

The feast of Saint Nicholas at the Patriarchate



On Thursday, December 6/19, 2024, the feast of our Holy Father Nicholas, Bishop of Myra in Lycia the Wonderworker, was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

On this feast day, the Church remembers that Saint Nicholas lived during the time of Emperor Constantine the Great, participated in the First Ecumenical Council in 325, defended the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, and reposed around 330 A.D.

As the Church sings in his Apolytikion: The truth of things revealed him as a rule of faith and an image of gentleness, and he acquired the high through humility and the rich through poverty. By his miraculous power, he saved “the innocent from death” and many others, who were in great danger at sea, which is why he is honoured as the protector of sailors.

His feast was celebrated:

In the Holy Church dedicated to him in Beit Jala, with many events of blessing and reverence, especially through the Divine Liturgy, which was presided over by His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III, with the co-celebration of the Elder Chief Secretary, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, as well as the parish priests Father Joseph, Father Elias, and Father Paul, and Archimandrite Silouanos, and the representative of the Russian MISSIA, Archimandrite Vassianos, with the pious participation of a large congregation, and in the presence of the General Consul of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Dimitrios Angelopoulos.

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

“The truth of things hath revealed thee to thy flock as a rule of faith, an icon of meekness, and a teacher of temperance; for this cause, thou hast achieved the heights by humility, riches by poverty. O Father and Hierarch Nicholas, intercede with Christ God that our souls be saved” (Apolytikion), thus the hymnographer of the Church exclaims.

Beloved in Christ brothers and sisters,

Devout Christians and pilgrims,

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all together in this renowned sacred Church of Saint Nicholas, that we may honour with festivity his holy and venerable memory.

Our Father, the Hierarch Nicholas, who flourished during the reign of the pious Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, and was one of the 318 Holy Fathers at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in the year 325, stands out among the Fathers of the Church not for his written works, but for his miracles, which he performed by the power of the Holy Spirit, as Saint Paul proclaims, saying: “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost” (1 Thessalonians 1:5, KJV). Moreover, he became a great Hierarch, that is, a true shepherd, following the Chief Shepherd Christ, who said: “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:11, KJV).

According to the hymnographer of the Church, our Father Nicholas had the distinct qualities that define the good Shepherd. He was revealed as a “rule of faith,” an

“image of gentleness,” and a “teacher of self-control.”

Saint Nicholas was revealed as a “rule of faith” because he preserved the consignment, that is, the truth of the Gospel, which the esteemed and holy 318 Fathers of the Church carefully formulated and firmly established by the illuminating power and work of the Holy Spirit at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea.

The blessed Nicholas was distinguished as an “image of gentleness,” hearing the command of the Lord Jesus Christ: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:29, KJV). In other words, our holy Father became a disciple of Christ by obeying His words: “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29, KJV).

Explaining the Lord’s words, Zigavinos says: “He did not say meek and lowly only, but lowly in heart, that is, lowly in soul, in will. And this, because, according to the blessed Paul, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Galatians 5:22-23, KJV).

“The fruit of this Holy Spirit, namely, self-control, was revealed in the life of Bishop Nicholas, who became a partaker and teacher of this virtue. He called upon the preaching of the God-inspired, eminent Apostles: Paul, who said: ‘For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate’ (Titus 1:7-8, KJV), [The Bishop must be blameless, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful and trustworthy word of the apostolic teaching]. And Peter, who said: ‘And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance’ (2 Peter 1:5-6, KJV).

Faith, gentleness, and self-control were the virtues that adorned the Hierarch Nicholas. These were the contents of the catechesis of the Gospel of God’s Word. These are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. ‘But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit’ (1 Corinthians 12:7-9, KJV), the blessed Paul preaches.”

It is noteworthy that to the humble Hierarch Nicholas was also granted ‘the gifts of healings’ (1 Corinthians 12:9), that is, the gift of healing the sick, for which he was also given the title of the wonderworker. This is attested by his hymnographer, who

says: "As a manifestly peerless physician of grave maladies of all kinds, O Father Nicholas, heal the infirmity of my soul and give me strength to cry: O God of our Fathers, blessed art Thou" (Matins, Ode 7, Troparion 4 of the Saint). And again the hymnographer exclaims, saying: 'The Lord greatly glorified you in miracles, both while living and after your end, Nicholas, Hierarch; for who, with all faith, has called upon your holy name, and was not immediately heard, finding you as a fervent intercessor?'

