

# **THE FEAST OF THE APODOSIS OF EASTER AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Wednesday, May 14/27, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the Apodosis of Pascha. This Feast was celebrated at the completion of forty days of resurrection, joy, peace and gleefulness, by our Lord, the Resurrected Jesus Christ.

This feast was celebrated just like the day of Easter. The service was the same as that of Easter except the Biblical readings.

For this Feast, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, with a limited number of faithful Christians.

According to the custom, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos went for veneration during the Divine Liturgy, after the Dismissal from the Service at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen.

After the Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Episcopal entourage returned to the Patriarchate and paid their respect to His Beatitude.

**From Secretariat-General**

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**HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH**

# OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY AT THE HOLY MONASTERY OF SAINT GERASIMOS

On Sunday, May 11/24, 2020, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Monastery of St. Gerasimos of the Jordan, which is located at the West Bank of the river Jordan before its estuary to the Dead Sea.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated in completion of the celebration of the commemoration of St. Gerasimos, which is on 4<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> May, but at that time the feast was held without the participation of any external congregation due to the COVID-19.

On this occasion, His Beatitude read the following sermon:

“And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him” (John 9:1-3).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians

Today, the sixth Sunday since Easter, we celebrate the miracle of our Lord Jesus Christ to the blind man from birth, through which miracle, Christ revealed the works of His God and Father.

To the disciples’ question, “who sinned, this man or his

parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2) Christ replied, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him" (John 9:3). Interpreting these words of the Lord, St. Cyril of Alexandria says that Jesus does not clarify His disciples' question, because this is a work of the Holy Spirit. "And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:7-8).

The miracle of giving sight to the man who was born blind is an irrefutable witness, that Christ, being the Son of God the Father, a perfect God and a perfect man, came to the world in order to enlighten and sanctify the world, as much through His teaching as also through His miracles. "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:8) the Lord says.

In other words, Christ is the spiritual and irreproachable light, "through which the enlightened ones should be illumined through faith", St. Ziganinos says. And according to St. Theophylactos, "I am the light of the world", meaning that through the teaching and the working of the miracles Christ illumines the souls.

Worth of our attention in the miracle of the man who was born blind is the fact, as St. Cyril of Alexandria says, "that by His own Will and command, the Saviour wanted to heal the man". And according to St. Chrysostom, "Christ Himself saw the blind man, it was not the blind man that came to Him. This means that Jesus was not invited by the blind man to heal his eyes". It was not possible for this blind man to see Christ, but Christ saw him and restored his eyesight with the miraculous healing.

In other words my dear brethren, Christ is found and

recognized by those who neither seek, nor see Him, as the prophet Isaiah says; "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not"(Isaiah 65:1). And if we know or become aware of anything regarding Christ, this is owed to the fact that we have been known by Him as St. Paul says. "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God"(Galatians 4:9) and "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus"(Phil. 3:12).

This teaching of St. Paul is confirmed by the preaching of repentance of St. John the Baptist, who in this context refers to prophet Isaiah by saying; "and every flesh shall see the salvation of God". Interpreting this verse, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "flesh here refers to man as a whole and every human flesh. In this manner every flesh shall see the salvation of God, namely of the Father, for He has sent our Saviour His Son."

Behold therefore why the hymn writer of the Church says "who can tell of Thy mighty works, O Christ, or who can number the multitudes of Thy wonders? For even as Thou, in Thy goodness, didst appear on earth twofold, of nature, so didst Thou grant twofold healings to the sick; for Thou didst open not only the bodily eyes of the man who was blind from the womb, but those of his soul also. Wherefore, he confessed to Thee, the hidden God, Who grantest great mercy unto all" (Pentecostarion, Sunday of the Blind man Matins, praises, Glory).

Indeed, not only the eyes of the body, but also those of the soul, did Christ open of the man who was born blind, as He "wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:4) according to St. Paul. This truth, namely the light of the truth, the God-man our Lord Jesus Christ, did the recovered eyes of the blind man see, and that is why at Jesus' question; "believest thou in the Son of God" (John 9:35) the blind man said "Lord I believe" and worshiped Him" (John 9:38).

The spiritual worship He asks on our part, St. Cyril of Alexandria says, hearkening to Christ's words to the Samaritan woman: "a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth...God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24).

Amen. Christ is risen!"

