

THE FEAST OF THE ADORATION OF THE PRECIOUS AND LIFE-GIVING CROSS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday 22 March/4 April 2021, the 3rd Sunday of the Great Lent, the whole Church and especially the Patriarchate of Jerusalem celebrated the Feast of the Veneration of the Precious Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Church has instituted this feast in the middle of fasting so that with the Holy Cross's adoration, the faithful are strengthened in their struggle towards the reception of Holy Easter. Due to this fact, this Sunday is known as the Sunday of the Adoration of the Cross.

The Feast was celebrated by the Patriarchate with Great Vespers on Saturday afternoon, according to the Status Quo order of "Parresias", led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-prayer of Archbishops and the co-celebration of Hieromonks and Hierodeacons, as the chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon.

On Sunday morning the Feast was celebrated as "Parresia" according to the Status Quo, however, the time was shifted to 10.30 a.m. this year, due to the celebration of Easter by the Roman Catholic Church.

The Divine Liturgy was officiated at the Holy Sepulchre by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with their Eminences' co-celebration; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia, Demetrios of Lydda and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, and Deacons. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Gotsopoulos, as the

Service was attended by faithful Christians and His Excellency the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a procession, three times around the Sacred Edicule and then around the Shrines. The feast concluded with the return to the Patriarchate Reception Hall, where His Beatitude addressed those present as follows:

“The Cross is a trophy of Christ; It always drives away the demons. Where are the idols and the futile killings of animals? Where are the temples and the fire of irreverence? All fire was extinguished and everything collapsed due to one Holy Blood. Therefore, the Cross is a mighty power, an invisible arrow, an immaterial medicine, a source of healing any pain, an embarrassing glory”, Saint John Damascene says.

Today, on the 3rd Sunday of Lent, we celebrate the Adoration of the Precious and Life-giving Cross, therefore with the order of “Parresia”, we celebrated the bloodless sacrifice at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the very place of the Crucifixion and Resurrection of our Saviour Christ.

“Today the word of the Prophet is fulfilled: for seeing we worship at the place on which Thy feet have stood, O Lord: and tasting from the Tree of salvation, we have been delivered from our sinful passions at the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Thou who alone lovest mankind” (Triodion, 3rd Sunday, Matins, Ode 3, Kathisma 1).

Indeed, the Cross of Christ, as the tree of salvation, became the mighty power through which God the Father granted us the freedom in Christ. “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1), Saint Paul orders.

Through the Cross, we were liberated from “the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God”

(Romans 8:21). For this reason, the hymnographer says that as You were willingly hung on the Cross, Christ, for my sake, do not renounce me from adoption, but grant me forgiveness of my transgressions through Your Cross.

The Precious Cross, or the icon of the Cross, is not just a simple symbol of the Christian faith, but rather the incarnation of the Divine righteousness, namely God's conciliation with all creation on the one hand; on the other, it is the pacification through Christ's Blood on the Cross, either between the people and God, and of the people with each other, or between the people and the heavenly hosts, as Saint Paul preaches: "And, having made peace through the blood of his [Christ's] cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. 1:20).

Behold why our Holy Church, projects today in the middle of Great Lent, the joyous adoration of the Life-giving Cross.

As for us, let us say along with the hymnographer: "We mortals who died of old, through eating from the tree, are through Thy Cross restored to life, O merciful Lord. By its power, O loving Master, give us strength to pass through the season of abstinence with compunction, obedient to Thy will, and to see the day of Thy light-giving Resurrection" (Triodion, Friday of the 3rd week, Matins, Kathisma 1).

Many happy returns and Happy Easter!"

From Secretariat-General