

The Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women at the Patriarchate of Jerusalem



On Sunday, the 21st of April / 4th of May 2025, the Patriarchate solemnly celebrated the Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women. On this day, the Church commemorates Joseph of Arimathaea, the noble counsellor and burial-giver of our Lord, who came from Arimathaea—modern-day Ramla—a respected member of the council, who boldly went unto Pilate and asked for the Body of Jesus (cf. Mark 15:43-46), and who, together with Nicodemus and the Myrrh-bearing Women, buried the immaculate Body of our Lord Jesus.

This sacred event was celebrated:

In Ramla, at the Holy Monastery of the Holy Myrrh-Bearing Women and of Joseph of Arimathaea, belonging to the Patriarchate. There, the festal reception of the Patriarchal School Scouts—students of the Patriarchate's school—was held with great warmth. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the morning, presided over by His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III, concelebrated

by Their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishop Damaskinos of Yaffo, and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, along with Hieromonks of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, led by the Patriarchal Exarch in Athens, Archimandrite Hieronymos. Also present were Arabic-speaking Presbyters from the surrounding regions and a large congregation of Orthodox faithful from the city.

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

“At that time... Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.” (Mark 15:43),

and, “When the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.” (Mark 16:1).

Beloved brethren in Christ,
Reverent Christians and pilgrims,

“The Grace of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ hath gathered us all today in your scriptural city of Arimathaea, that we may celebrate the radiant event of Christ’s Resurrection, while at the same time honouring His hidden disciples: Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus—he who first came to Jesus by night, “bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight” (cf. John 19:38–39).

According to Saint Cyril of Alexandria, the Evangelist John tells us that not only one disciple had the devout intent to bury the Body of Christ; for this reason, he adds to Joseph a second witness, Nicodemus. He does this to strengthen the testimony, in accordance with the Mosaic Law, which says: “In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (Matt. 18:16 / Deut. 19:15).

As for the Myrrh-bearing Women, and especially Mary Magdalene, our Father among the Saints Cyril teaches: “Because Mary Magdalene preserved a sincere disposition of love for Christ, the Saviour granted unto her, through the voice of holy angels, the knowledge of the mystery concerning Himself.” In other words, the Risen Jesus bestowed knowledge, namely, the revelation of the mystery of His rising from the dead on the third day, into the souls of those who loved Him: His disciples and the Myrrh-bearing Women, though in various ways. Christ’s disciples knew of the mystery of the Resurrection from the Holy Scriptures, whereas the women neither knew the Scriptures nor understood the depth of this mystery. Let us also hearken unto the hymnographer who saith:

“With fear came the Women unto the tomb, desiring to anoint Thy Body with sweet spices. And finding it not, they were perplexed and questioned one another, being

ignorant of the Resurrection. But an Angel appeared unto them, saying: 'Christ is risen, bestowing upon us great mercy.'

The Holy Church of Christ honours and extols the memory of the hidden disciples, Joseph and Nicodemus, as well as the Myrrh-bearing Women. The women became the first and true witnesses of the Resurrection. They were the first to behold the Resurrection—that is, the Risen Christ—and they were the first to proclaim this Resurrection unto Christ's disciples. As it is written:

"Mary Magdalene cometh and telleth the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things unto her: 'Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.'" (John 20:17-18)

Interpreting the Lord's saying, Saint Cyril of Alexandria writes: "Though Christ had indeed risen from the dead, yet the Holy Spirit had not as yet been given unto humanity by the Father through Him (Christ). For having ascended unto God the Father, He then sent It unto us. Therefore He said: 'It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.'" (John 16:7)

And as yet not having received the Spirit, Mary was restrained, as it were, and the Lord saith unto her, "Touch Me not," meaning: "I have not yet ascended unto the Father"—that is, I have not yet sent down the Holy Spirit unto you."

As for the hidden disciples, Joseph and Nicodemus, they too became true witnesses of the Burial and the Resurrection of our Saviour Christ, according to the witness again of Saint John the Evangelist and Theologian, who saith:

"...Joseph of Arimathaea besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came, therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight... as the manner of the Jews is to bury." (John 19:38-40)

It is noteworthy that the hidden friends of Christ reveal themselves at the moment of His utmost humiliation. The Myrrh-bearing women, on the other hand, are those who remained faithful and devoted to their Teacher, Jesus, as testified by the Evangelist Luke, who says: "And all His acquaintances and the women who had followed Him from Galilee stood at a distance, watching these things" (Luke 23:49)—that is, the events of the Crucifixion of the Lord and the other signs and wonders that provoked terror and fear.

