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## His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem celebrates the Divine Liturgy in the village of Turan in Southern Galilee



On Sunday, 19th May / 1st June 2025, the Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III visited the Community of Turan in Southern Galilee, located near the city of Nazareth, where He presided over the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of Saint George.

Concelebrating with Him were His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, along with Hieromonks of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, led by the Hegumen of the Holy Monastery of the Precious Cross in Jerusalem, Archimandrite Christodoulos, the parish priest Fr Ioannis, and other priests from the region, Archdeacon Mark, and Hierodeacon

Eulogios. The devout faithful of the parish participated in the service, with the parish choir chanting.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude preached the divine word with the following sermon:

“Let us extol today the mystic trumpets of the Spirit—the God-bearing Fathers—who composed in the midst of the Church a harmonious melody of theology: the one, unchanging Trinity in essence and Godhead. These are the vanquishers of Arius and champions of Orthodoxy, ever interceding with the Lord, that our souls may be saved,” the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved brethren in Christ,  
Pious Christians,

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all together in this sacred temple of your blessed city of Tur’an, in Lower Galilee, to commemorate the memory of the Holy 318 God-bearing Fathers who convened at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea of Bithynia, in the year 325 A.D.

The First Ecumenical Council, convened by the most pious Roman Emperor Saint Constantine the Great, condemned Arius’s blasphemous teachings, denying the divinity of the Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, claiming that He was a created being.

The principal purpose of the Council was twofold: First, to condemn Arianism and provide an exact and Orthodox formulation of the Church’s dogmatic teaching concerning the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Second, to proclaim the “Faith” or “Symbol” of Nicaea, commonly known today as the Nicene Creed.

In addition, the Council addressed and resolved three ecclesiastical schisms and brought an end to disputes regarding the date of the celebration of Pascha (Easter), decreeing that it should be observed on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox. Finally, the Council issued twenty sacred canons concerning Church order and discipline.

It is noteworthy that, as the esteemed Professor Ioannis Karmiris affirms, the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Orthodox Church ascribes to the dogmatic decisions of this First Ecumenical Council, and those of the subsequent six Ecumenical Councils, eternal validity, absolute authority, and universal and binding character. These are held as the chief written monuments of Holy Tradition, and as canonical, authentic, and immovable standards of Orthodox faith.

Accordingly, the Orthodox Church uses these Ecumenical dogmatic definitions as the primary and principal source of her dogmatic teaching, regarding them as equal in authority to the Holy Scriptures, since they contain the genuine Holy Tradition. Together with the Holy Scriptures, they constitute the two equally authoritative and balanced sources of Orthodox Faith.

This Sunday, the seventh after Pascha, is dedicated to the solemn commemoration of the Three Hundred and Eighteen (318) Holy Fathers of the Church who took part in the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea of Bithynia. This is so because the God-bearing Fathers of the Church are the successors of the Holy Apostles and disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To these Holy Apostles and His disciples, Jesus revealed the name of God His Father, as is testified in today's Gospel reading from Saint John the Theologian, referring to the prayer of Jesus Christ to God the Father, in which He says: "Father, I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me" (John 17:6-8, KJV).

The bishops and shepherds, appointed as successors of the Apostles, were shown to be Fathers and teachers of the saving Gospel of Christ, who Himself is the One calling and choosing Christians and Apostles, as the divine Paul proclaims, saying: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, KJV).

Interpreting this word of Paul, Saint John Chrysostom poses the question, and

answers: “How did He choose us unto salvation?” Paul shows the answer, saying, “through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (cf. 2 Thess. 2:13).

In other words, the Lord chose and called His beloved disciples and Apostles—and also their successors, namely, the God-bearing Fathers of the Church—through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, and through faith in the truth of the Gospel of Christ, as is beautifully expressed by the hymnographer: “Having perfectly framed the knowledge of the soul, and having conferred with the divine Spirit, the holy Fathers godly and solemnly inscribed the blessed and sacred Symbol of Faith. In this, they clearly teach that the Word is co-eternal with the Father who begat Him, and truly consubstantial, following manifestly the doctrines of the Apostles—these noble, all-blessed, and truly God-bearing Fathers.”

These, therefore, who followed the teachings of the Apostles and became vessels of the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit, were shown and continue to be revealed as Great Fathers of the Church, following the command of Christ, who says: “Whosoever therefore shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:19, KJV).