And the hardworking and hospitable Hegoumen Archimandrite Chrysostom hosted them for a meal.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF THE APPEARANCE OF THE SIGN OF THE PRECIOUS CROSS IN THE HEAVENS AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Wednesday, May 7/20, 2020 the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the appearance of the sign of the Precious Cross in the Heavens.

On this feast, the Church as a whole, and especially the Church of Jerusalem, commemorates the event that in the year 351 A.D., when St. Cyril was the Archbishop of Jerusalem, at the third hour of the day which was the day of Pentecost, the Cross appeared in the Heavens shining more than the brightest stars and the sun rays. The Holy Cross was visible from the Horrendous Golgotha and as far as the Mount of Olives, as the same St. Cyril Archbishop of Jerusalem describes it in his

letter to the Emperor Constantius, son of Constantine the Great.

This event was celebrated with the Divine Liturgy at the Horrendous Golgotha, which was led by His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, at the chanting of Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos. Only a few people were present due to COVID-19.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a procession three times around the Holy Sepulchre, with the participation of other Archbishops who came from the Patriarchate.

After the procession, the officiating Metropolitan read Archbishop Cyril's letter in Greek before the Sacred Edicule, while Archimandrite Meletios read it in Arabic.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Episcopal entourage paid their respect to His Beatitude at the Patriarchate. There, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis referred to the wondrous appearance of the Cross as it is described in the letter written by Archbishop Cyril of Jerusalem.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE PONTIANS' GENOCIDE**

His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, who comes from Paslah town of the Archdiocese of Kologne, continuing his long-term tradition, asked and received the blessing by H.H.B.

our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and after midnight on Monday, 5<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> to Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> May, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Sepulchre, with a memorial service for the repose and the salvation of the souls of the hundreds of thousands of victims of the genocide of the Greeks of Pontus by Turkey. The years range starts from the time of Komninos' Dynasty up to the present, and especially during the years 1916-1922. May the Lord give rest to their souls in the land of the living.

Ever lasting their remembrance.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Sunday, May 4/17, 2020, Sunday of the Samaritan Woman according to the Book of Pentecostarion, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the event when the Samaritan Woman met the Lord by Jacob's well in Nablus of Samaria. There, on the pretext of drinking water, the Lord revealed to her that He is the Living Water which brings eternal life, and that He is Christ the Messiah (John ch.4).

This year, this feast was celebrated under the limitations of the safety precautions for COVID-19, by the Hegoumen of Jacob's well and renovator of the Church of St. Foteini in Samaria, Archimandrite Ioustinos, at the place where the Holy relic of St. Philoumenos lies.

For this reason, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem

Theophilos did not go there, but instead, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Monastery of the Twelve Apostles in Tiberias, where He was warmly received by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Parthenios.

*On these occasions, His Beatitude read the following Sermon:*

*"Thou who art invisible in Thin essence, the Word and Omnipotent, wast seen by men as a man born of the pure Mother of God, to call man back to the participation of Thy Divinity" (Midnight Service of the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, Ode 7, Theotokion).*

*"Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

*Noble Christians*

*Today, on the fifth Sunday since Easter, we celebrate the feast of the Samaritan Woman, and glorify in Eucharist the source of life, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who appeared incarnate as man, "in order to recall the nation of peoples from Adam's annulled curse".*

*Indeed, the Incarnate God the Word Who became man, released the peoples for the curse of the Old, the earthly Adam, and resurrected them along with Him by His Resurrection.*

*During His dialogue with the Samaritan Woman by Jacob's well: "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water"(John 4:10).*

*Interpreting these words of the Lord, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "He calls living water the potion of the life-giving [Divine] Spirit, by which alone, humanity...which has already been arid and barren from every kind of virtue...is turned back to the beauty of old and the once lost life-giving grace, blossoming with goods in many meaningful ways."*



*In other words, the "living water", namely the life-giving potion of the Holy Spirit, is the one which "cleanses the dirt of sin and clenches the flame of the passions, and heals the aridity and barrenness of unfaithfulness" according to St. Theophylaktos. Moreover, the life-giving potion or the grace of the Holy Spirit, is the one through which the perfection of man is being accomplished in Christ the new Adam.*

*Only through the grace of the Holy Spirit is man's soul able to return to the old beauty as St. Basil the Great says, when interpreting the psalm: "O Lord, by Thy will hast Thou granted power to my beauty"(Psalm 29:8).*

