15/07/2024

# The feast of the Synaxis of the Twelve Apostles at the Patriarchate



On Saturday, June 30/July 13, 2024, the feast of the Synaxis of the 12 Apostles was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

Celebrating this holiday as “Synaxis”, the Church means the gathering of us believers, to honor the twelve Holy Apostles for their work, which they performed enlightened by the Holy Spirit and sent by our Lord Jesus Christ “to teach the nations”. Christ “enchanted the whole world” through them, as we sing in the Troparion of Pentecost.

The Synaxis of the 12 Apostles feast was celebrated in the Holy Monastery named after them, located on the Western shore of the Sea of Tiberias, downtown the modern city of Tiberias.

The Divine Liturgy was presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina, Aristovoulos of Madaba, Archimandrites, Meletios, Artemios and Silouanos, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos, local Priests and Priests from Greece and other Orthodox countries. The chanting was delivered by Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos in Greek and the Acre Choir in Arabic, as the service was attended by Russian and Arabic-speaking faithful of northern Israel and other areas.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 28,18-19).

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The Grace of the Holy Spirit, who enlightened and taught the Holy Apostles, “to observe all things whatsoever I [Christ] have commanded you” (Matt. 28,20), has gathered us all in this holy place, where our Lord appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, to celebrate their synaxis.

The elected by our Lord Disciples are those who were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and Jesus told them, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28,18-20).

Interpreting these words, Zigavinos says that Christ received the power as a human, “all power was given to me as a human being, the power that God has”. Saint Basil says, “This is referred to His incarnate presence, not the divine one”. Saint Cyril of Alexandria says, “Jesus received the power when He was a man, when He humbled Himself for our sake when the master became a servant when the free Son became a supplicant”.

It is noteworthy that Jesus commands His disciples, “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28,20). This means that the source of the Apostles’ teaching is no other than our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore,

Saint Paul says, “We are labourers together with God” (1 Cor. 3,9), and “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 9,11).

In other words, the Apostles became His co-workers in the preaching of the truth of Christ, as well as of His power as the Evangelist Matthew says, “And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease” (Matt. 10,1).

Moreover, the Disciples were given the power and the authority, not only to teach others to observe what He commanded them, but also to ordain priests in each Church (Acts, 14,23), and “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20,28).

The Holy Spirit who gave bishops to pastor the Church of Christ is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who is the “chief Shepherd” (1 Peter 5,4), and He is the cornerstone of the institution of the Church. That is why Saint Paul says, “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1,22-23). And that Christ loved the Church so much, that He gave His life for it (Cf. Eph. 5,25), Saint Paul preaches again. According to Saint Chrysostom, “The master, that is Christ, did not hesitate even to give His blood for the Church”.

Saint Chrysostom says that the visible on earth Church of Christ consists of the baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit members, who bear the seal of the Holy Spirit. This command and mission, to preach and baptize in the name of the Holy Trinity did the Apostles receive by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by placing their hands they transmitted the Holy Spirit. In that manner, Saint Paul says, they became co-citizens of the Saints and friends of God and were made steadfast on the foundation of the Apostles, and the prophets, while the cornerstone is Christ (c.f. Eph. 2,19-20).

Indeed, Christ is eternally the cornerstone while the apostles are the foundation stones. As Zigavinos comments, this is because the apostles were the first ones to believe so they were placed in the construction of the Church, with their preaching being the foundation”.

Both their faith and teaching of the Gospel all over the world proved to all that the apostles are the spiritual foundation stones. It also showed that they are the voice of the life and the truth of Christ our Saviour and God. The great contribution of the

