15/07/2024

The feast of the Holy Glorious and Chiefs of the Apostles Peter and Paul at the Patriarchate



On Friday, June 29/July 12, 2024, the feast of the glorious and Chiefs of the Apostles Peter and Paul was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

On this feast, the Church especially remembers these two holy Apostles, Peter, brother of Andrew the first-called, following Christ from Tiberias, confessing Him “as the Son of God”, denying Him, being accepted again through repentance, preaching Him, writing two Catholic epistles of the New Testament and martyred in Rome through a cross in AD 66.

The Church also remembers the Apostle Paul as a persecutor of Christ and His Church, as one who was called by a vision and became a chosen vessel, preaching Christ above all things, as is witnessed in the Acts of the Apostles and in his fourteen epistles and having testified during the reign of Nestor in Rome and was

beheaded.

This feast was solemnly celebrated in the Holy Monastery dedicated to them on the western shore of the Sea of Tiberias and in the location of the ancient city of Capernaum with a solemn Divine Liturgy, presided over by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and the Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, Makarios of Qatar, Hieromonks and Presbyters of this region of upper Galilee, Archimandrite Meletios, Archdeacon Markos and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by the Russian-speaking choir of the county of Beer-Sheba under the guidance of His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba on the right, and the Acre Choir on the left, as the service was attended by Russian and Arabic-speaking faithful of northern Israel, visitors from Jerusalem and other towns and pilgrims.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude proclaimed the divine word through the following sermon in Greek as follows:

“Lord, Thou shinest wondrously from the everlasting mountains” (Ps. 75,4), the psalmist proclaims.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit, Who has established the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul has gathered us all in this Biblical place of Capernaum to solemnly celebrate their holy commemoration.

Peter and Paul are distinguished among the twelve apostles, as they are considered to be the foundations of the Church, as the hymnographer writes: “Thou, O Lord, didst give the Church as good foundations and strong supports Peter’s firmness and constancy, Paul’s wisdom ablaze with light and his understanding, with the truthful preaching of each of them concerning God, which drove away godless error from the earth. And so, initiated by them both, we sing hymns of praise to Thee, O my Jesus, Almighty Lord, Thou divine Saviour of our souls” (Small Vespers, Sticheron 2).

The Holy Apostles are recognized as the “foundations of the Church” because each of them received the “true speech of God” by God, and the true witness of the Evangelists: “He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood

hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16,15-18).

Simon's new name as Peter signifies the apostolic mission the Lord appointed to Peter. In other words, this special choosing of Peter and the grandeur it signifies is based on the holy mission the Lord entrusted to him, which Peter had to fulfil with his genuine love. "Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs" (John 21,15).

Regarding Paul's calling to the apostolic office the following features are distinguished: Firstly, he received the calling from heaven, hearing the Lord's voice saying, "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9,15-16). Secondly, Saint Paul had an experience of "visions and revelations of the Lord" (2 Cor. 12,1).

According to his confession, Saint Paul, like another prophet Elijah was taken up to the third heaven, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such a one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12,2-4).

Regarding Paul's experience of the third heaven, Saint Chrysostom says, "Why was Paul taken up? So that he would not consider himself inferior to the other apostles. Because they were acquainted with Christ, but he was not, therefore, he was taken up to glory".

It is noteworthy that both, Peter's confession that Christ is the Son of the living God (Mat. 16,16) and Paul's about hearing unspeakable words are revelations of the Holy Spirit; "God is Spirit" the Lord says (John, 4,24). These revelations show the "the unsearchable riches of God", as Saint Paul says: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3,8).

The unsearchable riches of Christ are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, "every man hath his proper gift of God" (1 Cor. 7,7), Saint Paul says. "As every man hath received the gift, even so, minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the

manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4,10). And according to the testimony of the writer of the Book of Acts, “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2,1-4).

Interpreting the fact that all the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, Saint Theodoritos Kyrou says: “The Lord showed various gifts that were given, however, their source was a single one”. This is no other than the Holy Spirit as Saint Paul preaches: “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit…But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal” (1 Cor. 12,4-7). Here it is expedient to understand the profit of the Church.

The Holy Church of Christ especially honours Peter and Paul, because as the psalmist says, “Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (Ps. 19,4). Peter’s special place among the apostles is due to the fact that he was the first to confess Christ to be the Son of God, and Jesus said unto him: “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 16,19), for which Zigavinos says: “Of course this gift was also given to the other apostles, but Peter was the first to receive it; because he was the first to confess Christ as the Son of God”.

On the other hand, Paul was “exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, [however] there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing, I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. 12,7-9).

We, my dear brothers and sisters, are called by the Chiefs of the apostles, to say along with Paul, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Phil. 3,8); and let us hear Peter’s advice, which points to various dangers of our current era of lawlessness and twisting of the truth of Christ: “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen” (2 Peter 3,17-18). Many peaceful returns!”

After the Divine Liturgy and the reception, the Supervisor of the Monastery monk Irinarchos, who renovated the Holy Monastery and consecrated the Holy Temple hosted a meal by the seaside.

From the General Secretariat

















































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