

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS CELEBRATES THE D. LITURGY IN THE COMMUNITY OF TURAN

On Sunday, May 15 / 28, 2023, on the commemoration of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Synod, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos made a Pastoral visit to the Greek Orthodox Arabic-speaking Community of the county of Turan, adjacent to Cana of Galilee.

His Beatitude was warmly received by a parade of Scouts and a reception by the Priests, and he officiated in the Holy Church of Saint Georgios of this Community, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Elder Chief Secretary Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nektarios, Arabic-speaking Priests of the Galilee region, the Archdeacon Mark and the Hierodeacon Eulogios, under the chanting by the members of the Community choir and the participation of many faithful of the city.

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

“O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill and to thy tabernacles”, (Ps. 43,3), the psalmist exclaims.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Dear Christians,

The wishes of the holy God-fearing Fathers of the holy Church of Christ have brought us all together today in your city of

Lower Galilee Turan, so that we may thankfully celebrate their holy memory as well as the establishment of the First Ecumenical Synod, in Nicaea of Bithynia, in the year 325.

Our holy Church especially honours the 318 God-bearing Fathers, because they are the ones who, at the invitation of the holy Emperor Constantine the Great, convened the first Ecumenical Council, which on the one hand condemned and fought against the heretic teaching of Areios; on the other hand, it formulated in the most precise way the Orthodox faith, as we profess it in the Creed.

The accuracy of the doctrines is that which also determines the correct way of life of the Christian. For this reason, Saint Paul commands his disciple, Timothy, saying: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6,20).

Those who lost their aim at faith, are those who invent and do not resort to the sources of our faith, that is, to the Holy Bible, Old and New Testament and the holy Apostolic Tradition, constituting the totality of the divine sources of faith of salvific truths, handed down by the Lord and the Apostles to the faithful in the Church.

Let us hear in this case Saint John of Damascus saying: "You believe by hearing". "Listening to the Holy Scriptures, we believe in the teaching of the Spirit. This is the end of all those who are legislated under Christ, believing, worshipping and doing the commandments of the one who reformed us. The person who does not believe nor commune with the Catholic Church's tradition of beliefs through inappropriate works to the Devil is unfaithful". And more simply: "you believe by hearing", because by listening to the Holy Scriptures we believe in the teaching of the Holy Spirit. And this faith is perfected by all that was legislated by Christ since it is manifested by works, which show piety and apply the

commandments of Him who renewed us. He, therefore, who does not believe in the tradition of the Catholic Church or communes with the devil, doing inappropriate works, is an infidel. This is what Saint Paul preaches: the Church, "which is the Church of the living God, is a pillar and ground of the truth" (Cf. 1 Tim. 3:15).

As for the Holy Apostles and their successors, the God-bearing and God-breathed ones who are said to be fathers of the Church, they received the light and truth of God, according to the psalmist saying, " O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill and to thy tabernacles " (Ps. 43,3).

Today's Gospel narrative of St. John the Theologian, who is known as "the priestly prayer of Christ to God the Father", refers to his preserving his unity with His disciples and the members of His Church: "Father, the hour has come...and the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me ", the Lord says(John 17, 22-23).

The prayer of Jesus Christ to God His Father: "that he may be one as we are one" (John 17:22), refers to unity, which is founded on the correct faith of the Church and is reflected in the life of believers through the expression of mutual love, that is, the spiritual unity of believers in imitation of the physical and essential unity of the persons of the Holy Trinity, as Saint Cyril of Alexandria says.

In other words, my dear brothers, we are called according to Paul to preserve the unity of love between us, " With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace", (Eph. 4, 2-3).

In his prayer to God the Father, Jesus asks for the joy of His disciples: "that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves " (John 17,13). Interpreting these discourses of the Lord, Saint Cyril of Alexandria asks: "What then is the fulfilled and perfect joy? To know and believe, not only that Christ was man for us, but also that He was like us except for having any sin and He is the true God. It is clear and there is no doubt that He (Christ) has the ability to save those who worship him, whenever he wills, even though he does not seem to be present in the flesh. This fact will give us the possibility to have complete joy because we always have near us a supporter who is able to save us from all evil.

Joy, my dears, has as its source God the Father. The Only Begotten Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, is the self-joy, as the Apostle Peter assures us: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy " (1 Peter 4, 12-13).

It is worth noting that joy in Christ is inextricably linked to repentance, as the Evangelist Luke testifies, referring to Christ's sermon: "I say unto you, that likewise, joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15,7).

We too, my beloved brothers, can have fulfilled joy when we observe the correctness but also the unity of our Orthodox faith, listening to the voice of the holy and God-fearing Fathers who, by the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit, and the intercessions of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary the Most blessed, "With pious mind they refuted the godless dogma of the grievous Arius, and by synodal decree banished him for the Catholic Church. And they instructed all to openly confess the consubstantial and co-eternal Son of God, Who existed before the ages. This in exactness and piety, did they set forth in the Symbol of Faith. Wherefore, following their

divine doctrines and believing with assurance, we worship, in one Godhead, the Father, Son and the All-holy Spirit, the Trinity in one essence". Amen, many happy returns!

A reception followed, where His Beatitude addressed the President and the members of the Ecclesiastical Committee and the congregation again as follows:

"Blessed are you, the God of our fathers, and blessed be your name, holy and glorious forever" (Tobit 8,5), " thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" (Ps. 143, 10).

Dear Mr President and respected members of the Ecclesiastical Committee,

Dear Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Dear Father Spyridon,

My beloved brothers,

In addition to today's feast, the Holy Church of Christ celebrates the glorious Ascension of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ into heaven and the memory of the first Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in AD325 of the three hundred and eighteen godly Fathers.

The feast of the Ascension of our Saviour Christ refers to the sealing of the glorious Resurrection of Christ. And this is because through His Ascension, our Lord Jesus Christ "divinized the body which He had assumed", i.e. our human nature, which was assumed by the pure blood of the Ever-Virgin Mary. The feast of the holy God-bearing Fathers of the first Synod in Nicaea, refers to the entrenchment of the sanctifying teaching, (1 Tim. 1:10) namely of the right faith, as Paul wrote to his disciple Titus saying: "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers...who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake...Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in

the faith" (Tit. 1,10-13).

This healthy teaching and correct faith, the Apostolic tradition, has been preserved by the Church of Jerusalem, the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, founded on the blood of the Cross of Golgotha and the empty tomb of the Resurrection of Christ, through the ages, thanks to its presence and constant tireless activity of the monastic order of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood.

We boast in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:31) that here, in your beautiful town of Turan, where our Christian Orthodox Community lives and we rejoice in your good testimony of the moral values and truths of the Gospel of love, peace, love for our fellow men and hospitality, especially the harmonious symbiosis and coexistence with other respected religious communities.

We also proclaim this Gospel message today, my beloved brothers, through the Eucharistic fellowship with you, listening to the order of Saint Paul saying: " Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20, 28-30).

With these words, we want to assure you that the Venerable Rum-Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Mother of all the Churches, has never spared effort and expense, has never abandoned the Christian flock entrusted to it by the divine Providence, and has never ceased to care for the preservation of the Holy Places of our faith as well as for the preservation of the multi-religious and multi-ethnic status of the Holy City of Jerusalem. Many and blessed returns."

At noon, a hospitable, rich banquet was offered by the Community.

From Secretariat-General