

# THE FEAST OF ST. IOANNIS THE NEW HOZEVITE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, July 28/August 10, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of St. Ioannis the New Hozevite at the Holy Monastery of Hozeva, at the desert of brook Chorath, not far away from Jericho.

On this day the Church, and especially the Church of Jerusalem honours St. Ioannis from Romania, who came to the Holy Land and lived in strict fasting, silence and every virtue, becoming worthy of the gifts of clairvoyance and the working of miracles, as well as the incorrupt relics of his which is kept in this Holy Monastery.

He was canonized a Saint by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 2016.

An All-night Vigil was held to his honour, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with co-celebrants, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Constantine, Archimandrite Isidoros, other Priests and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod Hierodeacon Simeon and the Monastery Monks.

His Beatitude was welcomed by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Constantine. Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon;

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls”(Matt. 11:28-29) the Lord says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Our Holy Father Ioannis the New Hozevite, who became a vessel of the Holy Spirit and received by Him the working of miracles, has gathered us in the place of his asceticism to honour his sacred commemoration.

Our Holy Father Ioannis, toiling and burdened, retreated in the Holy Land and specifically in the river Jordan area, where our Lord Jesus Christ was baptized by St. John the Baptist "and the Holy Spirit confirmed the word" seeking his rest in Christ according to the Lord's words: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"(Matt. 11:28).

Interpreting these words of the Lord the God-bearing Fathers of the Church say; St. Chrysostom: " But the righteous live forever, and their reward is with the Lord; the Most High takes care of them. Therefore they will receive a glorious crown and a beautiful diadem from the hand of the Lord, because with his right hand he will cover them, and with his arm he will shield them"(Wisdom of Solomon 5:15-16).

In other words the rest of the righteous in Christ is no other than their entrance in the Kingdom of Heaven where "they reign along with the Lord...and Christ will crown those who believe in Him with unshakable Glory" St. Cyril of Alexandria says, commenting on Prophet Isaiah's words: "In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people" (Isaiah 28:5). This is also said by St. Paul in his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to Timothy: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing"(2 Tim. 4:8). And Apostle Peter too: "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away"(1 Peter 5:4).

Our Holy Father Ioannis received this crown of righteousness and of glory of God becoming a citizen of the heavenly city, the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22). And the crown of glory that fadeth not away and can be seen in St. Ioannis is his incorrupt fragrant relic, as St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "The good crown that fadeth not away is bestowed to the one who lives as he should; this blossom could not be contained by the earth."

Indeed, my brethren, the land of Hozeva could not contain this fragrant flower that fadeth not away, the corpse of our Holy Father Ioannis, because it has been clad with the incorrupt rest in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God the Word and our Saviour Christ. Behold therefore, the glory of our holy Church, behold the wealth of the Kingdom of God.

St. Ioannis accomplished his completeness because he was taught by Christ Himself the meekness and humility of the heart. "learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29) the Lord says.

This very meekness and humility of the heart we are also called to acquire, my dear Brethren, imitating our Holy Father Ioannis, as he became an imitator of Christ and managed his deification, becoming like the Holy great monastics George and Ioannis the Hozevites.

Along with the hymnographer let us say: "Thou, in taking the Lord's Cross upon thyself, and in following after Him to the end, didst never return in mind to the world or the things thereof; and thou slowest the passions with labours and abstinence, so preparing thyself as a temple for Christ our Lord. Hence thou wast rewarded, O divinely-wise with grace to heal all ills and to drive unclean spirits out, O God-bearer divinely blest. Intercede with Christ our God that forgiveness of all their transgressions be granted to them that with longing keep thy holy memory". Amen.

After the All-night Vigil a meal was offered.

**From Secretariat-General**