

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR DEMETRIUS THE MYRRH-STREAMER IN OLD NABLUS

On Friday, October 29 / November 11, 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated with the transfer of the feast of the holy great martyr Demetrius the myrrh-streamer at his Holy Church, downtown the Old City of Naples, which is used by the Arabic-speaking Community for their worshipping needs.

The Divine Liturgy in honour of Saint Demetrius was presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Hegoumen of Jacob's well Archimandrite Ioustinos, the Head of this Community, Archimandrite Leontios and Priest Lazarus from Nazareth. The chanting was delivered by the choir of this parish and the members of this Community participated in devotion.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"O Martyr Demetrius, thou great and glorious Saint, thy shining memorial hath cheered the whole Church of Christ while gathering all today worthily to hymn thee as a valorous soldier and destroyer of the foes, O godly-wise victor. Hence, save us from temptations, O Saint, by thine all-holy prayers", the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (Matins, sessional Hymn1).

Beloved brothers in Christ,

Dear Christians,

The grace of the Holy Spirit has brought us all together today

in the name of the Holy Great Martyr Dimitrios, in this historic place of Nablus, to celebrate his holy memory.

The miracle-working and myrrh-streamer Demetrius came from the city of Thessalonica and was distinguished by his piety and love for Christ. His divine zeal made him not only a disciple of Christ but also a wise teacher of the Christian and redeeming faith. This, on the other hand, was proven by his martyrdom, which he suffered under the Roman emperors, Diocletian and Maximian in the 3rd AD. Century.

The office of the teacher of Demetrius is particularly emphasized by the Holy Father of the Church Gregory of Palamas, who calls Demetrius "the great wonder of the world, the great beauty of the Church, ... the miracle worker and myrrh-streamer Demetrius".

Indeed, Demetrius was descended from an aristocratic family of Thessalonica, from which he received a Christian education from a young age, which made him a teacher of godly piety. This divine piety, which he made a way of life, was derived from the faithful study of the Holy Bible, listening to the prayerful words of the psalm: "Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments" (Psalm 119:66) and simply: teach me with common sense and science (so that I can distinguish good from evil, that is, show me the usefulness, ability of knowledge and discrimination. Saint Paul exhorts parents to this, saying: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

Saint Demetrius showed a special interest in the education of young people in Christ. That is why he had formed a circle of young people, engaged in the study and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. Among the young men was also his co-martyr, Nestor, who, before duelling with the killer Lyaeus, received the blessing of his teacher Demetrius: "So he came to the stage, saw Maximian, and said: "God of Demetrius help me" and

he killed the arrogant Lyaeus. And immediately Maximian ordered that Saint Demetrius should be stabbed with spears, as the cause of the massacre of Lyaeus, and Saint Nestor should be put to the same sword" according to his Synaxarist [= biographer].

The martyrdom of both Saints Demetrius and Nestor is expressed clearly by the hymn of the Church: "A great champion hath the whole world found thee to be when in grave perils? for thou dost put to fight the heathen, O victorious one. As thou didst humble Lyaeus' arrogance and gavest boldness to Nestor in the stadium, thus, O holy great martyr Demetrius, do thou entreat Christ God that we be granted great mercy" (Apolytikion).

Saint Demetrius became not only the patron saint of Thessalonica, but the saint of the world, and this is because through his preaching and martyrdom for Christ's death he destroyed, condemned in deed and theory the nations, i.e. the religion of the idolaters.

In other words, the Martyr Demetrius listened to the order of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16), and became light in the darkness of the idolatry of the world of his time. This is why the Lord says to him: "O Martyr Demetrius, thou boast of contest for Christ, apparelled with Him, thou foughtest as most mighty in war defeating the strengthless foe [namely the ruler of the darkness of this age] (cf. Ephesians 6:12); for in Christ didst thou destroy the fraud of the lawless and didst train the faithful to defend true religion" (Matins, sessional hymn 2, Glory).

Through his personality enlightened by the Holy Spirit, Demetrius, full of grace, contributed to the abolition of the devil's fallacy, thus becoming "infallible", that is, a teacher of believers in the mystery of piety, in the mystery of the divine providence of the Incarnation of the Son and

Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed with "the bath of immortality and the garment of incorruption", Saint Demetrius preached the truth, teaching and saying through the mouth of Saint Paul: "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto? whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting" (1 Tim. 6:16). And more simply: God who has immortal life and who dwells in light, in whom no one can draw near, and the God whom none of the people had seen, nor can they see Him. "If the dwelling is inaccessible, how much more so is the One Who dwells therein", says Zigavinos.

This testimony of "the true and unattainable light of Christ" is preached and confessed by his incorruptible myrrh-exuding holy relic, which is kept and honoured in his magnificent temple in Thessalonica.

To this great martyr of the truth of Christ and the teacher and infallible of the mystery of piety, Demetrius the myrrh-streamer, let us, who honour his memory, pray, and after the hymnographer, we say: "Martyr of Christ Demetrius, as by God's grace aforetime thou didst destroy Lyaeus'scorn, his brutish pride and vaunting, and in the stadium gavest strength to the valiant Nestor by the great power of the Cross, O victorious athlete, so also now ever strengthen me by thine intercessions against the demons' treachery and soul-corrupting passions" (Exapostilarion). Amen. Many happy returns!"

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a reception and a meal was offered at noon.

From Secretariat-General