17/06/2024

The feast of the Ascension at the Patriarchate



On Thursday, May 31/June 13, 2024, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Ascension, that is, the memory of the glorious ascension into heaven of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, on the fortieth day after the Resurrection while His disciples watched this happening in joyful morning at the Mount of Olives, according to the Gospels and the book of the Acts of the Apostles, (Acts 1,1-11).

This feast was celebrated with a Divine Liturgy in the Holy Monastic and Patriarchal Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, presided over by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

The feast was also solemnly celebrated on the Mount of Olives, in the place where the Ascension of the Lord took place.

Vespers was celebrated on Wednesday afternoon presided over by His Eminence Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia.

A litany followed to the pilgrimage of the Men of Galilee (Galili Viri), the former residence of the blessed Patriarch of Jerusalem Benedictus. In the Holy Church of this Monastery, His Beatitude was waiting with the Elder Arch-Secretary, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantine and after hearing the First Gospel

from Matthew, he blessed the Episcopal Entourage.

The litany returned to the Pilgrimage at the place of the Ascension, where the reading of the Small Compline and the chanting of the Canon of the Ascension were completed.

In the morning, a Divine Liturgy was celebrated in this place, presided over by His Eminence, Archbishop Theodosios, concelebrated by Holy Sepulchre Fathers, the first of whom was Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, after the Archimandrites, Meletios, Makarios, Stephanos, Christodoulos and Dionysios, the Priests of Saint James Cathedral and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon, Priest Ioannis and the students of the Patriarchal School of Zion in Greek and by the choir of Saint James Cathedral in Arabic, as the service was attended by local believers and pilgrims, in the presence of the Greek Consul Mrs Anna Mantika.

During the Divine Liturgy, H.H.B. Our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the members of the Holy Synod visited the Holy Shrine for veneration.

Afterwards, His Beatitude paid a visit to the Sheikh, the resident of the nearby Mosque and to the Monastery of the Ascension, which is overseen by the hard-working monk Achillios, then he supervised the ongoing work in the newly built Holy Church of Pantocrator and sat down for refreshments.

His Beatitude then visited the nearby magnificent Church of the Ascension of the Russians of the Diaspora (ROCOR), where He was received by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Romanos and blessed the congregation.

And during that visit, His Beatitude gave the following speech:

Your Eminences,
Your Graces,
Dear Archimandrite Roman,
Dear Abbess Varvara,
Beloved Sisters of this Venerable Convent,

Christ is risen!

On this joyous feast, when we celebrate the fulfilment of the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ and
the Gospel,we bring to you the blessing of the Holy and Life-Giving Tomb. As the hymnographer

writes

O Christ our God,
upon fulfilling your dispensation for our sake,
you ascended in glory,
uniting the earthly with the heavenly.
You were never separate but remained inseparable,
and cried out to those who love you,
“I am with you and no one is against you.”

(Kontakion for the Ascension)

These words remain of crucial significance for us, especially in this time of the crisis of the war
and of the extreme difficulties that we are facing in our region. We hold fast to the promise of
our Lord Jesus Christ who has assured us that he is always with us, even to the end of the age
(Mt 28:20). We are a people of the resurrection, and even in challenging times, we cannot
abandon hope. And we must be a beacon of hope to all.

As Saint Paul says, though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, you do not have
many fathers (1 Cor. 4:15). By divine providence, the mission of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem is
to be both father and instructor of the Church, for here the Church was revealed at Pentecost,
and from here the teaching of our Lord spread throughout the world. So all are united under the
wings of the Patriarchate. This double vocation of the Church of Jerusalem means, therefore,
that we cannot be frightened by the war to neglect our work. On the contrary, our mission and

moral obligation is so to intensify our prayers that we may have the courage to meet these difficult
days with resolve and faith in the resurrection.

We also remember that here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to

come (Heb. 13:14). For we are thankful that we are privileged to be standing today on the mount
on which our Lord gathered his disciples, and from which he ascended. As we read in the Gospel
of Saint Luke, he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While
he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven (Lk. 24:50-51).

So the disciples were looking toward the eternal city. Today we are celebrating the fulfilment of
the promise of our Lord who takes our humanity into the eternal city, and so opens up for us the
possibility of eternal union with God. We are hopeful because we have inherited this same power
that our Lord promised to his disciples on this mount (cf. Lk. 24:48-49), and therefore our hope
in unwavering. In all this we rejoice in this bright and holy feast.

May God bless you, dear Father Roman and dear Abbess Varvara, and this venerable convent, as
you shine like a beacon on a hill to show to the world the hope of the resurrection.

Christ is risen!

Afterwards, His Beatitude visited the Monastery of the Men of Galilee, where he was greeted with compliments by the nun Danielia, who diligently supervises and maintains the Monastery.

From the General Secretariat

en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info