

The Sunday of Thomas at the Patriarchate



On Sunday, the 14th/27th of April 2025, the Patriarchate celebrated the Sunday of the Holy Apostle Thomas, that is, the event of the touching of the Lord by the Apostle Thomas, according to the Typikon of the Church and the established Status Quo. On this Sunday, eight days after Pascha, the Church commemorates that on the eighth day from the Resurrection, the Lord, “the doors being shut,” entered “into the upper room where the disciples were assembled.” Thomas was also “with them,” and he beheld the Lord and the marks of the nails in His hands and His side, and was convinced, exclaiming, “My Lord and my God.” (John 20:24-29, KJV). This paschal event of the appearance of the Risen Lord was celebrated by the Patriarchate:

A. At the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, as a “Parhesia,” that is, with a festive Vespers service in the evening, including an entrance and veneration at the Holy

Deposition and the Holy Sepulchre, the offering of incense, the Great Entrance, and the blessing of bread at the Catholikon, and with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in the morning at the Most Holy and Life-giving Tomb. The Patriarchal Commissioner, His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolias, presided, concelebrating with His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerash and His Eminence Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia, along with Hieromonks of the Holy Sepulchre, led by the Master of Ceremonies, Archimandrite Bartholomew, and others. The chanting was led by Hierodeacon Symeon together with the students of the Patriarchal School of Zion, with the participation of members of the Greek community of Jerusalem and pilgrims from Greece, Cyprus, Russia, and Romania, who had remained for the Paschal period, in the presence of the Consul of Greece, Mr Petros Anagnostaras.

After the Divine Liturgy, the customary ascent to the Patriarchate followed, along with His Eminence's festal wishes and festive hospitality.

B. At the Holy Monastery of Saint George in the village of Cana of Galilee.

The feast was presided over by His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III, who was received at the entrance by Scouts and Priests vested in front of the Holy Church of Saint George of the Holy Monastery of Cana. Concelebrating with Him were His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, the Dean Priest Archimandrite Nektarios, the Representative of the Patriarchate of Moscow, Archimandrite Vassianos, Priests and Deacons of the Holy Metropolis of Nazareth, Archdeacon Mark, and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The choir of the parish chanted hymns in Greek and Arabic. A devout Orthodox congregation from Cana and the surrounding towns, together with reverent pilgrims, attended, honoured by the presence of Her Excellency the Ambassador of Greece to Israel, Mrs Maria Solomou, and His Excellency the Ambassador of Russia to Israel, Mr Viktor Anatolyev.

His Beatitude preached the divine word to the pious congregation as follows:

“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him” (John 2:11).

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Pious Christians and pilgrims,

The Grace of the Holy Spirit hath gathered us all together on this blessed Paschal day, that we may celebrate, on the one hand, the three-day Resurrection from the dead of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, and on the other hand, His presence,

together with His Mother, at the wedding feast which took place here in Cana of Galilee.

During His presence at the wedding, Jesus began His miracles and manifested His glory, as Saint John the Evangelist declares. The beginning of the miracles which Jesus wrought was the changing of the water into wine, according to the true testimony of the governor of the feast, “who tasted the water that was made wine” (cf. John 2:9). Moreover, the honourable estate of marriage was sanctified, and the curse upon women was lifted. The children of women are no longer born in sorrow and pain, for Christ blessed even this beginning of our generation.

It is noteworthy that the glory of our Saviour Christ shone forth as the rays of the sun; thus, His disciples were made steadfast in their faith, marvelling at the things that had come to pass.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria does not merely recount the miracles that took place at the wedding here in Cana of Galilee, but he proceeded to the “theoria”, that is, the deeper spiritual meaning of the mystery of marriage, saying: “Thus, the Word of God descended from the heavens, as the Lord Himself saith, to unite Himself to human nature as a bridegroom takes a bride, and to persuade it to bear the spiritual fruits of wisdom. Therefore, human nature is rightly called the bride, and our Saviour the Bridegroom, since Holy Scripture lifts up its language from human things to the comprehension of divine mysteries. And the marriage was celebrated on the third day, meaning in the latter times of this present age.”

And we may ask ourselves: why is it fitting that human nature be called “the bride” and our Saviour “the bridegroom”?

Because the Word of God, who descended from the heavens, took upon Himself human flesh from the pure blood of the Ever-Virgin Mary — that is, His human Body. And this Body is none other than the Church, of which Christ is the Head; and as the divine Paul preaches, Christ “loved the Church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:23-27).

“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25) — that is, He was crucified — for the Church, because the Church proceeded from Christ, just as Eve proceeded from Adam. “Just as Eve was formed out of Adam, so too are we from the Master Christ; for we are united unto Him (unto Christ) in baptism, and we rise again with Him, and we eat His body and drink His blood,” says the interpreter Theodoretos of Cyrus.

This very event — our resurrection together with the Risen Christ, as well as our partaking of His body and drinking of His blood — we celebrate today in this Paschal season. Therefore, Saint John of Damascus exclaims in hymn: “We celebrate the death of death, the overthrow of hades, the beginning of an everlasting life; and, leaping for joy, we praise the cause thereof, the only blessed and most glorious God of our fathers” (Paschal Canon, ode 7, Troparion 3).

It should be noted that we celebrate our resurrection in Christ, who rose from His three-day burial, not merely with emotional feelings or moral sentiments, but eucharistically, through our participation and communion in the mystical blessing — namely, the body and blood of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, as Saint John of Damascus again exhorts us in hymn: “Come, on this auspicious day of the Resurrection, let us partake of the new fruit of the vine of divine gladness and of the Kingdom of Christ, praising Him as God unto the ages” (Paschal Canon, Ode 8, Troparion 2).

