

THE LAST PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY ON HOLY WEDNESDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Holy Wednesday, April 18/ May 1, 2024, the last Pre-Sanctified Liturgy was held at the Patriarchate:

1. At the Holy Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, presided over by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-prayer of the Holy Sepulchre Fathers.
2. At the Horrendous Golgotha, presided over by the Sacristan of the Holy Sepulchre, His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, with the attendance of pilgrims.

From Secretariat-General

HOLY TUESDAY – THE BLESSING OF THE WATERS AT THE RIVER JORDAN

On Holy Tuesday, April 17/30,2024, the pilgrimage baptism was held at the West Bank of the River Jordan near the H. Monastery of Saint John the Baptist, with the participation of local Orthodox Christians and pilgrims. The service was led by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolias under the care of the Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Bartholomew.

From Secretariat-General

THE FIRST SERVICE OF THE BRIDEGROOM AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On the evening of Palm Sunday, April 15th/28th 2024, the contrite First Service of the Bridegroom took place in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, presided over by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. The service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos, monks, nuns and devout pilgrims, to whom His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“I see Thy bridal chamber adorned, O my Saviour, and I have no wedding garment that I may enter there. Make the robe of my soul to shine, O Giver of light and save me”.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

Today, the grace of the Holy Spirit brought us all to this place of the passion of the Cross, but also of the three-day burial of our Saviour Christ, who accepted the Cross, temptations and plagues, being judged by Pilate.

“Behold the Bridegroom comes in the middle of the night; and blessed is the servant whom he shall find watching, but unworthy is he whom He shall find in slothfulness. Beware then, O my soul, and be not overcome by sleep, lest thou be

given over to death and shut out from the Kingdom. But return to soberness and cry aloud: Holy, holy, holy art Thou, O God: through the Theotokos have mercy upon us" the hymnographer of the Church advises.

Christ, my beloved, is the Coming Bridegroom in the middle of the night, and His disciples, that is, those who believe and follow Him, are the sons of the bridegroom, that is, those invited to the weddings. "The sons of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them," says the Lord (Matthew 9:15).

Christ, as the New Adam on the Cross, redeems the new Eve by His precious blood, but also by the water that flowed from His embroidered side (John 19:34). The blood and water symbolize the mysteries of the Church but also the love of the Bridegroom for His bride. "Husbands love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her", (Eph. 5:25), Saint Paul preaches.

We, being members of the Church, which is the Body of Christ, are also members of the Body of Christ. In other words, the relationship between God and man in the person of Christ is a marriage relationship and union. The foundation and unifying force of marriage is love in Christ.

In this marriage of the Bridegroom Christ and the Bride, the Church, we are invited to participate as well. In order to participate, however, we must not only accept the invitation, which many refuse, but also bring the appropriate clothing.

In the well-known parable of the royal weddings of the Gospel of Matthew, we hear the King say to the uninvited "man not dressed in a wedding garment" (Matthew 22:11): "Sir, how did you come in here, not having a wedding garment"? (Matthew 22:12). This is why the hymn of the Church exclaims in a pleading manner: "I see Thy bridal chamber adorned, O my Saviour, and I have no wedding garment that I may enter there.

Make the robe of my soul the shine, O Giver of light and save me”.

This invitation will resound as long as the Church of Christ exists in the world. However, because the ceremony or rather the hour and time of the solemn ceremony of marriages is not fixed, it is necessary for each of us to be quick, so that when the Bridegroom comes we are ready, like the wise virgins who rose and decorated their lamp.

Here is a time of preparation, the Holy and Great Week of Lent, which calls us and prepares us for the festival of festivals, the Glorious Resurrection of Christ. Amen. Happy and blessed Easter”.

From Secretariat-General

PALM SUNDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

Sunday, April 15/28, 2024, was celebrated as the Feast of Palms in the Patriarchate.

On this feast, the Church remembers that our Lord Jesus Christ, after the Resurrection of Lazarus, which He performed “confirming the general Resurrection”, entered Jerusalem in triumph, sitting on an ass, while the children of the Jews were following and welcomed Him by rolling the clothes of them, holding palm branches and chanting “hosanna the Son of David, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord”.

This feast was celebrated with Vespers on Saturday afternoon, presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem

Theophilos, with the co-prayer of High Priests and the co-celebration of the Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon, Fr Ioannis Antoniou and Mr Eustathios Tsoumanis, in the presence of pilgrims.

