

## The feast of the deposition of the relic of the holy Great Martyr George the Trophy - Bearer



On Saturday, November 3/16, 2024, the Patriarchate celebrated the memory of the deposition of the holy relic of Saint George the Trophy Bearer to the Holy Land.

During this celebration, the whole Church, especially the one in Jerusalem, remembers that Saint George was a military officer, a Cappadocian by father and a Palestinian by mother and that he went to Rome to obtain higher military positions. Moving to Rome, he saw the persecution and torture of Christians and confessed his faith. Consequently, he was tortured and martyred by Diocletian in AD 305.

Before his martyrdom, he pledged to his servant to transport his remains to his native Lydda. Obedient to this command, the servant brought his relic to Lydda, which the Christians preserved, until piety shone upon the reign of the glorious king and equal-to-the-apostles Saint Constantine. His mother, Saint Helen, came to

the Holy Land and erected great Churches, such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Basilica of Bethlehem, she also erected a magnificent Church on the Tomb of Saint George in Lydda, which has been a shrine of the Patriarchate until today.

In honour of this event a great solemn Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences, the Archbishops, Damascene of Yaffo and Aristarchos of Constantina, Archimandrite Alexios, who was first in the rank of the Priests, Priests from various areas of the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate and the Head of the Russian MISSIA, Archimandrite Vassianos. His Beatitude received a warm welcome from the Scouts and the congregation, who also attended the service, under the hospitality of the Hegoumen Archimandrite Markellos.

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

“As the husbandry tilled by Christ, as the one valiant in martyrdom, let us sing the praises of wise and noble George, the fearless preacher of truth, the ever-living and verdant branch that doth blossom with the fruit of the Vine of eternal life and that welleth up with the sweet wine of piety and gladdeneth those faithfully observing the Martyr’s yearly memorial” (Matis, praises, Troparion 1), the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all today in the magnificent Cathedral of the Great Martyr George, to celebrate the commemoration of his Cathedral’s consecration and the deposition of his holy relic in his mother’s historic hometown.

“Wondrous and very great in all truth is the report of thine unspeakable martyrdom” George, his hymnographer proclaims. Today’s celebrated George is distinguished among the “compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses” (C.f. Hebrews 12,1), whose martyrdom of blood is inextricably linked with Christ’s witness during his confession to Pilate: “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice” (John 18,37).

Interpreting this phrase, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: “God came in this world when He became a man, to testify to the truth, meaning that He would cast out the lie of this world, and destroy the demon who made this world suffer through

deception, and to establish the truth, to present the truth (its nature), which will reign over all, truly and naturally. "Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18,37), the Lord says. The word of truth is welcomed by those who have already learned to love the truth, but not by those who have not known it. The Prophet Isaiah said to some men, if you don't believe, you will never understand (c.f. Isaiah, 7,9). Similarly, the truth seems to be ugly and odious to those with a disabled mind, even though the truth inserts the noetic and divine light in the souls of its seers.

The truth of Christ has implanted its noetic, spiritual and divine light in George's pure heart, who not only viewed it with his soul's eyes but also heard its voice, that is Christ's voice. That is why George confessed to being a Christian before the Roman emperor Diocletian and the whole Parliament.

Of course, the mobilizing power of George to preach Christ's truth boldly and courageously was none other than the firm belief that Christ is the light the life and the truth of the world. That is why George's fervent desire to participate in martyrdom by blood, that is, to Christ's passion, and become a citizen of His heavenly city, overcame the weakness of human nature, as Saint Theodore of the Studion expresses theologically: "Let us spiritually acclaim, O Brethren, that noetic adamant of patient endurance, the celebrated Martyr George, who was assayed by fire for the sake of Christ; perils forged him, torments tempered him, and diverse tortures destroyed his body, which was corruptible by nature. For longing conquered nature, persuading the lover to pass through death to the Beloved, even Christ God, the Saviour of our souls" (Glory of Praises).

In other words, through his martyr's blood, George became an imitator of Christ, who – according to the Evangelist John – is "the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1,5). In more detail, Christ is the true and always reliable witness, who with His death sealed His testimony about the divine truth and was the first to have risen from the dead, and is the eternal King and reigns over the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and because of His love has washed us clean from our sins with His blood...belongs all glory and the might forever and ever.

And Saint Paul urges his disciple Timoty thus: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim. 1,7-8). Moreover, the Lord Himself declared that He sealed the New Testament with His

blood: "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22,20). The New Testament is the triumphant "church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts, 20,28).

This means, my dear brethren, that Christ's sacred blood and martyrdom founded the Church which is Christ's body, as He was raised in the heavens through the Cross. "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12,32). The holy Church of Christ is also called to offer the testimony of blood for man's salvation. "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15,20).

To this calling of the Church did the holy martyrs of Christ respond, like the Holy and glorious great martyr George the trophy bearer, whose commemoration of his relic's deposition we celebrate today. To him and the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary we all pray, to intercede for world peace, especially our tested by the fire of war region, and pray to Christ to give our souls the great mercy. Amen. Many happy and peaceful returns!"

The Liturgy was followed by a reception, which was attended by the Ambassador of Greece to Israel, Mr Kyriakos Loukakis and diplomatic representatives of other countries such as Serbia and Cyprus. The Hegoumen Archimandrite Markellos and the Community Council hosted a festive meal for His Beatitude, His Entourage and many other celebrants.

This feast was also celebrated in the Holy Monastery of Saint George of the Hospital in Jerusalem with Vespers in the evening and a Divine Liturgy in the morning, presided over by the Most Reverend Archbishop Dimitrios of Lydda, and co-celebrants the Archimandrite Claudio, Priest Nektarios and Hierodeacon Simeon, under the chanting of Mr. Eustathios Tsoumanis and hospitality of the abbess nun Pansemni.

It was also celebrated in the Holy Monastery of Saint George in the Jewish Quarter by Archimandrite Christodoulos, at the chanting of nuns of the Patriarchate, with the help of the host of the feast the Supervisor of the Monastery, Hierodeacon Dositheos.

The feast was also celebrated in the Holy Monastery of Saint George "Al Khader", located in Bethlehem district with the participation of believers from this district, hosted by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Porphyrios.

In honour of the Holy Great Martyr George, the Trophy Bearer this feast was also celebrated in many other Churches of the Patriarchate.



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