

The feast of Saint George the Great Martyr and Trophy-Bearer in Acre - Ptolemais



On Saturday, April 27th/May 10th, 2025, the feast of Saint George the Great Martyr and Trophy-Bearer was celebrated by transference in the Holy Metropolis of Acre—Ptolemais in northern Israel.

This feast commenced with the reception of His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III, by the Scout Corps. The celebration continued with the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of the Metropolis, concelebrated by their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolias, and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, together with priests from the surrounding regions of Acre and Galilee, as well as Hieromonks of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, including Archimandrite Meletios and Archimandrite Christodoulos. The choir of Acre, founded and trained by the late Hegumen Archimandrite Philotheos, chanted the hymns. Present were the President of the

Municipal Council of Acre-Ptolemais, Mr. Fuad Brek, and the Ambassador of Greece to Israel, Mrs. Maria Solomou, along with a devout congregation from the city of Acre and its environs. The Patriarchal Representative of Acre-Ptolemais, Archimandrite Silouanos, hosted the event.

To this assembly, His Beatitude preached the divine word before the Holy Communion as follows:

“Lo, the springtime of grace hath shone forth; the Resurrection of Christ hath enlightened all. Now is this radiant and festal day also made bright by the martyr George. Come, all ye faithful, adorned in light, let us keep feast in gladness and godly joy” (Matins, Kathisma 1).

Beloved brethren in Christ,
Pious Christians,

The unwaning light of the Resurrection of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ hath gathered us all on this solemn day, that we might celebrate in a Paschal spirit the memory of the Holy Great Martyr George the Trophy-Bearer, here in your historic city of Acre.

Saint George stands distinguished among the great cloud of witnesses that compass us about (cf. Hebrews 12:1), for by his martyr’s blood he became a partaker in the passion of Christ, which is without suffering, and at the same time a victor over the delusion of the enemy, that is, the devil. For, as the blessed Paul saith, George looked with his bodily eyes upon the invisible God and with much endurance awaited His help: “For he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27).

The faith of George in the truth, the light, and the way of salvation that is in Christ was strengthened by the exhortations of Paul to his disciple Timothy: “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; Who hath saved us...” (2 Timothy 1:7-9).

The victorious martyr George endured suffering, as Zigavenos remarks, “in being subjected to maltreatment” by the cruel persecutor of Christians, the Roman Emperor Diocletian. In other words, the valiant George, who from his forefathers honoured Christ and now boldly confessed Him, suffered many forms of torture, being made manifest in every way as a Trophy-Bearer. Through his contests and miracles, he led many to the knowledge of the truth in Christ, and in the year 296,

he was beheaded at the command of Diocletian.

His sacred relic, as his Synaxarion relates, was brought by his servant to Lydda, the town of his mother's birth, and was laid in the magnificent church there built in his name, which stands to this day.

The radiant personality of Saint George became known throughout the entire world, wherefore his hymnographer exclaims: "All the tribes of the nations now praise, bless, and hymn thee, and with one voice cry aloud: Rejoice, O Saviour, the joy of the faithful; rejoice thou also, noble boast of the athletes, O George, wondrous among the saints!" (Matins, Ode 9, Troparion 2).

The wise George, strengthened by the hope of the Resurrection and fortified by love and faith, and moreover empowered by the might of Christ, not only extinguished the delusion of idols, but also sowed and cultivated within his heart the seed of the Gospel word, as a true disciple and Apostle of Christ. He united the testimony of the light and truth of the Christian faith with the martyrdom of the blood of the Righteous One — that is, of Christ, Who, as the Apostle Peter declares, "suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18, KJV).

This very death of the corruption of death we celebrate today, as the hymnographer proclaims: "We celebrate the death of death, the overthrow of Hades, the beginning of another life which is eternal." (Pascha Sunday, Ode 9, Troparion 3). And we ask: What is this "beginning"? The beginning of eternal life, beloved brethren, is none other than our deification — that is, the vision of the glory of God, which the disciples of Christ, Peter, James, and John beheld on Mount Tabor (cf. Luke 9:28–32), and likewise the Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen, as it is witnessed in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles: "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55, KJV).