Today, our holy Church, my beloved brethren, blesses the divine life of our holy Father Nicholas, who was illumined by the unapproachable Light. He came to the Holy Land, especially to your holy city, to venerate the God-revealing Grotto of the Nativity, namely the birthplace of our God and Saviour Christ, in Bethlehem. He came to this humble cave because in it was fulfilled the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son and Word of God from the pure blood of the ever-virgin Theotokos Mary, as the hymnographer says: 'A strange and paradoxical mystery I see! The cave is heaven; the throne of the Cherubim is the Virgin; the manger is the place in which the Uncontainable One, Christ God, has been laid; whom, as we sing, we magnify".

The place, that is, the space and the area of the humble manger, was deemed worthy to welcome the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, who reclined in it, the Uncontainable God as an infant. God, according to the holy John of Damascus, "God, being incorporeal and indescribable, does not exist in a place; for He Himself is the place of His own, in which He fills all things and is above them, and He Himself sustains them".

This "strange and paradoxical" mystery, my beloved, came to pass for the salvation of us, the people. Therefore, we are also called to celebrate the Nativity of Christ, imitating our Holy Father Nicholas, who transformed his soul and heart into a manger, where "the Uncontainable Christ reclined". And the holy John the Evangelist commands us, saying: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 2:15-17, KJV).

This is the way to glorify the Birth of Christ, and this is the way to meet the Christ who came down from the heavens. Amen. Many years, peaceful and blessed Christmas.

Following the Divine Liturgy, a procession was held, and a reception and meal were offered by the Community, during which His Beatitude gave another address, as follows:

“Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious” (Psalm 65:1-2), the psalmist exclaims.

Most Honoured Mr President and esteemed members of the Ecclesiastical Committee,

Holy Fathers and devout Christians,

The grace of our Holy Father Nicholas has called us all to this sacred and historical city of yours, so that we may make a joyful noise unto the Lord, sing forth His name, and give Him glory in praise. This is, after all, the purpose of the feasts: on one hand, that our holy Church may honour the memory of the Lord, the Theotokos, and the saints of God; and on the other hand, that it may present to us, the faithful, the virtues of these holy ones as examples for imitation, as the Apostle Peter also commands, saying: “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15-16, KJV, cf. Leviticus 20:7).

God is infinitely, unchangeably, and eternally Holy. We, being by nature sinful, must strive, by His grace, to become holy, listening to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ who says: “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 12:46, KJV).

And “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness” (John 12:46, KJV).

This “light of life,” “the One who came into the world,” shone forth at the Nativity of Christ in the cave of Bethlehem. Therefore, we as Christians, while we have this light among us, are bound to walk under His guidance and illumination. “Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you” (John 12:35, KJV), says the Lord.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, that ye be not conformed to this world" (Romans 12:1-2, KJV), that is, do not adopt the ways of life of the worldly, carnal people of this age, Saint Paul says.

We hymn and honour our Holy Father Nicholas, who became a great mystic of the grace of God, for as his hymnographer says: "... being undefiled in spirit, he was altogether a source of purification, offering to Christ the sacrifice that is pure and without blemish and acceptable unto God, since he himself, as a priest, was made pure in soul and body. Wherefore, he is truly a protector and champion of the Church, as a great initiate of the divine grace of God" (Oikos).

Let us, therefore, beseech, my brothers and sisters, 'him who now abides in the Paradise of delight and beholds the ineffable glory in splendour, Saint Nicholas the Blessed', that by his supplications, together with the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Mother of God, we may be deemed worthy to celebrate ecclesiastically — that is, in the Holy Spirit, and not in a worldly manner, that is, not carnally — the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. Blessed and peaceful Christmas."

2. In the Holy Church of St. Nicholas in Jerusalem, Vespers was celebrated in the evening, followed by the Divine Liturgy in the morning, presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolias, with the co-celebration of the Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Matthaïos, Archimandrite Claudius, the representative of the Patriarchate of Romania Archimandrite Ioannis, and the Hegumen of the Holy Monastery, Archdeacon Mark, with the participation of faithful from Jerusalem and pilgrims honouring the Saint.

After the Divine Liturgy, refreshments were offered by Archdeacon Mark, who organized the entire celebration and feast and has maintained the Holy Church in good order.

From the General Secretariat

































