

THE FEAST OF THE TRANSLATION OF THE RELICS OF ST. SAVVAS THE SANCTIFIED

On Saturday, October 13/26, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the translation of the relics of our Holy Father Savvas the Sanctified.

The translation of the relics took place on October 13/26, in the year 1965. At that time, one year after the meeting of the memorable Patriarch Athenagoras with Pope John Paul VI, after the lifting of the anathemas and the beginning of the theological dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem requested the return of the sacred relics of St. Savvas, which had been transported to Venice by the Crusaders.

The Roman Catholic Church granted this petition and the Saint's relics was returned to be welcomed by the full congregation at Jaffa Gate, offered for veneration at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for a week, and from there it was finally transported to the Lavra the Saint had founded, for the protection of the Fathers of the Lavra and of the pilgrims, as well as for their spiritual strengthening and sanctification.

For the celebration of this event, the All-night Vigil, with the Compline, Salutations, Matins and the Divine Liturgy were officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis and the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, and Hieromonks from other Orthodox Churches, Arab-speaking Priests, and the Hierodeacons Mark and Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the Choir leader of the Church of the Holy

Sepulchre Novice Monk Constantinos and the left choir singer of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos on the right in Greek, and by Archimandrite Philotheos on the left in Arabic, with the participation in prayer of the Spiritual Father of the Lavra Archimandrite Eudokimos, local faithful from Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, and pilgrims from Greece, Romania and Russia.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon before the Holy Communion;

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1-2) St. Paul preaches.

Beloved Fathers and Brothers in Christ,

Noble Christians and Pilgrims

Savvas the Sanctified “who has become a citizen of the heavenly metropolis” has gathered all of us in his holy Lavra, to celebrate the sacred commemoration of the translation of his holy relic from the Italian city of Venice.

The keeping of the commemoration of the translation of St. Savvas’ relic is a task both pleasing to God and a benevolence to us, who are subject to the corruption of death, by our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Hearkening to St. Paul’s advice, St. Savvas offered his body a living sacrifice, pleasing to God, offering at the same time a logical worship, namely the spiritual one, “which has nothing corporal, nothing fattening, nothing that can be felt” according to St. Chrysostom. This is confirmed by his biographer Cyril of Skythopolis by saying: “Predestined by God

from his mother's womb and foreseen before his body was formed, according to Prophet Jeremias, Savvas despised the things of this worldly life all together and offered himself in a monastery...where he was trained in the monastic life in precision he learned the Psalter and along with all the remaining coenobitic rules in no time".

His desire for reverence, namely the life in Christ, led Savvas from the town Moutalaski of Cappadocia to the God-trodden places of Palestine, where he learned the monastic life by the great teachers of the desert, the Holy Fathers Theodosios the Cenobiarch and Euthymios, and became their true imitator.

Bearing in mind St. Paul's wise advice; "that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2), the citizen of this desert Savvas scouted the forms of this era, namely wealth, glory and every temporary and corruptible thing, and instead he was zealous to perform the perfect will of God. Therefore the hymn writer of the Church says; "through virtues thou didst live outside both of the world and the flesh, and through thy life and virtues, thou didst glorify on earth they very Lord of Glory, O Father most wise, and thou rightly art glorified, O Savvas chosen of God; for in Him thou art a divine spring welling forth with cures".

And indeed, my dear brothers, St. Savvas has become "a spring welling forth with cures", a doctor for the sick and a healer of incurable diseases of both the soul and the body. A true witness of this is his incorrupt relic which lies before us, which gives a sacred fragrance and healing gifts, as St. Gregory Palamas says: "which word can worthily express God's glory that is revealed by the relics of the saints, by their continuous emitted sacred fragrance, the relics which are a source of myrrh, of healing, full of workings of powers, in multiple and redeeming for us epiphanies". [And in more detail; which words can clearly express God's glory which is

revealed by the corpses of the saints and the relics of the bones, a glory continuous throughout the ages, as well as the fragrance which is emitted from them, and the myrrh they gush out, the healing gifts and the workings of the powers and the many and redeeming healings that we experience through them?"]

Needless to say that the relics of the saints are a witness of the resurrection of the dead, "a commemoration of the righteous in praises" (Proverbs 10:7)., and "the souls of the righteous in the hand of God" (Wisdom of Solomon 3:1) according to the Holy Bible. And our Lord Jesus Christ says; "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matt. 22:32).

This true witness of the "God of the living" on the one hand and of "the resurrection of the dead" on the other, is being preached and evangelized to us by our Holy Father Savvas the Sanctified, who loved his Lord God with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his mind (Matt. 22:3) according to the Lord's command.

We are also called to this purpose, as we honour the commemoration of our Holy and God-bearing Father Savvas, so that we keep the commandments of our Saviour Jesus Christ and love His Church, because as St. John the Evangelist says: "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true" (1 John 5:19-20).

And we say this, because according to the psalmist, many say they love Him (God), "Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues" (Ps. 78:36).

Let us entreat the great citizen of the desert Savvas the Sanctified, who has boldness toward Christ our God, that he may intercede along with our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and

Ever-Virgin Mary for the light of our minds and peace of our souls. And along with the hymn writer let us say; "Thy very great and most honourable Lavra crieth out hymns of thanksgiving, bringing thee forward as its colonizer and founder and defender, O wise Savvas; and boasting int crieth out unto the Lord: Blessed is the God of our Fathers". Amen. Many Happy Returns!"

After the Dismissal and the boiled wheat in the Narthex, His Beatitude joined the monastic meal at the refectory and blessing everybody, departed via the Holy Monastery of St. Theodosios the Cenobiarch, according to the custom.

From Secretariat-General