The Great Martyr George also became a partaker and communicant of this divine experience of Saint Stephen, for he embraced the word of the Lord: "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:20, KJV), and: "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2, KJV).

This indeed was believed — and continues to be believed — by the persecutors of Christians. It is needless to stress that the persecution in our times is calculated and deliberate, for it is not the body and the flesh that it threatens, but the soul and the spirit of the Christians. Therefore, our Lord warns us, saying: "Fear not

them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28, KJV).

The deeper meaning of the martyrdom of Christ’s love lies in the fact that blood, which is the source of life and the very essence of man — which the Word of God assumed in His Incarnation and becoming man — is that which vivifies the Tree of Life, namely, the Precious and Life-giving Cross of the Risen Christ.

This salvific Wood of the Cross of the Risen Christ, being planted in the bosom of the Church, ceaselessly radiates the bright light of the Resurrection; and furthermore, it brings forth the fruits of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. And the fruit of the Spirit, according to the heaven-bound Paul, “is love, joy, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23).

These fruits constitute the Christ-bearing character of the Holy Great Martyr George, as this is most clearly expressed by the hymnographer of the Church, who proclaims and says: “He who for the sake of the world laid down his life, longing for Christ the King, the soldier, the great George, hastened to die for Him; for, having divine zeal in his heart, he offered up himself. Therefore, let us also hymn him in faith, as our fervent protector, as the glorious servant of Christ, who clearly imitates his own Master and intercedes with Him to grant unto all forgiveness of sins.” (Matins, Oikos).

Amen. Many happy returns, blessed and peaceful. Christ is Risen!”

After the Divine Liturgy, a procession was held around the holy Church, and a sanctification of the waters service marked the inauguration of a new chapel dedicated to Saint George the New Martyr of Cyprus, who suffered in Acre (+1752). During the offering of refreshments, members of the faithful addressed the gathering and praised the labours of the late Patriarchal Representative Archimandrite Philotheos, as well as the new Patriarchal Representative, Archimandrite Silouan.

At noon, the Hegumen and the Community Council offered a festive meal at the Rectory of the Monastery.

At this occasion, His Beatitude once again spoke, delivering the following address:

“Having been fortified by hope, and fenced about with love and faith, and strengthened by the power of Christ, O George, thou hast cast down the delusion of idols,” the hymnographer of the Church exclaims.

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

The feast we celebrate today in honour of the revered memory of the Holy Great Martyr George, which coincides with the radiant feast of Pascha, is truly a feast of love, faith, and the power of God.

We say this because, according to the holy Evangelist and Theologian John, “God is love” (1 John 4:16). “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” (1 John 4:20). Moreover, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

A fervent preacher of these moral principles and values was the trophy-bearer George, a witness to the truth and love of the Righteous One—that is, of the Crucified and Risen Christ. It was this truth that strengthened the wondrous George in his struggle against delusion and falsehood.

