

## **The feast of the Holy, Glorious, and All-Praised Twelve Apostles at the Patriarchate of Jerusalem**



On Sunday, 30 June / 13 July 2025, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy, Glorious, and All-Praised Apostles at the Patriarchal Holy Monastery dedicated to them. This monastery is located near the city of Tiberias, on the western shore of the Sea of Tiberias, at the place where the Lord appeared to His disciples, as recorded by the Evangelist John and read in the 10th Matins Gospel: "After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing..." (John 21:1-3)

At this beautiful seaside Holy Monastery, His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III, presided over Great Vespers on the eve of the feast and led the festive Patriarchal Divine Liturgy on the day itself. Concelebrating with Him

were their Eminences Metropolitans Kyriakos of Nazareth and Makarios of Ptolemais, the Elder Chief Secretary Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, and the Secretary of the Holy Synod Archimandrite Christodoulos, together with priests from the surrounding areas, Archdeacon Mark, Hierodeacon Prodomos, and the faithful of the region.

To the pious congregation, His Beatitude preached the following Sermon:

“As eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word made flesh, ye all-blessed disciples are proclaimed blessed; for ye shone forth upon the world as lightnings, and as spiritual mountains ye poured forth sweetness; being as ever-flowing rivers of Paradise, ye water the Churches of the nations with divine streams...”

Beloved in Christ brethren,  
Pious Christians and pilgrims,

The grace of the Holy Spirit hath gathered us all today in this sacred place, where, “after these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias,” (cf. John 21:1), that we might festively honour the Synaxis of the Holy, Glorious, and All-Praised Twelve Apostles, in the Monastery which bears their name.

According to the infallible testimony of the Evangelists, and especially of Saint Luke, it is written: “And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles”(Luke 6:12-13). Likewise, the Evangelist Matthew records: “And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men”(Matthew 4:18-19).

These simple fishermen were on the one hand called by Jesus Christ to the apostolic rank and were sent forth unto the nations—to the peoples that worshipped idols—to proclaim the saving truth of the Gospel. On the other hand, after His Resurrection, the Lord gave unto them the Holy Spirit, according to the testimony of the Holy Evangelist John: “Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose so ever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose so ever sins ye retain, they are retained” (John 20:21-23).

It is worthy of note that the Apostles received the Holy Spirit, “that Christ might be formed in them,” as Saint Cyril of Alexandria teaches, invoking the wise words of

the Apostle Paul: “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you”(Galatians 4:19).

Commenting on this saying of Paul, Saint Cyril writes: “For in no other way,” he says, “shall Christ be formed in them, save by partaking of the Holy Spirit and by living according to the evangelical law.”

Therefore, as at the beginning of the renewed creation unto incorruption and glory, and into the divine image, Christ again implants His own Spirit in His disciples. Put in simpler terms: the Apostle Paul says that Christ is not formed in them (the disciples) by any other means than through participation in the Holy Spirit and by living according to the Law of the Gospel. Indeed, Christ implants and establishes His own Spirit within His disciples as the foretaste and pledge of the renewed creation, unto incorruption and glory and into the likeness of God.

This is precisely why the Apostles are recognised as the foundation of the Church, according to the divine Paul, who says: “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:19-20).

Christ is, in this instance, the chief cornerstone, and the Apostles are the foundation stones of the building, namely the mystical Body of the Church. These apostolic stones are none other than the Churches founded throughout the world by the Apostles, who had the authority to ordain Bishops. This is because they received from the Lord the command: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

According to Theodore of Mopsuestia, the Apostles were entrusted with the task “to oversee all and to be entrusted with the stewardship of all.” At that time, they held full authority over the administration of the Church, and everything depended upon their judgment. To support this, Theodore invokes the words of Paul to the elders of Ephesus: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God” (cf. Acts 20:28).

Saint John Chrysostom, highlighting the supreme significance of the apostolic office, states: “The prophet is a ruler... but the shepherd and teacher is spiritual; yet greater than all of these is the apostolic authority.” This is because the Church,

and the structure of episcopal governance, is founded upon the faith, the succession, the mission, and the teaching of the Apostles—who not only were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, but also became eyewitnesses of the mystery of the divine Providence: namely, the incarnation and becoming man of the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, from the pure blood of the ever-virgin Mary.

As the divine Peter proclaims: “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16). And as Saint John the Evangelist testifies: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life... we bear witness, and declare unto you” (1 John 1:1-2).

