

# **HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS CELEBRATES THE D. LITURGY AT ST ONUPHRIOS' MONASTERY**

On Meat fare Sunday, 22 February / 7 March, 2021, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of Saint Onuphrius' Monastery.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated on the Sunday of the commemoration of the Last Judgement of God, according to the Gospel narrative of the Second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Onuphrius is located opposite Silouan's pool, at the potter's field, which was bought by the Jews with the thirty pieces of silver that Judas returned to them, when he repented his action of betrayal; this field was bought for the burial of the foreigners.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences the Metropolitans Kyriakos of Nazareth and Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Hagiotaphite Archimandrites Nectarios and Mattheos and Archdeacon Mark.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?... And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:37-40).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The Gospel narrative of this Sunday of the Last Judgement refers to the Second Coming of the Lord and the Last Judgement: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left" (Matt. 25:31-33) the Lord says.

Interpreting these words, Zigavinos says: "Therefore [the Lord] narrates all things regarding His Second coming to invoke fear and correction to those who hear Him". And Saint Chrysostom says: "Now they are not excommunicated ones, but all people are mixed together; however, their division then will be with exact precision". And Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "The sheep denote the chorea of the reverend faithful, who are loaded with the fruits of righteousness, just like the sheep are loaded with their wool".

Referring to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, Saint Peter says: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:10-13).

The Chief of the Apostles Peter urges us to keep ourselves

clean from the world in all our communication in it, as well as to train ourselves in reverence and every virtue. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness" (2 Peter 3:11). And again, Saint Peter advises thus: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Peter 3:14).

In these fatherly words of Saint Peter we distinguish God's righteousness, as well as His judgement, as Saint John the Evangelist also testifies: "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man" (John 5:26-27). And Jesus says: "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30).

Indeed, the judgement of our Lord Jesus Christ is just, because it stems from His righteousness, His holiness, as the Apostle Peter says to his fellow Jews: "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just" (Acts 3:14). In other words, those who denied Christ and His redeeming truth, will be judged by Him, as Saint Paul preaches: "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:12). "All unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17).

Moreover, those who believe in the truth, in the "Sun of righteousness", Christ, should "give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10). And this is because, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" (James 2:14), Saint James the Brother of God says.

Faith in the Living God, my dear brothers and sisters, cannot be confirmed without the divine righteousness, which is the final judgement of the people's actions, as Jesus Christ

Himself said: "Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? ... And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:37-40).

The least of Christ's brethren are Christ Himself, who put upon Himself our human flesh and suffered death on the Cross for our salvation. Saint Paul preaches: "so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death... For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection... Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" (Romans 6:3-6, 8). "and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16) Saint John advises. This means that the genuine Christians are distinguished by sincere manifestations of affection and sympathy through works, toils and sacrifices of selfless love. This way, my brethren, as Saint Gregory the Theologian preaches, "it is Christ we visit, it is Christ we heal, it is Christ we feed, it is Christ we clothe, it is Christ we meet, it is Christ we honour... but because the Master of all wants mercy and not sacrifice, and as compassion is better than myriads of well fed sheep, let us offer Him that, for the poor and the meek today, so that when we are freed from this life, they will receive us in the eternal tabernacles, in Him, Christ our Lord, to Whom belongs the glory unto the ages".

And let us say along with the hymnographer: "As I ponder the fearful day of Thy judgement and ineffable glory, I am altogether full of fear, O Lord, and trembling in terror I cry: Righteous Master, who alone are most merciful, accept me in repentance, by the intercessions of the Theotokos". Amen."

After the Divine Liturgy, the good keeper of the Monastery Reverend Abbess Paissia hosted a modest reception for His Beatitude and entourage.

**From Secretariat-General**