On Sunday morning the Holy Sepulchre Fathers went from the Patriarchate to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, holding palm tree branches. The Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolias, the Archbishops, Theophanes of Gerash, Dorotheos of Avela, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Theodosios of Sebasteia, Dimitrios of Lydda, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Archimandrite Vassianos from the Moscow Patriarchate, Archimandrite Ioannis from the Romanian Patriarchate. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Tsoumanis on the right and Fr Ioannis Antoniou on the left. The service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos, the Consul Mrs Anna Mantika and many pilgrims despite the ongoing war.

A procession around the Sacred Edicule and the shrines followed the Liturgy, under the chanting of the hymns of the feast.

The celebration concluded with the return to the Patriarchate Reception Hall, with the honorary escort of the Body of Scouts. There, His Beatitude expressed His wishes for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who entered Jerusalem sitting on an ass, for the celebration of the Holy Week and Easter.

From Secretariat-General

THE PROCESSION OF THE PALM TREE BRANCHES FROM BETHSPHAGE

On the evening of Lazarus Saturday, April 14th / 27th 2024, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos blessed the palm tree branches in Bethsphage, and assigned to His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolias, to lead the procession with the palm tree branches under the chanting of “the general Resurrection before your passion” from Bethsphage, passing through the Holy Monastery of the Ascension, Gethsemane, Saint Stephen and from the Lions Gate to the Holy Monastery of the Holy Ancestors of God as a memory of the Lord’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when the children of the Jews welcomed Him singing “Hosanna to the Son of David”.

The preparation for the procession from the Monastery of Bethsphage was completed under the care of the Supervisor of the Monastery, nun Savvina.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE RAISING OF LAZARUS AT THE HOLY SHRINE OF THE ASCENSION

The feast of the raising of Lazarus was celebrated per the Status Quo on Saturday, April 14th / 27th at the place of the

Ascension on the Mount of Olives, in the open air of the ancient Byzantine Church with Vespers in the evening, led by His Eminence the Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis. Co-celebrants to His Eminence were Holy Sepulchre Archimandrites, the first of whom was Archimandrite Philoumenos, the Priests Farah Bandour and George Baramki from Saint James Cathedral. The chanting was delivered by Mr Eustathios Tsoumanis on the right in Greek and Mr Rimon Kamar on the left in Arabic, as the service was attended by monks, believers and a few pilgrims.

At the end of Vespers, the Holy Gospel was read and the Canon of the feast was chanted as part of the Service of the Small Compline and a litany followed to the Holy Monastery of the Men of Galilee, where His Beatitude was also waiting.

The evening ceremony ended with the return of the Litany to the Shrine.

The following day, the day of the resurrection of Lazarus, Saturday the 14th/27th of April, a Divine Liturgy was held at the same place again presided over by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis. After the Divine Liturgy, the attending believers went to the Holy Monastery of Martha and Mary in Bethany to participate in the celebration there.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION

OF LAZARUS AT THE HOLY MONASTERY OF MARTHA AND MARY IN BETHANY

On Saturday, April 27/14, 2023, a Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos in the Holy Monastery of Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus in Bethany. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolas, and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina. The chanting was delivered by Mr Eustathios Tsoumanis and Monk Joseph from Mount Athos, as the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos and the Consul Mrs Anna Mantika, many local faithful and some pilgrims.

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

“O Lord Thy voice destroyed the dominion of hell, and the word of Thy power raised from the tomb him that had been four days dead; and Lazarus became the saving first-fruits of the regeneration of the world” (Friday Vespers, stichera of the Saint), the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of our God and Saviour Christ, has gathered us all in this town of Bethany, where Lazarus was born, and in this place where Lazarus' sister Martha met Jesus, to celebrate the raising from the dead of the holy, righteous friend of Christ, Lazarus, who was four days dead.

According to the true testimony of Saint John the Evangelist, Martha said to Jesus: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (John 11,21). "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11,25-26).

In interpreting Christ's words, Saint Augustine says: "The one who believes in Christ will die due to the death of the flesh, but will never die due to the life of the spirit and immortality and resurrection". Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "The one that believes in Him [Christ], will have endless life in the ages to come, full of beatitude and incorruption".

According to the hymnographer of the Church, Christ, along with His disciples, went from the place beyond the River Jordan to Bethany, where His friend Lazarus had died, to certify the abstract energy and power of His divinity. "As true God Thou hast known of the falling asleep of Lazarus and hast announced it beforehand to Thy disciples, giving them proof, O Master, of the infinite power of Thy divinity" (Mattins, Ode 6, Troparion 4), the hymnographer exclaims. Moreover, to confirm before His Passion, the general resurrection. "Giving us before Thy Passion an assurance of the general resurrection, Thou hast raised Lazarus from the dead" (Apolytikion), the hymnographer exclaims again.