*"For I was good according nature; weak though I was through the treachery of the snake and became dead by the offence...However the true and amiable beauty does exist in the divine and blessed nature, which only the purified mind can behold".*

*"For the best beauty is at first the one of the soul, when the soul is decorated with the Holy Spirit", St. Clement of Alexandria says.*

*The beauty of the soul in the Holy Spirit is no other than the transformation into divinity, in other words, the communion of the divine nature, as St. Maximus says: "God created us for this reason, so that we become communicants of the divine nature, and partakers of His eternity, and be made similar to Him according to the divine grace".*

*Behold why Jesus told the Samaritan Woman: "whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14).*

*This very water, which is welling up to eternal life, namely to the grace of the Holy Spirit, did Jesus offer the Samaritan Woman, and she gladly accepted it, as Prophet Isaiah says; "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation"*

*(Isaiah 12:3).*

*According to St. Cyril of Alexandria, in these words, Prophet Isaiah: "calls life-giving water the Word of God, while springs are the Holy Apostles and Evangelists and Prophets. And Christ is the salvation".*

*The Samaritan Woman did not only accept the grace of the Holy Spirit, but she also became a preacher and an Apostle of the Lord's preaching: "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth"(John 4:24).*

*Commenting of this verse, St. Chrysostom says: "When He [Christ] says "God is a spirit" He denotes nothing else but the bodiless nature. We must therefore worship this bodiless nature and offer unto Him from what is bodiless in us; namely from the soul and the purity of the mind...Do not therefore sacrifice sheep and cattle, but offer thy whole self a sacrifice unto God; for this is a living sacrifice, to present ...to God our bodies a true and proper worship (Romans 12:1)...crucifying yourself and refute and slaughter the illogical desires".*

*This is what became of the Samaritan Woman, who was named Foteini by Christ, namely, she entered the martyrdom of the love of Christ, as she was burnt along with her seven sons during the reign of the Roman Emperor Nero, receiving thus the crown of the passion on the Cross and the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Christ.*

*Let us then say along with the hymn writer; "the Well-spring of the principle of life, Jesus, our Saviour, came to the well of the Patriarch Jacob, and sought water from a Samaritan woman that He might drink. And when she answered Him that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, the wise Creator diverted her by the sweetness of His words rather to seek of Him the everlasting water, which, when she received it, she proclaimed to all, saying: Come and see the Knower of things*

*hidden, God Who is come in the flesh to save man”  
(Pentecostarion, Matins of the Samaritan Woman, praises  
Glory).*

*Amen. Christ is risen!”*

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF ST. GEORGE THE GREAT MARTYR AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Wednesday, April 23/May 6, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy glorious great martyr George the trophy-bearer. His father was from Cappadocia and his mother from Palestine, and he suffered a martyr's death in 303 A.D. during the reign of Diocletian in Rome. His holy relic was transferred to Lydda and is kept there to this day.

The commemoration of St. George was celebrated in many Churches of the Patriarchate which are dedicated to him, and especially;

1. In Acre-Ptolemais by the Patriarchal Commissioner Archimandrite Philotheos with the Divine Liturgy and the participation of only the allowed number of faithful Christians, due to the virus restrictions.
2. At the Holy Church of St. George in Lydda, where the saint's tomb lies, with the Divine Liturgy led by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Nicodemus, and the participation of a few faithful.
3. At the Holy Church of St. George of the Hospital,

adjacent to the Holy Monastery of the Holy Archangels in the Old City of Jerusalem, with the Divine Liturgy on Thursday morning, April 24/May 7, 2020, one day after the feast. The Service was led by Archimandrite Philotheos, who came from Acre for this reason, and only a few Nuns were present due to the restrictions mentioned above.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF JOSEPH OF ARIMATHAEA AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Sunday, April 20/ May 3, 2020, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearers according to Pentecostarion, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of Joseph of Arimathaea at his Holy Monastery in Remli, ancient town of Arimathaea, which was his hometown.

On this feast the Church commemorates that righteous Joseph went to Pilate and asked Jesus' body, and having received it, he buried it with the help of the myrrh-bearers near the place of His crucifixion.

The feast was held within the frame of the safety measures due to COVID-19, and was led by His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Joppa under the hospitality of the Hegoumen of the Monastery Reverend Archimandrite Niphon, with the participation of only a few faithful Christians.

