

THE FEAST OF THE UNIVERSAL EXALTATION OF THE SACRED CROSS

On Friday, September 14/27, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Universal Exaltation of the Sacred Cross.

On this feast the Church commemorates that fact that after the construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre by Saint Helen, on the day of the Consecration in the year 336, the Sacred Cross of Christ that was found on Golgotha was “exalted” so that the crowds of all faithful would see it from afar.

This feast was celebrated by the Patriarchate as “Parresia”, with Vespers in the evening and the Divine Liturgy on the Feast day, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Both Vespers and the Divine Liturgy were officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

Vespers began with the welcoming reception and veneration of the Holy Deposition and the All-holy Tomb, with the bells tolling, the incense offering procedure and the Blessing of Bread at the Catholicon.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Catholicon, where co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Archbishops of the Throne, Most Reverend Metropolitans; Isychios of Kapitolias, and Timotheos of Bostra, the Most Reverend Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Theodosios of Sebastia, Demetrios of Lydda, Philoumenos of Pella and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, visiting Archbishops from the Patriarchate of Moscow, the Patriarchate of Serbia and from the Church of Greece. Likewise, co-celebrants were the

Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark, 5 more Deacons and many Priests from Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, and Serbia. The Services were attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and the full congregation of a great multitude of pilgrims, despite the unacceptable hindrance of the Armenians.

After the Divine Liturgy the Procession marched toward the area of the Cave of the Finding of the Sacred Cross where the Exaltation of the Sacred Cross took place according to the Typikon order.

The Procession then marched three times around the Sacred Edicule and then up to the Horrendous Golgotha where there was again the Exaltation, by His Beatitude. Starting from the Holy Altar of Golgotha the Cross was exalted and turned to the four points of the horizon with a special prayer in each of the four exaltations. Many pilgrims venerated the Sacred Cross with the piece of the Sacred Wood in great joy and reverence and received basil leaves as a blessing from the disc where the Sacred Cross was placed.

After the Divine Liturgy the Patriarchal Entourage returned to the Patriarchate in joy and gleefulness, bells tolling.

There the pilgrims paid their respects to His Beatitude, and received His blessing, hearing the following address of His;

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14) St. Paul says.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

Our Holy Orthodox Church celebrates today the universal Exaltation of the Honoured and Life-giving Cross, which took place by Saint Makarios, Archbishop of Jerusalem at the presence of Saint Helen the mother of the Byzantine Emperor, Saint Constantine the Great.

We celebrated today this great event of salvation at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where the Horrendous Golgotha lies, where the Sacred Cross was placed and later found by Saint Helen the Equal to the Apostles.

The one who "was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12:4), says; "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14).

Interpreting these words of St. Paul, St. Chrysostom says; "and what is the boasting in the Cross? That Christ received for my sake the form of a servant and suffered all His sufferings for me, the slave, the enemy and ingratitude, but He loved me that much, so that He delivered Himself for me."

In other words, all our hopes are based on the Cross. The Cross fortifies and encourages us, because our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ received our infirmities and through His blood on the Cross restored our human nature from the corruption of sin. Through the Cross, the whole creation was restored, and the humankind was restored as well. "For this Wood (the Cross) is our salvation, the weapon of peace, the trophy invincible" the hymnographer says.

"Indeed, the Cross, which our Church exalts in all boldness today, is a weapon of strength and victory but also a symbol of glory and an instrument for the abolition of the rejoicing in the boasting, as St. James the Brother of God says: "But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil" (James 4:16).

Our Lord Jesus Christ became the model man of self-denial and outmost humility on the Cross, and through the Cross, because “He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philip. 2:8).

The sacred feast of the Exaltation of the Sacred Cross calls us today in this cause, to the exaltation of the earthly toward the spiritual and redeeming works of the soul, to the exaltation of the corrupt to the incorrupt and eternal goods.

Moreover, this is what the Life-giving Cross of Christ advises us through the Lord’s words; “And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (Matt. 23:12).

As for us, let us say along with the hymn writer: “Thou Who was raised up on the Cross of Thine own will, and through the Cross Thou hast also raised us up, grant us the heavenly joy and have mercy on us for Thou art good and loving-kind”. Amen. Many Happy Returns!”

From Secretariat-General