

# THE FEAST OF SAINTS IOANNIS AND GEORGE THE HOZEVITES

On Tuesday, January 8/21, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of Saints Ioannis and George the Hozevites with an All-night Vigil at their Holy Monastery, located on the left bank of Brook Chorath, on its route to the Dead Sea, near the town of Jericho.

The Honoured Saints contributed a lot to the rebirth of the monastic life in this Monastery; Ioannis was a former Bishop of Palestine in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and George came from Cyprus and renovated the Monastery from its ashes after the Persian raid in 614 A.D.

H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos honoured the Feast by officiating the Services, and the Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Constantine addressed Him as follows;

“Your Beatitude Father and Master with Your Reverend Entourage,

We celebrate today the Holy Owners of the historic Holy Lavra of Hozeva, who faithfully followed in their lives all things St. John Chrysostom refers to in the beginning of his speech on contrition and patience:

“I entreat you my brethren to believe in God’s providence not only from the present things, but also from those of the future. For the things of the present are fighting and striving and an arena; the future ones however, are prizes and crowns and awards. Just like the athlete in the track needs to fight the sweat and dust and the extreme heat along with the fatigue and discomfort, likewise the righteous in the present life needs to suffer a lot and suffer them all courageously,

if he wants to ascend to heaven and receive the reward for his hard work.”

Through holy patience, for which Paul the Apostle of Nations says: “tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope” (Romans 5:3-4), the saints won the fight over the passions, accomplished purification and apathy, defeated the world and secularism!

Moreover, through love in Christ which they had in abundance they healed the “wounds” of their fellow men, ascetics, monks under their obedience, and of many pilgrims! The love for our Lord Jesus Christ, which was projected to the fellow men, served them without toil and comforted the people in need.

Once more we will celebrate with a holy All-night Vigil these heroes of patience, of the wondrous beyond words asceticism and – primarily – of love toward Christ and man.

Your Beatitude,

Welcome!”

The All-night Vigil was officiated by His Beatitude, with co-celebrants His Eminences Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolas, and Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, along with Hagiotaphite Archimandrites and Priests from other Churches, as the chanting was delivered by Byzantine choir singers from Greece.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to the present congregation;

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27), St. Paul preaches.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Holy Fathers and noble pilgrims

Today the Holy Monastery of Hozeva, being a part of the river

Jordan district, has gathered us all in order to honour the commemoration of our Holy Father George the Hozevite in Doxology and Eucharist.

Today the Holy Monastery of Hozeva, along with its Righteous and Holy children and especially our Holy Father George, is rejoicing in gleefulness because with the Divine Epiphany of our Saviour Jesus Christ by the river Jordan, the humankind "was redeemed from darkness and illumined by the light of Divine knowledge".

Our Father George became a communicant and participant of this light of the Divine knowledge, namely of Christ, through his "firm and steadfast ascetical travails" in Hozeva desert, which is part of the wilderness of the river Jordan, where St. John the Baptist was preaching saying; "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:1-2). "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. But he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matthew 3:11).

And the One who "baptizes with the Holy Ghost and with fire" is no other than Christ, who – according to the witness of St. John the Evangelist – "was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). In other words, Christ is the natural light, while the Saints received the light by grace, as St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "[Christ] is by essence the Light, He did not partake of it by grace". Our blessed Father George partook of this light by grace, as his hymn writer says: "Delivered from darkness, thou hast been taken up to the unwaning light, O glorious George; and thou standest before the Almighty and Three-Sun Light with the orders on high, O blessed man, and thou delightest in the splendour that issueth thence and shinest like a fiery beacon upon us who hymn thee".

Our Holy Church, my dear Brothers and Sisters, honours and

venerates the commemoration of its Saints, because they shine brilliantly and illumine with the Divine brightness they have been issued, all those who have been baptized in Christ and have put on Christ, "the Only-begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages; light of light, true God of true God, begotten not made, con-substantial with the Father by whom all things were made" (The Creed).

Indeed, my dear brothers and sisters, "God is wondrous in His saints" (Psalm 67:36) and "wondrous are his witnesses" (118, 129) as the psalmist exclaims. And this is so, because the clouds of the righteous and of the saints of our Church are the citizens who have received the vision of the glory of God in heavens along with the Holy Angels, as St. Paul preaches; "For our conversation is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). Such a citizen, namely of the heavens, did our Holy Father George, whom we celebrate today, become, who cultivated the wilderness of the Jordan in Hozeva, transforming its stones into a holy spring of the Spirit, from which a multitude of saints, such as Ioannis, and Ioannis the New (from Romania) drank from its spiritual drink, as St. Paul says; "for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4).

The Holy Ancestors of God Joachim and Anna did also drink from this "spiritual Rock that followed them" and bore the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, from who our Lord Jesus Christ was born, who was baptized by St. John the Baptist in the river Jordan.

Through the intercessions of our righteous and God-bearing Hozevite Fathers, and especially of St. George, we are called to drink of that "spiritual drink". And along with the hymn writer let us say; "Thou, Who art the Light that enlighteneth all mankind, shining of Thyself with all splendour, O my Jesus, wast baptized in the Jordan's streams and shonest completely bright, as Thy Father's con-substantial Light, whereby all creation is enlightened, O Christ, crying to Thee:

Blessed art Thou Who hast appeared, our God, glory to Thee”.

The All-night Vigil was followed by a meal offered by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Constantine and his Monks.

**From Secretariat-General**