

THE CUTTING OF THE NEW YEAR CAKE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday evening, December 31, 2018/ January 13, 2019, the Eve of the New Civil Year 2019, at the Reception Hall of the Patriarchate there was the ceremony of the cutting of the New Year Cake, at the presence of the Hagiotaphite Fathers, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, nuns, local Orthodox Faithful and pilgrims from Greece, Cyprus, Russia and Romania.

During this ceremony the apolytikion of the Circumcision of the Lord was sung, and that of St. Basil and then H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed all present as follows;

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). Everyone who is united with Christ is a new creature. The ancient condition that the law and sin had created has passed away. Behold all things have become new, St. Paul preaches.

We fully comprehend these God-inspired words of St. Paul through the Holy Church of Christ, but also within the Church which not only evangelizes the entrance of the new year with the words of the Bible and of the Lord; “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Isaiah 61:1-2) (Luke 4:18-19), but it also prays to God for the sanctification and the blessing of the new year, through its hymn writer John of Damascus; “O Thou Who hast made all things in wisdom, O Word of the Father Who art from before all eternity, Who hast constituted the whole of creation by Thine almighty word,

bless the crown of the year with Thy goodness, through the Theotokos, since Thou art good and the Friend of man”.

And we say this because in the interpretation of the phrase “God created in the beginning” St. Basil the Great says; it has been said “He created in the beginning” for us to be taught that the world had been created without any intermediate passing of time, but immediately after the Will of God had been expressed. And elsewhere he says; or is it not so that the time is something of which the past has disappeared, the future has not appeared yet, while the present slips through the senses before it is even made understood that it is here?

In other words, the comprehension of the concept of time receives its appropriate meaning in the salvific mystery of the divine philanthropy, the incarnation through the pure blood of the Ever-Virgin Mary the Theotokos of God the Word and our Saviour Jesus Christ, as well as His Church.

And the Church, being the God-man mystical body of Christ, is the one who introduces in the world the eternity in Christ, and expands towards it. Within the liturgical life of the Church, where time becomes season (kairos), the memory of the past becomes memory in Christ.

For this reason St. Paul refers to the Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 49:8) who says; “In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee”. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2).

The Great Father and luminary of the Church Basil, whose commemoration is co-celebrated with the circumcision in the flesh of our Lord God Jesus Christ, calls us on this ceremony which is being done in his honour, the cutting of the New Year Cake, to imitate his fervour, faith and humility, so that we ask first for the spiritual rebirth of our souls, namely the

Kingdom of Heaven, hearkening to St. Peter's advice: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).

Bearing in mind this sobriety and the consideration of time according to Christ, and girding up the loins of our minds, let us entreat the Bishop of Caesarea of Cappadocia Basil the Great, to intercede to Christ our God for the salvation of our souls, for the peace of the world and of our tested region, and for the cessation of the schisms in the Churches.

And let us say along with St. John of Damascus; "O Thou Who hast made all things in wisdom, O Word of the Father Who art from before all eternity, Who hast constituted the whole of creation by Thine almighty word, bless the crown of the year with Thy goodness" and protect our venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, our reverend Christian flock and the Holy City of Jerusalem, through the Theotokos, grant the world the great mercy. Amen.

Many happy returns and a Blessed New Year.

Consequently His Beatitude cut the New Year Cake wishing a happy and joyful New Year 2019 and distributed the pieces while the students of the Patriarchal School were singing the carols and then they went out to sing the carols to the Hagiotaphite Fathers at the Central and at the Greek Community of Jerusalem.

From Secretariat-General