

## The feast of Saint James the Brother of God



On Tuesday, October 23 / November 5, 2024, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of Saint James the Brother of God. On this feast, the whole Church, especially that of Jerusalem, remembers that Saint James was the son of Joseph, born of a woman Joseph had married before he was betrothed to the Theotokos. That is why James was also called her son and brother of the Lord and son of Joseph (Matthew 13:55). He was also called “the Just” because of his extreme honesty and justice.

The Lord appointed him as the first Hierarch of the Church of Jerusalem. He presided over the First Apostolic Synod of Jerusalem in the year 49. He contributed the most to the decision of this Synod so that the Church would open its gates to the nations and not only to the Jews.

He wrote his Catholic Epistle in the New Testament, addressed to the twelve tribes of Israel in the diaspora. He confessed Jesus as sitting at the right hand of the power of God and coming on the clouds of heaven. On his testimony, he was pushed down from the wing of the Temple of Solomon and was stoned to death by order of Annanus the High Priest, in the year 62.

In honour of his memory and his work, solemn Vespers was held in the Holy Cathedral in his name, located between the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, presided over by our Father and the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, the Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks co-ministering with Him, with first in rank first the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nektarios and the priests of the Church.

On the morning of the feast, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude, with con-celebrants their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia, and Aristovoulos of Madaba, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks, the Ministering Priests of the Cathedral, Archimandrite Vassianos from MISSIA with his Hierodeacon, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacons Eulogios and Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr. Eustathios Tsoumanis in Greek and by the Cathedral Byzantine Choir under Mr Rimon Kamar in Arabic, as the service was attended by the parish members and others from Jerusalem, with the honorary presence of Mrs Constantina Gyftou from the Greek Consulate General of Jerusalem.

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

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (James 1, 12), Saint James the Brother of God says.

Dear brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The illumined by of the Holy Spirit’s fiery power, Saint James the Brother of God, has gathered us all in the Cathedral dedicated to him, next to the Holy Sepulchre of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, to celebrate his commemoration in the mystical blessing.

Saint James was distinguished among the Apostles according to Saint Paul, because he was considered one of the three pillars (Gal. 2, 1-10) of the first Christian

Church. He presides over the first Apostolic synod in Jerusalem and Saint Paul goes to him (Acts, 21, 18). Moreover, the Lord appeared to James after His Resurrection, as Saint Paul says: "After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (1 Cor. 15, 7-8).

In his epistle, James the Just refers to the power of patience, through which the faithful can deal with multiple temptations in daily life, that is why he urges: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" (James 1, 12). And in more detail, happy is the man who endures the trial of sorrows with patience and long suffering. And he is happy because when he overcomes the temptation, stable, tested and fit, he will receive the bright and glorious crown of eternal life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

The crown of eternal life is the crown of God's promise, as the Lord says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24, 35). It is the crown we shall receive, not because of our actions, but because God's mercy has promised it. "Are you asking by what material God has prepared the crown of life to those who love Him? It is what God has prepared for those who love him, for which the size of divinity cannot be seen and can neither be subjected to hearing, nor attained to the human comprehension", Saint Chrysostom says.

The faithful man of God is being tested so that the things hidden in the depths of his heart can be revealed, as Moses the God-seer says to his people: "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no" (Deuteronomy 8, 2).

According to Saint James, man is tested by God to receive eternal life. That is why he considers blessed those who endure the temptations, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation" (James 1, 12). And according to Saint Paul, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3, 12).

Interpreting these words of Paul, Ecumenios notes that "Paul refers to persecution here, meaning primarily that of the idolaters, but also the sorrows and the temptations". Saint Chrysostom says, "No man is walking on the path of virtue without going through sorrows, sadness, pain and temptations".

Indeed, my dear brothers and sisters, the one who walks on the path of virtue is being tested by sorrow, sadness, pain and multiple temptations. However, these temptations are neither caused nor directed by God, because, "God cannot be

tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (James 1, 13). God is "kind and most merciful", Saint James teaches, urging us to have as an example the patience of the prophets and the apostles of the Lord; "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5, 10-11).

Hence, Christ prepares His disciples for their future temptations, saying to Peter: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22, 31). Interpreting this phrase, Saint Cyril of Alexandria notes that the Lord also implies Peter's forthcoming denial and adds, "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22, 32); in other words, [He asks him to] become a brace and teacher to those who approach Christ in faith. In this case, it is made clear that through Christ's prayer, the faith of His disciples as well as of each one of the faithful may be shaken at times, however, it never fades.

In other words, my dear brethren, the tempted and tested faithful man is kept safe by the power of God the Father and the prayer of Jesus, His Son. That is why Saint James says, "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5, 13-15). Saint John the Evangelist also says, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John, 5, 4). And our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us, "Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, whatsoever thou shall ask in prayer - and doubt not - thou shall receive it" (c.f. Matt. 21, 21).

God promised He will not allow us to be tempted above our power, but along with the temptation He will bring its solution, so that we may be able to endure, as Saint Paul says, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10, 13).

Let us entreat today's celebrated James the Just, the Brother of God, the first Hierarch of the Holy Church of Christ in Jerusalem to intercede for us, along with our Most Blessed Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, so that we may be able to endure the temptations and the trials that the faithful people of God suffer in the Holy City of Jerusalem and the surrounding area. Many happy and peaceful returns!

Amen.”

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude with the High Priests and Priests co-celebrating with Him, dressed up, ascended the steps of Saint James Cathedral and met with the other Holy Sepulchre High Priests and Hieromonks in the forecourt of the Holy Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, and chanting in the joy of the resurrected Christ, went up to the Patriarchate Hall for the Dismissal. At the entrance of the Central Monastery, nun Seraphima, the head of the Bakery and Abbess of the Holy Monastery of Panagia Sayda Naya, offered the established small loaves of bread of blessing in honour of the feast of the Throne of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

In the hall of the Patriarchate, His Beatitude gave His blessing and handed over the key of the Holy Church to the Trustees of Saint James the Brother God as the Hegoumen of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and Patriarch of the flock.

This was followed by the festive treat and the kissing of His Beatitude’s hand with festive blessings.

From the General Secretariat

















































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