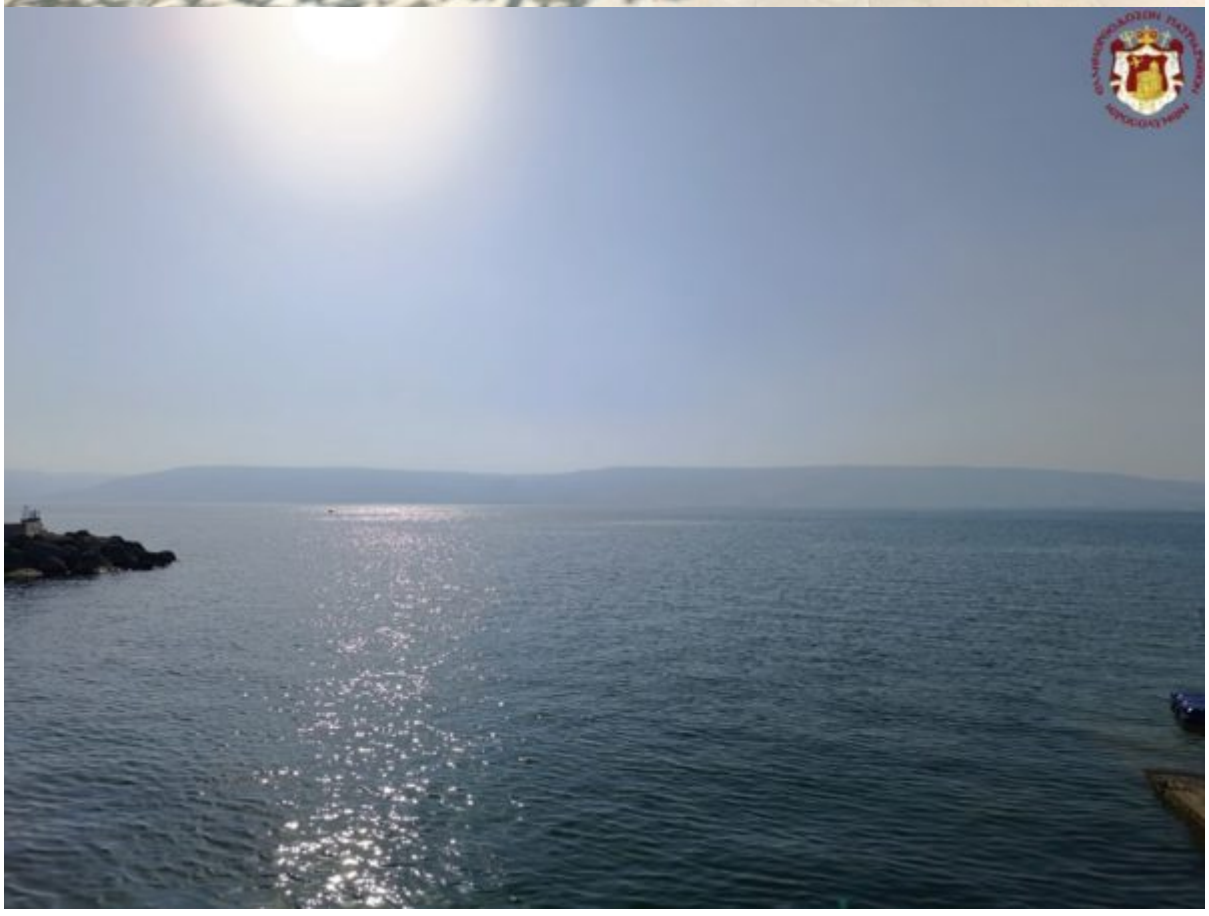
Holy Apostles to the Church is the Apostolic succession of the bishops of the Church which has been preserved and not altered. That is why the Church is called “Apostolic”, and that is why today the Holy Church of Christ honours and celebrates the synaxis of the holy glorious twelve Apostles and along with them the Most Blessed Theotokos, the Mother of God.

So, let us say along with the hymnographer, “In thee do we all boast, O pure Theotokos; with God, we all possess thee as our protection. Stretch forth thine invincible and mighty hand, smite to the ground our enemies; and send forth unto thy servants quick help from God the All-holy” (Minaion, Matins, Exaposteilarion). And “universal Twelve Disciples all-revered, who preached the All-holy Trinity throughout the whole world, that He by nature is everlasting God; ye truly unhewn towers of the Church and unshakable pillars of towering height, intercede with the Master of all things that our souls may be saved” and grant peace to the world and our war-afflicted region (Matins, praises, troparion 4). Amen. Many happy returns!”

After the Divine Liturgy and the reception, the hard-working Supervisor of the Monastery Monk Vasilios hosted a festal meal for the Patriarchal Entourage and the congregation.

From the General Secretariat

















































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