

THE REPATRIATION OF THE RELIQS OF SAINT SAVVA THE SANCTIFIED

On Wednesday, October 13/26, 2022, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem celebrated the feast of the repatriation of the relics of our Holy Father Savva the Sanctified.

On this holiday, the Church of Jerusalem celebrates the fact that the holy relic of Saint Savva, preserved incorruptible and intact to this day, was taken by the Crusaders to Venice and was returned under the authority of the Roman Church to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem on October 26, 13 1965. A solemn reception was then held for the holy relic at Jaffa Gate. After this, it was placed for veneration at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for a week and then returned to the place where it belonged, the Lavra, which Saint Savva founded, for the sanctification and help of its monks and pilgrims.

On the eve of the feast, Vespers was officiated by His Eminence, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, and at night there was an all-night vigil, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, along with Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Arab-speaking Priests. The chanting was delivered by Archimandrite Antypas from Mount Athos with Hierodeacon Simeon and his helpers in Greek on the right and Archimandrite Philotheos and his choir in Arabic on the left, at the presence of pilgrims from Greece, Romania and from Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: Sing forth the

honour of his name: make his praise glorious" (Ps 66,1-2) the psalmist proclaims.

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The grace of our Holy Father Savva the Sanctified has gathered us all in his holy Lavra to celebrate the great event of the repatriation of his holy relics.

Our Father Savva became a citizen of the desert and "an angel in flesh" because he applied in both theory and action the urging words of Saint Paul: "ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3, 1-4).

Having as a foundation Paul's healthy words, "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3, 1-2), Saint Savva showed Godly zeal and self-denial on the one hand, and on the other, he excelled among his co-ascetics the monks, because he was "strengthened with might by [God's] Spirit in the inner man" (ref. Ephes. 3,16).

In addition, Saint Savva was called "sanctified" because he sought the sanctification according to the saying "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12,14). "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification (1 Thess. 4,3), Saint Paul preaches again.

Moreover, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself says in His prayer to God the Father about His disciples and those who believe and

follow Him: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17,17). Here the truth is Christ's Spirit, the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit is the truth" according to the voice of John the Evangelist (1 John 5,6), Saint Cyril of Alexandria interprets.

In the reply of the Holy Church Fathers about what the sanctification of those who love God means, Saint Basil the Great says: "Sanctification means to devote ourselves to the Holy God wholeheartedly and without separation at all times, through the care and study of the things pleasing to Him". And Saint Gregory the Theologian says: "Sanctification is living along with God".

In other words, without the sanctification by the power of the Holy Spirit, man is unable to see God, namely the unapproachable light. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8,12), the Lord says. And the Saint's hymnographer says that the God-bearing father was seen from his early infancy to be a sanctified vessel, our Father and a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, my dear brethren, our Father Savva was seen and appeared to be a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Behold the true testimony and the visible proof before our eyes, his incorrupt and fragrant full body of his relics. Behold the light, the true light, the light of life "Thou art near, O Lord; and all thy commandments are truth" (Ps. 119,151), David chants. "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?" the Prophet Jeremiah announces (Jeremiah 23,23).

With today's feast of the repatriation of Saint Savva's relics from Venice of Italy at the place of his monastic striving, all of us are called to draw nigh to God, because He is a God that is near us. The way of our approaching the good God and friend of man is shown to us by Saint Savva the sanctified through the words of Saint Paul "dearly beloved, let us

cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7,1). Many happy returns."

After the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, a monastic meal followed.

Giving thanks to God, His Beatitude received the thanks of the Fathers of Saint Savva's Lavra and returned to Jerusalem.

From Secretariat-General