Because the redeeming Passion of Christ on the Cross was approaching, He shook the power of the death through the resurrection of Lazarus who had been four days dead. He also foretold His three-day burial and His resurrection.

So, we cannot but wonder; What does the "general resurrection" mean? The general resurrection is the resurrection of our Saviour Christ. The resurrection of the God-man Christ refers to the human flesh that He received from the pure flesh of the Theotokos Mary through the Holy Spirit. In other words, the general resurrection of Christ means the freedom of all men

from the corruption of sin.

It is noteworthy that the “freedom of all men from corruption” should not be interpreted morally or metaphysically, but as a true fact, given that man’s death is an undeniable truth.

Through the loud voice of Christ “Lazarus come forth!” (John 11,43), the life-giving power and the mission of the Son of Man are declared, as He assured the faithful, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5,24).

This transition from death to life was declared by the resurrection of Lazarus, who, according to Saint Andrew of Crete, “became the first fruits of the regeneration”, that is, of Christ’s resurrection.

Today, my dearly beloved, being in Bethany and foretasting the General Resurrection of our Saviour Christ, the Victor over death, let us say along with the hymnographer; By the prayers of the Most Pure Theotokos and the intercessions of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, grant us O Lord to see Your Passion on the Cross and Your glorious Resurrection, O friend of man. Many happy returns, and a Happy Easter. Amen”.

A procession around the Monastery followed before the end of the service. Then the elderly Abbess Eupraxia hosted a modest reception in the rectory, with the Mayor of the Municipality of Bethany as the guest of honour.

The procession to the tomb of Lazarus followed, led by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolas, where the Gospel narrative according to Saint John on the resurrection of Lazarus was read. The feast concluded with the return to the Patriarchate Headquarters.

From Secretariat-General

THE SERVICE OF THE AKATHIST HYMN TO THE THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday evening, April 6/19, 2024, the Service of the Akathist Hymn to the Most Holy Theotokos was chanted during the Small Compline at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

According to the Typikon order of the Church, the nine odes of the canon were chanted and in between the four stasis of the Akathist were recited. The first stasis was recited by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, the second by His Eminence the Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the third by the Elder Sacristan, His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis and the fourth by the Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos.

The service was attended by monks, nuns, local faithful, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos and Mrs Anna Mantika.

From Secretariat-General

THE SERVICE OF THE GREAT

CANON AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, April 4/17, 2024, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and during the service of the Small Compline, the Great Canon was chanted, and presided over by His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerash. The following Archimandrites delivered the chanting; Nicodemus, Claudius, Bartholomew, Epiphanius, Dionysios, Christodoulos, Priest Ioannis Antoniou, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Simeon. The service was attended by monks, nuns, and members of the Church.

This Canon is a brilliant theological and literature poem from Saint Andrew from Jerusalem, Archbishop of Crete. The Canon includes a multitude of Old Testament characters portrayed as examples to imitate their virtues or avoid their sins. This is for our better participation in the Great Lent towards the Holy Pascha, in contrition, humility, and repentance.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE ADORATION OF THE CROSS AT THE HOLY MONASTERY OF THE CROSS

On the Fourth Sunday of Lent, April 1/14, 2024, the feast of the Adoration of the Holy Cross was celebrated in the Holy Monastery of the Holy Cross, located in western New Jerusalem near the Jewish Parliament.

Following the Status Quo, this feast was also celebrated in the Holy Monastery of the Cross because of the tradition that

the wood of the Cross, on which the Lord was crucified for our salvation, was planted by the righteous Lot in the place where the Holy Monastery is located following the directive of Patriarch Abraham.

On this occasion, Vespers was celebrated on Saturday afternoon by Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks with Archimandrite Ieronymos first in rank. On Sunday morning the Divine Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina and Methodios of Tabor, the Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, the Hegoumen in Madaba, Archimandrite Ieronymos, Priest Ioannis Antoniou and other Priests. The service was attended by the representative of the Greek Consulate General in Jerusalem Mrs Anna Mandika and monks, nuns and members of our flock.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14), the wise Apostle Paul preaches.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Dear Christians,

The power of the Holy and Life-giving Cross of our God and Saviour Christ has gathered us in this holy place, where the three-composed tree was planted and the Monastery of the Cross was built, so that we may solemnly and in thanksgiving venerate the Wood of the Cross, through which, “God our King, before the ages, he hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth” (Ps. 73,12) as David prophetically sings.

