

LAZARUS' SATURDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

1. At the place of the Ascension the Great Vespers was observed on Friday 2/15 April 2022, led by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias. Co-celebrants to His Eminence were the Archimandrites Makarios, Kallistos and Dionysios, Priest George Baramki, Hierodeacons Mihail and Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon with the Patriarchal School Students and Saint James' choir under the lead of Mr Rimon Kamar. Within the service of the Compline in the evening, there was a litany to the Church of Men of Galilee which was blessed by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. On Saturday morning the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias in the presence of Rum Orthodox Palestinian, Russian, Romanian and Greek pilgrims.

The Episcopal Entourage and the congregation were offered a reception by the Caretaker of the Shrine, Monk Achilios.

2. In Bethany

In remembrance of the resurrection of Lazarus, who came from Bethany, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated on Saturday morning, 3/16 April 2022 at the Monastery of Lazarus' sisters, Martha and Mary, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences the Archbishops, Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Philoumenos of Pella, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archimandrites Klaudios and Epiphanius, Palestinian and Russian Priests, as the chanting was delivered by Mr Gotsopoulos and the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, pilgrims and local faithful.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered 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. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world” (John 11,25-27), Saint John the Evangelist says as an eye witness.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the brother of Martha and Mary and friend of our Lord Jesus Christ, Lazarus, has gathered us in this holy place of the biblical Bethany, to celebrate Lazarus rising from the dead on the one hand and the confirmation by Christ of our common resurrection before His passion on the Cross on the other.

The detailed narrative of Lazarus’ resurrection from the dead by Saint John the Evangelist is placed just before the triumphant entrance of Jesus Christ in the Holy City of Jerusalem with palm trees’ branches. That is why our Holy Church calls this day “the Saturday before Palm Sunday”, or the Saturday before the Passion Week of our Lord Jesus Christ. “Today Bethany proclaims beforehand the Resurrection of Christ the Giver of life, and it rejoices at the rising of Lazarus” (Matins, Ode one, Troparion 4).

The three-day burial and resurrection from the dead of Jesus Christ is the peak of the mystery of the Divine Providence, namely the incarnation of the Son and Word of our God the Father through the pure flesh of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, it testifies to our freedom from sin and the

corruption of death as well as the time of the last judgment, the divine righteousness. "For the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5,28-29) the Lord says. Likewise, the prophet Isaiah said through the Holy Spirit: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise" (Isaiah 26,19).

Saint Cyril of Alexandria interpreting the Lord's word in the Gospel "Loose him [Lazarus], and let him go" (John 11,44), says: "To our benefit, He did not untie him by His own hands, so that there would be no chance of slander, but all became witnesses of the miracle. And this is a sample of the catholic resurrection when each one shall be set free, loosened from the bondage of sin and the corruption of death".

And Saint Paul, showing the greatness of the resurrection of our Saviour Christ says: "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).

Anticipating the resurrection of the dead, my dear brethren, let us say along with the hymnographer: "Before Thine own death, O Christ, Thou hast raised from hell Lazarus that was four days dead, and hast shaken the dominion of death. Through this one man whom Thou hast loved, Thou hast foretold the deliverance of all men from corruption. We, therefore, worship Thine almighty power and cry; blessed art Thou, O Saviour, who comes in glory, have mercy upon us and save our souls" (Praises, troparia 2,3).

Have a blessed Holy Week and a good Easter! Amen!"

From Secretariat-General