

THE FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE SACRED CROSS

On Thursday September 14/27, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Universal Exaltation of the Sacred Cross.

On this Feast, the Patriarchate commemorates the event of the Exaltation of the Sacred Cross after its finding behind the Horrendous Golgotha by the Archbishop of Jerusalem Makarios and St. Helen during the feast of the Consecration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 336 A.D.

For this Feast the Church Services were;

1. Great Vespers in the evening of the Fore feast, with a welcoming reception of His Beatitude and of the Patriarchal entourage, with incense offering at the Holy Deposition, veneration of the Holy Sepulchre and Golgotha, incense offering procedure around the Shrines, Great Entrance and the Blessing of bread.

After the dismissal of Vespers the Patriarchal Entourage returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters.

2. The Divine Liturgy on the day of the Feast was officiated by His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with co-celebrants the Archbishops of the Patriarchate, Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Most Reverend Archbishops, Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Theodosios of Sebastia, Makarios of Qatar, Nectarios of Anthedona, Philoumenos of Pella, and the visiting from the Ecumenical Patriarchate and from the Church of Greece Most Reverend Metropolitans Panteleimon of Xanthi and Peritheorion, Nikiforos of Maronea, and Grabriel of Nea Ionia, the visiting from the Moscow Patriarchate Most Reverend Metropolitan Pitirim of Nikolaev and

Ozakov, the visiting from the Church of Serbia, Bishop Eininaios of Canada, Bishop John of Pakrats and Slavonia, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Hierodeacons, and Archdeacon Mark. The hymns were delivered by the Choir Leader of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos and a visiting choir from Greece, while the Service was attended by a very large congregation of pilgrims in joy and contrition.

After the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy the Procession began from the Catholicon, and marched through the Deposition to the Cave of the Finding of the Sacred Cross, while the Deacons were offering incense by the Holy Altar of the Armenians and the Exaltation took place at the spot of the finding of the Cross. Consequently the Procession marched three times around the Holy Sepulchre and went up to Golgotha, where the Exaltation of the Cross was carried out again from the Holy Altar to the four sides of the horizon.

Finally the Procession returned to the Catholicon and concluded at the Patriarchate Headquarters, where His Beatitude addressed all present as follows;

“Today the death that came to man through eating of the tree is abolished through the Cross. For the curse of our first mother Eve that fell on all mankind is destroyed by the Fruit of the pure Mother of God, whom all the powers of Heaven magnify”, the hymn writer of the Church exclaims.

Honourable Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Noble Christians and pilgrims,

We rend glory and thanksgiving to the Holy Trinitarian God, who has deemed us worthy to celebrate with boldness in this

Holy Eucharistic synaxis the Holy and most praised feast of the Exaltation of the Sacred Cross, in this very place of its discovery and Exaltation, at Golgotha, the place of skull.

The Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is "a great sign" for us according to St. Cyril of Alexandria. "For every work and wonder of Christ has been great, divine and marvelous, but His Sacred Cross is the most marvelous of all. For it is by nothing else that the death has been abolished, the curse of our forefather has been released, Hades has been destroyed, the resurrection has been granted...but for the sake of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" according to St. John of Damascus.

In other words, the Sacred Cross is the means through which we venerate our God and Saviour Christ, Who "hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:2), "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people" (Titus 2:14), St. Paul preaches.

And this peculiar people is no other than the "holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9), namely the faithful members of the mystical body of Christ, the Church, to which He "hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9) according to St. Peter.

The Sacred Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has revealed to us this "marvelous light". For this reason Christ orders us; "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light" (John 12:35-36).

This command of the Lord is as timely to our current reality as ever before. And this is so, because the agnostic and atheist conviction or doctrine, if you like, that has been cultivated by the worldly powers, assimilates man who has been "created in honour, to the beasts that have no wisdom and perish" (Psalm 48:12) according to the Psalmist.

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18). The preaching of the Cross seems like foolishness to those who walk in the path of destruction. However, to us who walk in the path of salvation, it is the power of God, which saves us, St. Paul preaches.

The salvific power of the Cross, the Divine power of the fruit of the Son of God and Theotokos Mary, is the weapon against the devil. For this reason, my dear ones, let us beseech God and pray along with the hymn writer who says; “Save us, O Cross by thy strength; enlighten us with thy radiance, O Sacred Cross, and strengthen us by thine Exaltation; for thou hast been given to us as light and salvation of our souls, and of peace to the world and our region”. Amen. Many Happy returns!

His Beatitude then received the respect of the Clergy and the pilgrims, as long as the address of the Most Reverend Metropolitan Panteleimon of Xanthi, who thanked God and His Beatitude for allowing his participation in this Feast.

From Secretariat-General