

THE FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday, June 30 / July 13, 2023, the feast of the Synaxis of the Twelve Holy Apostles was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

By saying "Synaxis" the Church, means the gathering of the faithful in the Holy Churches, in order to commemorate the Twelve Holy Apostles, for the sake of the mission they accomplished, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to preach Christ crucified and resurrected and they "enchanted the whole world".

This feast was celebrated by the Patriarchate in the Holy Monastery of the Holy Apostles in the city of Tiberias with the Divine Liturgy in the morning, presided over by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and the Archbishop of Aristarchos Constantina, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks and Arabic-speaking Priests from the neighbouring regions of Galilee. The chanting was delivered by Archimandrite Artemios in Greek and by the choir of Acre in Arabic, in the presence of the Consul of Greece in Haifa Mr Constantinos Zenovios and believers of the Galilee region.

To these believers, His Beatitude proclaimed the divine word as follows:

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I

am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28,18-20).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit that has dwelled on the Holy Twelve Apostles has gathered us all today in this place where Jesus appeared after His resurrection, “by the Sea of Tiberias” (John 21,1), to honour their Synaxis.

The Holy Apostles are the foundation of the faithful members of the body of the Church, as Saint Paul says: “Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2,19-20).

And this because the Lord commanded them to first go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, secondly to teach the nations to observe what they had commanded them and thirdly to assure them that this Lord is with of them [the disciples] all the days until the end of the age, (Cf. Matt. 28, 18-20).

These three characteristics of the character of the apostles constitute the apostolic institution of the Church. We say this because the Apostles of Christ received the Grace of the Holy Spirit not morally but essentially. “And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit” (Acts, 13,52) during their sermon in Antioch of Pisidia, the Apostle Luke writes. And to the apostle Peter, the Lord says: “You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of heaven shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

“When the Splendour of the Spirit appeared to you in deed and

verity, O wise Apostles, ye all took the fulness of it into yourselves, initiated into lofty teachings in the upper room; and now, as is meet, ye are counted blessed" (Matins, Canon of the twelve, Ode 9, Troparion 2) the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

On the foundations of the group of the Holy Apostles, those chosen by our Savior Christ, the earthly Church in the world was built, having as its citizens the Christians, who are already according to Paul "fellow citizens of the saints and householders of God » (Eph. 2:19) and "on earth they live, but in heaven they rule" according to Diognitos; On the other hand, the rule of it [the Church] in the Holy Spirit was shown, since it is the way of life of piety but also the way of governing of this, based on the Synodical system, established by the Apostles in Jerusalem according to the testimony of the author of the "Acts of the Apostles" the Evangelist Luke, saying: "the Apostles and the Elders came together to see about the word..." (Acts 15,6).

On the other hand, the Apostles were appointed by the Lord as His successors, as the holy Pachomius also says: "God the Word, ... ascending to heaven, preordained [=appointed in advance] His apostles as His successors".

The importance and content of Apostolic Succession for the Church and its salvific work is formulated precisely by Hippolytus of Rome, saying: "The Holy Spirit delivered in the Church, the apostles transmitted to the righteous believers; we, as their successors benefiting from this grace, by participating in the priesthood and teaching and are considered to be guards of the Church".

Indeed, my beloved brothers, the Holy Apostles are considered guardians of the Church, because its special component is "Apostolicity". Let us also hear the Apostle Luke, saying in the Acts of the Apostles: "As they pass through the cities, they deliver to them to keep the doctrines that were appointed

by the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem" (Acts 16,4). [And in more detail: as I was passing through the cities I delivered by oral teaching to the believers in them to keep the decisions, which had been definitively judged as the only correct ones by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem].

Notable in this regard is the admonition of the Apostle Paul to 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: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith", (1 Tim. 6, 20-21), "That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us", (2 Tim. 1,14).

Indeed, the Holy Fathers of the Church, gathered in the Holy Spirit, commemorate the "apostolicity" of the Church in the Creed, proclaiming: "I believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church". And this is because the Holy Apostles are those who sit in cities and ordain Elders and Bishops "shepherd the Church of the Lord and God" (Acts 20,28).

So this is why the Apostles are called by Saint Gregory of Palamas "arch-shepherds or even architects of the common piety and virtue". This is again why the schism in the body of the One, Holy and Catholic Church is a great sin: because it endangers the stability of the Apostolic succession, whose genuine and authentic bearers are the normally ordained bishops of the local Churches.

We, my dear brethren, who honour the sacred commemoration of the holy and glorious Apostles, let us join the hymnographer in the prayer: "O Good Saviour, Who by nature art the Friend of man and great in compassion, by the divine supplications of Thine all-hymned Virgin Mother, and the intercessions of Thine Apostles Peter and Paul, send unto us from Heaven Thy mercies and succour" (Matins, Canon of the Chief Apostles, Ode 9, Theotokion). Amen. Many happy returns."

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a reception and a banquet under the well-appointed priest of the Monastery Archimandrite Parthenios.

From Secretariat-General