

THE FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE APOSTLES AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, 30 June /13 July 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the Synaxis of the Holy Apostles.

By the word “Synaxis”, the Church does not mean the Gathering of the Apostles, but that of its faithful, in order to honour the twelve Apostles and Lord’s Disciples, for the mission they offered Christ and the Church, namely of the preaching about Christ and the spreading of the Gospel, through which they “didst draw the world into His net”.

The Church of Jerusalem was gathered for this feast at the Church of the Twelve Apostles in the centre of the city of Tiberias, on the northwest shore of Lake Gennesaret, the place of the appearance of the Lord after His Resurrection according to the 10th Matins Gospel (John 3:21).

There, on the feast day, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences: Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Archimandrites, Chrysostom, Artemios, Arab-speaking Priests from Nazareth district, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine choir of Acre under the lead of Archimandrite Philotheos, with the participation of Russian and Arab-speaking faithful Christians.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following sermon:

“Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the

ends of the world" (Psalm 19:4), the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The grace of the sacred chorea of the Holy glorious and all-lauded Twelve Apostles has gathered us today in this Holy place of the Tiberias Seashore, where Jesus stood (John 21:4) and where the Apostles' Monastery lies, to celebrate their commemoration.

In his "Revelation", John calls the twelve Apostles the foundations of the Holy city of Jerusalem, which is the Church; "And I saw a new heaven and new earth...And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband [Jesus Christ] ... And the wall of the city had twelve foundations and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rev. 21: 1-2, 14).

Talking about the mystery of marriage between a man and a woman, Saint Paul says; "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32). It is noteworthy that Paul compares the union of marriage with the mysterious and unbreakable union of Christ with the bride Church. Therefore, he preaches that the Church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:23) and He is the head of the body of the Church (Col. 1:18). Paul also says in his teaching that God the Father united the gentiles and the Jews in one Church through His Only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20).

From the aforementioned Biblical testimonies, we see the unbreakable relationship of Christ with the Church and the fundamental relationship between the Apostles and the Church

of Christ, His body. The Apostles received their calling from Jesus, not from the people: "Have not I chosen you twelve?" (John 6:70). "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matt. 10:16). The power given to the Apostles was gushing out from Jesus Christ Himself, Who said: "take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Matt. 10:19-20).

The great and wondrous day of Pentecost on which the Apostles received the uncreated energy of the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4), made them vessels of the gift of the Holy Spirit and preachers of the Word of the Gospel, and inaugurators of the Churches that were founded all over the world, along with the Bishops who were ordained and established by the Apostles.

"We are made as the filth of the world" (1 Cor. 4:13) as blessed Paul says about the Apostles, proven to "have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4:7), that they were "ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1), and that "this grace is given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:8-9), and moreover, that they are "the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ" (2 Cor. 8:23).

Indeed, the Apostles are the "glory of Christ" and therefore, of His Church, because upon their calling they were given "power against unclean spirits" (Matt. 10:1) and "over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19). And before his separation from His disciples, the Lord said to them: "These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the

Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:25-26).

Interpreting these words, Cyril of Alexandria says: "the perfect and precise revelation of the mystery is given to us by the Comforter, namely of the Holy Spirit Who was sent by the Father in His Name, I say of the Son, [and our Lord, Jesus Christ]".

This authority that the Apostles received by Christ upon their calling, as well as the perfect and precise revelation of the mystery of the Divine Providence, through the Comforter, namely the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, proves clearly the magnitude of the apostolic preaching on the one hand, and on the other, the extreme value of the Apostolic succession which brings together the institution of the divine-human body of the Church through the Holy Spirit.

Behold, therefore, why the Holy Apostles are the foundations of the Church of Christ and behold why the Holy God-bearing Fathers called the Church "Apostolic" in The Creed.

We, my dear brethren, who honour the commemoration of the Holy Apostles, would like to pray to our God and Saviour Jesus Christ and say along with the hymnographer: "Thou Who art Light that existed ere all ages, when Thou didst vouchsafe to come to me, the lowly man, through Thine ineffable love for man... Thine Apostle and disciples didst Thou then reveal as second lights brightly glittering with the resplendence and the dread lightning that flasheth froth from Thee; and being sent forth, they illumined all of creation with Thy light divine, O Lord. And they ever beseech Thee to enlighten and to save our souls" (Matins, praises, Troparion 3). And let us say to the Theotokos: "Thee do we bring forward as an indestructible weapon against our enemies; thee, O Bride of God, do we possess as the anchor and hope of our

salvation”(Matins, Ode five, Theotokion). Amen. Many happy returns!”

After the Divine Liturgy, the good carer of the Monastery Archimandrite Parthenios hosted a meal for the Patriarchal entourage.

From Secretariat-General