15/05/2024

Thomas Sunday in Cana of Galilee



The Feast of the Touching of Thomas was celebrated in Cana of Galilee, on the morning of the Sunday of Thomas, on April 29/May 12, 2024, with a festive reception by the Scouts and the Community, followed by a Divine Liturgy, which was officiated by His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eninences, the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks with the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios first in rank, Priest from Cana district, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The service was attended by many faithful people of Cana and the honourable presence of the Ambassador of Greece to Israel Mr Kyriakos Loukakis and the Ambassador of Russia to Israel Mr Anatoly Viktorov.

His Beatitude delivered the following sermon to this congregation:

“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his

glory; and his disciples believed on him” (John 2,11) Saint John the Evangelist says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Devout Christians and pilgrims

The life from the grave, that is, the risen Christ from the grave, our God, brought us all together today in this Biblical place of Cana of Galilee, to celebrate “the beginning of the signs, which Jesus wrought here” and the touching of the Holy Apostle Thomas.

As much as the emerging sign of the change of water into wine in the presence of Jesus and His Mother in the Marriage herein, as the touching of the side of the resurrected Christ by the Apostle Thomas, which was pierced by the soldiers on His Cross is one of these many signs, i.e. miracles, which our Lord Jesus Christ performed in the presence of His disciples.

And this, so that firstly His glory may be revealed and secondly, that people may believe in Him, as Saint John the Theologian orders in his Gospel saying: ” But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31).

According to Saint Cyril of Alexandria, Jesus Christ is “not just a son, but the Son of God uniquely and especially”. This is what Saint Cyril says, invoking Christ: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (John 5, 24-26).

This means that the Son of God, that is, Christ, is a perfect God, as Saint Cyril of Alexandria also interprets, saying: “For since the Only Begotten is life by nature and partaker of the life to come, it is needless to say that He has the power to vivify just as the Father does”.

The resurrected Christ, my beloved brothers, is the New Adam, who redeems the New Eve on the Cross with His precious blood but also with the water that flowed from His pierced side (Cf. John 19:34). The blood and water symbolize the mysteries of the Church, but also the love of the bridegroom for his bride. “Husbands love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her” (Eph. 5:25), Saint Paul preaches.

We, being members of the Church, which is the Body of Christ, have learned that we are also members of the Body of Christ. In other words, the relationship between God and man in the person of Christ is the relationship and union of Marriage. The foundation and the unifying force of Marriage is the perfect love, the love that is revealed in Christ, which “does not seek its own things and never falls away”, (Cf. 1 Cor. 13, 4-8).

Precisely this infinite philanthropy, that is, the love of God, lifted His Son up on the Cross and brought him down to Hades, in order to free and heal the great wound, the man, as Saint John of Damascus writes: “Thou camest to Thy Disciples, O Christ, while the doors were shut. Then, by dispensation, Thomas was not to be found among them; for he said: I will not believe except I also behold the Master, and see the side whence there issued the blood, the water, the baptism, and see the wound through which man, the great wound, was healed” (Vespers, Glory).

It is noteworthy that by touching Christ’s side, the faithless Thomas became a sharer and partaker of the “sweet mystical communication of the soul between the visible and invisible worlds of His fiery glory”, that is, of the brilliant glory of Christ’s Resurrection. We too, my beloved brothers, the approved people of the Church, the bride of Christ, enjoy this sweet mystical communication of the soul between the visible and invisible worlds of the Resurrection of Christ, in the mystery of the secret blessing, that is, of the Divine Eucharist, as Saint Cyril of Alexandria teaches, saying: “Christ descends and appears to all of you both invisibly and visibly; invisibly as God, visibly and again in the body. He also allows and gives His holy flesh to be touched. Let us, therefore, draw night by the grace of God to the mystical communication of the soul between the visible and invisible worlds, receiving Christ in our hands, so that we also may believe, as we should, that He truly raised His own temple.”

Through the presence of Him with His mother, Mary the Mother of God, in the wedding in Cana, Christ sanctified marriage on the one hand and freed the woman from the curse, on the other. “Marriage [in Cana] is sanctified because it is honest, so the curse against the woman is gone; the children are no more born in sorrow,

and this is the beginning of our birth, which was blessed by Christ", Saint Cyril of Alexandria says.

And through the secret blessing of the mystery, namely the divine Eucharist, we participate in the mystical, spiritual Marriage of the Bridegroom Christ and the bride Church, that is, of humanity. "The marriage is solemnized on the third day, that is, at the end of the present times", says Saint Cyril again, invoking Saint John the Theologian, who writes in his book of Revelation: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God" (Revelation 19, 7-9).

"The marriage supper of the lamb", my beloved ones, is none other than the kingdom of heaven, about which the Lord commands: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Mt. 6, 33). Let us also say along with the hymnographer on this glorious Easter day: "O great and most sacred Pascha, Christ; O Wisdom and Word and Power of God! Grant us that we partake of Thee fully in the unwaning day of Thy Kingdom" (Canon of Pascha, Ode 9). Amen. Christ is Risen!"

A litany followed three times around the Holy Church, the advance of the Scouts and the widespread participation of the people.

At noon, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Benediktos, the Council and the congregation of Cana hosted a meal for His Beatitude, to which the Commissioners of the Community of Cana and the Russian Ambassador to Israel Mr Anatoly Viktorov and the representative of the Greek Embassy in Tel Aviv, Mr Mavroidis addressed His Beatitude.

After the meal, His Beatitude inaugurated the opening of a housing complex erected by the Community of Cana on a dedicated plot of land belonging to the Patriarchate. At this ceremony, His Beatitude spoke with the following address:

"And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands" (Hebrews 1:10).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Dear President and Honourable members of the Ecclesiastical Committee,

Our Lord Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, called us all to celebrate with thanksgiving the inauguration of Christ's Resurrection, as well as the touching of the Holy Apostle Thomas in your holy city of Cana in Galilee, where the Lord sanctified the marriage through His presence, with His Mother, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.

True witnesses of this event are not only the Apostles and Evangelists but also the Rum Orthodox Christians living here throughout the centuries, who are the blessed Christ-named congregation of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, that is, the Mother of the Churches, founded on the blood of the cross of its founder; "for nothing else can be a foundation than what is laid, which is Jesus Christ", Saint Paul preaches.

We rejoice and in this "divine zeal and willingness of you, the young Trustees of our local Church, we boast" (Cf. 2 Cor. 9,1). We say this because the new generation, despite the difficulties it faces in its daily life, is distinguished by its zealous devotion to the traditions of the Church and especially by its selfless love for the land of its ancestors and progenitors.

We rejoice because today, with the laying of the foundation of this stone, a good and socially beneficial work is being inaugurated, a work demonstrating the concern of the Mother for her children, of the Church, that is, of Jerusalem for the members of her body, so that according to Paul "there should be no schism in the body, but let the members take care of this for each other" (1 Cor. 12:23).

We wish you success in this good work and every good initiative of yours to the glory of God and the praise of His Holy Church. And this is because, according to the voice of the wise Paul, " For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" (1 Cor. 3, 9). Christ is Risen!"

From Secretariat-General
















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