

# THE FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE ARCHANGELS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, November 8/21, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Synaxis of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel and of all the heavenly Bodiless Hosts.

On this feast the Church gathers to thank the Archangel Michael because when the fallen Lucifer rose against God, the Archangel called all the angels and called out "Let us give heed", meaning let us be careful and turn into prayer and unity with God so that we will not become like the fallen angel, who was turned from light into darkness.

The commemoration of this event was celebrated by the Patriarchate at the Holy Monastery of the Archangel Michael in the seaside town of Yaffo. This Church which was burnt during the 50's was rebuilt and brilliantly renovated by the current Hegoumen, His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Yaffo.

In this Church, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Archbishops, Damascene of Yaffo, Aristarchos of Constantina and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Archimandrites, Alexios, Niphon, Marcelus, Artemios, Ieronymos and Christodoulos, the new Head of MISSIA Archimandrite Vassianos, Priests from the neighbouring areas and from Galilee, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by the Community Byzantine choir, as the service was attended by the flock of Yaffo and faithful Christians of Russian and Romanian origin, as well as the representative of the Greek Embassy to Tel Aviv Mr Kyriakos Loukakis and other members of the Embassy.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Supreme Commanders of God and ministers of the Divine Glory, guides of men and leaders of the bodiless hosts: Ask for what is to our profit and for great mercy since ye are Supreme Commanders of the bodiless hosts” (Kontakion), the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all today in this holy Church of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel in your historic biblical town of Yaffo, to celebrate the Synaxis of the holy bodiless heavenly hosts.

All Angels, according to Saint Paul, “are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Hebrews 1,14). In more detail, all Angels are ministering spirits who do not act according to their own initiative, but are sent by God to serve those who are meant to inherit eternal life.

The Angels are called by the psalmist to praise God: “Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word” (Ps. 103, 20). In other words, all Angels are called to praise God because they excel in strength, obey the Divine voice, “do his commandments” and are willing to execute God’s commandments, “hearkening unto the voice of his word”.

According to Saint John of Damascus, “All Angels were created by the Word and were made whole by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, participating in enlightenment and grace according to their value and order”.

Regarding the nature of Angels, Saint John of Damascus says:

“An Angel is a noetic substance, mobile, bodiless, which ministers God, by Whom he has received immortality in his nature by grace and the kind of this substance is only known to God”.

It is noteworthy that today's feast is linked with the Grand Commander of the bodiless hosts, the Archangel Michael, and the fall of Lucifer, that is, Satan. This Lucifer, Saint John of Damascus says, “by his own will was turned against his nature and raised himself above God, Who created him, wanting to rebel against God, and was the first to become evil since he distanced himself from good; because nothing else is evil, but the lack of goodness, just as darkness is the lack of light. Goodness is a noetic light, just as evil is a noetic darkness...since the demons have the same nature as the Angels, they have become evil, arbitrarily turning their choice from good to evil”.

When the Grand Commander Michael saw this apostasy, that is, Lucifer's fall, along with the fall of a multitude of other angels from the angelic order, as Christ says, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Luke 10,18), he gathered all the orders of the Angels saying “Let us give heed. Let us stand firm”. He praised God, exclaiming along with all the heavenly hosts, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Sabaoth, the heaven and earth are filled with Thy glory”. The hymnographer describes this action of Archangel Michael, saying: “Our God and Maker showed thee forth, O divine Chief Commander, as champion and governor of the race of us mortals, the noblest steward of our good, and He also honoured thee with the unspeakable glory of unceasingly crying the divine and thrice-holy and God-inspired hymn of victory” (Exaposteilarion 1).

According to Saint John of Damascus, “This very God is the maker and creator, creating them from non-being into being, according to His image, a bodiless nature, an immaterial spirit and fire, as David says; “Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire” (Ps. 104, 4). The

heavenly Angels of the earthly Saints of the Church are distinguished as thus, ministering spirits and flames of fire. "Secondary noetic lights, receiving their illumination from the Initial Light Who has no beginning and is the source of light", Saint John of Damascus says.

According to Saint Gregory the Theologian the Angels are the emanation of the Initial Light because they receive their light from the irreproachable, unspeakable and incomprehensible light of God. That is why they appear in the Bible as helpers in the redeeming mission of our Saviour Jesus Christ. "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (Hebrews 1,4), Saint Paul preaches.

The Angels care for the protection of the people. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18,10), the Lord says. The Angels convey the Saints' prayers to God; they transport the souls of the righteous to God's Kingdom. "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16,22). Under the lead of their Chief Michael, the Angels fight for the Church's defence against its adversary the devil. "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels" (Rev. 12,7), Saint John the Theologian says. "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 1,9).

The Angels connect the heavenly with the earthly world, the triumphant Church and the unceasing praising worship of God. "... they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Rev. 4,8). "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the

highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men" (Luke 2,13-14), Luke the Evangelist says.

Behold why our Holy Church renders this worthy honour to the Angels, especially to the Chief Archangels Michael and Gabriel. The Saints and the Righteous of Christ's Church, who had human flesh and lived in the world, became imitators of the Angels through prayer and asceticism, they became heavenly people and earthly angels, according to Saint Paul's advice, which is directed to us also: "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven... And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. 15,47-49).

Let us say along with the hymnographer: "O Marshal passing glorious, O divine leader Michael, thou wast appointed by God's will to be the chief and foremost of the Authorities, Powers, Dominions, Thrones, and Angels, Archangels, Principalities; wherefore, as thou now standest at that dread Throne, guard and keep and save and protect and shelter all them that honour thee with faith, who art the world's defender" (Exaposteilarion 3).

As for us who celebrate, maybe have the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos bring forth peace in the tested Holy Land and all over the world. Amen! Many happy returns, peaceful and blessed Christmas!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a meal that the Hegoumen His Eminence Archbishop Damascene hosted.

The feast of the Synaxis of the Archangels was also celebrated at their Holy Monastery in Jerusalem, with Vespers and the Divine Liturgy, led by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolas, along with Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, Archimandrite Klaudios and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Angelos Gianopoulos

with the Patriarchal School students. The service was attended by a large congregation of monks, nuns and faithful Christians from Jerusalem, who were offered a treat after the Liturgy by the Hegoumen and renovator of the Monastery, His Eminence Archbishop Dimitrios of Lydda.

**From Secretariat-General**