Interpreting this word of the Lord, Zigabenos notes: “Observe how He says that one must first do, and then teach; and not only to do, but also to teach.” Hence, the Fathers of the Church are all those who both kept and practiced the commandments of the Lord, who says: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:21, KJV).

Particularly noteworthy is the interpretation of Saint Cyril of Alexandria, who explains: “I will manifest Myself to him... through My very own Spirit, enlightening him in all things necessary, revealing Myself to the mind employing certain ineffable spiritual illuminations, and making Myself known.” In simpler words, Christ makes Himself manifest to such a one—He shines forth in them through His own Spirit, guiding them in all things needful by His divine light, revealing Himself and becoming visible to their minds through spiritual torches and divine illumination.

Of this unspeakable light, through these spiritual torches, the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea were deemed worthy. And they rightly divided the word of salvific truth in both deed and contemplation, with their virtuous lives, their God-inspired teaching, and their writings filled with divine wisdom—Fathers such as Saint Athanasius the Great, Saint Nicholas of Myra in Lycia, Saint Spyridon of Trimythous, and a multitude of other holy and God-bearing Fathers.

Concerning these blessed ones—whose memory we now honour—we cry out together with the hymnographer, saying:

“O divine assembly, God-speaking warriors of the Lord’s battalion,  
radiant stars of the spiritual firmament, unshakable towers of mystical Zion,  
fragrant blossoms of Paradise, golden mouths of the Word,  
boast of Nicaea and adornment of the world,  
fervently intercede for our souls!”

Amen. Many happy returns, peaceful and blessed.”

After the Divine Liturgy, refreshments and a festive meal were offered by the Community. At the meal, His Beatitude addressed those present as follows;

“You are supremely glorified, O Christ our God, who established our Fathers as luminous beacons upon the earth, and through them did guide us all unto the true faith. O Most Merciful One, glory be to You,” the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Revered Holy Fathers,  
Beloved brethren in Christ,

Today’s feast commemorates the memory of the 318 Holy Fathers who convened at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea of Bithynia, assembled under the auspices of the great and holy Emperor, equal-to-the-Apostles, Constantine. This celebration does not merely concern the fortification of our Orthodox faith, but honours the very foundational pillars of that faith — the Holy and God-bearing Fathers.

These God-inspired Fathers became exact guardians of the Apostolic Traditions. With devout conviction, they refuted the impious doctrine of the heresiarch Arius, who denied the divinity of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, and through conciliar decision, cast him out from the Catholic Church. With resounding clarity, they taught and confessed that the Son of God is consubstantial and co-eternal with the Father before all ages, precisely and piously formulating this truth in the Symbol of Faith.

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem has preserved intact the Apostolic Tradition and divinely inspired teaching, heeding the exhortation of the divine Apostle Paul to his disciple Timothy, saying: “Guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding profane and vain babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge — by professing it, some have strayed concerning the faith” (1 Tim. 6:20-21). And again:

“Keep the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us” (2 Tim. 1:14).

This very deposit — that is, the Rum Orthodox identity and the spiritual Helleno-Christian tradition, known in Arabic as سڤذوثرألا موررلا (Rum Orthodox), has been faithfully preserved and continues to be safeguarded through the ages by the ancient Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

We affirm this because the Roman Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem stands as a guarantor of the integrity of the Roman Orthodox religious and cultural heritage of our communities living in the Holy Land. As the Lord Himself declares: “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

Illuminating here is the interpretation of Saint Cyril of Alexandria, who says: “Even though the flock be small in nature, in number, and in outward glory, in comparison to the innumerable hosts of heavenly spirits (i.e., the righteous), yet the goodness of God the Father, surpassing all reasoning, has granted even to this flock the inheritance of those heavenly beings — namely, the Kingdom of Heaven.”

In other words, dearly beloved brethren, the Holy Church of Christ is she who leads us, through the mystery of the divine and bloodless sacrifice namely, the Divine Liturgy into the Kingdom of Heaven. “For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the one that is to come,” (Heb. 13:14) the wise Apostle Paul preaches.

Therefore, we who have been benefactors of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith, let us again proclaim with the hymnographer: “You were taken up in glory, O Christ our God, and gladdened Your disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit. They were assured through the blessing that You are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.”

Many happy returns, in peace. Amen.”

From the Secretariat-General

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