

THE FEAST OF ST. ONUPHRIUS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, June 12/25, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of our Righteous Father Onuphrius of Egypt at his holy Monastery, at the deep end of valley Enom, opposite of Siloam font.

Our Holy Father Onuphrius lived in Egypt in the 4th century in total abstinence of the passions and in asceticism of the virtues of Christ, "having become an immigrant from the turbulent world", he lived in utmost austerity and poverty and nudity that was covered with his long beard, and became an example to imitate for the ascetics of all times.

The Patriarchate has dedicated a Monastery to him in the lower part of Jerusalem, the City of David, opposite Siloam's font, which is the place the Pharisees bought with the thirty silver coins that Judas returned to them when he regretted his action of Jesus betrayal. For this reason, this place was called "field of blood" or "Potter's field".

In this Church which has a part inside a cave, the Divine Liturgy was led by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenopolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Archimandrite Ignatios and Fr. Nectarios and Fr. Eirinaios, from the Holy Monastery of Oblou, of the Holy Metropolis of Patra from the Church of Greece, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Sophronios, at the presence of a large congregation of pilgrims, monks and nuns.

His Beatitude delivered the following sermon to this congregation:

“You ought to behold the delight of the Lord, O God-bearer and with Him alone did ye long to converse alone. Wherefore ye abandoned the world, fleeing afar off to dwell in the wilderness and in mountains; and putting on Christ, ye took no thought for raiment, for ye had trafficked for the garment of incorruption, wherewith ye entered into the heavenly bridechamber, where ye rejoice eternally, O Onuphrius” the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The sacred commemoration of our Father among the Saints Onuphrius has gathered all of us today in his Holy Church in this Biblical and historical “potter’s field” also known as the “field of blood” (Matthew 27:7-8), in order to celebrate his feast in Eucharist and Doxology.

The holy hymn writer calls our Holy Father Onuphrius from Egypt, a citizen of the desert, an Angel in flesh, wonder worker and healer of the souls of all who come to him. Indeed, Saint Onuphrius became a co-citizen of the Angels, a participant of the righteous and the holy, therefore he received the crown of righteousness that Christ prepared for him, as St. Paul says; “I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for a me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”(2 Tim. 4:7-8).

Our Father among the Saints Onuphrius loved Christ so much that when he heard the life of the great zealots of Christ, of Elias the Thesvite and John the Forerunner and Baptist, he retreated in the desert where he lived for sixty years without seen any man at all, as his synaxarist says. And according to the witness of St. Pafnutius the Great, who met the Saint in

the deepest desert and was also present at the departing of the Saint to the heavenly dwelling places, saw that our Father Onuphrius "was naked and his body was covered with white hair all over".

For this the holy hymn writer says: "Wherefore ye abandoned the world, fleeing afar off to dwell in the wilderness and in mountains; and putting on Christ, ye took no thought for raiment, for ye had trafficked for the garment of incorruption".

And what was the raiment of incorruption which he strove to secure, for his cover? It was the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ for which St. Paul proclaims by saying; "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). And elsewhere he says; "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4).

This very newness of life did our Holy Father Onuphrius follow, namely the path of the Gospel. And the path of the Gospel is no other than the path of incorruption and of eternal life. Let us hear the hymn writer saying; "Thou madest thyself a temple altogether luminous with the virtues, O righteous and all-blessed Onuphrius, flashing lightning-like with eh far-shining radiance of the clear and divine beams of Godlike miracles". And again; "Apprehending the illumination of Christ with an inspired mind, thou joyfully dweltest in the desert as in Paradise, putting forth shoots of incorruption."

Our Father Onuphrius became co-heir of the glory of the Son and Word of God the Father, not only because of the power of his faith, but also because of his harsh ascetic striving, and of course through the help of the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul preaches; " The Spirit [of adoption] itself beareth witness

with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:16-17). In other words, we become co-heirs of Christ if of course, we co-suffer with Him, in order to be glorified together with Him.

The holy festal commemoration by our holy Church of its saints, as our Holy Father Onuphrius, is not a commemoration of worldly events and historic persons, but rather a witness of the life in heavens, namely of " the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Hebrews 12:23).

This witness, my dear brothers and sisters, are we called to join, heeding to our Holy Father Onuphrius on the one hand; and hearkening to the words of wise Paul on the other, saying; "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Hebrews 13:14).

This means that the one bearing the name of Christ should continuously strive, praying unceasingly, hearkening to the words of the Lord in the book of Revelation of St. John: "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). In other words, the one who belongs to the mystical body of Christ, namely the Church, should not neglect his spiritual duties for the sake of the worldly matters. And this is so because the danger of his spiritual death is always lurking.

Interpreting the words of St. Paul, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor. 12:27) and "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called" (Ephes. 4:4-5), St. Gregory of Sinai says: just as the body without the spirit becomes dead, likewise, the one who neglects the commandments of the Lord becomes dead in the spirit and remains without the power and the light of the Holy Spirit and

the grace of Christ.

Because we, my brothers and sisters, through the Holy Baptism have been born children of light and sons of day (1 Thess. 5:5), let us not sleep the sleep of indifference and carelessness, as those who do not know Christ do, but let us be vigilant and sober, according to St. Paul's advice; "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. 5:6).

Let us imitate the vigilance, the abstinence, the fasting and the wakefulness, as well as the unceasing prayer of today's honoured, our Holy Father Onuphrius, as well as our Holy Father Peter of Mount Athos, and along with the hymn writer say; "As Angels in the flesh who dwelt in the hosts incorporeal, ye lit the desert like stars flashing in the night with your ascetic pains and toils. Now O God-bearing Fathers, importune God's great mercy for us who sing your praise, Onuphrius and Peter while crying out: Alleluia". (And along with our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary who prays for our souls). Amen."

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a procession inside the Monastery and a memorial service for the repose of the souls of the founders of the Monastery and Nun Seraphima who has recently slept in the Lord, as well as a prayer for the blessing of the fruit.

After the Divine Liturgy the good keeper and renovator of the Monastery Abbess Paissia offered a reception to the Patriarchal Entourage and the congregation at the hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General