely His resurrection which referred to our human nature that He took upon Himself from the Ever-Virgin Mary the Theotokos. Let us hear the melodist saying: "O Christ, Thou hast raised up Thy friend that was four days dead, and hast made the lamentation of Martha and Mary to cease, showing to

*all that Thou art He who fills all things by Thy divine power and Thy sovereign will. To Thee the cherubim without ceasing cry aloud: "Hosanna in the highest: blessed art Thou, God over all: glory to Thee".*

*As we celebrate today my dear brothers this great and paradox miracle, namely Lazarus' rising from the dead, let us prepare ourselves that by the prayers of the righteous Lazarus we may be deemed worthy to also celebrate the glorious resurrection of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. Happy Easter.*

## 2. At the Mount of Olives

In the evening Vespers and the Small Compline were held at the Holy Shrine of the Ascension and the Holy Procession towards the Holy Monastery of the Men of Galilee, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, who was welcomed by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Anthimos in this Monastery.

On Lazarus Saturday morning, the day of the feast, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the place of the Lord's Ascension, near Bethany, also led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, with co-celebrants Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the Dean Priest Charalambos Bandur, Archimandrites Sergios, Stephen and Kallistos, and visiting Priests from other Orthodox Churches. The right choir was formed by the choir singers of the Church of the Resurrection and the Patriarchal School of Zion students, and the left by Mr. Rimon Kamar. The service was attended by a large congregation of local faithful and pilgrims.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Episcopal entourage was offered a reception at the Holy Monastery of the Ascension opposite the Shrine, by the caretaker of the Monastery Monk Achilios.

**From Secretariat-General**

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