

THE SYNAXIS OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday June 30/July 13, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Synaxis of the Twelve Apostles at the Holy Monastery dedicated to them and is located on the seaside at the west bank of the Sea of Tiberias, within the big town of Tiberias.

At the Church of this Holy Monastery the Divine Liturgy for the Synaxis, namely the gathering of the faithful in order to honour the Holy Apostles, was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Secretary-General, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Arab-speaking Priests of the neighbouring areas of the Patriarchate and Archdeacon Mark. Archimandrite Philotheos and his choir delivered the hymns and there was a large congregation attending the service. His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to them;

“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease” (Matt. 10:1).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims,

The Chief Apostles Peter and Paul, who received their calling from on high by Christ, have invited all of us at the shore of the lake of Tiberias to celebrate their commemoration.

Yesterday the Holy duet Peter and Paul were honoured in Eucharist at Peter's hometown, Capernaum; today, the Synaxis of the Twelve Holy Apostles is honoured in this holy place

where for the third time, "Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead" (John 21:14).

Our Holy Orthodox Church honours especially the elected Apostles by Christ Himself – "I have chosen thee twelve" (John 6:70) – because they became good benefactors of mankind, according to the hymn writer: "With one accord let us honour in hymns the divine Disciples and Apostles of Christ, who thundered the heavenly doctrines unto us, those verdant meadows of the Faith, those common benefactors of mankind, those Servants of the Saviour".

Moreover, the Holy Apostles are especially honoured, because the characteristic feature of the Church of Christ is its Apostolic nature, as the God-bearing Fathers of the Church formulated in the Creed; "I believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church".

Having been called by the Lord, and having abandoned everything, those who were fishermen the fish and the nets, the Holy Apostles followed Him during all His earthly action until His Ascension, and after the Pentecost, once the Holy Spirit had inspired them, they became preachers of the faith in Christ and eye-and-ear witnesses to His Passion on the Cross, the three-day burial and His Resurrection from the dead.

The Holy Apostles' preaching on Christ, the Son and Word of God, Who was crucified and resurrected from the dead, was based on their personal experience, as John the Apostle and Evangelist says: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.

(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have

seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1-3).

To this very preaching, namely of the continuation of the redeeming mission of the Lord, of the redemption of mankind from sin and the corruption of death, were the Apostles called. And our Lord Jesus Christ Himself ordered them: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19).

The Church continues this order of the Lord, as it is the mystical body of Christ through the successors of the Apostles, the ordained Bishops and spiritual Shepherds, by the power and the working of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. The Apostles were those, who at the mission of the evangelism of Christ's Name and the pastoring of the newly-founded Churches, ordained Priests and Bishops around the various towns "to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

St. Paul the Great, referring to the union between the gentiles and the Jews by God the Father in Jesus Christ 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 corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:19-21).

These founding stones, namely the Holy Apostles, along with the Chiefs Peter and Paul, does the Church of Christ honour and venerate today, glorifying the its cornerstone, our God and Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who emptied Himself for us, to make us partakers of His fullness, according to the hymn writer: "He that is full is made empty for our sakes, that we

might partake of His fullness; for without parting from the bosom of the Father He that is uncircumscribable is come down into thine all-immaculate womb and is made flesh; for this cause we all bless thee, O Mary Bride of God”.

Let us entreat this God-bearing Chorea of the Holy Apostles along with Peter and Paul, who have been sent forth to those sitting in the darkness and shadow, to pray to Christ our God for the salvation and enlightenment of our souls and peace for our tested region. Amen.”

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a monastic reception and a meal of fish, which were offered by the good carer of the Monastery Hegoumen Archimandrite Sophronios.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY CHIEFS OF THE APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL

On Thursday June 29/July 12, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy and Glorious and All-lauded Chiefs of the Apostles, Peter and Paul at the Holy Monastery dedicated to them, which has been built by the memorable Patriarch of Jerusalem Damascene at the north-west bank of the Sea of Tiberias.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated for this feast, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina and Secretary-General, Makarios of Qatar, the

Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Arab-speaking Priests from the neighbouring parishes, and Archdeacon Mark. Archimandrite Philotheos and his choir delivered the hymns, and the service was attended by a congregation of pilgrims and local faithful from the Galilee district. His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon;

“A joyous feast hath shone unto the uttermost parts of the earth today, even the all-august memorial of the most wise Apostles, the Chiefs Peter and Paul. Therefore Rome danceth and rejoiceth with them. Let us also, O brethren, joyously celebrate with songs and hymns this most venerable day, saying: Rejoice, O Peter, Apostle and true friend of thy Teacher, Christ our God. Rejoice most dearly beloved Paul, preacher of the Faith and teacher of the whole world. O holy and elect yoke-fellows, since ye have boldness, entreat Christ our God that our souls be saved” the Bishop of the Church Efraim from Karia says.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims,

The citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, Peter the rock of faith and Paul the preacher of the Church, the two men that shone forth by the grace of the Holy Trinity, the vessels of the Holy Spirit, have gathered all of us in this sacred shrine of Capernaum in order to honour their commemoration in Eucharist.

The Holy Apostles Peter and Paul are distinguished among the other Apostles because they have been elected by our Lord Jesus Christ to be chosen vessels, stewards of the mysteries of God and teachers of the whole world. Their holy and God-inspired epistles and letters are the irrefutable and non-negotiable consignment they have given to us men “who are kept

by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 5-9) St. Peter teaches.

In other words, the final glory, our salvation, is ensured through the sorrows of the present life. And in these sorrows and testing we have the Holy Spirit as a helper, according to St. Paul’s teaching by saying: “For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:22-23). “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26).

Our Lord Jesus Christ, my dear brothers, came into the world to liberate man from the bondage of sin, namely from the darkness of ignorance and fallacy; and to lead man into the truth of freedom. The Lord says; “For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice” (John 18:37). (And everyone who is willing to learn the truth, hears and comprehends my voice and teaching and through its application he becomes a citizen of my spiritual and heavenly Kingdom).

To this voice of witness of the truth and witness of the Lord

did the Holy Apostles hearken, and especially Peter and Paul among them. For this reason the Lord says to Peter; "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:17-18). And Paul, who has been called a chosen vessel (Acts 9:15) says: "[I] was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12:4). The Lord said to Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (1 Cor. 12:9).

The salvific mystery of the divine providence in Christ, my dear ones, is prolonged in the world throughout the centuries through the Church, the mystical body of Christ, and by the eye-witnesses and servants of the divine word (Luke 1:2). And these eye-witnesses and servants of the divine word, namely of the preaching of the gospel, are the Apostles and their successors, the spiritual shepherds and teachers of the Church, the workers and ministers in the Lord's vineyard. They are the ones who continue the mission of Jesus Christ and of His Apostles on earth by the grace of the Holy Spirit, according to their advice; "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Christ's gospel preaching refers to the perfection of our Christian faith, whose motivation is and should be the salvation of our souls. "For now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light" (Romans 13:11-12), St. Paul preaches.

And the first among the Apostles, Peter, calls the faithful to have Christ, the leader of their lives, as an example to imitate. "For to this you were called, because Christ also

suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:21-22).

Let us entreat the Holy men of Christ, Peter and Paul, who we commemorate festively today, so that by their intercessions, along with those of the Most Blessed Theotokos, our Lady and Ever-Virgin Mary, we may be granted the mercy and compassion of Christ our Lord and God and Saviour. Amen.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a monastic reception and then an outdoor lunch with fish, offered by the renovator of the Monastery Hegoumen Eirinarchos.

From Secretariat-General