

THE FEAST OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, May 4/17, 2020, Sunday of the Samaritan Woman according to the Book of Pentecostarion, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the event when the Samaritan Woman met the Lord by Jacob's well in Nablus of Samaria. There, on the pretext of drinking water, the Lord revealed to her that He is the Living Water which brings eternal life, and that He is Christ the Messiah (John ch.4).

This year, this feast was celebrated under the limitations of the safety precautions for COVID-19, by the Hegoumen of Jacob's well and renovator of the Church of St. Foteini in Samaria, Archimandrite Ioustinos, at the place where the Holy relic of St. Philoumenos lies.

For this reason, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos did not go there, but instead, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Monastery of the Twelve Apostles in Tiberias, where He was warmly received by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Parthenios.

On these occasions, His Beatitude read the following Sermon:

"Thou who art invisible in Thin essence, the Word and Omnipotent, wast seen by men as a man born of the pure Mother of God, to call man back to the participation of Thy Divinity" (Midnight Service of the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, Ode 7, Theotokion).

"Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians

Today, on the fifth Sunday since Easter, we celebrate the feast of the Samaritan Woman, and glorify in Eucharist the

source of life, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who appeared incarnate as man, "in order to recall the nation of peoples from Adam's annulled curse".

Indeed, the Incarnate God the Word Who became man, released the peoples for the curse of the Old, the earthly Adam, and resurrected them along with Him by His Resurrection.

During His dialogue with the Samaritan Woman by Jacob's well: "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water"(John 4:10).

Interpreting these words of the Lord, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "He calls living water the potion of the life-giving [Divine] Spirit, by which alone, humanity...which has already been arid and barren from every kind of virtue...is turned back to the beauty of old and the once lost life-giving grace, blossoming with goods in many meaningful ways."

In other words, the "living water", namely the life-giving potion of the Holy Spirit, is the one which "cleanses the dirt of sin and clenches the flame of the passions, and heals the aridity and barrenness of unfaithfulness" according to St. Theophylaktos. Moreover, the life-giving potion or the grace of the Holy Spirit, is the one through which the perfection of man is being accomplished in Christ the new Adam.

Only through the grace of the Holy Spirit is man's soul able to return to the old beauty as St. Basil the Great says, when interpreting the psalm: "O Lord, by Thy will hast Thou granted power to my beauty"(Psalm 29:8).

"For I was good according nature; weak though I was through the treachery of the snake and became dead by the offence...However the true and amiable beauty does exist in the divine and blessed nature, which only the purified mind can behold".

“For the best beauty is at first the one of the soul, when the soul is decorated with the Holy Spirit”, St. Clement of Alexandria says.

The beauty of the soul in the Holy Spirit is no other than the transformation into divinity, in other words, the communion of the divine nature, as St. Maximus says: “God created us for this reason, so that we become communicants of the divine nature, and partakers of His eternity, and be made similar to Him according to the divine grace”.

Behold why Jesus told the Samaritan Woman: “whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14).

This very water, which is welling up to eternal life, namely to the grace of the Holy Spirit, did Jesus offer the Samaritan Woman, and she gladly accepted it, as Prophet Isaiah says; “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation” (Isaiah 12:3).

According to St. Cyril of Alexandria, in these words, Prophet Isaiah: “calls life-giving water the Word of God, while springs are the Holy Apostles and Evangelists and Prophets. And Christ is the salvation”.

The Samaritan Woman did not only accept the grace of the Holy Spirit, but she also became a preacher and an Apostle of the Lord’s preaching: “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth”(John 4:24).

Commenting of this verse, St. Chrysostom says: “When He [Christ] says “God is a spirit” He denotes nothing else but the bodiless nature. We must therefore worship this bodiless nature and offer unto Him from what is bodiless in us; namely from the soul and the purity of the mind...Do not therefore sacrifice sheep and cattle, but offer thy whole self a sacrifice unto God; for this is a living sacrifice, to present

...to God our bodies a true and proper worship (Romans 12:1)...crucifying yourself and refute and slaughter the illogical desires".

This is what became of the Samaritan Woman, who was named Foteini by Christ, namely, she entered the martyrdom of the love of Christ, as she was burnt along with her seven sons during the reign of the Roman Emperor Nero, receiving thus the crown of the passion on the Cross and the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Christ.

Let us then say along with the hymn writer; "the Well-spring of the principle of life, Jesus, our Saviour, came to the well of the Patriarch Jacob, and sought water from a Samaritan woman that He might drink. And when she answered Him that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, the wise Creator diverted her by the sweetness of His words rather to seek of Him the everlasting water, which, when she received it, she proclaimed to all, saying: Come and see the Knower of things hidden, God Who is come in the flesh to save man" (Pentecostarion, Matins of the Samaritan Woman, praises Glory).

Amen. Christ is risen!"

From Secretariat-General