In both the hidden disciples of Christ and the Myrrh-bearing women is discerned the power of the Lord's love, of which the divine Paul speaks: "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

According to the interpreter Zigavenos, we Christians ought to live according to the will and commandments of Christ, who died and rose for us, the One who legislates a new city. As Saint Theophylactos says, commenting on the Apostle Paul's word, "that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him" (Col. 1:10): "For wherever there is every good work, there is also full pleasing of God."

This very pleasing of the Lord was manifested through their true love by the hidden disciples and the Myrrh-bearing women: the former through their boldness—"Joseph of Arimathea went in boldly and asked for the body of Jesus" (Mark 15:43); the latter through the courage of their seemingly weak (female) nature: "Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him" (Mark 16:1). In both, faith and love for Christ conquered fear and cowardice; and for this they were deemed worthy not only to honor the dead Master, but also to worship their risen Lord and God.

Let us also, beloved brethren, exclaim together with the hymnographer: "Rejoice and exult, O Virgin Mary, the divine gate of Light! And let the noble Counsellor Joseph be hymned, together with Nicodemus and the Myrrh-bearing women and the holy disciples, as heralds of the Resurrection of Christ. Amen."

Christ is Risen! Many happy returns—resurrectional and peaceful!

Following the Divine Liturgy, a Holy Procession was held around the Monastery, accompanied by refreshments and a festive meal generously offered by the Reverend Hegumen Archimandrite F Niphon and the Community. During this meal, His Beatitude once again addressed those present with the following words:

"The Myrrh-bearing women, having reached Thy Tomb and not finding Thine immaculate Body, came in haste, weeping, and saying: 'Who has taken from us our Hope?'"

Your Excellency, Ambassador of Greece, Mrs Maria Solomou,
Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,
Honourable President and esteemed members of the Community Council,

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Today, your ancient and scripturally renowned city of Arimathea rejoices and exults, for once again this year the light of the Resurrection has shone forth into the hearts of all of you. Your city boasts in Christ, for it has become a true and undeniable witness of the Resurrection of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ through the hidden disciple of Christ, the noble counsellor Joseph of Arimathea. It was he who, “taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus” (Mark 15:43).

And the Myrrh-bearing Women, coming to the Tomb and not finding the Body of Christ, cried out in sorrow, saying: “Who has taken from us our Hope?” In this question of the Myrrh-bearing Women is expressed the tragic state of man without hope—a hope that in this case is none other than the Resurrection of Christ.

The wise Apostle Paul, in his defense before King Agrippa concerning the hope in the Messiah Christ, declares: “For this hope’s sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews” (Acts 26:7), and turning to his compatriots, he asks: “Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?” (Acts 26:8).

The divine Paul identifies this hope in the Risen Christ with the Mystery of Divine Providence—namely, the salvation of mankind. Thus, he exhorts the Thessalonians, saying: “But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8). Interpreting this, Zigavenos notes: “Just as the helmet protects the vital part of the body, so also does hope—the anticipation of salvation and the enjoyment of eternal blessings—guard the most vital part of the mind from harm.” And Saint John Chrysostom adds: “Hope does not allow the mind to collapse, but holds it upright like a head, letting nothing external strike it.”

This very hope in our Risen God and Savior Jesus Christ—the Author and Finisher of our faith (cf. Heb. 12:2)—has preserved like a helmet the blessed existence of our people through the ages in these sacred places, sanctified by the redeeming blood of the Righteous One, who was crucified and rose again.

This hope in the Resurrection of Christ is embodied and borne witness to by the venerable Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem—that is, the Church of Jerusalem—together with its devout and Christ-loving native flock. This testimony to the hope in our Risen Christ we, too, declare and proclaim in our Paschal assembly today. This very hope of the Resurrection we confess in the Symbol of Faith concerning our Lord Jesus Christ: “Who shall come again with glory to judge

the living and the dead, Whose kingdom shall have no end... I await the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come.”

This charge of hope in the Resurrection is also addressed to us, beloved brethren, by the God-inspired Paul, especially in these times of confusion, uncertainty, and turmoil in our contemporary world and particularly in our tried and tested region. He says: “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13), and “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful” (Heb. 10:23).

Christ is Risen! Many happy returns—blessed and hope-filled in the Risen Christ. Amen.”

B.

This event was also celebrated in the Chapel of the Myrrh-bearing Women, located internally within the Cathedral of Saint James the Brother of the Lord, with a Divine Liturgy presided over by His Eminence Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia, and concelebrated by the clergy of the Cathedral. The chanting was led by the chief cantor of the Church of the Resurrection, Deacon F Eustathios, together with the Cathedral choir under Mr Rimon Kamar, with the participation of local faithful from Jerusalem and some devout pilgrims.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, the Association of the Myrrh-bearing Women of the Community and the Trustees offered refreshments at the Ouzount Centre.

From the General Secretariat



















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