His Beatitude sent the following Sermon to Remli Community;

*“Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus” (Mark 15:43). “And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him” (Mark 16:1).*

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

*Noble Christians*

*Our Lord Jesus Christ who has caused the light to rise and shine all over the universe, has gathered us all in the Biblical town of Arimathaea, the home town of Joseph, so that along with Nicodemus and the myrrh-bearers we may celebrate their feast.*

*In the detailed description of the three-day burial and resurrection of Christ, the Holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John commemorate especially the myrrh-bearing women, Joseph and Nicodemus, the secret disciples of Christ. Because their immediate and noble care of the burial of Jesus' immaculate body is an irrefutable witness. The myrrh-bearing Women were the first true witnesses of the resurrection of the Lord, while Joseph and Nicodemus were the witnesses of His burial. “And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe”, St. John the Evangelist writes (John 19:35).*

*And St. Cyril of Alexandria says regarding Jesus' burial; “in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matthew 18:16). “For two were those who buried Him, Joseph and Nicodemus, who had their mind and faith in God and did not prefer the earthly glory nor its honour...by their free faith they received the permission and were shown to be devoted and dear guardians of our Saviour's command”. The resurrection, my dear brethren is the crown of the mystery of the Divine Providence, as St. John Damascene says; “Now the*

*hidden mystery of the ages of old is being revealed; now the chapter of the Divine Providence is being fulfilled; now the crown of the Incarnation of God the Word is being put into place; now the abyss of the Divine Love is being published. For God the Word loved the world so much, so that by the providence of God the Father He came down and became incarnate, and took upon Himself our body while being bodiless, so that He might suffer by partaking in the passions and become passion to death, in order to cover with apathy, us, who suffer from the passions” (St. John Damascene, Sermon on Holy Saturday).*

*The extreme power of the Resurrection is due to this fact, that “by becoming a passion to death, [Christ] dressed us [the people] who suffer from the passions, with apathy”. St. John Damascene formulates this clearly in his Paschal Hymn; “The only blessed and most glorious God of our Fathers, who hath redeemed the Children from the furnace, is become man, and as a mortal doth suffer, and through suffering doth cloth mortality with the grace of incorruption” (Katavasia of Pascha, Ode 7).*

*In other words, He who took upon Himself our nature with all the passions except sin, suffers passions as a mortal and especially the death on the Cross. Through the passions and the resurrection, Christ renews the human nature that He took upon Himself, and clads it with the beauty of incorruption, as Prophet David says; “The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty” (Psalm 93:1).*

*This immense philanthropy and excessive goodness of God is being preached by St. Gregory the Theologian who says; “He that Is, becomes poor with my flesh so that I may become rich with His divinity; and He who is full is emptied; He is emptied from His glory for a short while, so that I may partake of His fullness. What is the richness of goodness? What is this mystery that concerns me? I partook from the image and did not keep it; He takes upon Himself my flesh, so*

*that He may save the image and make the flesh immortal."*

*Here St. Gregory talks about the salvation of the image through the Incarnation of God the Word, namely of the soul and the immortality of the human body.*

*Moreover, interpreting the Lord's words, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth" (John 11:11) Cyril of Alexandria says that Jesus "calls sleep the departure of the soul from the body". And elsewhere the Father says; "the acquired corruption defiles the nature of man, and death shall prevail by evil hatred, having sin as a root."*

*In this the victory and the power of Christ resurrection is made obvious, namely in the abolishment of the death of the acquired corruption, namely of sin, through Christ's death. Let us therefore hear St. John Damascene saying; "For if the sacred soul of the life-giving and immaculate body was divided, nevertheless the divinity of the Word after the conception in the womb of the Holy Virgin Theotokos Mary, remained inseparable, the two natures in one hypostasis, an undivided unity, of the soul and body; and thus the one hypostasis of Christ remained in this death, being God the Word in body and soul, and after death also this very one hypostasis. For this reason, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11).*

*Behold therefore, my dear ones, why Pascha, or better say, the Day of Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is recognized as the day of the inauguration of the unwaning Kingdom of God, to which we are called to participate by the hymn writer. And behold why today we honour the commemoration of Joseph and Nicodemus along with the myrrh-bearers. For they all were fervent preachers of Christ's resurrection.*

*As, for us, let us say along with the hymn writer; "When thy Son destroyed all the might of death, O Virgin, as the mighty God He exalted and deified us with Himself by His Resurrection. Wherefore, we sing His praise unto the ages" (Pentecostarion, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearers, Matins, Canon 8, 2nd troparion of the Theotokos). Christ is risen!"*

On this Sunday the Patriarchate also celebrated the commemoration of the myrrh-bearing Women, who buried the Lord along with Joseph and were the first ones to hear that the Lord was risen from the dead by the angel who was sitting at the Tomb's stone, early at dawn of the first Saturday.