Indeed, the one who through sufferings, even though he was finished on the Cross [Jesus] became the cause of eternal

salvation for all who obey him (Heb. 5:9), as preached by Saint Paul.

The Holy Cross, which was shown to be the instrument of redemption, is inextricably linked to death, pain, and the blood of Christ, " In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence" (Eph. 1, 7-8), as the wise Paul says again.

According to the revelation of the Evangelist John, the Cross is the saving tree, i.e. "the tree of life". " To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (Revelation 2,7). And in more detail: "To him who will win in the battle against Satan and sin, I will give him to eat from the tree of life. In other words, I will claim him to enjoy the eternal goods in the Paradise of my Father, Who according to my human nature is also my God", says the Lord.

Athanasios the Great, admiring the plan of God, Who through the cross leads the faithful to salvation and defeats the work of the devil, says: "O divine true wisdom and heavenly thinking! The Cross was set up and idolatry was destroyed. A Cross was raised and a diabolical dynasty was condemned" (P.G. 28, 1056)

The devil was condemned out of God's infinite love for man: " Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Eph. 5, 1-2), Paul preaches.

It is worth noting that the living offering and sacrifice of Christ was made on the wood of the Cross, which is why the Cross is also called an "altar" where " the Lamb of God [was placed] which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Greater still ... here the gift of the altar is laid and by the

gift the altar is sanctified”.

In other words, Christ, Who is the gift, is “greater”, i.e. superior to the altar, therefore the altar, i.e. the wood of the cross, is sanctified by the offered gift, the sacrificed Christ. According to St. John of Damascus, the wood of the cross is true and venerable, in which Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice for us...sanctified by the grace of the Holy Body and Blood”, therefore “venerated”. Moreover, “we also venerate the type of the honourable and life-giving cross, even if it is made from other material, not honouring the material, not the birth, but the type as a symbol of Christ”.

In his homily, Saint Sophronios Patriarch of Jerusalem on the veneration of the Holy and Life-giving Cross in the middle week of Holy Pentecost, says in praise: “Hail, Holy Cross, where the Son and Word of God rested His hands and hugged us and brought us to Heavenly Father ... and in you, Holy Cross, the divine blood of the Son and Word of the invisible Father was shed”.

This Holy Cross was prefigured by the Tree of Life, the one planted in heaven by God (where death is through wood, so through wood life and resurrection are given). “This Holy Cross was prefigured by the tree of life, which was planted in Heaven by God. Because death came through wood, life and resurrection had to come through wood” St. John of Damascus says.

And because our God is the Saviour, all people will be saved (Tim. 1’ 2-4) first He planted the tree of life in the middle of Paradise, when the fullness of time had not come, he planted the tree of salvation in the secret Paradise, that is, in the Virgin Mary, from whom Christ sprung from her pure blood, as Saint Cosmas Bishop of Maiuma exclaims in a hymn, saying: “O Theotokos, thou art a mystical paradise, which being untilled hath blossomed forth Christ, by Whom the life-giving Tree of the Cross was planted in the earth. In

worshipping Him now through its exaltation, thee do we magnify" (Katavasiae of the Cross, Ode 9).

The fruit of the life-giving tree of the Cross, my beloved brothers, is the body and blood of Christ risen from the dead, of which we are called to eat and drink according to His command: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." (John 6:53). " He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him" (John 6:56).

The wise Paul often refers to the redemptive blood of Christ's Cross. And this is because, through this blood, we are redeemed (Romans 5,9), we are bought (Eph'. 1,7), we become God's property (Acts 20,28) and the unity and communion between believers in the eucharistic cup is declared (Cor. 10,16/11, 25-28). Moreover, the death of the Lord is reported, and His coming is declared "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

This is why St. John of Damascus says in a hymn: We glorify your life-giving Cross, Christ God, your three-day Resurrection, for by it you renewed the corrupt nature of men, and raised it to the heavens forever, as the only good and philanthropist.

Let us, my beloved brothers, beseech the Mother of God, who gave birth to the One who was lifted up on the Cross, so that by the great power of the Holy Cross we may reach the luminous Resurrection of our Saviour. Amen. Many happy and peaceful returns".

The Liturgy was followed by the service and procession of the Adoration of the Holy Cross.

Finally, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Christodoulos hosted a modest treat at the rectory.

From Secretariat-General