

LAZARUS SATURDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, April 7/20, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of Lazarus' Saturday, as the commemoration of the event of the resurrection from the dead of the four-day dead Lazarus, friend of our Lord. This event was celebrated:

1. In Bethany, where the event took place.

At the Holy Monastery of Lazarus' sisters, Martha and Mary, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios and Priests from other Churches, under the chanting of Archimandrite Demetrios and Byzantine choir singers from the Church of Cyprus. The service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and members of the Greek Consulate, as well as a large congregation of pilgrims.

His Beatitude preached the Divine Word to this congregation as follows;

"O Lord, Thy voice destroyed the dominion of hell and the world of Thy power raised from the tomb with him that had been four days dead; and Lazarus became the first-fruits of the regeneration of the world. All things are possible to Thee, O Lord and King of all. Bestow upon Thy servants cleansing and great mercy".

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

Having concluded the beneficial to the soul Great Lent, we

came today to this holy place, the town of Bethany, the hometown of Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary, in order to proclaim in Eucharist and Doxology, on the one hand the Common Resurrection before the Passion of our Lord and Saviour Christ, which was confirmed by the resurrection from the dead of His friend, the righteous Lazarus, and on the other hand, the triumphant entry of Christ in Jerusalem.

Lazarus' resurrection in Bethany, as well as the triumphant entry of our Saviour Jesus Christ in Jerusalem, are two important events of the great mystery of the Divine Providence, which are steadfastly bound together, as the hymn writer says; "Giving us before Thy Passion an assurance of the general resurrection, Thou hast raised Lazarus from the dead, O Christ our God. Therefore, like the children, we also carry tokens of victory, and cry to Thee, the Conqueror of death: Hosanna in the highest; blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord".

"Christ performed this wondrous event of Lazarus' resurrection as a foretelling of the resurrection from the dead of the whole humankind" according to St. Cyril of Alexandria, which will take place during the Second Coming of Christ. Moreover, Lazarus' resurrection took place so that the Son of God would be glorified, as St. John the Evangelist says; "When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness [of Lazarus] is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (John 11:4).

Interpreting these words, Amonios says: "For it was not so much for glory and wonder to raise Lazarus from his sickness, as it was to raise him from the dead". In other words, Christ's Resurrection is the peak of the life in Christ, namely of the believers in Crucified and Resurrected Christ as St. Paul preaches; "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. 15:14).

Christ's resurrection, my dear brothers and sisters, refers

primarily and mainly to the human nature of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. This means that we are called to be co-resurrected in Christ with Christ. "Jesus said, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25). And in more detail, I am the resurrection and the life. I have the power to resurrect because I am the source of life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies in the flesh, yet he will live, because, despite the heavenly and spiritual life I will transmit to his soul from this time forth, in due course, he will also be risen from the dead by me, even in the flesh.

Because Lazarus' resurrection is the preamble of the common resurrection of all people, for this reason Christ rose Lazarus from the dead after four days of his death, in order to show with this manner the common resurrection from the four elements that constitute the human body, namely, the earth, the soil, the air, the water and the fire, according to St. Cyril of Alexandria who interprets the words of Martha, Lazarus' sister; " Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days" (John 11:39).

In other words the natural death denotes undeniably the corruption that the created bodily form of man undergoes, in contrast to the death in Christ, which is the death of incorruption, namely the death of deliverance from the death of the bondage, namely of the corruption of sin. The death of deliverance is the death of eternal life and beatitude. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:26) the Lord says.

Commenting on the above words of the Lord, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "The one that believes in Him (Christ) has eternal life in the time to come, in beatitude and complete incorruption".

St. John the Evangelist says "then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been

dead, whom he raised from the dead" (John 12:1). "On the next day, much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him and cried, Hosanna: blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord" (John 12: 12-13).

Those people did this, becoming eye witnesses of the miracle of Lazarus' resurrection from the dead, as St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "being more adept to believing the large crowds welcomed Christ praising Him with palm tree branches as the one who conquered death".

This very Christ who conquered death are we also called to welcome, my dear brothers and sisters, with the spiritual palm tree branches of faith and repentance, if we actually want to become communicants and partakers of the deliverance from the corruption of sin.

And along with the hymn writer of the Church let us say: "Before Thine own death, O Christ, Thou hast raised from hell Lazarus that was four days dead, and hast shaken the dominion of death. Through this one man whom Thou hast loved, Thou hast foretold the deliverance of all men from corruption. We therefore worship Thine almighty power and cry: Blessed art Thou, O Saviour, have mercy upon us".

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a procession to Lazarus' Tomb, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, who read at the Tomb the Gospel narrative of Lazarus' Resurrection according to St. John.

Afterward there was a visit of the Episcopal Entourage at the Municipality of Bethany and lunch offered by the Abbess of the Monastery of Bethany, Nun Eupraxia.

2. At the Mount of Olives

Likewise the event of Lazarus' resurrection was celebrated on the Mount of Olives, due to its proximity to Bethany. In the evening there was Vespers at the Shrine of the Lord's Ascension with the Service of Compline and a procession towards the Church of the Men of Galilee (Galili Viri), officiated by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia, where the morning Gospel was read, at the presence of His Beatitude. Finally there procession returned to the Ascension Shrine.

In the morning the Divine Liturgy was officiated by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia, under the chanting of the Choir Leader of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos and the choir of St. James Cathedral, at the presence of local Christians and pilgrims.

From Secretariat-General