

THE CONSECRATION OF THE HOLY CHURCH OF SAINT SAVVAS IN YAFFAAN NASIRAH OF NAZARETH

On Saturday, September 29/ October 12, 2019, the Consecration of the Holy Church of Saint Savvas the Sanctified was held, at the Greek Orthodox Arab-Speaking Community of town Yafaan Nasirah, near the city of Nazareth, where our Lord Jesus Christ lived and because of which, He was called Nazarene.

This Holy Church, initially built in the 12th century, and now renovated and dedicated to Saint Savvas, reminds us through its presence and name of the fact that the pastoral activity of St. Savvas, which began in the 5th century from his great Monastery-Lavra in Judea, had also reached Galilee, where he constructed Churches and Monasteries, according to his biographer Cyril of Skythopolis.

According to the typikon order of our Orthodox Church, the service of the Consecration was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of the local Metropolitan His Eminence Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, among whom Archimandrite Artemios, the Supervisor of this Community Steward Fr. Gabriel Nadaf, and from afar, the Spiritual Father of the Lavra of St. Savvas Archimandrite Eudokimos, who brought the relics of the slaughtered Fathers of St. Savvas' Monastery, for the Holy Altar, the Master of Ceremonies Archimandrite Bartholomew, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the Novice Monk Constantine in Greek and the Nazareth Community choir in Arabic, with the participation in prayer of the Community members and faithful from many

parishes of Nazareth and Galilee.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon before the Holy Communion;

“By means of His coming, Christ hath filled all things with His light; our souls are now consecrated and by His Holy Spirit He hath renewed the world; for a house is founded to the Lord’s praise and glory, wherein Christ our God, for the salvation of mortals, doth consecrate and hallow the hearts of all His faithful flock” the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

Today the grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in the neighbouring to Nazareth town of Yaffea, in order to consecrate the newly built Church of St. Savvas the Sanctified for the glory and honour of the Holy Trinitarian God.

On Mount Sinai, this very Lord, our God, showed Moses a tabernacle made of no human hands, outlining the Church of Christ, which according to St. Paul is the mount of Spiritual Zion, and the city of the Living God (Hebrews 12:2). And according to the witness of Evangelist Mark, Jesus Christ told His Disciple Peter: “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). And this is so because the Church is the mystical body of Christ, and Christ is the head of this body as St. Paul preaches; “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23).

The hymnographer of the consecration of the Church accurately states the meaning of this event, calling upon the gospel words of St. John the Theologian who says; “When the Word

dwelt among us in the flesh, the Son of Thunder spake thus in his writings: we have radiantly beheld the glory which the Son hath from the Father in the grace of truth. And as many of us as have received Him with faith, to all hath He given the power to become children of God; and we, who were born again not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but have received the increase by the Holy Spirit, have raised up this house of prayer, and cry out: Do Thy Thyself now establish this house O Lord".

In other words, today, we that have been reborn through the Holy Baptism and have put on Christ, have made a house, a Church of prayer, where the heavens rejoice and the earthly things are made glad; the creation is being blessed and the Creator is being worshiped, and where lies the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

Nevertheless, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). And the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of Christ is the One who holds together the whole constitution of the Church as the hymn writer says; "The Holy Spirit provideth all things; He gusheth forth prophecy; He perfecteth the priesthood; he hath taught wisdom to the illiterate. He hath shown forth the fishermen as theologians. He holdeth together the whole constitution of the Church. Moreover, the Lord confirms this through the mouth of Prophet Ezekiel saying: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

These prophetic words show that the service of the consecration refers to the consecration of our souls and bodies in the Holy Spirit. And we say this, hearkening to the preaching of St. Paul saying; "Know ye not that ye are the

temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defiles the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. 3:16-17), and elsewhere, "ye are the temple of the living God" (2 Cor. 6:16).

