

THE FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE ARCHANGELS IN JOPPA

On Wednesday, November 8/21, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Synaxis of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel and of all the heavenly hosts in Joppa, at the Holy Monastery of the Patriarchate dedicated to Archangel Michael. The Church of the monastery had been completely destroyed by a fire and it was then rebuilt from its foundations by the Hegoumen Most Reverend Archbishop Damascene of Joppa.

Through this Feast, the Church calls its members in a Gathering, in order to honour the Holy Angels, who when Archangel Lucifer protested against God and thus he fell and God made him the devil, joined forces with God, remaining liturgical spirits in ministry, sent to the salvation of the people; Archangel Michael gathered the angels and said "Let us stand right, stand with fear with God the Most High and our Creator".

In this Holy Monastery the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Most Reverend Archbishop Damascene of Joppa, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis and the visiting Most Reverend Metropolitan Ioustinos of Nea Krini and Kalamaria, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Archimandrite Ieronymos, the Hegoumen of Fhes in Jordan, Archimandrite Niphon, Hegoumen in Remla, and Archimandrite Andrew, Arab-speaking Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Deacons Sophronios and Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the Choir leader Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos and the Patriarchal School Students in Greek on the right, and the hagiographer of the H. Church and choir leader in it Mr. Martinakos and the Community choir, in Greek and Arabic on the left, while the service was

attended by a large congregation of Arab-speaking, Russian-speaking and Romanian-speaking faithful, and the Ambassador of Greece in Tel Aviv.

His Beatitude delivered the following sermon to this congregation;

“But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?” St. Paul preaches in the epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 1:13).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims,

Our Holy Orthodox Church honours and venerates today the holy Synaxis of the Marshals Michael and Gabriel and of the other Bodiless and heavenly hosts, namely of the Angels of God. According to the biblical witness, these Angels are ministering spirits, which do not act on their own initiative, but are sent by God to the ministry of those who are destined to inherit the eternal life. “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14).

The Angels are known to us from our Lord Jesus Christ himself, who proclaims their existence on the one hand; and on the other, from their liturgical, namely their ministering role. “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me... of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38).

During the earthly life of the God-man, our Saviour Jesus Christ, the angels appear as His servants and ministers, praising and glorifying Him and bearing witness of Him. Similarly, Archangel Gabriel evangelizes the nativity of Jesus to the Ever-Virgin Mary (Luke 1:26), “the Angel of God” appears to Joseph (Matt. 1:20) and to the shepherds (Luke 2:8), a multitude of heavenly hosts along with the angel

glorify the Most High on the nativity of the Saviour (Luke 2:13,15), others minister Him in the desert after the end of the temptations; "Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him" (Matt. 4:11). An Angel strengthens Him on the Mount of Olives before His Passion on the Cross "And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him" (Luke 22:43). Angels conveyed the message of Christ's resurrection to the myrrh-bearing women "two men [Angels] stood by them in shining garments" (Luke 24:4). And two Angels talk to the disciples about the second coming during Christ's Ascension; "And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:10-11).

Apostle Paul commemorates the Angels, who are distinguished in orders, which are called, principalities, powers, might, dominions, thrones, angels and archangels (Eph. 1:21/3:10/6:12, Col.1:16, 1 Thess.4:16, Jude verse 9). According to St. Dionysius the Areopagite, a special position is held by the orders of the six-winged Seraphim and the many-eyed Cherubim, which unceasingly chant the thrice-holy hymn of victory; "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Sabaoth; the heaven and the earth are filled with Thy glory; Hosanna in the Highest; blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord; Hosanna in the Highest".

Distinguished among the Angels are the Marshals Michael and Gabriel. Angel Michael is considered the most preeminent Commander of the bodiless Hosts, in both the Old and the New Testament. And this is so, because the all-famed Michael, as his synaxarist says, having safeguarded the gratitude towards God the Master as a faithful servant, and having displayed the

guardianship of the people, he was granted the first place among the noetic archangelic orders by God the Almighty. For having seen the apostate, namely the angel Satan fallen, he gathered all the chorea of the Angels and saying "Let us give heed", he praised the Lord of all in a loud voice saying; let us give heed, we who are created, to what happened to those among us who existed as light up to now but are turned into darkness hence forth. This gathering therefore, was called Synaxis of the Angels, namely, caution, concord and unity.

Let us also hear the melodist of the Church saying: "The Marshal of the Hosts on high, Michael, the leader of the divine orders, who daily walketh at our side preserving all from every assault of the devil, calleth us today to a festival. Come therefore, ye that love the feasts and that love Christ, and gathering the flowers of the virtues, with pure thoughts and an upright conscience let us honour the Synaxis of the Archangel. For he standeth continually in the presence of God, and singing the thrice holy hymn, he intercedeth that our souls be saved".

Our Holy Church honours especially the commemoration of the Angelic orders, because the Angelic powers are the invisible heavenly Church. The Incarnation of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ and through it, the grace and truth that have been given to the people (1 John 14:17), make the link and the unity of our humankind and our visible creation with the invisible and spiritual immaterial world.

In other words, the Angels in general, and today's celebrated Archangels Michael and Gabriel, being liturgical spirits of God the Father, minister as well the earthly Church of Christ. For this reason the hymn writer of the Church invokes their help and protection saying; "Supreme Commanders of the Hosts of the Heavens, we, the unworthy, importune and beseech you that by your supplications ye encircle us in the shelter of your wings of your immaterial glory, guarding us who now fall down and cry to you with fervour: Deliver us from dangers of

all kinds, as the great marshals of the heavenly hosts on high”.

Archangel Michael is distinguished among all the Angelic orders, because, seeing the fall of angel Lucifer and of his team, as the result of his conceit, pride and selfishness, he intervened and called out “Let us give heed”, thus he halted the generalization of the apostasy and established the position of the Angelic orders. In the book of Revelation, Archangel Michael and his Angels appear fighting the dragon and his fallen angels: “And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Rev. 12:7-9).

The festively celebrated commemoration of the Synaxis of the Holy bodiless and heavenly hosts and especially of their Marshals Michael and Gabriel, calls us who participate in the mystical body of Christ, namely His Church, to vigilance, or better say, to watchfulness, namely to concord and unity, by the prayers of the Most Blessed and Ever-Virgin Mary, our Lady Theotokos, and the intercession of Holy Archangel Michael to God. Amen.”

After the Divine Liturgy there was a reception at the hegoumeneion and finally the Hegoumen Archbishop Damascene offered a festal meal in honour of His Beatitude and others.

From Secretariat-General