

THE FEAST OF SAINT ONUPHRIUS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, June 12/25,2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of our Father among the Saints Onuphrius the Egyptian.

On this feast, the Church commemorates that Saint Onuphrius lived in the strictest monastic anchorite striving in Egypt, after the example of the prophet Elijah and Saint John the Baptist. Saint Pafnoutius found his dead body and buried it.

This feast was celebrated at the Holy Monastery dedicated to him, opposite the pool of Siloam, at the potter's field which was bought by the Pharisees "to bury the foreigners" (Matt. 27, 7-8), with the thirty silver coins that Judas returned to them (Matt. 27,3-6).

Inside and around the monastery there are tombs carved in the rocks. One of them belongs to the first Patriarch of Jerusalem, Saint Iouvenalios during whose Patriarchal Office the Church of Jerusalem was declared a Patriarchate in AD 451.

At the Church of this Monastery, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, and the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina and Makarios of Qatar, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks and Priests from the Holy Metropolis of Patra, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and pilgrims.

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

"Godly-wise Father Onuphrius, by separating thyself from the turbulence of the world, thou wast lifted to the height that

is found far above the world; and longing after the very Source of Good, thou hast in truth reached what thou didst most desire. Since thou art all aflame with the shining rays thereof, O blest of God, by thine intercessions snatch us from the gloom of sin" (Vespers, stichera 3) the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The noetic heavenly light, the Holy Spirit that enlightened the eyes of the heart of our Holy Father Onuphrius the Egyptian has gathered us all in his Holy Monastery, in this biblical place of the potter's field, which is called "the field of blood unto this day" (Matt. 27, 7-8), to celebrate his commemoration in honesty and truth (cf. 1 Cor. 5,8).

And we say this because the purpose of the feasts of our Holy Church is the rendering of honour to those who have renounced the world and bore their cross and followed Christ, on the other hand, the promotion of their virtues to the faithful, in imitation of the saints.

Our Holy Father Onuphrius was such a true imitator of Christ, who heard of the lives of the prophet Elijah and Saint John the Baptist and retreated into the deeper desert, seeking to be blessed by holy anchorite men, whose burning desire was the immigration to the heavenly city, as Saint Paul preaches: "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Hebrews 13,14).

This ardent desire had also captured the soul of our Father Onuphrius, just like that of the psalmist who exclaims: "I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments. Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name" (Psalm 119,131-132).

In this ardent desire and honest love for Christ, Saint Onuphrius had God the Father as his accomplice, as Saint Paul confirms: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8,28).

Interpreting the phrase "to them who are the called according to his purpose", Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "According to his purpose means according to their will, just as some righteous and holy men became saints not only because God called them, but also because this was their own will".

Our Holy Father Onuphrius obtained these two wills. And this is so, because he "loved the Lord God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind" (cf. Matt. 22,37), according to Christ's command. The exceeding power of the love for God is praised by the hymnographer of Saint Onuphrius, saying: "O love, thou transcendently shining light! O sum of all the virtues, whoever fillest the heavenly orders with gladness and grace, and hast made thy dwelling in the Saints, the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles: by their prayers also dwell in us, that with them we may sing to God: Alleluia" (Matins, Oikos).

Saint Onuphrius, whose holy commemoration we celebrate today, shines like a bright light in our contemporary world of apostasy, lawlessness and the prevailing disorder. And it shines like a light, because he became a migrant from the confusion of the world, living and being fed off in the deserts and on the mountains, clothed with Christ and always listening to the voice of St. Paul saying: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3,20), therefore, "Be careful of nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4,6).

Interpreting these words of Saint Paul, Ecumenios says, "Be

careful of nothing, do not say anything, not even curse against the enemies, do not say anything when in sorrow". In other words, my dear brothers and sisters, we should put such trust in the Divine Providence, that our mind and heart will be free from any agony and concern of our needs. We should rely on God, so much so, that we keep the peace and tranquillity of our hearts unshakable. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," Saint Paul says (Romans 8,18).

The vision of this very future divine glory did our God-bearing Father Onuphrius achieve, having thus boldness towards God. Therefore, as we honour his holy commemoration, let us entreat him, along with our Most Blessed Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and the also celebrating today, our Holy Father Peter of Mount Athos, that they may intercede with our Lord God for our souls and for the peace of our region and of the whole world. Amen. Many happy returns!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a litany at the tombs of the founders of the Monastery and a memorial service at the tomb of the blessed nun Seraphima, concluding with the prayer for the fruit.

Finally, the renovator of the monastery, Abbess Paisia hosted a reception for His Beatitude and the congregation.

From Secretariat-General