

# THE FEAST OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT THE PATRIARCHATE

Sunday, May 1/14, 2023, was celebrated by the Patriarchate as the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman at the Samaria Well of Jacob in Nablus.

On this Sunday, the Church celebrates the fact that the Evangelist John (John 4, 5-29) reports, that a woman from the county of Sychar in Samaria came to Jacob's Well to draw water and there she had a conversation with the Lord, in which the Lord revealed to her the things of her life and that "God is a Spirit and those who worship Him should worship Him in spirit" and that "He who speaks to her is the Messiah".

The Samaritan woman named Foteini believed in Christ and martyred for Him with her entire family of daughters, sons, and brothers.

Next to the Well, on the excavated Byzantine Church, the Hegumen, Archimandrite, Ioustinos, erected a magnificent Church in honour of Saint Foteini.

In this Church, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with their Eminences the Archbishops, Damascene of Yaffo, Aristarchos of Constantine and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios and Archimandrite Meletios, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by the Hegoumen of Rafidia Archimandrite Leontios on the right in Greek and members of the Community of Rafidia on the left in Arabic, with the participation of many local faithful and pilgrims.

His Beatitude spoke to them through His following address:

"Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of

God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (John 4,10 ).

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in this Eucharistic Paschal gathering to celebrate in joy and gladness the commemoration of the Samaritan Woman who spoke with Jesus by the Patriarch Jacob's well, in this holy place.

The Lord's disciples became eyewitnesses, as Peter says in the book of Acts: "And we are witnesses of all the things which Jesus of Nazareth did, Whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (cf. Acts 10,38-39).

Indeed, Christ was not restricted in benefiting the people in a specific city, nor did He wait for the benefited ones by Him to come to Him, instead, He went to them, marching on foot all of Palestine, as in the occasion with the Samaritan Woman, to whom the Lord revealed Himself.

Let us hear what Saint Cyril of Alexandria says on this: "Christ does not reveal Himself solely to uneducated and ignorant souls (like the Samaritan Woman), but to the souls who "are shining and visible", the ones who have prepared themselves to learn something and they have born faith in them, and "make haste to gain the perfect knowledge", that is, they are in a hurry to learn the perfect mysteries".

To Christ's words "thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water", the Samaritan Woman replies, "From whence then hast thou that living water?" (John 4,11). Interpreting these words, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "The Samaritan Woman with the words 'living water' means

her own interpretation of water; the one that gushes forth from the spring, the natural water”.

The Samaritan Woman’s question is the same as that of many people with feeble faith. And this is because they don’t pay heed to the Lord’s words, which are words of eternal life (cf. John 6,68), as Christ Himself teaches by saying: “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6,63).

Christ, my dear brethren, is the unending source of life and of divine grace. This is what He told the Samaritan Woman, after all: “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4,14). Christ is the “well-spring of the principle of life”, as the hymnographer says, “Come and see the Knower of things hidden, God Who is come in the flesh to save man” (Matins, Glory of praises), hearkening to the Samaritan Woman’s voice, who received the wondrous changes in herself of our Lord Jesus’ grace.

“Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom” (Psalm 51, 6), the prophet David chants. These very hidden and inward parts of His truth did Christ reveal to the Samaritan Woman by saying, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4,24).

Interpreting these words, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: “Righteously God accepts the spiritual pilgrim, who does not bear the image of reverence in the Jewish manner of pretension, but shines in an evangelical manner through the accomplishments of virtue and applies the true worship through the correctness of the divine doctrines”.

In other words, the true pilgrim, namely the Christian, is the

one who lives according to the teaching of the Gospel of Christ. It is not enough to worship God only in our minds, theoretically, but we should do so actively, through our participation in the mystical life of the Church, which is the body of Christ, as Saint Paul advises: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor. 12,27). "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him" (John 6,56), the Lord says. For this, the purity of our life and the correctness of the doctrines, namely of our precise Orthodox faith, constitute the true worship of God. "Spiritual worship is", according to Zigavinos, "the humility; for the Bible says, the sacrifice of God is a broken spirit".

"A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51, 17), the psalmist proclaims. Indeed, the Son and Word of God did not avoid to show to the sinner Samaritan Woman, what is the wealth of the glory of "the mystery which hath been hidden from ages and from generations" (Col. 1, 26), the woman that the Holy Church of Christ honours today in her hometown on the one hand; and projects her as an example of humility and of a broken heart, on the other.

As for us, let us say along with the hymnographer: "Accepting Thine divine law O Saviour, man puts out the burning coals of fallacies. Therefore, unto the ages, he will not thirst, nor will he hunger of Thee Master, heavenly King; for this we glorify Thine might Christ our God, asking that Thou may send down richly to Thine servants the remission of sins". Amen. Christ is risen!"

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a Procession around the Church, while at noon the Hegumen hosted a meal.

**From Secretariat-General**