

THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday 28 February/13 March 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the Sunday of Orthodoxy as the triumph of the truth of Orthodox Faith through the restoration of the holy icons by the pious Empress Theodora and the Patriarch Methodios of Constantinople; the holy icons testify to the incarnate presence of the Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

This feast was celebrated with Great Vespers on Saturday afternoon as ordained by the Typikon and the Status Quo of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, and with the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Services were officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Archbishops, Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia and Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Deacons and Archdeacon Mark. The Liturgy was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, members of the Greek Consulate and many faithful, Greeks, Palestinians, Russians living locally, without pilgrims as there are still some covid-19 restrictions.

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a litany three times around the Sacred Edicule and around the shrines, which concluded in front of the Holy Sepulchre.

There His Beatitude read the "Synodicon of Orthodoxy" as it is written in the Book of Triodion, blessing the reverend Patriarchs, High Priests, Emperors and Priests who fought in favour of the holy icons and anathematizing, or delivering to God those who refused the holy icons and preached other

heretic teachings.

Bells tolling, the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters, where His Beatitude addressed all present as follows:

“We also depict in icons and reverently venerate the shape of our human form that He has taken, which we have felt and seen, and the One who bore Him whilst keeping her virginity, and those who have utterly pleased Him. The symbols of His passions and especially the Cross we hold and venerate as divine trophies against the enemy”, the God-bearing Father of the Church Saint Gregory Palamas preaches and confesses.

Your Excellency, Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

Today, the first Sunday of the Great Lent, we commemorate the historical event of the restoration of the sacred icons, which was done by the blessed Sovereigns of Constantinople, Mihail and his mother Theodora, during the Patriarchal Office of Saint Methodios the Confessor.

The victorious power of the Church against the iconoclasts was recognized as the triumph of the healthy faith of the Orthodox Christians against their enemies. We say this because the established doctrines by the Ecumenical Synods and the great Fathers of the Church about the precision of our Orthodox Faith has preserved and safeguarded the sacred consignment which we have received by the Disciples and Apostles of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem, being fortified and founded by the divine power of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb of our Lord Jesus pays heed to the Lord's words: “Blessed are they

that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28); it has been the safe harbour of the unity of our Orthodox Faith, not only on the doctrines' side but also on the part of the bestowed grace, as Saint Cyril of Jerusalem teaches.

Behold, therefore, why the Holy Church of Jerusalem calls upon all those who want to venerate the Holy Sepulchre and the other sacred shrines of our Saviour Jesus Christ and His Most Holy Mother, to receive their grace. "The honour to the icon is attributed to the prototype", Saint Basil the Great says. In the same manner, the veneration of the holy shrines is attributed to Christ, the Theotokos and the Saints. "By kneeling down we venerate not the material but the image depicted," Saint John Damascene says (just as we do not venerate the material of the Gospel, nor of the cross, but the image of the Lord).

We, both clergy and the people, who are gathered here at the place of the passion on the Cross, of the burial and the resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ, namely at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, have celebrated the great sacrament of the Divine Liturgy, rendering thus thanksgiving praise and doxology to the Trinitarian God.

Let us say along with the hymnographer, celebrate, feast, the people of God bearing His name, seeing the Church again shining forth the beauty of the divine image, which God received as a man to save us. Many happy returns and a blessed Lent. Amen".

From Secretariat-General