

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" (Jonh 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