

# THE FEAST OF SAINT JAMES THE BROTHER OF GOD AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, October 23/ November 5, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of St. James the Brother of God and first Hierarch of Jerusalem as his Throne feast.

St. James the Brother of God is known to the Church as the son of Joseph the betrothed of Theotokos and brother of the Lord, according to the law, and the one to whom the Lord Himself entrusted the shepherding of the Church of Jerusalem. According to the Acts of the Apostles he was the Chairman of the First Synod of the Church of Jerusalem in 49 A.D. He is the author of the epistle with his name in the New Testament, he confessed Jesus as the Son of God and Christ and was overthrown from Solomon's Temple wing and is being honoured as a Hieromartyr.

Honouring his work, the Church of Jerusalem celebrated his commemoration at his Holy Cathedral next to the Central Monastery with Vespers in the evening and the Divine Liturgy on the morning of the Feast, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and the Most Reverend Archbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia, and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Priests of the Cathedral; Fr. Farah/ Charalambos Bandour, and Fr. Hader/George Baramki, other Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Eulogios, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and the

participation in prayer of a large congregation from the Cathedral parish and pilgrims.

His Beatitude read the following Sermon to this congregation;

“The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever. The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment” (Psalm 37:29-30) the psalmist says.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The sacred commemoration of the righteous Apostle James the Brother of God has gathered us today in the Holy Cathedral dedicated to him, in order to offer a sacrifice of praise and bloodless Eucharist to the Holy Trinitarian God Who has performed great and wondrous things to His saints and righteous men.

St. James was distinguished as a tool of the working of the Holy Spirit, and this was so because he became the first Bishop of the Church of Jerusalem having been ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and was the first one to write the Divine Liturgy, having been taught by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as the synaxarist of the Church witnesses.

Paul, the Apostle of the nations, calls the righteous James a “pillar” (Gal. 2:9) of the Church, while his Catholic Epistle presents him as a teacher of a great standard among his readers. He received the name “Brother of God” because along with the other so thought brothers of Jesus Christ, he was a son of Joseph the betrothed to the Ever-Virgin Mary and Mother of God. Joseph had been married before with another woman. Because of his excessive asceticism, he had “his knees hardened just like those of a camel” because he prayed on his knees continuously, “worshiping God and praying for the remission of the sins of the people”. For his excessive zeal of

righteousness, namely of the faith in God and the good works, he was called "Righteous". "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" (James 2:14) he preaches in his catholic epistle, calling upon the connection between the man's body and soul and saying: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26).

In other words, faith without works is idle and dead, not only because it is empty from the manifestations that prove the existence of spiritual life to the one who believes, but because it is not able to work the salvation; it is impossible for the indifferent and idle faith to lead to the eternal life, as St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "Faith in Christ works righteousness and relieves from the stains of the previous sins. And if someone may be found to be idle and prone to fall into the passions of the world, it seems that in a way he has mortified the faith...regressing rather to the roughness and ruthlessness of his former life".

St. James was called "Righteous" not only because he believed the foretold prophecies written by the Prophets of the Law of Moses regarding the Son and Word of God, but he also became a communicant of the Passion of Christ, and of His martyr's blood, suffering a similar death to His, as St. Paul says: "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss ...that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Philippians 3:8-11).

Interpreting this sacred words, St. Chrysostom says that our Lord Jesus Christ is our righteousness. "Righteousness is God; and it is a complete gift". And St. James teaches, that God is the source of all good things given to us. "Do not err, my

beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:16-17).

Indeed, we should be sure that God, Who called us to become participants of the righteousness of His Son and our Lord Jesus Christ, is reliable, and keeps His promises, for this reason each one of us should trust Him without hesitation, as St. Paul says; "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9).

And our faith to God is being tested through our actions, as St. John Damascene says; "Faith without works is dead", likewise, works without faith are dead; for the true faith is being tested through works". For this reason, St. James recommends long-suffering and patience, calling upon the example of the hardships of the prophets and Job's patience. "Be patient therefore Brethren and grudge not one against another so that you may not be judged; behold the judge standeth before the door" (James 5:7-9). "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:10-11).

These apostolic words of St. James' preaching urge us to consider our Christian faith on the one hand, and on the other, our joining to the mystical body of Christ, namely the Church, whose one and sole and ultimate purpose is for us to become, according to St. Paul, "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), namely holy and partakers of Christ's life, having of course been relieved from the corruption of the world beforehand, which is created by the sinful desire. "Becoming one with God with the partaking of the divine illumination and without altering the divine essence" St. John Damascene explains.

In other words, my dear brothers and sisters, the believers of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, according to St. John the Evangelist, "are born of God" (John 1:13), or "of the Spirit of God" (John 3:5, 8), and God becomes their Father (Eph. 2:18/ Rom.4; 12) and therefore they become heirs of the Kingdom of God. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17) St. Paul says.

Honouring today the sacred commemoration of "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1) the Apostle who preaches that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16), let us entreat along with the Mother of God and the hymn writer and say: "Distinguished among the Apostles as the brother and successor of Christ the Chief Shepherd, thou didst love death for His sake, and wast not ashamed of martyrdom, O glorious James. Entreat Him unceasingly that our souls be saved" and grant peace to our tested by war region. Amen.

After the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude, dressed in His Patriarchal vestments, and His Entourage returned to the Patriarchate Reception Hall, through the courtyard of Saint Constantine and the main gate of the Patriarchate. The Patriarchal Entourage and all faithful following them received the traditional small loaf of bread as a blessing from Abbess Seraphima.

At the Patriarchate Reception Hall, there was a special prayer by His Beatitude and His Entourage, the polychronion of His Beatitude was chanted and then a reception followed, where His Beatitude delivered the following address;

"James who was His (Jesus') brother appears that he was not distant from Him, nor foreign to the faith to Him, but on the contrary he was one of His most genuine disciples; so much so, that he was the first to be distinguished in the throne of the Church of Jerusalem" Eusevios of Caesarea mentions in his writings (Vol. 21, p. 380).

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem honours and venerates today the sacred commemoration of its first Hierarch, Spiritual Father, teacher and distinguished Apostle James the Brother of God. Being one of the most genuine of Christ's disciples, he was anointed by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself a minister of the spiritual sacraments, a High Priest, and was established the first Bishop of the Church of Jerusalem by the chorea of the Apostles, as his hymn writer says: "Thou has manifestly adorned the choir of the Apostles as the first high priest of Jerusalem, anointed by the very hand of the Word, as God's brother and disciple, and a sacred preacher of great mysteries".

St. James' festal commemoration refers not only to the institution of the Church which is inseparable to the Apostolic succession, that of the Bishop and Patriarch of Jerusalem, but also to the safeguarding of the religious and sacred Status Quo of the Holy City of Jerusalem, namely of its Christian demographic character.

St. James, who was called "Righteous" sealed the Throne of the Church of Jerusalem with his martyr's blood, becoming a co-martyr to Christ, Who is the mystical body and the head of the Church.

Our settlement by the mercy of God in the Bishop's Throne of St. James as his successor, bears witness to the true words of the Lord in the Gospel: "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it", namely of the Church (Matt. 16:18).

Therefore, all of us who live in Jerusalem (Luke 24:18) and witness "the Name above all names" (Phil. 2:9), the name of

our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, are called to pay heed to the words of St. James the Brother of God whom we celebrate today; "Have long patience, therefore Brethren and stablish your hearts unto the coming of the Lord" (James 5: 7-8). Amen.

**From Secretariat-General**