The commemoration of the myrrh-bearers was celebrated at their chapel in the courtyard of St. James the Brother of God Cathedral and at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The celebration was held by St. James' Cathedral parish, led by the participation of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, with only a few faithful Christians present, again due to the COVID-19 measures. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Monk Nikolaos on the right in Greek, and by Mr. Rimon Kamar on the left in Arabic.

A modest reception followed the service at the Cathedral's office.

Early in the morning of the same day, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the H. Monastery of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, where He read the following Sermon;

*"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).*

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*



The beyond comprehension condescension and philanthropy of our Lord and God towards us, has gathered us all in this holy place of Tabor where for the first time "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (Matt. 17:2), in order to celebrate the Paschal commemoration of the myrrh-bearing Women; and of the secret disciples Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus.

"For great is the mystery of the Divine Providence, which cannot be comprehended only through faith, but it needs purity of soul which is consistent with divine desire and fear. For there is no other way to work purification, but through divine fear and love. Also, it is not possible to receive the divine enlightenment, if the eyes of the soul are not cleansed beforehand. For every divine gift is unapproachable to the profane ones; for only the ones that are pure in heart shall see God, as Christ, the only truth indeed says" St. John Damascene preaches.

"Let us purify our senses and we shall behold Christ, radiant with the unapproachable light of the Resurrection, and we shall clearly hear Him say: Rejoice! As we sing the triumphant hymn", the hymn writer of the Church proclaims (Canon of Pascha Ode 1 troparion 2).

Christ's Resurrection is "the living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh" (Hebrews 10:20) according to St. Paul. And this way is the one which leads us to the eternal Kingdom as Ecumenios and Zigavinos interpret respectively; "He [Christ] has initiated it" and "He was the first one who walked on it". And according to the hymn writer; "Christ is the Pascha that openeth the gates of Paradise for us".

Behold therefore, why St. Paul advices us; "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2).

*“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth...seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col. 3:5, 3:9-10). And in more detail; mortify your body parts that desire the earthly pleasures and delights, having first removed from yourselves the old corrupt man along with his actions and even more since you are dressed with the new man, who is continuously renewed.*

*The established Father of the Church St. John Damascene, says after St. Paul’s preaching; “Christ on the Cross; for ye are partakers of His sufferings (2 Cor. 1:7), “and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed” (1 Peter 5:1). Christ is among the dead; let us mortify our flesh to sin, in order to live in righteousness. Christ is wrapped up in clothes for the dead; let us cleanse ourselves of the old lump and become a new leaven (Gal. 5:9), in order to become the den of Christ. Christ is in Hades; let us go down along with Him to the humility that elevates, in order to rise, and stand and be glorified along with Him, always beholding God, and being seen by Him.”*

*We, my dear ones, who have been vivified through the death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, let us say along with the myrrh-bearing women and the secret disciples Joseph and Nicodemus, who became preachers and witnesses of the three-day burial and resurrection from the dead of our Christ: Let no one fear death; Christ is risen! To Him belongs all glory and the power unto the ages of ages! Amen.”*

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE FEAST OF THOMAS' SUNDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

The Feast of Thomas' Sunday was celebrated by the Patriarchate on Sunday, April 13/26, 2020.

On this Sunday the Church commemorates the event of the first day after the Resurrection, "On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders ..." (John 20:19-29), when Jesus appeared to His disciples at the Upper room, Thomas was not with them, and when the disciples told him "we have seen the Lord", he was not convinced, but said; "“Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe”. Then after eight days Jesus appeared to the disciples again and told Thomas "“Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

According to the typikon order of the Patriarchate, this feast was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, as a "parresia" with Vespers in the afternoon and the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Sepulchre in the morning, officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, with only a few co-celebrants, due to the safety measures. There was also a celebration in Cana of Galilee with the Divine Liturgy which was held according to the current restrictions by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Chrysostom.

