

THE FEAST OF SAINT NIKOLAOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, December 6/18, 2022, the feast of our holy Father Nikolaos, Bishop of Myron of Lycia, was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

During this feast, the Church remembers that St. Nikolaos was the Bishop of Myra of Lycia who “gained the high places through humility, the rich through poverty” throughout his life, and especially as Bishop of Myra of Lycia, he defended the “one essence” of our Lord Jesus Christ with the Father, worthy of God’s gift to work miracles, by which he helped many, especially the seafarers.

His feast was celebrated in the nearby town of Beit Jala, with a warm welcome accompanied by the Boy Scout Corps and the Palestinian Municipal Authorities, and with a Divine Liturgy which was officiated by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor and Philoumenos of Pella, the Archimandrites Porfyrios and the Elder Kamarasis Nectarios, Priests Yusef, Pavlos and George and the Hierodeacons Eulogios and Simeon. The chanting was delivered by the local Byzantine choir as the service was attended by the full congregation of the citizens and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation:

“Rejoice, O mind most sacred and great, and purest dwelling of the All-holy Trinity; thou steadfastness of the faithful, and pillar staying the Church, and the help of all bowed down with grievous pains; thou star ever scattering with thy beams of well-pleasing prayers the heavy darkness of temptations, of

sufferings, and of all distress, O divine Hierarch Nikolaos. Harbour of all serenity wherein they are swiftly saved that flee thereto when encompassed with the tempestuous waves of life. Entreat Christ with fervour to grant pardon of our sins and great mercy to our souls" (Vespers, Aposticha 2).

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Dear Christians,

The Divine Grace of the Holy Spirit, who anointed His Holiness Nikolaos Archbishop of Myra of Lycia with divine myrrh, brought us all together in this holy place of his emigration, and the Church dedicated to him, so that we may solemnly honour his sacred memory.

The Bishop of Myra of Lycia, Nikolaos, rose in the firmament of the Church as a universal luminary, who enlightened the world through his virtues, thus he was recognized as a "Canon of the Orthodox faith of the doctrinal teaching of the divine mystery of piety, formulated by the first Ecumenical Council in Nice in AD 325 by the holy and approved Fathers of the Church.

It is noteworthy that as a member of this Ecumenical Synod, the wonderful Nikolaos effectively contributed to the extermination of the blasphemous heretical teaching of Arius, and formulated the truth about the Holy Trinity and the Theology about the Son and Word of God and our Saviour Christ as the hymnographer exclaims: "I reverence the uncreated Trinity, Father and Son together with the Spirit, a Divinity simple in essence, a Nature not severed in essence, being of Three Hypostases, while I distinguish Them according to person and hypostasis" (Matins, Ode 1, Canon 2 of the Saint, Triadicon). And again "Foreseeing things to come with the eye of thy mind, thou didst fill all men with upright doctrines, declaring unto us the Son's consubstantiality with the Father; and thou hast utterly destroyed the madness of Arius, offering

thy venerable achievements as a monument of the Orthodox Faith" (Matins, Ode 6, Canon 2 of the Saint, Troparion 3).

Having the mind of Christ, (1 Cor. 2:16), Nikolaos exterminated the fury of Arius, because he spoke not with the spirit of the world, namely with human wisdom like Arius, but with the grace of the Holy Spirit, as Saint Paul preaches: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Cor. 2:12).

Behold, therefore, why His Holiness Nikolaos was called "canon of faith and pillar of the Church but also a great shepherd". He, as a spiritual Father and shepherd, did not seek his own interest, but that of the many, so that they may be saved (1 Cor. 10:33). That is why he was "the support of the faithful and the help of the afflicted". Nikolaos was recognized as a real Father, listening to and applying the order of Saint Paul saying: "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Of course, Christ is the model to which we are all called to conform. If we are encouraged to imitate the saints or the apostles, it is because before us the Saints and the Apostles like Paul, who received "visions and revelations of the Lord" (2 Cor. 12:1), conformed to the example of Christ and imitated Him.

In other words, Saint Nikolaos brought together all those gifts of the Holy Spirit, which make up the teacher and spiritual Father of the Church. He was "nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:6). That is why Saint Ignatius of Antioch considers "the bishop in the type of God" and listens to the Proverb: "Revere, son, God and the King" (Prov. 24, 21) and exhorts by saying: And I say; fear God, as the cause of all and Lord; the bishop as high priest, wearing the image of God; according to the principle, of God, according to the priests, of Christ".

Indeed, my beloved brothers, the meek Bishop of Myra of Lycia

proved himself to be a true High Priest of the Church, bearing in himself the image of God, as far as the administration [of the Church] is concerned and the image of Christ as far as the Ministry of the divine mysteries is concerned. "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. 15:49), Saint Paul preaches.

Interpreting the above words of Paul, St. Methodius says: "the earthen image, which we have put on [which says, thou art dust and dust thou shall become], while the image of the heavenly, the resurrection from the dead, and incorruption, so that "like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so, we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). "Virtuous life is new life," Zigavinos says.

It was precisely this "newness of life", this life in Christ that our Father Nikolaos walked and taught so that he received the crown of incorruption. This life in newness, namely, the virtuous life we are also called to walk, listening to the voice of the wise Paul: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

In other words, we as human beings, but above all as reborn Christians, are His own creation, created to remain united with our Lord Jesus Christ. For even Saint Paul gives a paternal order, saying: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise" (Eph. 5:15).

Here is this blessed time of our preparation through fasting and good works, of receiving in the cave of our hearts the Christ born from the pure blood of the Ever-Virgin Theotokos Mary.

Yes, my brothers, "not as unwise", that is, as worldly, but as wise, since as children of the light of Christ we celebrate the metropolis of the holidays, the blessed Christmas in this God-receiving cave of Bethlehem.

Let us say along with the hymnographer "As thou standest before the throne of God, cease not to intercede earnestly for us all, thy faithful servants, O wise and wondrous Nikolaos, that we be delivered from the eternal fire and from the wicked counsel and ill-dealing of our enemies" (Matins, Ode 4, Canon 2 of the Saint, Troparion 2). Amen. Happy and blessed Christmas."

At noon, the Community Council hosted a meal, where His Beatitude spoke again in Arabic.

This holiday was also celebrated in the Holy Monastery of Agios Nikolaos, near the Patriarchate in Jerusalem.

The Vespers and the Divine Liturgy were presided over by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, with the co-celebration of the Elder Master of Ceremonies Archimandrite Bartholomew, Fr Nectarios, Fr Dometianos of the Russian MISSIA in Jerusalem, the Russian Fr Nikolaos Kolinsky, the caretaker of the Monastery Archdeacon Mark, at the chanting of the Typikon Keeper of the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen Archimandrite Alexios, Fr Seraphim and Mr Gotsopoulos. The Services were attended by faithful Orthodox Christians and pilgrims from Greece, Palestine, Romania, and Russia.

After the Divine Liturgy, Archdeacon Markos, who continues the renovation of the Holy Church, offered a reception for the Episcopal Entourage and the congregation.

From Secretariat-General

