13/05/2024

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR GEORGE THE TROPHY-BEARER IN ACRE



On Saturday, April 28th / May 11th, 2024, the Feast of the Great Martyr George the Trophy Bearer was celebrated with transfer by the Patriarchate in Acre, a city in northern Israel, ancient Ptolemais.

During this holiday, the commemoration day of the martyrdom of Saint George the Trophy Bearer, a reception was held for our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theofilos under the Acre Community, that is, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Silouanos, the Boy Scout Corps, the President of the Community Mr Fuad Break, the Commissioners of the Community and believers from other Communities of the area of jurisdiction of Acre.

Matins and the Divine Liturgy were officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences,

Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Patriarchal Representative in Acre, Archimandrite Silouanos, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Archimandrites Meletios, Artemios, Nikon from MISSIA, other local priests, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by the Acre Byzantine choir which was founded by the late Archimandrite Philotheos. The Liturgy was attended by the Ambassador of Greece to Israel Mr Kyriakos Loukakis, the representative of the Ministry of Interior of Israel Mr Caezar Marjieh and many faithful, in reverence and Paschal joy.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Behold, the spring-tide season of grace is arisen; upon all men there shineth our Christ’s Resurrection, and with it now shineth forth the bright-beaming, all festive day of the valiant George, the trophy-bearer and Martyr. Come ye all let us with divinely-bright vesture exultantly celebrate” (Minaion, April 23, Matins, Kathisma 1).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians,

The grace of the Holy Glorious Great Martyr George the Trophy Bearer, brought us all together on this Easter day in his Church in Acre / Ptolemais, to celebrate his sacred memory.

Saint George, who excelled as a military officer during the time of the Roman Emperor Diocletian, proved himself to be a faithful witness, that is, a faithful follower and disciple of Christ, always listening to the word of Him saying: ” Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also” (John 15:20).

Interpreting these words of the Lord, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: “This is as if he [Christ] said I, Who am the Creator of all and have under my control all things in heaven and on earth, I did not restrain the anger of my hearers, nor restrained the feeling, their emotion as if it were an insult to me. Rather, I allowed them to choose what seemed right to them and to do whatever they wished… So, when you are persecuted, endure for a moment the repulsion/loathing of those who hate you… following my own Providence and pursue with Me the like purposes, so that you may share in the same glory. And this is because those who suffer with me they will also reign [with Me]”.

The words of the Lord, “If they have persecuted me they will persecute you”, (John

15, 20), constitute His “Providence”, which is formulated in another declaration of Christ saying: ” If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24).

In this teaching of the Lord, the “preference” of the person who wants to follow Christ is distinguished and underlined, as Saint Chrysostom says, interpreting this: “I am not in a hurry, I am not forcing, but I am giving each person his own choice” and more specifically: “I am not obliging neither do I force, but I make everyone, who is master of his own free will, says the Lord”. According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa, “This is the free choice, a free word of action and an autonomous in the freedom of the mind”.

It was precisely this free choice, that is, the divine zeal, which he had in his heart, that led Saint George to become an imitator of our Savior Christ’s martyrdom, listening to the prophetic command of Isaiah: “Be my witnesses and I am a witness, says the Lord God… before me there was no other God, and with me he is not” (Is. 43,10). The hymnographer of the Church exclaims: “In his longing for Christ the King, Who laid down His life for the life of the world, this soldier, the great George, strove diligently to die for His sake; for having divine zeal in his heart, he offered himself up. Let us therefore faithfully sing his praise as our fervent protector, as Christ’s glorious servant, who verily imitated his own Master, and who asketh Him to grant all the forgiveness of trespasses” (Minaion, April 23, Oikos).

The glorious George is distinguished among the cloud of martyrs of the Church because he excelled as a superior official over the Roman Emperor Diocletian, who declared a harsh persecution of Christians, he did not hesitate to declare himself a Christian, but also to go against the vanity and disease of idols and to those believing in them.

In other words, the wonderful George martyred with his own blood for the truth of Christ, who, at the time of His condemnation before Pilate, said: “I was born into this and I was born into this world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice” (John 18,37).