His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos sent the following Sermon for the flock in Cana;

"Come on this auspicious day of the Resurrection let us partake of the new fruit of the vine of divine gladness and of the Kingdom of Christ, praising Him as God unto the ages"

(Pentecostarion, Canon of Easter, Ode 8, troparion 2).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians

Christ our God, who “has endured the cross, voided death and risen from the dead” (Octoechos Sunday Matins praises tone 1, troparion 1), has gathered us all in this holy place of Cana of Galilee in order to celebrate the beginning of the marvels Jesus worked, and revealed His glory and His disciples believed in Him (John 2:11). Today’s feast of the wedding in Cana and of the miracle of turning the water into wine on this Thomas’ Sunday of the Renewal week has a special significance. Because, on the one hand, the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of our Christian faith as St. Paul preaches; “But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (1 Cor. 15:13-14). And on the other, Easter is the primary celebration of the Eastern Church, as St. Paul says; “For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7).

Jesus chose the day of His friend Simon the Canaanite’s wedding to begin the working of His divine signs, His miracles, at the presence of His Mother, the Ever-Virgin Theotokos Mary. And St. Paul regards marriage as sacred and great; “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32).

Interpreting these words, St. John Damascene says that St. Paul refers to the union of Christ with the teaching of His Church; “in this manner there is a sacrament of the concealed truth, as the union of the woman with the man depicts the union of Christ with the Church”.

In other words, in the wedding of Cana there was a sacrament which depicted the hidden truth, namely the spiritual wedding of Christ with the Church, as very clearly St. Paul teaches by

saying; "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25).

Moreover, St. Paul's teaching is confirmed by the witness of St. John the Evangelist in his book of Revelation by saying; "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7).

This prophesy of St. John refers to the joy of the partakers of the triumphant Church, namely of the Kingdom of God, which is represented as the lamb's wedding. "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven", the Lord preaches (Matt. 8:11). And St. Andrew of Caesarea of Cappadocia, interpreting the verse "the guests at the Lamb's wedding supper" says; "The supper of Christ is the gladness of those who are saved, and the harmonious gleefulness, and blessed are those who partake of it and enter the eternal bridal chamber along with the holy bridegroom of the purified souls".

During the Last Supper, namely the tradition of the Holy Eucharist, our Lord Jesus Christ " took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament... But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:26-29).

"The fruit of the vine", namely the wine, which is an inseparable element of the wedding ceremony, here at the Last Supper depicts the foretaste of the sacred blood that was shed from the pierced side of our Lord Jesus Christ. Behold

therefore, why Christ blessed the marriage on the one hand, and on the other, He projected the wine with the transformation of the water, by His perfect divine power in Cana of Galilee.

Behold therefore why St. John Damascene says rejoicing; ““Come on this auspicious day of the Resurrection let us partake of the new fruit of the vine of divine gladness and of the Kingdom of Christ, praising Him as God unto the ages” (Pentecostarion, Canon of Easter, Ode 8, troparion 2). In other words, through His blood that was shed from the cross, and through the day of the Resurrection, Christ renews our human nature which He had received, and dresses it with the beauty of His incorruption, thus making it partaker of His eternal Kingdom, as Prophet David says; “The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty” (Psalm 93:1); He also makes our human nature an accomplice of its [the eternal Kingdom’s] supper, as St. Luke the Evangelist says; “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God” (Luke 14:15).

My dear Brothers and Sisters, it is made clear that the divine grace given through the sacrament of the wedding held by the Church is sanctifying and strengthening, enabling the couple to live their union in Christ, with mutual love and devotion, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25), as well as their mystical partaking in the redeeming and incomprehensible mystery of the inseparable union of the bridegroom-Christ with the bride-Church.

For his good unfaithfulness, the Holy Apostle Thomas was a partaker of this incomprehensible and paschal and divine sacrament of the mystical wedding, as well as of its supper. St. Thomas asked to put his fingers in the print of the nails and thrust his hand into the Resurrected Lord’s side, and by the Lord’s philanthropy he was allowed to investigate the incorrupt deified body of Christ and cried out loud; “My Lord and my God” (John 20:19-31). Therefore, my beloved Brothers

and Sisters, we, who have been enlightened by the unwaning Light of the Resurrection of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, cry aloud: "Christ is risen from the dead, by death he hath overcome death and to those in the graves He has bestowed life". Christ is Risen!"

