

THE FEAST OF SAINTS GEORGE AND JOHN THE HOZEVITES

On Saturday, January 8th/21st, 2023, the memory of Saints George and John the Hozevites was celebrated by the Patriarchate in the Holy Monastery of Hozeva, located on the left bank of the Brook Horrath in its Jericho flow.

On this day, the Church remembers that Saint John came to the Holy Monastery of Hozeva, having resigned his Bishopric in Caesarea, and became a pole of spiritual attraction, and Saint George came from Lefkara of Cyprus and renovated the Monastery after the Persian invasion of 614 AD.

The memory of these holy men was honoured with an all-night vigil after the preface by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Constantine of His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the following address:

“Rejoice, rules of extreme humility,”

“Rejoice, images of clear wisdom”,

Your Beatitude, Father and Master,

And Your honourable Entourage,

We have gathered once more to celebrate the annual memory of the two Holy Founders of the historical HozozHoHeva Lavra, George and John, and the three thousand Hozevite martyrs the day after tomorrow.

Their virtues are many! Based on the most meaningful, excellent spiritual teaching of our Holy Father George, a virtue above all:

Holy humility!

In the teaching of the Saint to the Hozevite Monks, "About pride", we read:

"Humility, humility, exaltation (that is, boasting) has the Only Begotten Son of God, who humbled Himself to death, death on the Cross... I tell you, brothers, that there was no Greek or Jew or Samaritan who had true humility and he is not loved and much loved by God and men... so let us acquire these virtues: humility and reverence. Struggle, brothers, supporting each other in humility."

This is what our Holy Father George taught the Hozevites. Not only did he teach, but also practiced!

Both Saints John and George were possessed, not only by humility but above all, by extreme and genuine humility. The distinct, indeed, difference between the two concepts is clarified by our Holy Father Nikitas Stithatos in the second hundred of his chapters:

"Humility is achieved by all suffering and by the external efforts of virtue... Humility, however, is what is divine and heavenly and is born... through the influx of the Holy Spirit". (Philokalia, volume 4 p.86,87, 1st edition 1987, "The Orchard of the Virgin Mary").

The sublime precisely humility, which is completely lacking in our days, please pray, Your Beatitude Father and Master, that we may all acquire it. And indeed, we may walk in life with moderation, in the bond of the Lord's love, Amen".

Consequently, the all-night vigil followed, officiated by His Beatitude, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina, Isidoros of Hierapolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, among whom the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Hozevite Hieromonk Chrysogonos, at the changing of Mr Stavros Christos, cantor in

the Church of Saint Paraskevi of Attica, Mr Papadimitriou Nikolaos, choir leader of the Holy Church of Saint Kyriaki in Pyrgos Elia, Mr Stavros Ioannou choir leader in the Holy Church of Saint Dimitrios of Tripoli, Mr Theotokatos Nikolaos left choir singer in the H. Church of Prophet Elias of the Municipality of Saint Paraskevi Attica, Mr Kamtsios Elias and Panagiotis, right and left choir singers respectively of the chapel of the Holy Apostles of the Municipality of Saint Paraskevi Attica, after the monks of the Monastery, with the participation of many people for the first time after the last covid-19 pandemic.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude delivered the solemn sermon as follows:

“And I said: this change hath been wrought by the right hand of the Most High”, (Ps. 76,11) exclaims the psalmist,

Beloved Holy Fathers and Brothers in Christ,

The redeeming Grace of God and our Saviour Christ, who appeared in the Jordan, brought us all together in this Holy place of Hozeva, so that we may solemnly honour the sacred memory of our Holy Father George the Hozevite.

Burning from childhood with the desire for a solitary and ascetic life, to which he was drawn, and after remaining in the service of his elderly parents until their death, he left his native island of Cyprus for the Holy Land. Then his brother the monk Heraklides receives him and leads him to the famous for its austerity and its holy monks, the coenobitic monastery of Hozeva.

Let's listen to his hymnographer saying: “Neither lengthiness of the road nor severity of the place could avail to weaken thy strong and fiery zeal to make thy journey to God; and when thou joyously hadst arrive da the places that were trod by the feet of our Lord and God, thou, O righteous George, leftest nothing undone till through thy labours and ascetic deeds thou

camest unto the Sion in Heaven's heights" (Vespers, sticheron 2).

Indeed, "the fire of our Saint George's education to God" is strengthened by the Davidic words "I have longed for Thy salvation, O Lord, and Thy law is my meditation" (Psalms 118, 174) from one; and the strict (hard) his practice on the other hand, in Lavra. "The insults of the warrior devil did not settle the citadel of his soul," says the hymn. And this, because the blessed George had as a model of imitation our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the commandment of Saint Paul: "Be ye, therefore, followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (Eph. 5, 1-2).

Interpreting these words of Paul, Saint Chrysostom says: "See that the suffering because of the enemy, is a smell of fragrance and also a welcome sacrifice; if you die, then it a sacrifice; this is to imitate God."

The imitation of God, that is, of our Saviour Christ, is nothing other than the alteration of the right hand of the Most High, Who "became like us and was greatly altered himself", as Saint Cyril of Alexandria says, adding: "and everyone, out of malice returning, or remaining in virtue and prosper, let him say: -Now I start; this change, which the right hand of the Most High has bestowed, may it be the greatest advance through the striving of reverence. The precept of virtue does not exist when he does not change. It is also said that the Only Begotten (Son and Word of God) is changed, as the descent of the divine nature to the human form and a kind of change, not by expulsion (=rejection) but by adoption.

Our holy Father George also achieved this exact change according to Christ, "having been trained in virtue through the gymnasiums (=practice) of piety, of the right professed

faith. Also worth noting is the fact that the Holy George, like another Paul, dwelt on earth as a disembodied angel, unceasingly glorifying the Holy Triune God and receiving his divine radiance.

Saint George, born as a vessel of the enlightening Grace of the Holy Spirit and following in the footsteps of Saint John the Forerunner and Baptist preaching repentance in the desert of Jordan, echoed and evangelized through the mouth of the psalmist, the greatness and saving truth of Christ, saying: "I have proclaimed the good tidings of Thy righteousness in the great congregation; lo, my lips I shall not restrain; Lord, Thou knowest it. Thy righteousness have I not hid in my heart; Thy truth and Thy salvation have I declared (Ps. 39, 11-12).

True witnesses of this event have been the multitude of monks, the ascetics in this holy Monastery of Hozeva, in which John the bishop-to-be of Caesarea of Palestine and John our New Father from Romania, who is before our eyes and his incorruptible and fragrant relic proclaims the Resurrection of God and our Saviour, but also our resurrection in Christ. " For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Rom. 6:5), preaches the wise Paul.

We, my beloved brothers and venerable monks, who are practising in this sanctified Lavra, beseech the all-wise George standing before God, to grant to those who honour him the illumination of the Holy Spirit who appeared in the form of a dove in the Jordan and the divine communion.

And after the hymnographer let us say: "with one accord, let us faithful laud with hymns God the Word, Who came forth from God, and Who ineffably took on flesh from a pure Virgin for us and in wisdom past telling descended to make Adam new again, who by eating fell grievously down into corruption's pits" (Ode 9, Heirmos).

Amen. Many, peaceful and blessed years”.

After the Dismissal of the vigil, the renovator of the Monastery and its reorganizer, Hegoumen Archimandrite Constantine, offered a solemn feast.

Blessing everyone, His Beatitude ascended the uphill road with the help of the monastery vehicle and boarded the Patriarchate’s car to return to Jerusalem.

From Secretariat-General