Saint Cyril of Alexandria, interpreting today’s Gospel, the word of the Lord addressed to His disciple Thomas, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing” (John 20:27), says:

“Most blessedly, therefore, do we celebrate the holy assemblies (the gatherings) in the churches on the eighth day (the Lord’s Day, Sunday). We shut the doors, yet Christ cometh and appeareth to all of us, invisibly and visibly: invisibly as God, visibly again in the body. He also permits and grants us to touch His holy flesh. For by the grace of God, we approach and partake of the mystical blessing, receiving Christ into our hands, that we too might firmly and without any doubt believe that He hath truly raised up His own temple (that is, His own body).”

In other words, my beloved brethren, the glory which Jesus Christ manifested in that sacred place of Cana, and in which His disciples believed on Him (cf. John 2:11), is none other than the divine mystery of the incarnation of the Word of God, which reached its fulfilment and perfection in the mystery of the Resurrection of Christ, our God. The radiant presence of the Holy Ghost — the Spirit of Christ — is that which revealed His glory unto His disciples.

This very radiant working of the Holy Ghost, and the mystical presence of Christ, is granted unto us by the Holy Church of Christ through the mystery of the bloodless sacrifice, namely the divine Eucharist, as also Saint Symeon the New Theologian declares:

“For when He cometh within us through the Spirit, He raiseth us from the dead and giveth us life; and He granteth us to behold Him wholly alive within ourselves — Him that is immortal and incorruptible; and not only this, but also granteth unto us clearly to perceive that He raiseth us up with Himself and glorifieth us together with Himself, as all the Holy Scripture beareth witness.”

And, more simply:

“When Christ comes within us by the grace of the Holy Spirit, He raises us from the dead and gives us life, and He vouchsafes us to see Him alive within ourselves — He who is immortal and incorruptible. And not only this, but He grants us the gift of perceiving that He raises us up together with Himself and glorifies us together with Himself, as the whole of Holy Scripture testifies.”

Therefore, beloved, let us glorify Christ, who rose from the tomb on the third day, the Giver of life; and together with the hymnographer, let us magnify the Theotokos and Mother of God, saying:

“O Thou lamp of shining splendour and pure Mother of our God, thou most manifest glory, thou who art more exalted than all creation, with hymns thee do we magnify” (Matins, Heirmos, Ode 9).

Christ is risen! May the peace of Christ reign in the hearts of us all. Amen. The Lord is risen indeed!

At the banquet offered by the Community and the Hegumen, Archimandrite Leontios, His Beatitude addressed those present with the following speech:

“Shine, shine, O new Jerusalem, for the glory of the Lord hath risen upon thee. Dance now and be glad, O Sion, and do thou exult, O pure Theotokos, in the arising of Him Whom thou didst bear.”

Your Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth,
Your Excellency, Ambassador of Greece to Israel, Mrs Maria Solomou,
Your Excellency, Ambassador of the Russian Federation, Mr Victor Anatoly,
Honourable President of the Local Council of Cana,
Esteemed President and respected members of the Ecclesiastical Committee,
Reverend Fathers and brethren,
Beloved Christians and devout pilgrims,

We render glory and thanksgiving unto the Holy Triune God, who has vouchsafed our Mediocrity and our honourable retinue to celebrate once again this year,

together with our most beloved inhabitants of Cana, the event commemorated in the Gospel, the Wedding at Cana and the miracle renowned throughout the whole world: the transformation of water into wine.

The Christian presence, as well as the organised Christian Community, which has ever been under the spiritual and ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the venerable Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, dates back to the earliest centuries of Christianity.

We state this because it is owing to the Christian presence that the historic city of Cana has preserved and safeguarded its multicultural, multireligious, and multiethnic character unto this very day. The harmonious coexistence of Muslims, Jews, and Christians therein stands as a model worthy of emulation.

The particular mention of Cana in the New Testament has made it a magnetic centre for countless pilgrims and visitors to the Holy Land. The Holy Shrine of Cana proclaims and fervently heralds the sanctity of the Mystery of Marriage — the foundation of the family and of the moral structures of human society.

The Holy Church of Jerusalem, namely the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, boasts in the Lord for its contribution both to the establishment and promotion of the shrine through the founding of a Church and Monastery, and to the pastoral care through the protection of its Christ-named flock and, more broadly, of the inhabitants of Cana.

Our Mediocrity hath been vouchsafed the ministry of this holy shrine, as well as the shepherding of our devout flock dwelling here from ancient times, bearing witness to the Cross-Resurrection love and the righteousness of the Gospel of Christ.

The zeal of the faithful for their Church, the blessed coexistence of Christians and Muslims, the mutual respect shown towards religious feasts and social traditions, and the hospitality extended towards pilgrims — according to the commandment of the Apostle Peter, “Be hospitable to one another without grumbling” (1 Peter 4:9) — reflect the unique character of the people of Cana. We, too, have been made partakers and sharers of this exceptional experience.

On this auspicious Paschal day, we rejoice that “Christ is Risen” and that death hath been put to death. We rejoice once more that the fruit of the tree of the glory of God, manifested in Cana of Galilee, is preserved excellently, according to the Lord’s saying: “Make the tree good, and its fruit good; for the tree is known by its fruit” (Matthew 12:33).

Moreover, we are gladdened by the cooperation in Christ between the Hegumen, Father Leontios, and the diligent members of the Ecclesiastical Committee.

Finally, we express our gratitude to all who have honoured this feast, and especially to the beloved President of the Local Council of Cana.

Christ is Risen! Many blessed and peaceful returns to all!

Upon the conclusion of these events, His Beatitude made pastoral visits within Cana and immediately thereafter departed for Jerusalem.

From the General Secretariat



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