

THE CUTTING OF THE NEW YEAR CAKE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

At 6.00 p.m. of the last day of the year, December 31, 2019/January 13, 2020, the ceremony of the cutting of the New Year Cake was held at the Reception Hall of the Patriarchate.

Present at the ceremony were the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, Hagiotaphite Archbishops and other Hagiotaphite Fathers, Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Priests and Stewards of St. James' Cathedral, local members of the Community of Jerusalem, Monks and many pilgrims, who filled the Hall.

In the beginning of the ceremony, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem addressed those present as follows;

"But hath [God] in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour" (Titus 1:3), Saint Paul says. "In due times manifested it, meaning the eternal life; for the Gospel encompasses all things, what is given to us in the present time...and those of the future, which lead to eternal life" Saint Theophylaktos says, interpreting Paul's words.

The grace of the God-receiving Cave in Bethlehem, where we recently celebrated the great mystery of the Incarnation of God the Word and our Saviour Jesus Christ from the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Mary, has gathered us all in the Sacred Seat of our Venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem, in order to thank once more the Holy Trinitarian God for the beginning of the New Year of His Goodness.

We say "the entrance of the New Year, of His Goodness", because according to wise Paul, "according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the

Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:5-6).

This means that the Holy Church of Christ, which is His mystical God-human body, comprehends and interprets the meaning of the historic Time, which is in accordance to the earthly life of the man in Christ and for Christ, as St. Paul preaches: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4-5).

In other words, our historic Time as the completion, namely, the decision of the wisdom of God on the one hand, and as a reward – according to Ecumenios – of our adoption from on high and by promise, as it was owed on the other, becomes fully comprehensive as the beginning, the middle and the end. And this is because – according to Paul – "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

The Incarnate God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, being without beginning and through His Incarnation with a beginning, He is the present time in His Church, in Whom the past and the future of the current time is made obvious; "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Through these words of Paul, it is made clear that the Church introduces the eternity in Christ within our historic and worldly reality and is being expanded towards it. And within the Church, where as we mentioned before, the time becomes season (kairos), namely the quantity becomes quality, according to Ammonios, the memory of the past becomes memory in Christ. And the hope in the future becomes hope in Christ. For this reason St. Paul preaches and calls upon the words of Prophet Isaiah (49:8): "For he saith, I have heard thee in a

time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

This "accepted time and the day of salvation" refers to both the liturgical time of the commemoration and condescension of our Saviour Jesus Christ in our humankind, namely in His circumcision in the flesh, which is held in the passing of the time in a circle, and to the commemoration of our Father among the Saints Basil the Great Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, to whose honour we have the tradition in the Church to cut the New Year Cake, which bears his name in Greek (Vasilopita).

This festal, modest and joyful reception calls us to hear St. Paul's advice: "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:23-24).

Behold, my dear brothers and sisters the way by which we are called to celebrate the entrance of the New Year, bearing in mind "that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13). "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

Considering the notion of time rotation in Christ our God, let us entreat the Theotokos and Mother of God, the Ever-Virgin Mary, along with our Father among the Saints Basil, who beautified the morals of the people, to intercede to our Saviour and God Who was circumcised in the flesh, for the peace of the world and especially for the Middle East which has suffered much under the threat of war in our region. And with the hymn writer let us say: "all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord, God the Word, Who formed all things with ineffable wisdom, and brought them into being out of nothing" (Matins January 1st, Ode 8 Heirmos).

Have a good, happy, blessed and peaceful New Year 2020.

Many happy returns!”

Then, once the apolytikion of Christ’s circumcision “ Our human form hast Thou taken on Thyself without change...” and that of St. Basil “Thou sound hast gone forth into all the earth...” were chanted, His Beatitude cut the New Year Cake wishing “a blessed and peaceful New Year 2020”, and distributed the pieces to those present.

At that time the Patriarchal School of Zion students were singing the Christmas and New Year carols.

After the ceremony the students went around the Patriarchate and the Monasteries to sing the carols.

The ceremony of the cutting of the New Year Cake was also held at the Epitropikon, after Matins and the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great on Tuesday morning, January 1/14, 2020, which is the first day of the New Year for the Hagiotaphite Fathers, as well as another cake was cut during lunch time at the refectory of the Patriarchate.

From Secretariat-General