05/08/2024

The feast of Prophet Elijah at the Patriarchate



On Friday, July 20 / August 2, 2024, the commemoration of Prophet Elijah of Thesbes was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

On this day, the Church draws from the Old and New Testaments and honours the Prophet Elijah as a native of Thesbes, a hermit and ascetic, zealous for the rights of God, fighting for His rights and performing many signs and wonders, as is briefly but inclusively mentioned in his Synaxarion and his Apolytikion, that he is: “the incarnate angel and the prophets’ summit, the second forerunner of the coming of Christ”, the one taken up by a chariot of fire into heaven and sent through his mantle double his grace to his disciple Elisha, who crossed the river Jordan on it.

His memory was celebrated in his Holy Monastery, the one between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, by the ancient Monastery of the Seat.

Vespers was celebrated in the evening by His Eminence Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia, with the co-celebration of Archimandrite Bartholomew, the ministering

Priests of Saint James Cathedral and Hierodeacon Dositheos. In the morning 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 Hesychios of Capitolias, and the Archbishops Theodosios of Sebastia and Filoumenos of Pella, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks and local Priests. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon on the right in Greek with the help of Saint Sabba's monks and Saint James' choir under Rimon Kamar on the left in Arabic. The service was attended by the Spiritual Father of the Holy Monastery of Saint Sabba, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos, the parishioners of Saint James and Arabic-speaking and Russian-speaking believers from Jerusalem, Bethlehem and other towns in the region.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (James 5,17-18), the Apostle James says.

Dear Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians

The grace of the Holy Prophet Elijah of Thesbes has gathered us all today in this holy place to celebrate in Eucharist his fiery ascension into heaven.

According to his Synaxarist, the glorious Elijah prophesized for twenty-five years. He was born 816 years before Christ's coming. This is Elijah, who brought down fire from heaven three times, and stopped the rain with his voice, and raised up the dead, and burned fifty-two (cf. Kings 1,19-20), and saw God himself on Mount Horeb, in a way that is not possible for man to see. And he opened the Jordan in two with the mantle and was taken up into the heavens in a chariot of fire and was present on Mount Tabor during the Transfiguration with Moses.

According to the testimony of the Apostles, "I will send them prophets and apostles" (Luke 11,49), God said, so that they may minister in the mission of His Divine Providence, the mystery of the salvation of man. The Prophet Elijah was such a minister of God's plan and was distinguished for his extreme zeal and righteousness.

That is why Saint James the Brother of God, referring to the power of prayer which is based on faith and accompanied by faith, projects the Prophet Elijah as an

example, who was a man like all of us: “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5,16-17). This became apparent to the righteous man of God, Elijah from Thesbes, who heard the Lord’s voice: “And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave” (3 Kings 19,11-13).

Behold, my dear ones, the manner of God’s appearance, as well as the manner of His reply to His righteous and faithful man; behold also, the manner of the righteous prophet Elijah, who covered his face out of fear and respect. The “still small voice” is the symbol of the infinite love of God, who does not want the triumph of the evil, nor the death of the sinner, but his repentance. “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5,32), the Lord says. Interpreting these words of the Lord, Saint Chrysostom says that, here, Christ means that He did not want the sinners to remain as such, but He came to make them better people.

Answering the question, “Who is a righteous man?”, the Psalmist says “He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour” (Ps. 15, 2-3). In other words, righteous is the man who applies in his life all the commandments of God. “One should not only work righteousness but work in a righteous disposition, according to “judge the people with just judgment” (Deuteronomy 16,20), Saint Basil the Great says. “Thus should one live, so that he is neither disgraced by others, nor himself disgrace others”, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says.

It is noteworthy that the Prophet Elijah was not only a zealot but also a man. As a man, unavoidably he was subjected to the laws of corruption of the human nature. For this reason, according to Saint Chrysostom, God’s providence of love hastens to humble His chosen one, before the conceit and pride, which kill men, do so. “There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure” (2 Cor. 12,7), Saint Paul says.

In other words, the great boldness towards God, the vision of God, the power to work miracles and the other great gifts of the Holy Spirit that Elijah had are

primarily owed to his Godly zeal, and the earnest predisposition of his heart. “But covet earnestly the best gifts” (1 Cor. 12,31), Saint Paul urges. “Predisposition is this, free deeds stemming from self-will, abiding in a free mind” Saint Gregory of Nissa teaches.

These God-inspired words denote the power of the Godly zeal and divine predisposition, which allows any man who wants to be united with God in Christ and through Christ, to become an imitator of Elijah’s Godly manner of living. “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ” (Phil. 1,27), Saint Paul preaches. And the hymnographer says: “When thou wast united unto our God through thy virtue and unspotted life, O Prophet renown, and hadst for this cause received from Him authority and power, then thou didst change creation as seemed good to thee, and by thy will didst shut the gates of rain on high; and thou didst bring fire down from above, wholly consuming the impious. Do thou entreat Christ the Saviour that our souls be saved” (Matins, Praises, Troparion 1).

We, our dear ones, who honour his commemoration, let us entreat him, that by his intercessions, and those of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary we may be deemed worthy not only of the acquisition of His virtues but also of the vision of God, which according to Saint Cyril of Alexandria comes with the acquisition of the virtues. Amen. Many happy and peaceful returns!”

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a reception at the reception hall in the courtyard of the Holy Monastery, and later on, the hard-working Supervisor of the Monastery Monk Achilios hosted a meal, where His Beatitude addressed those present as follows:

“O seer of mysteries ineffable and holy, thou didst cleave in twain the River Jordan’s running streams; and the delusion of idols, thou didst burn to ashes with the fierce lightning-bolt of thy godly words. When the king transgressed, thou didst rebuke him openly; the shameful priests of iniquity, thou boldly slewest; and with thy prayer, thou didst burn thy sacrifice. Now with the fire of thy most fervent prayer, quench the flaming-hot coals of the sufferings and distress of thy people, O Elijah, prophet of the Lord” (Vespers, Aposticha 3) the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Today’s festal commemoration of Prophet Elijah reminds to all who honour him that the God of love does not appear only in a sound “as of a rushing mighty wind” (Acts 2,2), or like “thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud”, and “as the smoke of a furnace” (Exodus 19,16-18), or like the “whirlwind” (Job 38,1), but primarily and especially like “a still

small voice” (3 Kings 19,12).

And that “still small voice” is no other than the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the Communion of the Holy Spirit, which as a comforter is transmitted to us during our participation in the Divine Liturgy, the logical worship and prayer. “Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Hebrews 12,28), according to the Bible.

That is why Saint Paul urges us: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12,1-2).

Precisely this “good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12,2) did Elijah distinguish, as a “zealot and governor of the passions, the incarnate angel and bodiless man” according to the historical time of his earthly life.

We say this, my dear brothers and sisters, because the signs of apostasy and lawlessness of our times are already visible and active. “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work” (2 Thess. 2,7) Saint Paul preaches. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3,4) Saint John the Theologian and Evangelist says.

We can face the wars and turmoil of the present time only with the weapons of prayer and repentance, having a safe refuge in the ark of Salvation, that is, the Holy Church of Christ and as protectors the Holy Prophets like the zealous Elijah, the Apostles and all the saints, not least the most blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. Amen. Many happy returns.”

From the General Secretariat






















©Heba Hrimat


©Heba Hrimat


©Heba Hrimat










©Heba Hrimat


©Heba Hrimat


©Heba Hrimat


©Heba Hrimat


©Heba Hijmawi


©Heba Hijmawi


©Heba Hrimat







en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info