The consecration in the Holy Spirit, namely the "new heart" and the "new spirit" of Christ did our Holy Father among the Saint Savvas the Sanctified acquire, thus becoming a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, of "the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23). Behold therefore why the consecrated Churches are dedicated in honour of the holy and righteous people of God, and especially in honour of our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and Mother of God. "God is wondrous in His saints" (Psalm 67:36) the psalmist proclaims.

Indeed, God was made wondrous in His Saint Savvas the Sanctified, making him "a temple of the Living God" and an incorrupt relic fragrant of the "holiness in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 1:4) of the resurrection from the dead of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Today's consecrated Church of St. Savvas the Sanctified in the district of Nazareth, the town of the Annunciation of Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, is an irrefutable witness of the revealed mystery of old, for the love and philanthropy of God in the incarnate God the Word Jesus Christ, through the pure blood of the Full of Grace Virgin Mary.

Therefore, we cry out loud; "Great art Thou O Lord, and wondrous are Thy works, and no word sufficeth to praise Thy wonders". And along with Saint Sophronius the Patriarch of Jerusalem we say; "Today Paradise is opened unto men, and the Sun of Righteousness shineth upon us. Today things on high celebrate together with things below, and things below converse with things on high. Today the sacred and grandiloquent festival of the (Rum) Orthodox is glad". And

together with St. John Damascene we praise; "Hail thou O Holy Zion, mother of Churches, God's abode, for thou wast the first to obtain remission of sins through the resurrection".

In this house of God, the dwelling place of God, we are also invited my dear ones, by God Himself, our Saviour Jesus Christ Who says: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

We pray and beseech Thee o Lord, just as You has sent down Your glory to Your Disciples after Your resurrection from the dead and Your Ascension in heavens, renew a right Spirit within us, and uphold us with Thy free Spirit, and accept our prayers of repentance. Moreover, accept every bloodless and thanksgiving sacrifice offered to Thee in faith by all who love the decorum of Your house. Amen."

During the offered meal, His Beatitude addressed all present as follows;

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Your Excellence Mr. President of the Community,

Your Excellences, Representatives of the Government,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ

We rend glory and thanksgiving to the Holy Trinitarian God who has deemed us worthy for the consecration of the newly built Church, dedicated to Saint Savvas the Sanctified, in your town today.

Our joy in Christ is commendable day is indeed great. And this is so, because a good work is being offered to your town, and for the Christian community a house of worship and prayer. A house of God is being offered, where all those who labour and are heavy laden may find rest, as the Lord says; "Come unto

me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

And our joy in Christ is greater because the Church of the Living God (2 Cor. 6:16), namely of the reverend flock of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, gives its active witness, both through its participation in the liturgic life and practice of the church, and through the accomplished social and pastoral ministry under the spiritual guidance of Reverend Priest Fr. Gabriel (Nadaf) and his associates; and especially of the ministry of the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth who is the shepherd of your community.

The good cooperation between the spiritual shepherd and his flock, not only brought forth the good fruit, but also brought the completion of the construction and function of the presently consecrated Holy Church of St. Savvas the Sanctified.

Needless to say, that as a house of worship and prayer to the God of love and mercy, the Church is a guarantee of the identity of the members of the Community, especially of the youth.

And we say this, because the contemporary era of the rapid development of the electronic technology creates a confusion to the whole world and especially to the youth, and questions the great spiritual and moral values of the Holy Scriptures, which consist the inexhaustible source of the healthy faith in the God of love and philanthropy, as well as of endless mercy. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).

On this blessed opportunity, we would like to assure you, my dear brothers and sisters, that the Venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem remains faithful and dedicated to its holy mission of the safeguarding of the All-holy Shrines, as well as of its

pastoral care for its Christian flock.

Finally, we express our warmest thanks to all here present, in this great feast of the consecration, and especially to the women's associations, of the youth, the scouts, who made every effort for this event.

May the Lord God, strengthen and guide their actions to the working of His commandments, through the intercession of our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and of our Holy Father among the Saints, Savvas the Sanctified. Amen. Many Happy Returns!"

From Secretariat-General