26/09/2024

The feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God



The Nativity of the Mother of God is a feast of the Theotokos, which the Church celebrates with joy and rejoicing and thanks God, remembering that the Virgin and Mother of God Mary is the fruit of her pious and childless parents, the Holy Ancestors of God Joachim and Anna.e is a gift from God to her parents, but also to all of humanity, as from her the Saviour of humanity, our Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer from the corruption of death, was born in the flesh from the Holy Spirit.

The Feast was celebrated:

On Saturday, September 8/22, 2024 at the Theotokos' Tomb in Gethsemane, according to the Status Quo, a Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, with the co-celebration of the Archimandrites, the Exarch of the Holy Sepulchre in Athens, Raphael, Makarios, Dionysios, Ieronymos and Christodoulos, the Priests, Nectarios, Ioannis, Farah, Archdeacon

Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. Mr Eustathios Matsoukas, the Patriarchal School of Zion students and the choir of Saint James Cathedral delivered the chanting.
The Liturgy was followed by a reception by the renovator and Hegoumen, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis.

On Sunday, September 9/22, 2024, by transference at the magnificent Church dedicated to the Nativity of the Theotokos in Beit Jala. The Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with con-celebrants their Eminences the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina and Aristovoulos of Madaba, the Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks, Raphael, Ieronymos and Porphyrios, the ministering Priests of the Church Boulos, Yusef and Elias, Priest Ioannis, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The Hegoumen of Beit Jala Archimandrite Ignatios was absent due to a temporary illness. The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine choir of Beit Jala, as the service was attended by the full congregation of the town.
Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“The prophecy is fulfilled of him that cried out; for he said: I will raise up the tabernacle of sacred David that is fallen; which prefigured thee, O immaculate Virgin, through whom the entire dust of man hath been refashioned into a body for God” (Matins, 2nd Canon of 9th Ode, Troparion 3).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Reverend Christians,

The grace of the Holy Spirit, which overshadowed the fountain of live, Mary the God-bearer, has gathered all of us in the Church dedicated to her, to celebrate her Nativity by the Righteous ancestors of God Joachim and Anna, and participate in the common joy of both Angels and people.

The Nativity of the Theotokos is the annunciation to the Prophets of God’s Providence (c.f. Acts 13,32), the annunciation of the Divine Providence, for which the Holy David says: “For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth” (Ps. 74,12). Saint Paul thanks God because, “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; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ” (Eph. 3,8-9).

The hymnographer of the Church says about the annunciation of the unfathomable riches of Christ, namely the mystery of the Divine Providence: “Thy Nativity O

Theotokos hath proclaimed joy to the whole world; for from thee hath dawned the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, annulling the curse and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting" (Apolytikion).

Indeed, my dear ones, the Nativity of the Theotokos proclaimed joy to the whole world, because according to the Prophet Isaiah, "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah, 7,14). Stressing this phrase from Isaiah, Saint John of Damascus says: "Sing, O barren [Anna], thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child" (Isaiah 54,1). Rejoice Joachim, for from the daughter "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9,6).

This "counsellor, the mighty God" is our Lord Jesus Chris, who made known to us humans the will of God the Father of old, as Saint Basil says. This counsellor the mighty God is Christ, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3,13), Saint Paul preaches. This means that Christ suffered death on the Cross, the death of the curse, as Saint Athanasios says: "Christ became a curse.... accepting the cursed death". In other words, Christ "redeemed us from the curse of the Law" (Gal. 3,13), and made us owners of the blessing of the Holy Spirit, of His Spirit.

Becoming the victor over the death of corruption through His Resurrection, Christ abolished the power of the devil, namely the death of sin, and granted us everlasting life. Christ, Saint Luke says, is the one "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2,24).

Behold, therefore, why Saint John says in praise: "Oh native daughter…indeed thou hast become the most honourable in the whole creation. From thee our Creator received a fate, the beginning of our race. His flesh was from thine flesh, His blood from thine blood, and from your breasts did God suckle milk, and your lips were matched with God's lips. Oh, how incomprehensible and private wonders! Foreknowing thee, the God of all made thee worthy to be loved by Him, and having loved thee, at the end of times He brought thee into being, and made thee the Mother of His Son and Word".

The sermon of Saint John of Damascus is noteworthy, according to which, the Most Holy Theotokos is projected as the old farm of the sheep of her father Joachim, and

now the heavenly-like Church of the logical flock of Christ.

This fact, my dear brethren, proves that our Holy Church is not a mere common religious institution, but the very body of Christ, whose head is the incarnate Jesus Christ, our Lord. “And God gave Him to be the head of the Church, which is His body” Saint Paul preaches.

Saint Paul’s preaching and teaching were not based on human wisdom and thinking, but on the power of the Holy Spirit, as he testifies: “my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2,4-5).

This faith in the Holy Spirit’s Divine power made the Theotokos Mary blessed among all the generations (c.f. Luke 1,48). Rejoice the only mother of God, the only true and indeed most wonderful and most desirable name of the Christian faith.

Let us say along with the hymnographer: “This is the day of the Lord, be exceedingly glad, O ye people. For behold, the Bridechamber of the Light, and the Book of the Word of Life, is come forth from the womb; and the Eastward Gate, which hath been born, awaiteth the entrance of the Great Priest; and she alone bringeth into the world the only Christ, for the salvation of our souls” (Matins, Glory of praises). Many happy and peaceful returns. Amen!”

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a litany around the Holy Church and then a short treat, concluding with lunch, hosted by the Community Council, where His Beatitude again addressed those present as follows:

“O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth” (Isaiah 25, 1), the Prophet Isaiah proclaims in joy.

Your honour, Mr President and respected members of the Ecclesiastical Committee,

Holy Fathers and brothers,

Dear Christians,

We glorify and praise the name of the Great God and our Saviour Christ, for He has wrought wonderful works, an ancient true will. This ancient and true will was fulfilled in the blessed person of the Ever-Virgin Mary, whose Nativity we celebrate today.

The Mother of God was born of God and Man, of heaven and earth, as Saint John of Damascus exclaims in praise, saying: ” Hail Theotokos literally and truly, you bind men tightly to God and with you the heavens and the earth are united, giving back the things of men to God and the things of God to man”.

This means that the Virgin Mary is now the ladder that transfers us from earth to heaven, she is the ladder that moves us to the eternal city, as the Apostle Paul says: “For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come”. (Heb. 13, 14).

We seek the future city, that is, the Kingdom of Heaven, because as Saint Paul preaches again, “for the fashion of this world passeth away” (1 Cor. 7:31). We say this because the world in general and our region in particular is being tested in many ways by the uncertainty and upheaval caused by the prevailing war situation.

The Most Holy Theotokos, my beloved, is the hope of all Christians and the refuge of those who turn to her; moreover, she is the one through whom, according to Saint John of Damascus, the eternal light is transmitted to people.

Let us entreat my dear brethren the Theotokos and say along with the hymnographer: “Our universal joy, the all-praised Virgin, hath dawned forth from righteous Joachim and Anna for our sakes. By reason of her exceeding purity, she is become the living temple of God and she alone in truth is acknowledged to be the Theotokos. By her entreaties, O Chris God, send down peace upon the world, and great mercy to our souls” (Vespers of 7th September, Glory of Aposticha). Many happy and peaceful returns. Amen.”

From the General Secretariat

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