

26/01/2024

## THE FEAST OF SAINTS GEORGE AND JOHN THE HOZEVITES



On Sunday, January 8/21, 2024, the feast of the Holy Monastery of Hozeva in Wadi Qelt was celebrated. The Monastery is located in the desert of Brook Chorath, which leads to Jericho and the Dead Sea.

On this feast the Church honours the distinguished in this Monastery as its founders, John Metropolitan of Caesarea of Palestine, who left the pastoral care of his Metropolis and came to live in monastic striving in this Monastery. It also honours Bishop George, who came from Cyprus and renovated the Monastery after its destruction by the Persian raid in AD 614.

The Church of Jerusalem also commemorates on this day John the New Hozevite, who came from Romania and lived in monastic striving in the Monastery and was canonized as a Saint by the Patriarchate in 2015, to be celebrated separately on

July 28. Along with them, we also commemorate the former Hegoumen Antonios, who slept in the Lord while renovating the Narthex of the Monastery in 1993. We also remember the Hegoumen Germanos who was unjustly murdered in 2001.

For this feast, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos came, and was welcomed by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Constantine with the following address:

“Your Beatitude Father and Master with Your Holy Entourage,

We gathered together for another time, as we celebrate the annual memory of the Founders of the historic Hoseva Lavra, Saints John and George.

We gathered in the midst of wars and turmoil, amid uncertainty, sorrow and pain. Pain, which even Saint George the Hosevite experienced to the maximum degree during the invasion of the Persians in the Holy Land in 614 AD.

As far as we know during his lifetime, having envisioned and foreseen the invasion and the massacre that followed, the Saint mourned, lamented and wept eloquently “for the vulgarity of the people or rather the ignorance and disrespect”. Coming out of his cell, he sat on a stone under the sun (due to the great weakness of his flesh) and begged God, saying: “Lord God of compassion and Lord of mercy, Who wants all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, pick up your rod and teach this people, for they walk in ignorance”...

Your Beatitude Father and Master,

As all of us are praying in fervent prayer of life-giving hope to the Messiah and Redeemer Lord Jesus and invoke the strong intercession of the Holy Hosevites, let us commence the feast...”

His Beatitude officiated the All-Night Vigil with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Archimandrites, Constantine, Chrysogonos and Christodoulos, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacons Simeon and Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by the lead Byzantine singer of the Holy Church of Saint Paraskevi Mr Stavros Christou, the lead Byzantine singer of the Holy Church of Saint Dimitrios of Tripolis Mr Stavros Petrou, the left Byzantine singer of the Holy Church of the Meeting of the Lord in Kalamata, Mr Nikolaos Theotokatos, the left Byzantine singer of the Holy Church of the Holy Church of the Prophet Elijah in the Municipality of Saint Paraskevi, and the lead Byzantine singer of the Chapel of the Holy Apostles in the parish of Saint Paraskevi. The Vigil was attended by only a few monks and laity due to the ongoing hostilities in the State.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon before the Holy Communion:

“My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Psalm 42,2) the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved Fathers and Brethren,

Reverend Christians

The divine grace of the One surrounded by the clouds in the heavens and by the waters of the Jordan River, of the One who took upon Himself the sin of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ, has gathered us all in this neighbouring to the Jordan River Holy Monastery of Hozeva, to honour the sacred commemoration of our Holy Father among the Saints George, the so-called Hozevite.

Our blessed Father George left his hometown, Leukara of Cyprus and came to venerate the Holy Tomb of our Lord at the beginning of the 7th century, before he retreated to this Lavra of Hozeva, which was founded by the blessed John of Egypt.

Like another deer, the blessed George ran towards the springs of water (c.f. Psalm 42,2), that is the spring of life which is Christ, to see the face of God the Father, Who is the unapproachable light, as the psalmist says: “For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light” (Psalm 36,9). This is also confirmed by our Lord Jesus Christ with the words, “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness” (John 12,46).

Interpreting these words of the Lord, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says, “By confessing that He is the Light, Christ proves that He is God by nature since it is befitting only

to the God by nature to be called thus". And Saint Chrysostom says, "Because God is called by that name in the Old and the New Testament, He uses this name [light]. For this reason, Paul calls Christ 'refulgence', radiance, as he preaches "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1,1-3).

This divine light, that is our salvation in Christ, did the soul of George seek, so that the word of the Gospel would be imprinted on it, according to the advice of Saint James the Brother of God: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1,21). The way of salvation is achieved through the knowledge of the scriptures, and that knowledge is the food of faith as Saint Paul tells his disciple Timothy: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3,15). Moreover, faith should be fruitful with good deeds, as Saint James says, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" (James 2,14).

Again, Saint Paul urges us: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2,12-13). Thus Saint George chooses the place of the desert on the one hand, and the monastic life on the other, which predisposes the unceasing asceticism of the virtues of salvation. "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation" (1 Thess. 5,8), Saint Paul preaches. This is also phrased by the hymnographer of the Church, "The Monastery of Hozeva hath found in thee a rule and most exact example for the pursuit of every form of virtuous works, O wise George, boast of the righteous. Therefore, those who have passed their lives in godliness leap for joy with thee unto the ages" (Menaion, Jan. 8, Matins, Ode 8, Troparion 3).

Indeed, Saint George was a rule and exact example for the pursuit of the virtues - according to Saint Theodore of Edessa - "to the extreme state of deification", the ascend to the unwaning light as George's hymnographer says, "Delivered from darkness, thou hast been taken up to the unwaning light, O glorious Father, and thou standest before the Almighty and Three-Sun Light with the orders on high, O

blessed man, and thou delightest in the splendour that issueth thence and shinest like a fiery beacon upon us who hymn thee” (Matins, Ode 9, Troparion 3). It is noteworthy that according to the psalmist, God is covered in magnificent garments of light; “Thou, Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment” (Psalm 104,2), while according to Saint Paul, God is the only one “Who hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see” (1 Tim. 6,16). That is why the hymnographer of our Holy Father George says, “and thou delightest in the splendour that issueth thence”.

In his synaxarist, Saint Nicodemus of Mount Athos says: “Having reached the utmost apathy, the thrice-blessed George appeared full of the grace of the Most Holy Spirit. He departed to God Whom he desired, to enjoy along with the Angels more clearly and precisely the radiance and blessedness that is projected from the Holy Trinity. This radiance is no other than the energy of the uncreated light, which anyone who has been baptized can enjoy, the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit, Who appeared in the form of a dove in the Jordan River. “Now there is brought to pass a great and awful mystery: to purify us mortals, the Master of creation is baptized by a servant’s hand” (Matins, Aposticha of Praises, Troparion 1).

The glorious George became a preacher, an Evangelist and an Apostle of this great and awful mystery of reverence. Therefore, along with the hymnographer let us say: “In His ineffable mercy, He that is simple in His divine nature truly became twofold from thee, O Mother of God, uniting to His Divinity the flesh which He received from thy blood. Therefore, knowing thee to be the Theotokos, we praise thee with hymns unto all the ages” (Matins, Ode 8, Theotokion), entreating your intercessions, along with the prayers of our Holy Father George. Amen. Many happy and peaceful returns!”

After the service, the renovator of the Monastery Archimandrite Constantine Peramatzis hosted a meal.

From Secretariat-General





















































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