02/07/2024

The feast of the Prophet Elisha at the Patriarchate



On Thursday, June 14/27, 2024, the feast of the Holy Prophet Elisha was celebrated by the Patriarchate in his Holy Monastery in Jericho, near the sycamore tree of Zacchaeus.

This Monastery is located in Jericho, due to the action of the prophet mainly in that place.

During this feast, the Church commemorates the prophet, Elisha, as descended from the village of Abel-Meiz. This was the son of Shafat, a farmer by profession and was called by God to the prophetic office by the prophet Elijah. Elijah the prophet anointed Elisha as a prophet and threw his mantle on him. Elisha left the twelve pairs of oxen with which he was ploughing, and slaughtered and used them for a feast for the people and followed the prophet Elijah, being faithful to him throughout his life. He worked many miracles, as narrated mainly in the book of 4 Kings of the Old Testament. He saw his teacher Elijah taken up on a chariot of fire into heaven and he asked for and received his grace and mantle, on which he passed the Jordan river as if on a boat.

In the aforementioned Holy Monastery, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of

Jerusalem Theophilos celebrated the Divine Liturgy with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolias and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Holy Sepulchre Fathers, the first of whom was the Typikon keeper of the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen Archimandrite Alexios, the Archimandrites Silouanos and Kyriakos and Fr Issa Mousleh, the Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. Hierodeacon Simeon was the Greek chanter with the assistance of Mr Georgios Varaklas and the choir of the Orthodox congregation chanted in Arabic.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude proclaimed the divine word as follows:

“And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so” (4 Kings 2, 9-10).

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Reverend Christians

The spirit of the prophet Elijah, that is, the Holy Spirit that was transmitted to his disciple Elisha, has gathered us all in this Biblical place of Jericho in the Jordan River area, where the Monastery of Prophet Elisha is located, to celebrate his annual commemoration.

The Holy Prophet Elisha is distinguished among the prophets who prophesized the incarnate presence of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth, because, as a disciple of the great prophet Elijah, he learned of him and worked many miracles by the grace of God, as his synaxarist writes: “the water is naught, and the ground barren. And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake” (4 Kings 2, 19-22).

Moreover, the great Elisha raised dead people; he cleansed Neeman the Syrian from leprosy and made his servant a lepper as a punishment for his greed and disobedience; He even smit the waters of the Jordan River and made them part, using Elijah’s mantle (Cf. 4 Kings 2,14).

The Holy Church of Christ honours the prophets as the “righteous” people of God,

the saints of God. The prophets, and of course, prophet Elisha are the chosen vessels of God, inspired by the luminous power of the Holy Spirit. “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4,24), the Lord says.

The holy prophets are those who prepared and foretold the great mystery of the Divine Providence in Christ, as Saint Paul preaches: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tim. 3,16).

Regarding this, the Lord’s words to His disciples after His resurrection are noteworthy: “Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24, 25-27).

Interpreting these words of the Lord, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: “Nothing coming from God is of no importance, but all and every single one of them have their specific place and use. The servants of the Lord were sent to the right place beforehand, to prepare the Lord’s coming, introducing prophecy as the necessary preparation for the faith in Christ”.

In other words, my dear ones, the gift of prophesy that God gives, is the gift of revealing the hidden plans of God, as the prophet Amos says: “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3,7).

Like another Paul, who was taken up in the third heaven (Cf. 2 Cor. 12,2), the prophet Elisha reached spiritual heights and received the hidden knowledge of God by God. As his hymnographer writes: “Plainly informed by a divinely inspired oracle, the wondrous Elijah anointed thee a prophet, O glorious Elisha. In thee the bounteous grace of the Holy Spirit found rest and came to dwell” (Matins, Ode 3, Troparia 1,2).

It is made clear that the gift of prophecy is the prototype of the Apostolic office, from which both the prophets and the apostles draw strength and genuine divine knowledge. According to the true testimony of the writer of the Book of Kings, the prophet Elisha used Elijah’s mantle and made the waters of the Jordan River part and walked through them, reaching the other side of the river. Through this ‘sign’, the other prophets recognized Elisha as Elijah’s disciple and honoured him, bowing

down their heads before him (Cf. 4 Kings 2,13-15).

