

THE CUTTING OF THE NEW YEAR CAKE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday evening, 31 December 2021/ 13 January 2022, the cutting of the New Year cake took place at the Patriarchate main hall, on the commemoration of Saint Basil the Great and the beginning of the New Civil Year on Friday 1/14 January 2022.

The ceremony began with the following address of His Beatitude on the New Year:

“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night” (1 Thessalonians 5:1-2), Saint Paul urges.

The Sun of Righteousness has shone again from the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Mary, born in in the Cave of Bethlehem, our God, Jesus Christ, showing the light of knowledge to all people; “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12), “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness” (John 12:46), the Lord says.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is “the true light” indeed, has gathered us all in this sanctified place of our venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem, to render glory and honour and thanksgiving to the Creator of the universe, our Lord God, in the changing of the year of His benevolence, our Lord Jesus Christ who said to His disciples: “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power” (Acts 1:7). Moreover, the grace of our Saviour Christ has gathered us on the sacred commemoration of the circumcision in the flesh of the Son of God, our Saviour

Christ, as well as for the co-celebrated commemoration of our Father among the Saints Basil the Great, on whose honour we keep the ceremony of the cutting of the cake bearing his name, "Vasilopita".

The change of the year of the Lord's benevolence (cf. Luke 4:19, Isaiah 60:2), namely the ecclesiastical and liturgical year for us, is strongly joined with the historic time of the earthly life of man, whose "days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more" (Psalm 103:15-16), according to the psalmist.

We say this because the consideration of the meaning of time, as present, past and future is not "cunningly devised fables" (1 Peter 1:16), but "according to the revelation of the mystery" (Romans 16:25), namely of the incarnation of God the Word and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

In other words, the definitions of the incomprehensible God are not sudden decisions but stem from His pre-eternal will. Whatever comes from God, was hidden in Him before all ages. "Who hath resisted his will?" (Romans 9:19) Saint Paul says. And Saint Cyril of Alexandria in his interpretation of the Lord's words "'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1:7), says: "[Jesus] did not want to use the secret things hidden from God and He taught through them".

This means that the meaning of the time can only be comprehended through the history of the Divine Revelation, during which time is distinguished in quantity and quality, according to Ammonius: "The season shows quality, while the time shows quantity". It is precisely this "quality of season" that we experience in the Church of Christ, becoming members of His Body through baptism.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me

to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19, Isaiah 61:1-2).

Through the year of the Lord, the historic time is inaugurated in Christ through the cathode of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, on the day of Pentecost and is extended to the ages as the time of salvation, namely of remission of sins and the deification of man through the Church and its sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, in which we become of one body and one blood with Christ.

Let us hear the wise Paul saying: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God...For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? but we have the mind of Christ" (2 Cor. 2:12,16). And wise Solomon says: "the light of the righteous remains forever" (cf. Proverbs 13:9).

Today's festal changing of the year, during which the memory of the past becomes a memory in Christ, and the hope of the future becomes hope in Christ, marks the refreshment of God's Spirit that lives in us; "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16).

Therefore, my dear brethren, with the beginning of the new year of the Lord, we are called to renew ourselves according to Saint Paul's advice: "I beseech you therefore, brethren... be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

Putting into practice the will of God, and having before us the meaning of time in Christ who became incarnate from the

pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Theotokos Mary, let us entreat the Great Hierarch of Cappadocia, Saint Basil, who has adorned the ways of man, to pray for the salvation of our souls to our circumcised in the flesh Lord and God, our Saviour Jesus Christ, as well as for the peace of the whole world, especially for our tested Middle East, for the cessation of the schisms and the restoration of the unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church and for the deliverance of the humankind from the infectious variants of the covid virus.

And along with the hymnographer, let us say: "Thou who hast made all things in wisdom, O Word of the Father Who art from before all eternity, Who hast constituted the whole creation by Thine almighty word, bless the crown of the year with Thy goodness, and cast down the heresies, and the schisms through the Theotokos, since Thou art good and the Friend of man" (Minaion, 1st September, Vespers, Aposticha 4). Moreover, Thou, pre-eternal Word of God, Who has unto Your power the times and the seasons, bless the crown of the year with Your goodness, keeping in peace and spiritual wellness our venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, our pious Christian flock, the Holy City of Jerusalem and the reverend royal nation of the Rum Orthodox. Amen!

Have a good, happy, blessed and healthy New Year 2022!

Many happy returns!"

The apolytikia of the Circumcision of the Lord and of Saint Basil followed before His Beatitude cut the cake and distributed the pieces to those present; the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, the Archbishops, Hieromonks, Monks and Nuns, the members of the Greek community, the Arab-speaking flock and the Patriarchal School Students, wishing a blessed New Year 2022, while the School students were singing the Christmas carols.

From Secretariat-General

