

# HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE D. LITURGY AT REINEH OF NAZARETH

On Sunday of the Paralytic, April 16/29, 2018, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos led the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of St. George of the Greek Orthodox Arab-speaking Community of the town Reineh, a suburb of Nazareth in Galilee.

After a very warm welcome by the Scouts and the parish, His Beatitude led the Divine Liturgy with co-celebrants the Most Reverent Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Archimandrites Hilarion and Makarios, Arab-speaking Priests from that area, such as the Dean Priest of that Parish Fr. Simeon, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Aanasios. The parish choir sang in Arabic, while the service was attended by a large congregation, very faithful to its Church.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation:

*“At the sheep’s pool, a man lay in sickness; and when he saw Thee, O Lord, he cried: I have no man, that, when the water is troubled, he might put me therein. And straightaway, taking compassion on him the Saviour saith unto him: for thee I became man, for thee I am clothed in flesh, and sayest thou: I have no man? Take up thy bed and walk.”*

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

*Noble Christians,*

*Christ our true God, who was risen from the dead and cured the paralytic by the Sheep's pool, has summoned us all on this Paschal day, in your town Reine, so that we may glorify His ineffable philanthropy.*

*And the philanthropy of God the Father is manifested by two great and unprecedented historical events; that God the Word became incarnate and took the form of a man by the Virgin Mary; and that God the Word, and Son of God the Father, our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ was risen from the dead.*

*To the desperate protest of the impotent man who had been waiting for thirty eight years and said to Jesus: "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath" (John 5:7-9).*

*Jesus healed the paralytic by the authoritative manner of His word, just to show His sovereign strength and force, as St. Cyril of Alexandria interprets; "He commands the man to take his bed and walk, in order to show to the spectators the mighty force of the healer".*

*It is precisely this sovereign force and power over corruption and sin that Jesus revealed, and showed to all peoples through His three-day burial and resurrection, as the hymn writer says; "Going down to those in Hades, Christ proclaimed the glad tidings saying: Take courage I have conquered now; I am the Resurrection; having destroyed the gates of death I shall lead you up".*

*In other words, my beloved brothers, our Lord Jesus Christ cured the paralytic saying; "Rise, take up thy bed and walk" (John 5:8). And this was done in this manner in order to show that it was a miracle by the divine power of Jesus and not a by a mere phantasy, as St. Chrysostom says: "Not only did He*

make the man walk, but He also ordered him to take up his bed, in order to confirm the accomplished miracle and no one would suppose that what happened was a phantasy or hypocrisy."

Jesus Christ's question to the paralytic: "Wilt thou be made whole?" (John 5:6) has a timeless significance and is addressed to every single man who wants to be made whole.

And we say this, because our Lord and Saviour, God the Word, was made man and took upon Himself our human flesh in order to release us from sin, in other words, the sickness, and consequently our "paralysis".

Behold why the Church of Christ is rejoicing on His Resurrection, having Him as its head and body. Let us hear the hymn writer saying: "When thy Son destroyed all the might of death, O Virgin, as the mighty God He exalted and deified us with himself by His Resurrection. Wherefore, we sing His praise unto the ages."

Our deification is the ultimate purpose of the calling through the Church that God offers by His ineffable philanthropy to His own creature, the wounded man. Christ's divine blood on which the Church was founded, was shed for us people. And the Church should not be thought of as a worldly or social organization, but primarily as a sanatorium and hospital of our souls and bodies.

As a sanatorium and hospital, the Church has always its gates open wide, at all times towards all people, according to the Lord's words: "and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37) and "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17). In other words, Christ calls the sinners "not remain sinners, but to repent, in other words, to return to Him" St. Theophylactos says.

This means my dear ones, that there are many people and especially Christians, who consider themselves healthy without the need of a physician, namely of Christ and His Church. But

to them applies what the Lord said to the Bishop of Laodicean in the book of Revelation of St. John the Theologian: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17). And in more detail; you claim in your pride and self-complacence that you are rich in virtues and have no need for more. And you don't know that you are indeed miserable and deplorable and poor in virtue, and blind and sick sot that you don't see your paralyzed spiritual condition.

Today's festal and Paschal celebration of our Holy Church calls us through the words of its hymn writer to get to know the power of the horrendous mystery of the Lord's crucifixion and resurrection for our sake; "Christ our Saviour, the Word who was in the beginning, was crucified for us and was buried of His own will, and arose from the dead, that He might save all things. Let us worship Him."

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem has been a faithful witness and preacher of this truth, with its Monastic Order of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, which has preserved the Holy Shrines throughout the centuries, as places of sanctification and spiritual refreshment and also as a guarantee of the Christian presence in the Holy Land and in the Middle East.

Let us give thanks to the merciful God and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who was born by the Most Pure and Ever-Virgin Mary the Theotokos and say along with the hymn writer: "Do Thou, O transcendently Good, heal my soul, which hath been grievously infirm for many years, even as Thou madest whole the paralytic before, that I may walk in Thy paths, which Thou hast shown to them that long for Thee." Amen.

*Christ is risen!*

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a reception at the

reception hall next to the Church, where His Beatitude addressed all present as follows during lunch time;

*“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Philip. 4:4). “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philip. 4:7).*

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

*Respected Members of the Church Committee,*

*We rend glory and thanksgiving to the resurrected from the dead our God and Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who has deemed us worthy concelebrate in this Paschal Day of the Lord, in which “All things are filled with gladness, having received the proof of the Resurrection”.*

*This gladness of Christ’s Resurrection is what the Church of Jerusalem preaches, through its Christian noble Congregation, which is scattered all over the Holy Land and especially in the Galilee area, where the Lord appeared to His disciples saying to them: “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 28:18-19).*

*All power on earth that was given to the victor over death and sin, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, was also given to the Church, which is Christ’s mystical body in the world. And this power is no other than that of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of our God and Saviour Christ. For this, says the Lord; “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of*

*man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matt. 12:31-32).*

*And we say this because many are those who are driven against the Church, in other words, against its members the Christians. Of course, those who are against us "they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).*

*The primary mission of the Church and consequently of its faithful members is the preaching of love, righteousness, reconciliation, peace and forgiveness in the world.*

*The Church, the Eucharistic and Liturgical Community in the Holy Spirit, is God's city in substance, as the Great Apostle of the Nations St. Paul says; "ye are come unto the city of the living God" (Hebrews 12:22). This means, according to St. Paul's teaching, that "our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philip. 3:20) Who was resurrected from the dead.*

*Christ is risen!*

### **From Secretariat-General**

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