This confession of Christ clearly demonstrated the ultimate purpose of divine revelation, that is, God’s intervention in human history in the person of the Son and His Word. This fact is none other than the mystery of piety, that is, of the divine Providence, as Paul preaches: “The mystery of piety is indeed great; God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, was seen by the angels, proclaimed to the nations, believed in the world, was taken up in glory”.

The blessed George showed himself as a faithful witness of the mystery of piety, as the hymnographer expresses this saying: “Having been cultivated well by the Lord God, as the most honoured cultivator of piety thou hast now gathered sheaves of virtues for thyself; for as thou didst sow with tears, thou dost reap with rejoicing; with thy blood didst thou contest and thou now hast received Christ” (Kontakion).

Indeed, my beloved brothers, the great athlete George showed himself to be of true piety, of the faith of Christ, an honourable farmer, for he also reigns in heaven with the King of Powers. “The righteous to eternal life… for this they receive the kingdom of decency and the diadem of beauty from the hand of the Lord”, (Soph. Solomon 5,15-16). “God tried [George] like gold in a crucible and accepted him as the whole fruit of a sacrifice”, according to the wisdom of the Wise Solomon, (Soph. Sol 3,6).

We, my dear ones, who at Easter honour the holy memory of the Holy Great Martyr and Trophy Bearer, are called to imitate his desire and divine zeal and beseech him with the intercessions of the all-holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, that we may partake of the unweaning light of the Resurrection of our Saviour Christ.

After the psalmist we say: ” O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill and to thy tabernacles” (Cf. Psalm 42,3) where Your glorious Martyr George came. Amen. Christ is Risen.”

After the Divine Liturgy, a treat was served in the reception hall in the presence of the Mayor of the city of Acre, its Sheikh and the President of the Acre Community, Mr Fuad Break. Afterwards, His Beatitude blessed the renovated hall of the Ecclesiastical Court of Acre.

In the end, a meal was hosted by the Community and the Hegoumen Fr Silouanos, and His Beatitude addressed again those present with the following address:

“Behold, the spring-tide season of grace is arisen; upon all men there shineth our Christ’s Resurrection, and with it now shineth forth the bright-beaming, all festive day of the brave George, the trophy-bearer and Martyr. Come ye all let us with divinely-bright vesture exultantly celebrate” (Minaion, April 23, Matins, Kathisma 1).

Dear Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Dear Father Silouanos, our Patriarchal Representative in Acre,

Honourable President of the Ecclesiastical Council, Mr Fuad Break,

and Respected members of the Community,

Today’s Paschal feast is an irrefutable testimony, on the one hand, of our faith in the crucified and risen Christ, and on the other hand, of the undivided and active presence of the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and its Christian flock in the Holy Land in general, and the city of Jerusalem in particular.

This Christian presence and witness throughout the centuries is due first and foremost to the preaching of the Gospel: ” God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16), but also to the Lord’s command to His disciples: ” Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14, 27).

These evangelical words inspired today’s honoured Saint George the Trophy Bearer, who, imitating Christ’s passion on the cross, was a co-martyr of His blood, as his hymnographer says: “Cultivation with all care the saving seed of God’s commands, thou didst piously disperse all thy riches to the poor and in return didst acquire Christ’s eternal glory. Then boldly wentest thou to conflicts with the foe and unheard-of pains, O glorious Martyr George; and as a sharer in the Passion and Rising of the Dispassionate, thou sharest also now in his Kingdom, praying for us in fervour” (Matins, Kathisma 3).

This double celebration of the Resurrection, namely of our Lord and God and Saviour Christ, as well as of the memory of the Holy Great Martyr George, the actual co-minister of the Holy Angels in the heavenly glorification of God, provides us amid the trials of our region the living hope of faith in the God of love and peace.

Therefore, we have prayed to the Holy God, by the intercessions of Saint George and the most blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, saying after the Holy Martyr and Apostle Peter: ” Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1,3) Amen. Christ is Risen”.

From Secretariat-General


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