

H.H.B. CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY AT BURKIN OF SAMARIA

On Friday, January 19/ February 1, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the healing of the ten lepers by the Lord (Luke 17:12-19), at the place of their healing north of Nablus of Samaria, where there is a chapel built on the carved rocks, in the natural cave of which the ten lepers lived in isolation as imposed by their surrounding society.

On the morning of the aforementioned day, at this place and in this chapel, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos celebrated the Divine Liturgy, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the Hegoumen of the Shepherds Archimandrite Ignatios and Arab-speaking Priests, Archdeacon Mark and other deacons, while the service was attended by many faithful who came from the neighbouring towns, parishes, for Toubas, Rafidia and Zababde.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation;

“And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us” (Luke 17:12-13).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and Pilgrims

The infinite mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ led our footsteps today to this holy place of the lepers, known as Burkin, so that we also glorify Him in gratitude, in festivity and thanksgiving.

This holy place of Burkin is not only identified as the place of the healing of the ten lepers, as Luke the Evangelist mentions, but also as the place witnessing that our Lord Jesus Christ as perfect God and perfect man is the One who according to Prophet Isaiah "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (Matt. 8:17). And elsewhere, Luke the Evangelist says: "But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities" (Luke 5:15).

Today's gospel narrative, my dear brothers and sisters, is not a mere parable, but a fact that happened at a certain place and time. And we say this because this Rum-Orthodox ancient Byzantine Church is built above the cave of the isolation of the ten lepers, in the certain town from which Jesus passed via Samaria and Galilee, heading towards Jerusalem (Luke 1:11).

God's love and infinite mercy are given to every man who puts his trust in Him. The ten lepers cried out loud all together saying; "Jesus Master, have mercy on us" (Luke 17:13). And the loud voice, the lepers' voice, was a voice of entreaty, and a voice of invocation in truth, as St. Theophylaktos interprets: "and while they stood afar from the place, the supplication was drawn near. For He is near to all who call upon Him in truth". And Evangelist Matthew says: "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Matt. 4:23).

The ten lepers ask for the mercy of the Son of God; "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us" (Luke 17:13) because they trust Christ to whom they assign themselves and their healing. This means that the man, whose "days are as grass" (Psalm 103:15), is not able to rely on himself when he faces serious and painful physical and mental health problems, seeing himself collapsing and coming apart. This very collapsing and torn apart self does he entrust on the mercy and philanthropy of

God, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

"O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit" (Psalm 30:2-3). My Lord and my God, I have cried unto Thee in my sickness and Thou hast healed me. Yes, O Lord, from the gates of Hades Thou hast returned my life, Thou hast saved me for Thou hast not counted me along with the dead who are brought into the grave; this is what Prophet David exclaims, thanking God in gratitude.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan" (Luke 17:15-16), meaning that he was a foreigner. St. Cyril of Alexandria says that "the Samaritan was a foreigner because he was from the nation of Assyria". This foreigner, the Samaritan, by expressing his thanksgiving and gratitude towards Christ, and by glorifying God, receives on the one hand the resurrection of his being, and on the other, he discovers the salvific power of faith, when he hears the words of Jesus telling him: "Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole" (Luke 17:19).

On the contrary, the ingratitude and ungratefulness of the nine lepers – "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" (Luke 17:17) according to Jesus' question, returned them to the condition of sin, namely, to the sickness of the soul, or better say, to the leprosy of the soul. And this is so, because ungratefulness is a sin, which ignores the philanthropic and benefactor God and projects the injudiciousness and the egocentrism of man.

Behold my dear ones, why the great and wise Paul advices his disciple Timothy, and not only him, but all of us, saying: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall

come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, and ungrateful” (2 Tim. 3:2)... “ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Tim. 3:5).

We, as members of the mystical body of Christ, namely of His Church, enjoy God’s benevolence, as well as the healing that was brought forth by the divine Word, Christ, to “all the nature of men stricken by leprosy” as the God-bearing Fathers of the Church teach.

This healing of the physical and mental infirmities of ours is made possible within the Church and by the Church, which is the sanatorium and hospital of all who participate in its liturgical and sacramental life in fear and faith and love, but also in a clear conscience.

Our way of “giving glory and thanksgiving to God” is the order by St. Paul saying: Brothers, “ But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all” (Col. 3:8-11). Amen.

After the Divine Liturgy His Beatitude inaugurated the new hall which is going to be the Hegoumeneion, refectory and reception hall and has been built by the Caretaker of the Monastery Monk Vissarion.

At noon Monk Vissarion offered a meal to His Beatitude and the congregation.

From Secretariat-General