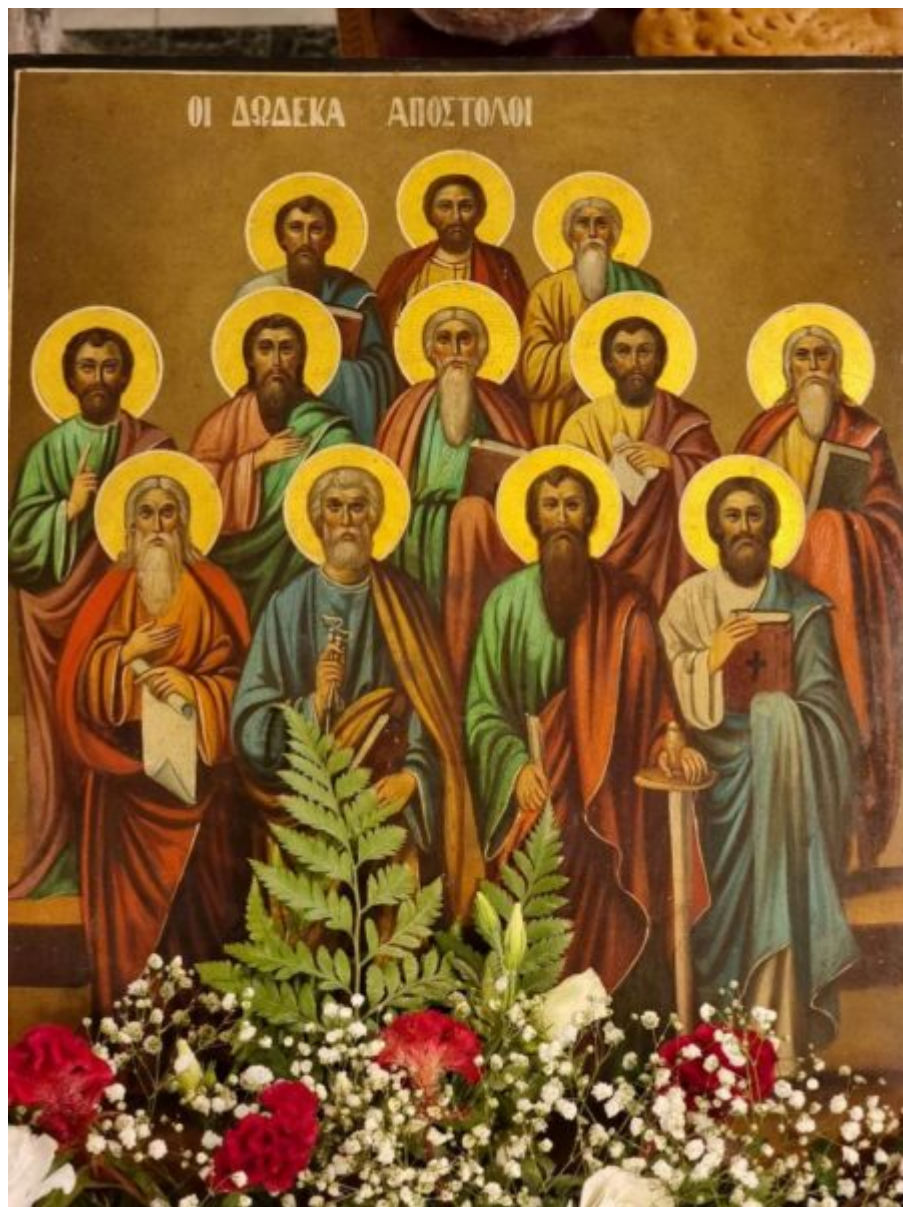
In other words, the defining mark—the very characteristic—of the Church of Christ is her Apostolicity, which contains within it the unity, holiness, and catholicity of the Church, as this is expressed in the Symbol of Faith (Creed) of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea. The God-bearing Fathers of the Church, as successors of the Holy Apostles and illumined by the Holy Spirit, are those who preserve the sacred deposit—that is, the doctrines defined by the Apostles and the elders in Jerusalem: “And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem” (Acts 16:4).

For this reason, dearly beloved brethren, we too are called by the Holy Apostles, who, according to Paul, “have the mind of Christ”: “For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16). We are called, therefore, to heed the exhortation of the divine Paul to his disciple, the Apostle Timothy: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

And together with the hymnographer let us say: O ye Twelve Apostles of Christ, the unhewn pillars of the Church, truly towers and immovable columns of the Master of all: Intercede that our souls be saved, and that peace may be granted to the world and to our region. Amen.

Many happy returns!”

After the Divine Liturgy, a small reception was offered, followed by a traditional fish meal from the Sea of Tiberias, lovingly prepared by the diligent Hegumen of the Monastery, Archimandrite Nikodimos.



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