

# THE FEAST OF SAINTS CONSTANTINE AND HELEN AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, May 21/ June 3, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy glorious God-crowned sovereigns and equal to the Apostles, Constantine and Helen, as a feast of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, since St. Constantine accepted the request of the Archbishop of Jerusalem Makarios at the First Ecumenical Synod in 325 A.D., sent his mother St. Helen to the Holy Land and especially in Jerusalem, and revealed under the idolatrous monuments the places of the Horrendous Golgotha and the Life-giving Tomb of the Lord. St. Helen built the Church of the Holy Sepulchre around them and the worship of the true God started immediately in that place. The Order of the Studious ones, namely of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, was settled at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and its mission is being continued throughout the ages, which is no other than the witness of the Orthodox faith and the preservation-safeguarding of the Holy Places.

This feast was celebrated in the afternoon with Vespers led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the participation in the prayer of all the Hagiotaphite Fathers.

After Vespers, everybody was offered boiled wheat and dry bread with wine at the courtyard of the Holy Church.

On the Feast Day, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the ministering Priests of the Church, the Typikon keeper of the Church Archimandrite Alexios and others, at the chanting of the Choir

Leader of the Church Archimandrite Eusevios and Hierodeacon Simeon, as the service was attended by Archbishops and other Hagiotaphite Fathers, and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Christos Sophianopoulos.

After Dismissal, a procession to the Patriarchate followed, while Abbess Seraphima distributed the small loaves of bread as a blessing at the main gate of the Central Monastery.

At the Patriarchate Reception Hall, His Beatitude addressed those present as follows;

“Not from man did great Constantine with his blest mother Helen receive the royal sovereignty but by God’s grace from Heaven. For he beheld the divine Cross as a bright flashing trophy. With it was he victorious over all who opposed him, and he destroyed the deceit and error of all the idols while making strong throughout the world Orthodox faith and practice”(Matins, exapostilarion).

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Christos Sophianopoulos,

Reverend Fathers and Brethren,

Noble Christians

Our Holy Orthodox Church, and especially the Church of Jerusalem honours and venerates today the sacred commemoration of the Holy glorious God-crowned and equal to the Apostles Great sovereigns Constantine and Helen.

For this reason, Our Mediocrity, surrounded by the reverend members of the Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, went to the Holy Church of Saints Constantine and Helen at the Central Monastery, and rendered glory and thanksgiving to the Holy Trinitarian God, with the celebration of the Mystery of the bloodless sacrifice, namely the Divine Liturgy.

Just like St. Paul, having been enlightened by the rays of the

Holy Spirit, King Constantine became equal to the Apostles and a preacher of the truth of the Gospel of Christ according to his word: "Having kept the holy faith, I partake of the light of truth. Guided by the light of truth, I comprehend the Divine Faith" as Eusebius of Caesarea mentions in his history.

The priceless contribution of blessed Constantine to the Church of Christ is not only confined to the marvellous publication of the Royal Decree, of 13th June 313, through which the Christians enjoy the freedom of exercising their worship, but also to the fact that Constantine summoned the First Ecumenical Synod of the Church in Nicaea, and honoured it with his presence. Moreover, he sent his mother, Augusta Helen to the Holy Land, where she found the Precious and Life-giving Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and erected the magnificent Church of the Holy Resurrection of Christ in the Holy City of Jerusalem, and that of the Nativity of Christ in Bethlehem.

For this reason, the hymn writer says: "As is due, we celebrate thy memory, O Constantine, thou equal to the Apostles, foundation and boast of all sovereigns. For being enlightened with the rays of the Spirit, thou didst brighten the whole Church of Christ, when thou broughtest the assemblies of the faithful from all parts, gathering them in the illustrious city of Nicaea" (Minaion May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> troparion of the Entreaty). "Thou wast the first of all the Christian kings to receive the sceptre from God; for His saving sign, which was hidden in the earth, was shown to thee, O blessed Constantine. By its might thou didst subjugate all nations and peoples underneath the Christians' feet, since thou didst truly have Christ's life-giving Cross as a weapon which no adverse power could conquer, and thereby thou also wast brought to our God" (Vespers, 1<sup>st</sup> troparion of stichera aposticha).

It is also noteworthy that the Saints Constantine and Helen

are those who made us heirs of the spiritual and redeeming chapter of Romiosyni, according to St. Paul's words: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"(Gal. 3:27-28).

Therefore, being grateful, we also say along with the hymn writer: "Rejoice, O great and all-wise Constantine (along with your mother Helen), thou fount of Orthodox Faith, that dost water continually all the lands beneath the sun with thy sweet and delightful streams. Rejoice, O root from which there sprouted forth the fruit that nourisheth Christ's most holy Church. Rejoice, thou most glorious boast and fame of all the fartherst ends of earth, first of Christian kings. Rejoice, thou joy of faithful men" (Matins, praises, troparion 1).

At noon there was a festal meal for the Fathers at the Patriarchate.

**From Secretariat-General**