Let us implore this great and marvellous vessel of the Holy Spirit, the great prophet of God, that along with the intercessions of our Most Blessed Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, he may pray for us all. And let us say along with the hymnographer: “With hymns let us the faithful honour Elijah and Elisha, the pinnacles of the Prophets, those brightly shining luminaries of the whole world; and let us cry out in harmony unto Christ: O compassionate Lord, by the entreaties of Thy Prophets, grant Thy people forgiveness of sins and great mercy” (Vespers, Aposticha Glory). Amen! Many happy and peaceful returns!”

After the Divine Liturgy, the good carer of the Monastery, Archimandrite Parthenios, offered a reception to the Patriarchal entourage and the congregation.

At noon the Hegoumen of Abba Gerasimos Monastery Archimandrite Chrysostom hosted a meal in honour of His Beatitude in a restaurant in the city.

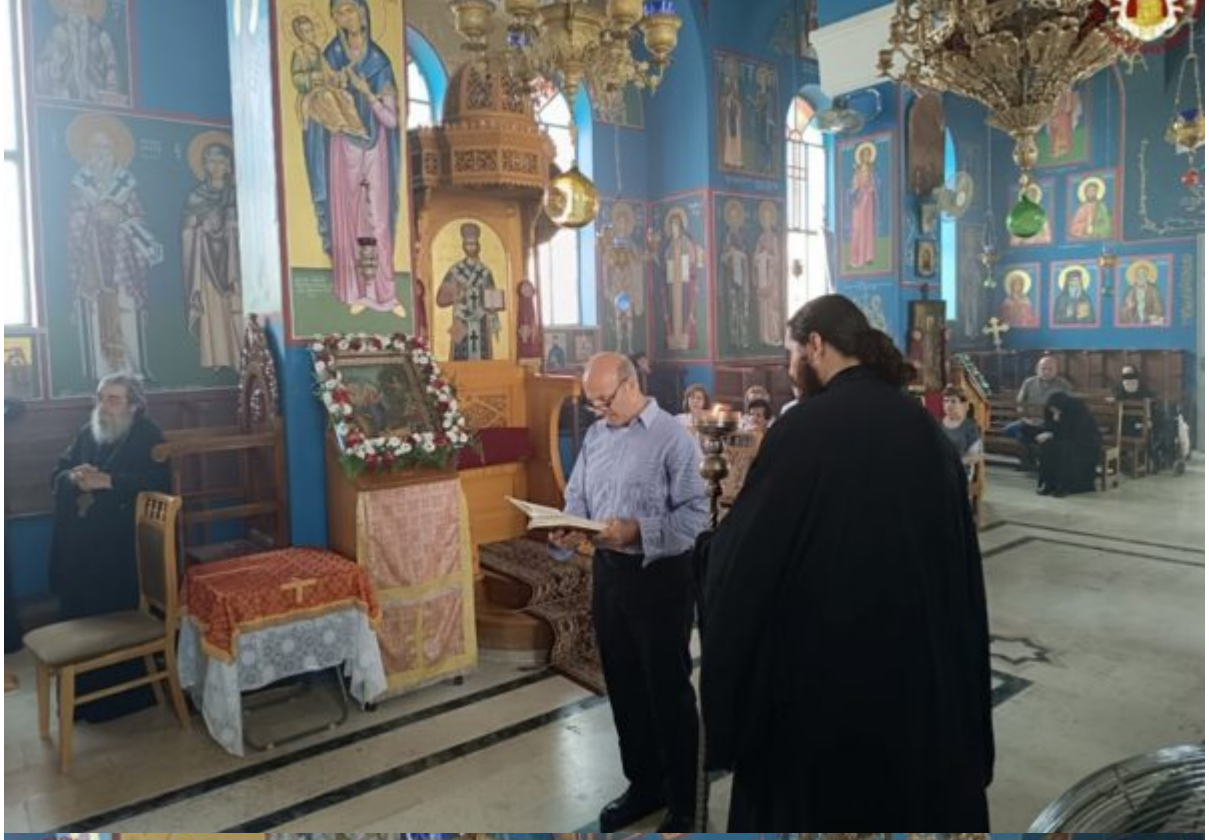
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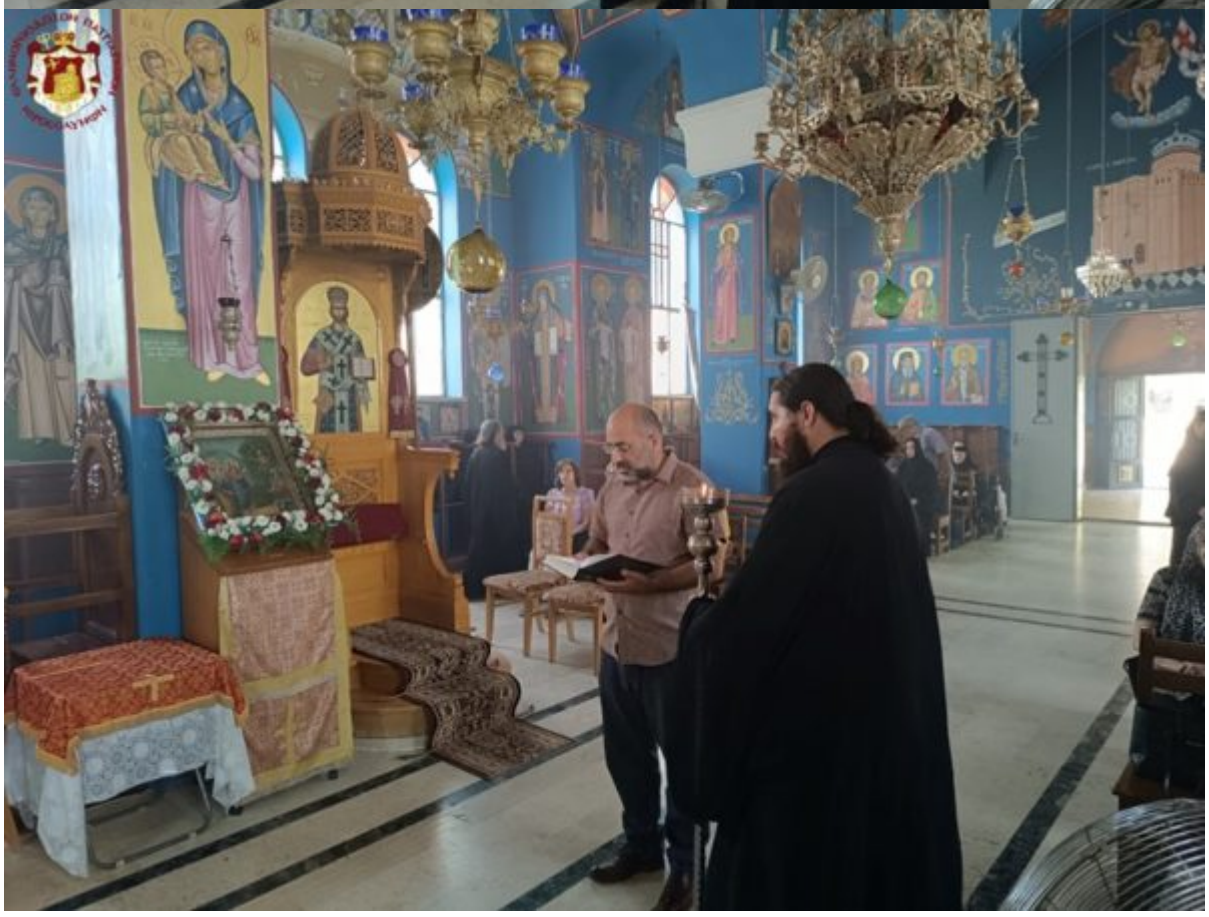


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