His Beatitude officiated an All-night Vigil at the H. Monastery of Saints George and Ioannis the Hozevites and delivered the following Sermon;

"This chosen and holy day is the first of the sabbaths, the queen and lady, the feast of feasts, and the festival of festivals, wherein we bless Christ unto the ages" St. John Damascene declares in his hymn (Pentecostarion, Sunday of Pascha, Ode8, troparion 1).

Beloved Fathers in Christ,

The unwaning Light of our Lord Jesus Christ's Resurrection has gathered us in the holy and historic Hozeva Monastery in order to celebrate the chosen and Holy day, the inauguration of our renewal in Christ. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" St. Paul preaches (2 Cor. 5:17).

"Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter...(John 10:22), "[the time] of unfaithfulness, and Jesus came, the God and temple, eternal God, recent temple, which could be destroyed in a day, and rebuilt in three days, and remain unto the ages, in order that I may be saved and be recalled from the old body of death, and become a new creation, redeemed [from death] through such a philanthropy" St. Gregory the Theologian says.

The three-day Resurrection of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ is the end of the mystery of the Divine Providence, namely of the incarnation of God the Word through the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Theotokos Mary. Behold why during this Paschal feast we bless Christ unto the ages.

On this second Sunday after Easter, we celebrate the inauguration of Christ's Resurrection and the placing of the hands of St. Thomas the Apostle: "A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:26-28).

Interpreting this witness of St. John, the Evangelist, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "righteously therefore we hold the gatherings in the Churches on the eighth day [on Sunday]. And in order to explain the meaning of what is held, we close the doors, but Christ comes and can be seen by all of us, visibly and invisibly; invisibly as God, and visibly again in the flesh, and He allows to touch His Holy Body. Let us therefore accept as reasonable the mystical blessing by participation, receiving Christ in our hands, so that we also may have unshakable faith in that He raised His own body as a temple".

In other words, the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ is the true confession of Christ's Resurrection from the dead. For this reason, our Holy Father Cyril makes us pay heed by saying; "Let us thus abandon unfaithfulness as something destructive, but on the contrary, having touched Christ, we may find ourselves with steadfast mind".

Let us, my brethren, renew our souls on the bright day of the Resurrection "our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19). This truth is witnessed by the partakers and communicants of the incorruption, namely of Christ's Resurrection, the Saints George, Ioannis and Ioannis the New, the Hozevites, and especially entreat the Mother of God, the evident glory and superior of all creation, in order to intercede to Her Son and God for all of us.

Christ is risen from the dead, by death hath He trampled down



death, and on those in the graves hath He bestowed life. He is risen indeed!"

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **EASTER MONDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

Easter Monday, April 7/20, 2020, was celebrated as the Feast of Easter, according to the tradition at the Patriarchal and Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, with Easter Matins, the Easter Canon of St. John Damascene, and the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, with the lead in participation of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, and the co-prayer of the Hagiotaphite Fathers who live in the Central Monastery, along with the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and without any nuns or local faithful Christians, due to the ongoing safety precautions regarding gatherings.

During the Holy Week this year some Services were not held at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for the same reason. Only the Services of the Epitaph, the Holy Light and the All-night Vigil for Easter were celebrated at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

All other Services were held at the monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, in total silence, monastic patience and without the participation of any nuns or pilgrims.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF THE SECOND RESURRECTION AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Easter Sunday afternoon, at 12.00/13.00 p.m. summer time, the Patriarchate celebrated the Second Resurrection, which is also known as the Feast of Love.

This year, due to the health safety measures, the feast was not celebrated with the festive procession to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, but at the Patriarchate Headquarters.

At first, the 9<sup>th</sup> Hour was read at the Reception Hall, while H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem was getting dressed with His complete Patriarchal liturgical vestments, and the Archbishops, Priests and Deacons with theirs, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos.

Then, they marched to the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen while the choir was chanting the hymns of the Resurrection.

The joyful paschal Vespers was held, during which the Gospel narrative according to St. John on the first appearance of the Resurrected Lord to His disciples at the Upper Room was read, in Greek, Arabic, Russian, German, Romanian and Hebrew, stating the love and universality of the Gospel to all nations.

**From Secretariat-General**