

THE FEAST OF THE ADORATION OF THE HOLY CROSS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, 14th /27th March 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Sunday of the Adoration of the Sacred Cross at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

This feast has been ordained by the Church to be celebrated in the middle of the Holy and Great Lent so that the faithful may receive strength from the protection of the Holy Cross in the struggle of the fast.

This feast was celebrated on Saturday afternoon with the Service of Great Vespers, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. The service included the welcoming reception and the veneration of the Holy Deposition slate, the Holy Sepulchre and then the bells, incense offering procedure, Great Entrance and Blessing of bread, with the co-prayer of High Priests and the co-celebration of the Hagiotaphite Hieromonks.

The feast concluded with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning at the Holy Sepulchre, which was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Metropolitan Ivan from the Patriarchate of Serbia, the Archbishops, Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Theodosios of Sebastia, Nectarios of Anthedona, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, and those from the Patriarchates of Moscow and Romania, Priests from other Orthodox Churches, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Gotsopoulos and the service was attended by members of the

Jerusalem Community and some pilgrims, along with a group of Rum-Orthodox Arab-speaking faithful from Ai-Labun under the lead of Fr. Spyridon.

The Divine Liturgy concluded with a litany three times around the Holy Sepulchre and the shrines.

Finally, the congregation went to the Patriarchate Reception Hall where His Beatitude delivered the following address:

“In Paradise of old the tree stripped me bare; for by giving me its fruit to eat the enemy brought in death. But now the Tree of the Cross that clothes men with the garment of life has been set up on earth and the whole world is filled with boundless joy. Beholding it venerated, O ye people, let us with one accord raise in faith our cry to God: His house is full of glory!” the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (Matins, Triodion, Troparion 1).

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

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Noble Christians,

Our Holy Church celebrates the 3rd Sunday of Lent, the day of the adoration of the Sacred Cross, in the middle of the period of the Holy Lent.

The wood which stripped us bare from paradise and brought in death, this very wood became the Cross of our Saviour Christ, bringing to us the garment of life. And this because according to Saint Theodore the Studite, “the Church has been revealed as a second Paradise, having within it, like the first Paradise of old, a tree of life, Thy Cross, O Lord. By touching it we share in immortality” (Triodion, Ode 5, Troparion 4). This immortality is no other than Christ Himself, “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light

which no man can approach unto" (1 Timothy 6:16), according to Saint Paul.

We also become participants of the energy of this light that no man can approach unto, my dear brethren, through the veneration of the Sacred Cross. And this because, as Saint Paul says, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:23-24).

Precisely because the life-giving Cross brings along with It the divine righteousness and power of the One Crucified on It, It has become a weapon against the devil, that is why Saint Paul preaches thus: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). And the hymnographer joyfully exclaims "Today the ranks of angels dance with gladness at the veneration of Thy Cross. For through the Cross, O Christ, Thou hast shattered the hosts of devils and saved mankind" (Triodion Ode 5, Troparion 3). According to Saint John Damascene, the sacred wood of the Cross is "truly sacred, where Christ brought Himself a sacrifice for us...and it has been sanctified by the touch of the Holy Body and Blood". That is why "we venerate the type of the Sacred and Life-giving Cross, even if it is made of a different material, not worshipping the material [let it not be so] but the type of as a symbol of Christ".

Today the Holy Church of Christ projects the Sacred Cross in adoration, which we, who live in the Holy City of Jerusalem "have worshipped at the place of His footstool" (Psalm 132:7), that is the Holy Church of the Resurrection, in order to receive grace and power to complete the struggle of the Holy Lent. Let us then say along with the hymnographer: "What shall we offer Thee, O Christ? For Thou hast given us Thy Precious Cross to venerate, on which Thy Holy Blood was shed, to which Thy flesh was fixed by nails. With love, we kiss it and give

thanks to Thee” (Triodion, Ode 4, Troparion 4).

Amen. Many happy returns and a Happy Easter!”

From Secretariat-General