

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY HIEROMARTYR PHILOUMENOS THE HAGIOTAPHITE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, November 16/29, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy Hieromartyr Philoumenos at the Nablus shrine of Jacob's well in Samaria.

On this feast, the Church of Jerusalem commemorates the Holy Apostle Matthew along with Saint Philoumenos the Hagiotaphite. Saint Philoumenos came from Cyprus and having served as a Hagiotaphite in various shrines and in Jacob's well, where he suffered a martyr's death by an irreverent man in November 1979, and was canonized a Saint by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 2009 (Meeting 50/11-9-2009).

For this feast, the Divine Liturgy was officiated on Sunday morning by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences; Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Hagiotpaphite Archimandrites; Elder Kamarasis Nectarios, the Hegoumen of Beit Jala Ignatios, the Hegoumen of Saint Gerasimos Chrysostomos, Arab-speaking Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine singers of the neighbouring to the shrine Arab-speaking communities, as the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and people from the neighbouring areas, without any pilgrims due to covid-19.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let

them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles” (Psalm 43:3) the psalmist says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The Holy New-martyr Philoumenos the Hagiotaphite’s martyrdom for the light and the truth of Christ, has gathered us all today in the very place of his martyr’s blood, the biblical shrine of Jacob’s well, which is also the spring of the natural and spiritual water of the Samaritan Woman; we are here to celebrate the commemoration of the Saint and be found worthy of the grace of our God and Saviour Christ.

Longing for Christ, who sacrificed His life for the life of the world, Hieromartyr Philoumenos arrived in the Holy City Jerusalem from his country Cyprus, according to the prayer of Prophet David: “O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles” (Psalm 43:3).

His joining the Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood made our Father Philoumenos a faithful friend and earnest zealot of Christ’s love. His ministry, in both the holy shrines and in the communities of our pious Christian flock of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, was distinguished by his fear of God as well as for the divine zeal of the preservation of the healthy faith and the unadulterated apostolic tradition, following Saint Paul’s words to his disciple Timothy: “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so-called” (1 Timothy 6:20). “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us” (2 Timothy 1:13-14).

During his pastoral ministry, our Holy Father Philoumenos

never ceased to preach and act according to the redeeming word of the Gospel of our Saviour Christ, for the spiritual development of the Church flock, applying the Lord's words: "Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19). And it was his preaching for Christ the Son of God that provoked the hatred and rage of his murderers, during Vespers inside the chapel of Jacob's well, where the signs of his violent martyr's death are still vivid, witnessing the event.

The martyr's death of Saint Philoumenos was, in essence, a death of confession of Christ's Name, before those who refuse Him, the Son of God, the Messiah of the world "that God hath raised from the dead" (Romans 10:9). Therefore, Philoumenos's spirit, who completed his life in righteousness and faith, is placed in the chora of the Confessors who have their eternal repose in the Kingdom of Heaven. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (1 John 4:15), Saint John the Theologian preaches.

The fact that righteous Philoumenos became a confessor of faith is made clear since his martyrdom took place while he was chanting in boldness David's psalm: "In God will I praise his word: in the Lord will I praise his word. In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me" (Psalm 56:10-11).

Our faith, my dear brethren, is totally based on the true witness of Saint John the Evangelist, according to which: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him, that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood. And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever" (Revelation 1:5-6).

In other words, Christ is the incarnation of the divine love,

which is the reason of our salvation, namely of our liberation from the bonds of sin out of unfaithfulness in Jesus Christ, Who says: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter [the Holy Spirit] will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he has come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" (John 16:7-11).

To our question, 'who is the prince of this world' Saint Paul replies in his letter to the Thessalonians: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:3-4).

We were saved from the 'prince of this world' by the One Who loves us, Jesus Christ, through His sacred redeeming and martyr's blood, according to Saint John's testimony: "Unto him, that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever" (Revelation 1:5-6). Our Holy Father Philoumenos, a Priest of God, became a participant and a communicant of the Kingdom of God, through his blood. "The Martyr's death is a comfort for the faithful, boldness for the Churches, the composition of Christianity, abolition of death, proof of the resurrection, demon's ridicule, devil's accusation, the teaching of philosophy...and the root of every good work," Saint Chrysostom says.

As for us, who honour the Hieromartyr Philoumenos, who has boldness before Christ our God, let us entreat him along with the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and all his

co-martyrs and Saints, that they may pray for our souls, and for the protection of the whole world from the covid-19 plague. Amen. Many happy returns and a blessed Christmas-fasting period.”

After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen and owner of the magnificent Church of Saint Foteini the Samaritan Woman, Archimandrite Ioustinos offered a fasting meal.

From Secretariat-General