

THE FEAST OF SAINT JAMES THE BROTHER OF THE GOD AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, October 23 / November 5, 2022, the Feast of the Holy Glorious Apostle James the Brother of God was celebrated by the Patriarchate, which is the Enthronement Feast of the Patriarchate, as Saint James was the first Bishop of the Church of Jerusalem.

On this feast, the Church of Jerusalem commemorates that Saint James was ordained its bishop by the Lord and that he presided over the First Apostolic Synod of Jerusalem, in the year 49 AD. He opened the doors of the Church to the nations and left as a legacy to the Church his Catholic letter in the New Testament and his martyrdom. Saint James confessed Jesus as the Christ and for this, the rulers of the Jews pushed him down from the wing of the Temple in the year 62 AD and killed him.

In his memory, evening Vespers were held in his Cathedral, the one between the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Patriarchate, in which H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos presided. The Divine Liturgy in the morning was also officiated by H.H.B. with concelebrants their Eminences; Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias and the Archbishops; Arisarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebasteia, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the ministering Priests of the Cathedral, Fr Charalambos Bandour and Fr George Baramki, along with Priests from other Orthodox Churches. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon with the help of the Patriarchal School of Zion students in Greek and the Cathedral choir under Mr Rimon Kamar in Arabic, in the presence of the

Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and in the participation in prayer of many believers from the members of the parish of Saint James and pilgrims from Greece, Russia and Romania.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Enlightened with the fiery brightness of the Divine Spirit, thou didst prove to be a divine zealot of piety, O James, Brother of God. Wherefore, He that in His compassion received thee as a brother, clothed thee like Aaron of old, but with raiment more venerable than that of the priesthood of the Law. O thou who art glorious among the Apostles, entreat Christ that our souls be saved” the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (Menaion, Glory of praises).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all, the people of godly mind, to celebrate in Eucharist and Doxology the sacred commemoration of the Brother and disciple of the Lord, James the Just, who became the first Hierarch of the Church of Jerusalem.

Indeed, Saint James was established as a zealot or reverence by the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, namely a faithful disciple of Christ and preacher of the mystery of the Divine Providence, the foretold mystery of the Incarnation of God the Word, according to the Prophets of the Law of Moses.

This is clearly expressed in his Catholic Epistle to the twelve tribes of the Christian Jews that were dispersed around the nations, where he writes: “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting” (James 1:1).

The purpose of this Letter of Apostle James was the comfort of those suffering various trials and the control of abuses, the redress of deviations and “the form of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13) of the Christian doctrine and the redeeming true faith, which is no other than the wisdom that is from above. “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17). [In simple words, the wisdom that is given by God, is firstly pure from every impure incentive, then it is peaceful, indulgent and sympathetic to the ignorance and imperfection of others, willing to obey and free from stubbornness, full of mercy and good works, free from the hesitations of doubt, and alien to hypocrisy].

According to Ecumenios the interpreter, “the wisdom from above” (cf. James 3:17) is “pure and taintless, notwithstanding any of the carnal things”, in no way tolerating the carnal mindset, because it operates under the light of the power of the Holy Spirit, through Whom the heart of man is made pure. For this reason, Saint James invokes the power of prayer saying “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms” (James 5:13).

To confirm this, he refers to the example of the Prophet Elijah saying, “Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit” (James 5:17-18).

The Lord says to King Solomon: “And the Lord said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there forever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually” (3 Kings 9:3).

“In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving

let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6), Saint Paul advises. And our Lord Jesus Christ, Who showed us the manner of prayer, says: "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. 21:22).

And Saint James, who for his excessive righteousness was called "the Just", had had his knees hardened like those of a camel because he was unceasingly praying on his knees, "worshipping God and asking for the remission of the sins of the people".

Full of righteousness and piety, the according to the flesh relative of Jesus Christ, he was ordained the first Bishop of Jerusalem by the Lord Himself and was the first one to write the Divine Liturgy. During the first Synod of the Apostles and Presbyters in Jerusalem (Acts 15:6), Saint James stands out, having the leading role in the Church. His Priestly ministry and excellent apostolic work were sealed by his martyr's blood. During Passover's feast, he was called to testify before the people about Christ, and he confessed that Jesus is the Son of Man and sits at the right of God's greatness.

