12/03/2025

The Sunday of Orthodoxy at the Patriarchate



The First Sunday of the Holy and Great Lent, 24th February / 9th March 2025, was celebrated as the Sunday of Orthodoxy by the Orthodox Church, particularly by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

On this Sunday, the Church celebrates the triumph of the restoration of the holy icons under Emperor Michael, his mother, the holy Empress Theodora (815–867), and the holy and confessor Patriarch Methodius (846), after one and a half centuries of persecutions and martyrdom, when the Iconoclasts were destroying the Holy Icons. The distinction between Orthodoxy and this heresy is subtle, and only the God-bearing Fathers, those who have discernment, taught it to the faithful. Therefore, on the first Sunday of Lent, the Church commemorates the defenders of the holy icons—pious Patriarchs, Hierarchs, Kings, and simple faithful—who were witnesses to the earthly incarnate presence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Vespers

This event, essential to Orthodoxy, was confirmed by the Seventh Ecumenical Council of 843 AD. The Church of Jerusalem celebrated this by Vespers on Saturday afternoon at the Katholikon of the Church of the Resurrection, with veneration and incense at the Holy Deposition, veneration at the Holy Tomb and the Horrendous Golgotha, by the Holy Synod Fathers, with the Great Entrance, Artoklasia (Blessing

of Bread), and incense, presided over by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Theophilos, with the co-prayer of the Archbishops of the Throne and the hieromonks and deacons of the Holy Sepulchre. The chanting was delivered by the chief cantor and deacon, Eustathios Tsoumanis, and with the participation of the congregation, mostly from Jerusalem's monks, monastics, and pilgrims.

The Feast Day

On the main feast day, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Katholikon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, presided over by His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos, with the participation of their Eminences, Metropolitan Hesychios of Capitolias, and the Archbishops, Theophanes of Gerash, Dorotheos of Abila, Theodosios of Sebasteia, Demetrios of Lydda, Makarios of Qatar, and Philoumenos of Pella, Hieromonks of the Holy Sepulchre, with the first being the Elder Kamarasis, Archimandrite Nektarios. The chanting was delivered by the chief cantor and deacon, Eustathios Tsoumanis, in the presence of the General Consul of Greece, Mr. Dimitrios Angelosopoulos, and with the participation of a large number of faithful and pilgrims.

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a procession of the Holy Icons three times around the Holy Sepulchre and the holy shrines, after which the Synodikon of Orthodoxy from the Triodion was read at the Holy Tomb.

Following this, there was a ceremonial ascent to the Patriarchate, where the respects were presented to His Beatitude, and He addressed the faithful with the following speech:

"By nature indescribable, being divine in Thine essence, O Master, having assumed flesh, Thou were deemed worthy to be described; for by the taking of the flesh, Thou assumed all its characteristics; therefore, we embrace Thine image, and we are lifted up to Thine love, receiving from it the grace of healing, following the example of the Apostles, according to the divine traditions", Saint Theodore the Studite writes in his hymn.

Your Excellency General Consul of Greece, Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos,
Reverend Fathers and Brothers,
Beloved Christians and Pilgrims,

The Holy Church of Christ, today on the first Sunday of Lent, commemorates the veneration of the restoration of the holy and venerable icons, which the faithful and pious rulers undertook, the late Emperors of Constantinople, Michael and his mother Theodora. And this is because the veneration of the holy icons concerns the mystery of the divine Providence, that is, the incarnation of the Word of God from

the pure blood of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.

Saint Basil the Great and the holy Fathers of the Church clearly and distinctly proclaim that we venerate and kiss the holy icons not in a worshipful manner, but with respect. “The honour given to the icon passes over to the prototype,” says St. Basil. And the prototype is the one depicted in the image, from which the icon is derived. “Who can make a likeness of the invisible, bodiless, indescribable, and formless God?” teaches Saint John of Damascus, quoting Saint Basil.

It should be noted that the hypostatic union of the Word of God with human nature, as well as the resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ from the dead, constitute the cornerstone of the Christian faith, and especially of our Orthodox faith. This is because correct faith entails a proper way of life. In this, the greatness of Orthodoxy is clearly distinguished, for it centres on the correct mindset of faith in the crucified and risen God.

“Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4, KJV) the divine Paul proclaims.

As we proceed through the course of the Holy Fast, let us pray to God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ, that through it we may be deemed worthy to partake of His glorious Resurrection. Amen. Many happy returns and a blessed Pascha.

From the Secretariat-General




























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