

The feast of the repatriation of the Holy of Saint Savva the Sanctified



On Saturday, October 13/26, 2024, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the repatriation of the holy relic of our Holy Father, Savva the Sanctified.

On this feast, the Church of Jerusalem commemorates that after the lifting of anathemas between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, the meeting of the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras with Pope John Paul VI in the Holy Land, and the beginning of the Theological Dialogue between the Churches, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem asked the Roman Catholic Church for the relic of Saint Savva, which the Crusaders had taken to Venice. It was given back to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and returned to Jerusalem on November 13th/26th 1965.

After the exhibition veneration in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for one week, the holy relic was placed again in the Holy Monastery, which the Holy One founded

and remains there as a treasure and a source of strength and healing for those who live in asceticism therein and its pilgrims.

Because of this historic and significant event, an All-night Vigil in the Catholicon of the Holy Monastery of Saint Savva, was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with concelebrants their Eminences, the Elder Sacristan Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, the Elder Chief-Secretary, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Hegoumen of Gethsemane, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenopolis, the Spiritual Father of the Lavra, Archimandrite Eudokimos, other Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks, among whom the representative of the Holy Monastery of Hozeva, Hieromonk Chrysogonos, local Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Patrikios. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon in Greek and by a Byzantine choir under Mr Elias in Arabic. The Vigil was attended by many faithful from the Bethlehem district.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“I have chosen rather to be an outcast in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of sinners. For the Lord loveth mercy and truth, God will give grace and glory” (Ps. 83, 11-12).

Beloved holy fathers and brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

Blessed is the Lord and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has gathered us in this holy Lavra of our Holy and God-bearing Father of ours, Savva the Sanctified, to celebrate the repatriation of his incorrupt relic from Venice, in the year 1965, during the Patriarchal Office of the late Patriarch Benediktos, our predecessor.

The young Savva had such a desire for reverence that he came to the place where the feet of our Saviour Christ walked. The discipleship of our Holy Father Savva under the great ascetics and anchorites, Euthymios the Great, Theodosios the Cenobriarch and Theoktistos the holy, in the deserts of Judea and the River Jordan, made him a teacher of the anchorite life and a citizen of the desert, as his biographer, Cyril of Skythopolis testifies, writing: "The earthly angel and heavenly man, Savva, the wise and science teacher, the advocate of Orthodoxy and persecutor of false doctrines, the one distinguished as a prudent steward, who multiplied the divine gifts, who was clad in the power from on high by the goodwill of God the Father with the assistance of Christ and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who inhabited the desert with a multitude of monks, with the seven famous monasteries he founded in Palestine".

Indeed, the wise Savva became an earthly angel and a heavenly man, an advocate of Orthodoxy and persecutor of the false doctrines. That is why he became an example of the ladder of virtues, that is, of the way and the path that lead to the vision of God, the vision of God's glory, which is reflected and imprinted in his incorrupt relic that lies before our eyes.

In other words, the power from on high, which filled the heart of our Father Savva, made him, like Saint Paul of old, a type and an example to imitate for the practising monks who fervently desire to inherit eternal life.

This spiritual state of holiness is testified by the holy and incorrupt relic of our Holy Father Savva. Saint Paul also says: "For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12,10-11). "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12,14).

Today, my dear brethren, on the festive commemoration of the repatriation of the God-bearing and Sanctified Savva's fragrant relic, we basically celebrate our new life in Christ through rebirth. The result of our rebirth in the resurrected Christ is the living hope, which is eternal and with no corruption. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter, 1,3-4), the Apostle Peter preaches.

Our Father Savva became an heir of this inheritance, the incorruptible and reserved in heaven. God bestows this inheritance to us men, “among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20,32), “the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1,18), “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Cor. 15,50), the wise Paul says. And this is so because what is asked of us men is the rebirth, that is, our transfiguration according to the image of Christ, as Saint Paul again says: “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Cor. 15,49).

Our loss of the heavenly image in us resulted in sin and the corruption of the fallen man, the old Adam. But when we are clad in the new man, then our heavenly image is restored. To this cause are we called my dear brethren, by our Holy Father Savva the God-bearer and sanctified, through the mouth of Saint Paul: “Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4,24). Amen! Many happy and peaceful returns!”

After the Divine Liturgy, a monastic meal was offered.

Accepting the wishes of the Lavra fathers and blessing them, His Beatitude returned to Jerusalem via the Holy Monastery of Abba Theodosios the Cenobiarch.

From the General Secretariat





































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