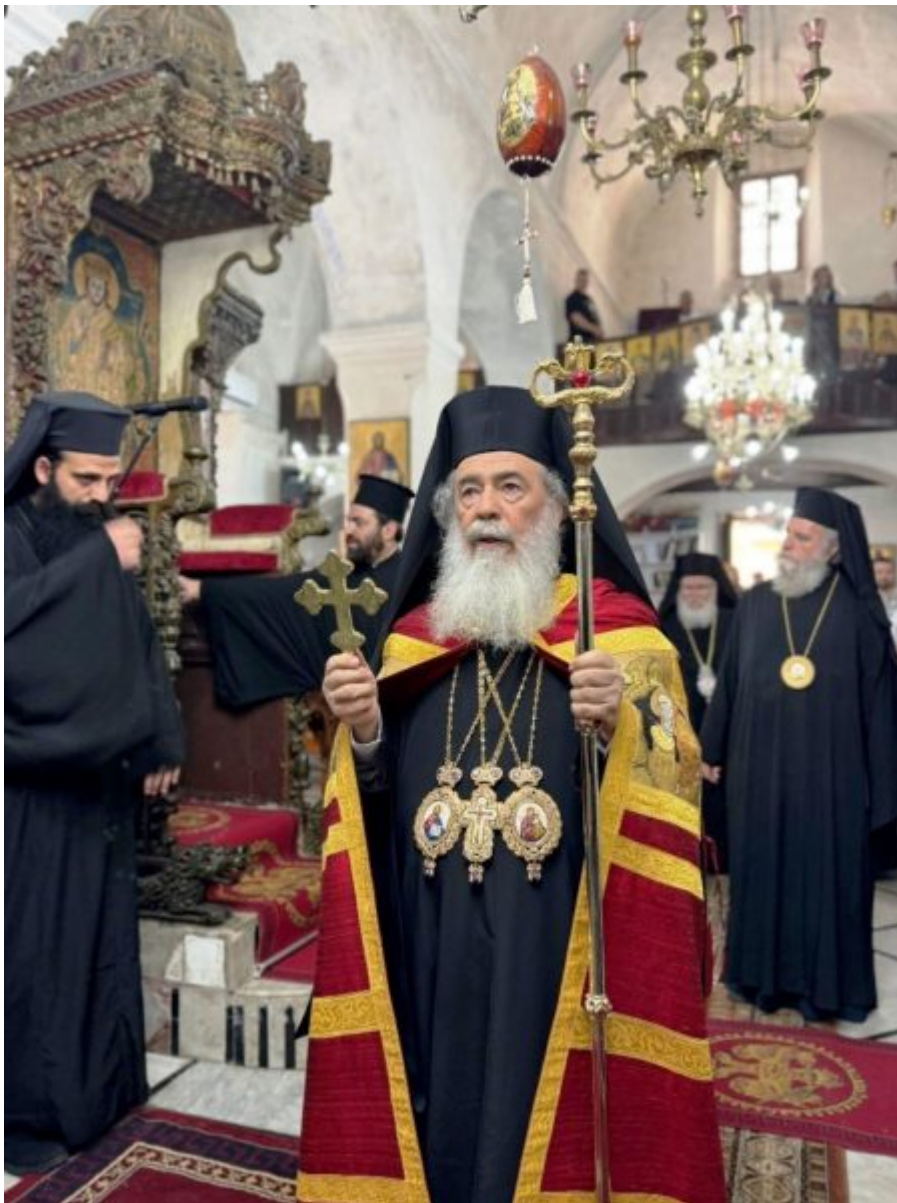
His unshakable faith in the one God, the Father Almighty, and in the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit, made the martyr George an apostle to the world, as this is clearly declared by the hymnographer of the Church, saying: “Worthy of thy name wast thou, O soldier George; for having taken up the Cross of Christ upon thy shoulders, thou didst cultivate the earth laid waste by the devil’s delusion, and having uprooted the thorny religion of idols, thou didst plant a vine of the Orthodox Faith; wherefore thou pourest forth healings to the faithful in all the world, and wast revealed to be a tiller of the Trinity, a righteous man indeed. Intercede, we pray, for the peace of the world, and the salvation of our souls” (Great Vespers, Praises, Glory).

Truly, George the Trophy-Bearer fought the good fight, pursuing righteousness, godliness, faith, love, and peace. These divine moral principles and values are safeguarded as a sacred inheritance by the ancient Patriarchate, which is indeed the Mother Church of Jerusalem.

We boast in the Lord, for the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, through the ages, remains together with its devout and Christ-loving flock a beacon, emitting

the luminous rays of love and hope, of respect toward the human person, which is none other than the image of God, of righteousness and peace.

True witnesses of the spiritual mission of the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and all Palestine are the martyrs of the blood of Christ's love, most especially the Great Martyr George the Trophy-Bearer, whom we beseech to intercede with the merciful and philanthropic God for the peace of the world, and especially for peace in our region, which is tried by the affliction of war.



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