

THE FEAST OF SAINT JAMES THE BROTHER OF GOD AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, October 23/November 5, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy Glorious Apostle and Martyr James, the Brother of God and first Hierarch of Jerusalem.

On this feast, the whole Church, especially the Church of Jerusalem, remembers that Saint James was the son of a woman who was previously married to Joseph, the betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos, therefore, he was also called the brother of the Lord. Because of this legal relationship, Saint James was named Brother God. The Apostle Paul also testifies to this, saying: "None of the apostles did I see but James the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1:19). He was righteous, a type of virtue and holiness, also called "hoblias", that is, righteous and protector of the people.

Saint James was installed by the Lord as the first Hierarch of the Church of Jerusalem, as his Kontakion says, "The Word of God, the Father's Only-begotten, came down and dwelt here in our midst in these last days. He then appointed thee as the first shepherd of all-holy Jerusalem, and He made thee her teacher and a faithful steward of lofty spiritual mysteries. For this cause as is meet, O wondrous James, O blest Apostle, we all praise and honour thee".

Through this authority given to him, he exhorted the Church of Jerusalem most devoutly, he wrote his Catholic letter in the New Testament, and he was calm, peaceful, presentable and beloved by all the people of Jerusalem. He presided over the first Apostolic Synod of Jerusalem in AD 49, which opened the doors of the Church to the nations and confessed the Lord as the Son of God and for this, the Jewish rulers threw him down

from the wing of the Temple and killed him around AD 60. X. at an old age.

In his honour, in the Cathedral named after him, adjacent to the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and the Church of the Resurrection, Vespers was held in the evening, presided over by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the Divine Liturgy in the morning, concelebrated by their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias and the Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina and Philomenos of Pella, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nektarios, the ministering Priests of Saint James Cathedral, Fr Farah Badour and Fr Hader Baramki. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon with the students of the Patriarchal School of Zion on the right in Greek and by the choir of the Church under Mr Rimon Kamar on the left in Arabic. The service was attended by the congregation of the Orthodox Community of Jerusalem, monks, nuns and a few remaining pilgrims, in the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos and members of the Greek Consulate General in Jerusalem.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following sermon:

“And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace”, (James 3:18). [The spiritual fruit of justice and Holiness is sown peacefully and without strife by those who practice and spread peace and who are truly wise and peace-making teachers], Saint James the Brother of God teaches.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The grace of the righteous Apostle James, the Brother of God brought us all together today in his Holy Cathedral, adjacent to the Holy and Life-giving Tomb of our Saviour Christ, to honour his holy memory.

Saint James acquired a prominent position in the holy Church of God and the city of Jerusalem, and because of his great piety he was given the title "the Just".

In fact, Saint James was shown to be a "pillar of the faith" and a support of the Church"; and this, because his Catholic letter shows him as "a teacher of great personal prestige among its readers". On the other hand, his participation in the Apostolic Synod of Jerusalem and his teaching concerning the evangelization of the Gentiles, that is, the idolaters, confirm the prestige of James.

Saint Chrysostom, interpreting the fact that the Brother of God spoke in the Synod "after Barnabas and Paul had silenced them", (Acts 15:12) says: "This [James] is the bishop of the Church in Jerusalem, for he says clearly; and "in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is established" (Cf. Matt. 18:16), then it is fulfilled. The hymnographer of the Church, extolling the preaching of Saint James, says: "Unto all the farthest regions of the earth, the sound of thy words hath resounded most mightily; and through them, O blessed James, we have been enlightened in all godly virtues and we are guided faithfully to the divine knowledge of the Trinity. We therefore importune thee: as a hierarch, offer up fervent prayer unto Jesus, the Friend of man, in His mercy to save our souls" (Menaion, Vespers, sticheron 2).

James the Brother of God boldly declared the Lord Jesus God as the Word and Creator of everything and that God the Father is the supreme and unique source of all enlightenment, physical or moral, and says "The wisdom of the people descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife are, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3, 17 -18).

In other words, the fruits of God's wisdom are produced through the power and grace of Jesus Christ. And among the good things of these fruits, the fruit of justice is distinguished. And this fruit is none other than the peace of Christ, who said "Without me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Even Saint Paul commands saying: "Be filled with the fruits of righteousness through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1,11). And Isaiah says: "And let the works of righteousness be peace, and let righteousness keep rest, and trust forever" (Is. 32,17).

[And in more detail: the result of justice will be peace. Justice will bring rest and peace, and people will walk in faith after everything].

