

Commemoration of the return of the relic of Saint Sabbas to the Patriarchate



On Sunday, the 13th/26th of October 2025, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the return of the holy relic of our venerable Father among the Saints, Sabbas the Sanctified. The precious relic of Saint Sabbas was transferred from Venice, where the Crusaders had taken it in the 11th century, to his Holy Monastery on the 13th/26th of October 1965.

This event took place following the visit of the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI to the Holy Land, during the blessed Patriarchal Office of Benedictos of Jerusalem, after the lifting of the anathemas and the commencement of the theological dialogue.

For the transfer of the relic, the late Metropolitan Vasilios of Caesarea, the late Metropolitan Germanos of Petra, Archimandrite Theodosios, the Spiritual Father of the Monastery of Saint Sabbas, Archimandrite Seraphim, and the then deacon and now His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, travelled to Venice.

The precious relic arrived at Jaffa Gate during the rule of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and was brought into the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for veneration during the course of one week. Thereafter, it was transferred to the Holy Monastery of Saint Sabbas, founded by the Saint himself, to remain therein as an unfailing treasure, a consolation, and a fountain of healing for the Fathers of Saint Sabbas and for the pilgrims.

In honour and remembrance of this historic event of the repatriation of the relic, His Eminence Metropolitan Makarios of Ptolemais-Acre travelled to the Holy Lavra of Saint Sabbas for the celebration of Vespers. Thereafter, an all-night Vigil was held, presided over by His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III, concelebrated by His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, His Eminence Metropolitan Makarios of Ptolemais-Acre, and His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, together with the Spiritual Father of the Monastery, Archimandrite Eudokimos, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nektarios, and Greek, Russian, and Arabic priests.

The choir of the Holy Sepulchre Fathers chanted on the right in Greek, and the choirs of the Arabic-speaking faithful of our Patriarchate chanted on the left, in the presence of devout believers from Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, and Beit Jala.

To them, His Beatitude preached a Sermon as follows:

“Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints” (Rev. 15:3).

The Grace of our venerable Father among the Saints, Sabbas the Sanctified, has gathered us all together at this hour in his renowned Lavra, in the desert place of his monastic striving, that we may celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the return of his holy relic from Venice, where it had been preserved for many centuries in the church of Saint Anthony.

Truly, great and marvellous are the works of the Lord our God; for the return of the incorrupt relic of our venerable Father Sabbas, and its placement in this sacred place wherein he had shone forth about one and a half millennia ago, is both an historical event and a manifest testimony that “God is wonderful in His saints” (Ps.

68:35). Wondrous is the Lord in His protection of His saints and venerable ones.

The saints of the Lord, according to Saint Paul, are those “who are called with a holy calling” (cf. 2 Tim. 1:9), to become “partakers of His holiness” (Heb. 12:10), that is, of His purity. Saint John Chrysostom interprets this saying: “He wants to declare us holy and to make us sharers of His own holiness.”

This command was heard and followed by the venerable Sabbas, who, leaving the land of Cappadocia and his own village of Mutalaska, became a sojourner and a pilgrim in the Holy Places, where our God and Saviour Jesus Christ was crucified, buried, and rose again on the third day. So fervent was his desire for godliness, that is, for the life according to Christ, that, having come to the Holy Places and the holy city of Jerusalem, he ever kept in mind the Gospel saying of the Lord: “And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

Significant in this respect is the interpretation of Saint Cyril of Alexandria, who saith: “As the ploughman who is slothful in his work shall not see the fruits multiply, even so he that chooses to follow Christ and does not renounce worldly affairs and those of the flesh, especially those who hinder his purpose, shall by no means accomplish his good courage.”

Blessed Sabbas not only accomplished this good courage, but became worthy of the kingdom of heaven, being shown forth as a citizen thereof. This truth, that God-bearing Sabbas has been revealed as a citizen of the heavenly city, is manifestly declared before our eyes by his incorrupt and fragrant holy relic lying before us.

This blessing, or rather, this grace, “was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel” (cf. 2 Tim. 1:10), Saint Paul says. Therefore, the relic of our sanctified Father Sabbas stands as the holy and incorrupt proclamation of eternal salvation, not only for those enlightened by the light of the Holy Spirit, but for every man, even for those “who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death” (cf. Luke 1:79). For the Lord says, “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness” (John 12:46).

Beloved brethren in Christ, let us give thanks unto our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who has bestowed upon us His light in our fellow man Sabbas the Sanctified, he who stands in the midst of our holy Church of Jerusalem, shining with the light of Christ before men, especially in these times when the place of true

knowledge has been usurped by false knowledge, that which is now called “artificial intelligence.”

This artificial knowledge leads not unto truth, but rather unto falsehood and delusion, for it stands in opposition to the sound doctrine of the holy Church. As the God-inspired Paul prophetically teaches, saying unto his disciple Timothy:

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1).

The holy relic, that is, the incorrupt, fragrant, and wonder-working relic of our God-bearing and sanctified Father Sabbas, is the visible and tangible testimony of our sound Orthodox faith, the faith of Saint Sabbas himself.

Therefore, let us beseech Sabbas the Sanctified, that heavenly citizen, to intercede, together with the prayers of our most blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, unto Christ our God, that He may grant us, who celebrate the holy repatriation of his relics, forgiveness of sins, and peace in our tried region and in all the world.

Amen. Many blessed and peaceful returns.”

After the All-night Vigil, a procession took place thrice around the tomb of Saint Sabbas, followed by a monastic meal.

His Beatitude, blessing the Fathers and receiving their thanks for his visit, according to the custom, departed via the Holy Monastery of Abba Theodosius the Cenobiarch, where he was received by the Hegoumen, Monk Ephraim.

From the Chief Secretariat









































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