In his Letter to the Galatians, Saint Paul calls James the Just "a pillar" of the Church (Gal. 2:9). He does so, due to James' leading status, the spiritual authority of the interpretation of the teaching of Christ, on the basis of which the Christian community was organized in the Holy Land and in Jerusalem. It is also noteworthy that James calls himself a servant of Christ: "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1). And according to Saint Paul, "For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise, also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant" (1 Cor. 7:22).

This very phrase of Saint James "a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ" is embodied and witnessed by the Christian Community throughout the centuries, knowingly and consciously, that is, members of the living body of the local Church of Jerusalem.

This very freedom in Christ from the bondage of corruption (Romans 8:21) is also testified today by the festive commemoration of the Holy Glorious Apostle James the Brother of God and the first Hierarch of Jerusalem.

Let us, therefore, say along with the hymnographer, "Distinguished among the Apostles as the brother and successor of Christ the Chief Shepherd, thou didst love death for His sake, and wast not ashamed of martyrdom, O glorious James. Entreat Him unceasingly that our souls be saved" (Vespers, aposticha Glory). Amen! Many Happy Returns!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by the ascent to the roofs of Saint Constantine, where the Bishops were waiting and escorted His Beatitude to the Patriarchate, passing through the Gate of the Central Monastery, and receiving the small loaves of bread as a blessing of the Patriarchate's bakery from the baker Gerontissa Seraphima.

At the Patriarchate's Main Hall, His Beatitude addressed those present with the following address:

"Thou didst set forth the law of life for the Church of Christ, ordaining and proclaiming it in the life-creating Spirit" O most wise James, the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (Matins, Ode 3, Troparion 3).

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

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

Today the Holy Church of Jerusalem celebrates the sacred commemoration of the Holy Hieromartyr and Apostle James the Brother of God, who became the first Bishop of Jerusalem, and was ordained by the Lord Himself, as his hymnographer clearly says: "The Word of God, the Father's Only-begotten, came down

and dwelt here in our midst in these last days. He then appointed thee as the first shepherd of all-holy Jerusalem, and He made thee her teacher and a faithful steward of lofty spiritual mysteries. For this cause, as is meet, O wondrous James, O blest Apostle, we all praise and honour thee" (Kontakion).

For this reason, we went to the Cathedral dedicated to him, which is adjacent to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where we celebrated the Patriarchal Divine Liturgy, thanking God Who gave us a Just Hierarch and Shepherd as well as a faithful steward of the spiritual sacraments of the Church.

Saint James commemoration is of particular importance for the Church of Jerusalem, as it refers to the God-founded and God-man institution of hers; "every institution is a work of its legislator", Saint Dionysios the Areopagite says. Referring to the Episcopal office of Christ, Saint Paul says: "We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Hebrews 8:1-2).

The leader of "this true tabernacle" namely of the Church, the "apostle and great high priest of our faith, Jesus Christ" (cf. Hebrews 3:1-2) but also the "Chief Shepherd" (1 Peter 5:4), the Holy and Just James, along with his other apostles and disciples. The leading status of the Brother of God as the High Priest and Apostle of the Mother of Churches was strengthened at the first apostolic synod (AD 49) in Jerusalem, which he also led.

This Holy and Apostolic Synod which was inspired by the Holy Spirit under the presidency of Saint James established the apostolic institution of the Church, namely the apostolic succession of its Shepherds and founded its canonical order. The apostolic succession and the canonical order constitute the unity of the Church in the Holy Spirit. That is why Saint

Paul entreats, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). And the Hieromartyr James advises: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you... Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:7,10).

The Holy Church of Jerusalem boasts in the Lord today for its first Hierarch, "made a minister, according to the dispensation of God" (cf, Col. 1:25) for our sakes. Therefore, we cry out loud along with the hymnographer: "Distinguished among the Apostles as the brother and successor of Christ the Chief Shepherd, thou didst love death for His sake, and wast not ashamed of martyrdom, O glorious James. Entreat Him unceasingly that our souls be saved" (Vespers, aposticha Glory). Amen! Many Happy Returns!"

From Secretariat-General