Justice and peace between people are essentially the fruit of God's Grace and faith in Christ according to the testimony of the hymnographer:

"Truth has arisen from the earth and justice has flowed from heaven" (Psalm 84:12). For this reason, Saint James who was an eye-and-ear-witness, i.e. a natural witness of the mystery of piety, of the mystery of the divine Providence in Christ, on the one hand refers to Christ, Who walked the path of righteousness and opened it for us as well; on the other hand, he wonders, where wars and battles among men come from: "Whence are wars and battles among you? Are they not from your desires, rooted in your body parts?... adulterers and adulteresses! Have you not seen that the friendship of the world is the enmity of God? Whoever, therefore, willfully is a friend of the world, becomes an enemy of God".

Interpreting these reasons, Ecumenius says: "Have you not seen that the friendship of the world is alien to the friendship of God, or it makes enemies of God? In the world [the Brother God] calls out all material life, as the mother of corruption. He who communes with it hastily becomes an enemy of God".

Indeed, my beloved brothers, "the friendship of the world alienates us from the friendship of God. And this, because according to the Righteous James, God is all light and out of His own good will He gave birth to us spiritually through the gospel, which is the word of truth, so that we may be among the first and most honourable of His creations, chosen and dedicated to the God. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1,18).

Let us who solemnly honour Saint James, the Brother God and the first Hierarch of Jerusalem, beseech him so that by his prayers and the intercessions of the most blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, the Lord our God, may implant in the hearts of all of us, this word of truth, namely of the divine light of righteousness and of peace, especially in the hearts and minds of the keepers of the world and our tested region. Amen. May you have many blessed and peaceful returns."

After the end of the Divine Liturgy, the full congregation went up to the Patriarchate Hall through the historic steps of Saint James carrying the Holy Icon of Saint James, passing through the Gate of the Patriarchate, where they received the ceremonial loaf of bread as a blessing by Nun Serafima, who is in charge of the Patriarchate's bakery.

In the hall of the Patriarchate, a prayer was offered, the Polychronion of His Beatitude was chanted and a reception followed, where His Beatitude spoke again as follows:

"Come and with sacred hymns let us all magnify James, the first enthroned bishop and luminary of the Church, as a hierarch and divine herald, who was fittingly called the Just" his hymnographer exclaims.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos,

Dear Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved brothers in Christ,

The Holy Church of Jerusalem honours and commemorates today the sacred memory of the holy Hieromartyr and Apostle James the Brother of God, the so-called "the Just".

This Saint James, who in his epistle calls himself "a servant of God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1), became bishop of Jerusalem and was called to the Apostolic office by the Lord. As such, Saint James appears as the operator of the whole church life, of the formation and indeed of the organization of the administrative system of the Church of Jerusalem, which as the mother of all the Churches throughout the world was the model for everything on the part of the Church. This is evidenced by his universal epistle of the greatest Apostolic authority addressed to "the twelve tribes in the diaspora" (James 1:1) of the Jews who believed in Christ.

Saint James, who was appointed by the Father of the only begotten God the Word as the first Hierarch, shepherd, teacher and faithful steward of the spiritual mysteries, became the foundation stone of the apostolate "indeed the cornerstone of Jesus Christ" (Eph. 2:20) of the Church of Jerusalem and the celebrated commemoration of Saint James refers to the Apostolic and Patriarchal throne of the Zionist Church, whose Minister and Successor Our Modesty became.

To this end we came, accompanied by honourable members of the High Priests, Priests and Hierodeacons in the holy Church of Saint James, where we celebrated in a Patriarchal Assembly the great Sacrament of the divine Eucharist to the honour and glory of the celebrated saint and righteous James, co-martyr of our crucified Saviour Christ by his own blood.

Today's institutional celebration of the Throne and of the holy memory of the holy glorious Apostle James the Brother of God and first Hierarch of the Church of Jerusalem is an

undeniable testimony of the ongoing Apostolic succession, of the one imprinted on the face of each Primate of the Church of Jerusalem for one; and of the unceasing prayerful presence of the mission of the order of the Studios, of our Venerable Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, as well as of our devout Roman-Orthodox flock rooted and living in the Holy Land on the other hand.

This great Apostle and witness of Christ's love, let us beseech: Drive away all sorrows arising from the war in our region and grant us and the whole world justice and its fruit, peace.

Many and peaceful returns! Amen".

The celebration was sealed with the traditional handover by His Beatitude of the keys of the Cathedral of Saint James the Brother of God to its Priests and Stewards.

From Secretariat-General