

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS OFFICIATES THE DIVINE LITURGY AT THE CHURCH OF THE DELEGATION OF THE PATRIARCHATE OF ROMANIA

On Wednesday, April 25 /May 8, 2019, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Church of St. George in West Jerusalem, for the commemoration of the Holy and Glorious George the Great Martyr and Trophy-bearer.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Archbishops: Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, and the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, along with Archimandrite Ieronymos, the representative of the Patriarchate of Romania Archimandrite Theophilos and his helper Archimandrite John, Archimandrite Dometian and Archimandrite Athanasios of the Russian Missia, other Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Hader, and Deacon Ephraim from the Patriarchate of Romania. The chanting was delivered by a Church singer from Romania and the Nuns of the Delegation in Romanian and Greek, as the service was attended mainly by a Romanian speaking congregation.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude read the following Sermon;

“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth

from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning". "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 15:26-27, 16:1-2) the Lord says.

Reverend Archimandrite Theophilos

Representative of H.H.B. the Patriarch of Romania Daniel at the Church of Jerusalem,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and visiting pilgrims

Today the glorious Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has shone forth, along with the commemoration of the Holy and glorious George the Great Martyr and Trophy-bearer. Therefore we are gathered in this Holy Church, dedicated to the Saint, in order to glorify in Eucharist the Holy Trinitarian God and the Resurrected Christ and our God. Moreover, in order to declare the unity in Christ of the brotherly Orthodox Christian Churches, namely of the Venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem with the Patriarchate of Romania, and bear witness to the faith of the martyr of blood of Christ, George the Trophy-bearer.

The luminous Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ was preceded by the impassive for His divinity Passion, His martyr's death on the Cross. The faithful martyr George became a communicant of this very impassive passion and of the resurrection of Christ, as well as a member of the Kingdom of Heaven. "For George's desire [for God] conquered his human nature, convincing him to head through death to the object of his desire, Christ our God and Saviour of our souls" the hymn writer says.

George's persecutors and murderers thought that they were being offering worship to God, as the Lord said to His disciples: "the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2). It is a fact that many times the work of the devil was carried out under the garment of the deacon of God and of His Holy Church, and many times the most tumultuous opponents of the healthy teaching of Christ (1 Tim. 1:10) sat "at the Temple of God" (2 Thes. 2:4). Nevertheless the victory of truth was triumphant, as St. John the Evangelist witnesses in his book of revelation: "And they [the faithful martyrs of Christ] overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them" (Rev. 12:11-12).

Behold why the Church of Christ sings through the mouth of the hymn writer; "For meet it is that the Heavens should rejoice and that the earth should be glad, and that the whole world, both visible and invisible, should keep the feast; for Christ our everlasting joy hath risen".

The martyrdom of Christ's friend George has a special place in the chorea of the martyrs of the Church. And this is so because it does not belong to the historic time of death and corruption, but to the time of "another life, the eternal one" according to St. John Damascene – namely to the time of the death and the life-giving resurrection of our Saviour Christ.

The great and wise St. Paul calls upon the living witness of the martyrs of love and truth, namely of Christ, "I am the truth" (John 14:6) to the faithful members of the Church, so that we should face the struggle that is before us in patience. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the

author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

St. George is not only distinguished as being one of "so great a cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12:1) of the Church, but also from the ecumenical honour he receives, and especially in our contemporary era of the anti-biblical and anti-Christian Orthodox faith of ours.

And we say this, because as a representative of "the cloud of witnesses", of the love and truth and righteousness of Christ, and ecumenically recognized, as well as being honoured by other doctrines and religions, St. George calls us and our brotherly Orthodox Churches, today in his annual festive commemoration, through St. Paul's command: "I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephes. 4:1,3) and through the unity of faith, for which St. John Damascene says in his hymn; "Your martyrs, O Lord, have been confirmed by faith and strengthened by hope. By the love of your cross they have been fortified in spirit and so have they overcome the anguish of suffering. They have obtained the crowns and together with the angels they pray for our souls".

Let us entreat St. George the Great Martyr to intercede the incarnate for our sake crucified and resurrected Christ, our God and Saviour, along with the Ever-Virgin and Most Blessed Theotokos Mary to grant us life eternal and peace to the world and in our region.

Many Happy Returns! Christ is Risen!

After the Divine Liturgy the Hegoumen and representative of the Romanian Patriarchate Archimandrite Theophilos offered a

festal meal to the Patriarchal entourage and others.

During the meal His Beatitude addressed those present as follows;

Archimandrite Theophilos, dear Father,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved faithful of this Romanian congregation in Jerusalem,

Dear Pilgrims,

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Christ is Risen!

Hristos a inviat!

We greet you in the joy of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we give thanks to Almighty God for this blessed occasion on which we have celebrated the Divine Liturgy with you in this Church of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem.

Our gathering today is a visible sign of the common *martyria* of the Orthodox Church which the Church lives here as well as around the world. The Orthodox Church enjoys a cohesion of faith and life that is more important in our own day than ever before, especially in a world in which the predominant experience is one of division and enmity between peoples. The unity of the Church is a divine encouragement in our divided society.

We learn so much from the Great and Holy Martyr George, who holds genuinely ecumenical significance. For he is revered not just by the Orthodox Church, but also by non-Orthodox Christians, and even by non-Christians. Saint George lived in a different cultural and social context, in which there was so

much division and difficulty, but he managed to keep the unity of the faith as well as the unity of the Church.

As we sing in one of our services, the martyrs of the Lord, they were united spiritually with the love of your cross, and so they banished completely the tyranny of the enemy.

In the same way our beloved Orthodox Church must be a witness, inspired by Saint George, to the unity of the faith and the unity of the Church. Our unity is our strength, and the only way to withstand the assaults of our contemporary enemy. As Saint Paul tells us, our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Ephes. 6:12).

We guard the unity of the faith and of the Church with the witness of our conscience, again as St. Paul says: Indeed, this is our boast, the testimony of our conscience: we have behaved in the world with frankness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God – and all the more toward you (2 Cor. 1:12). Just as the faith cannot be divided, neither can the conscience, and so we do everything in our power to ensure that we serve the unity of the Body of Christ, again as St. Paul says in the Letter to the Ephesians; making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

Our unity in the bond of peace, is at the heart of our life as the Orthodox Church, and we know that any kind of schism or division is a wound at the very depth of our common life. So on this blessed occasion, we take this opportunity to renew our commitment to the unity of the Church in spirit and in truth.

May the incarnate Logos, who is risen from the dead, warm our hearts and enlighten our minds, that we may ever serve the

unity of our beloved Orthodox Church. May God bless you, dear Archimandrite Theophilos, and your community, and May God bless the peoples of our beloved Romania and our beloved Holy Land.

Christ is risen!

Hristos a inviat!

From Secretariat-General