

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



On Saturday, 26 April / 9 May 2026, the Patriarchate celebrated, by transference, the feast of the Holy Great Martyr George the Trophy-Bearer in the city of Acre, ancient Ptolemais, in northern Israel.

On this occasion, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, Patriarch Theophilos III, was received by His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, His Eminence Metropolitan Makarios of Ptolemais, the priests of the fourteen communities of this Metropolis, the Scout Corps, the President of the Community, Mr Fouad Breik and its Commissioners, escorting him as far as the entrance of the Holy Church.

His Beatitude presided over the Paschal Divine Liturgy, concelebrating with His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, His Eminence Metropolitan Makarios of Ptolemais-Acre, Holy

Sepulchre Hieromonks, among whom first was Archimandrite Meletios, Archimandrite Silouanos, the presiding priest of the Metropolis, together with Archimandrite Artemios, presbyters from the neighbouring regions, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Prodromos. The chanting was offered by the new choir of Acre under Presbyter Nikolaos Mousa, together with members of the Nazareth choir, in the presence of the Ambassador of Greece to Israel Mrs Maya Solomou, Mr Mavroeides, Mrs Yulia, representative of the Ambassador of Russia Mr Viktorov, the representative of the Israeli Ministry of the Interior Mr Cesar Martzieh, and a great multitude of faithful from the city honouring the Saint.

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

“Behold, the springtime of grace hath dawned, the Resurrection of Christ hath shone forth upon all, and together therewith now shineth the all-festive and light-bearing day of George the Martyr. Come therefore, all ye people, bearing lamps in spirit, let us celebrate with gladness,” the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved brethren in Christ,
Pious Christians and pilgrims,

The springtime of the grace of the Resurrection, namely, of our Saviour Christ, has gathered us all together in this sacred Church of Saint George the Great Martyr, in your historic seaside city of Acre, that we may celebrate, in Paschal joy, his all-venerable memory.

The martyr whom we honour today for the love of Christ shines forth among the Saints of the Church, those who bore witness unto the light and truth of Christ against the darkness and falsehood of idolatry. Wherefore he was manifested as equal in spirit unto the Apostles during the reign of the Roman Emperor Diocletian (284-305 AD), whose rule is remembered in history for the savage persecutions against Christians, as the “age of the martyrs of Christ”.

Indeed, together with the radiant light of Christ’s Resurrection, there shines also the glorious memory of Saint George. For his mother, Polychronia, hailed from the sacred biblical city of Lydda, later called Georgioupolis, where a magnificent church was erected over the cenotaph containing his holy relics, and remains preserved unto this day.

The young George, having entered the Roman army, distinguished himself through virtue, boldness, courage and heroism, but also through his fearless proclamation of the name of Christ, hearkening unto the Psalmist: “O Lord, thou knowest: I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy truth and thy

salvation: I have not concealed thy mercy and thy truth from the great congregation" (Psalm 39:10-11).

According to his biographer, the wondrous George, when he was about to confess his Christian faith before the Roman Senate, "held the rank of Count. And when the Emperor conceived war against the Christians and issued a decree that those who denied and renounced Christ should be honoured with royal dignities and gifts, while death should be the punishment for those who would not obey, then Saint George himself, being present, proclaimed himself a Christian, exposing the vanity and weakness of the idols and mocking those who placed their trust in them."

The victorious athlete George not only proclaimed himself a Christian but also mocked the deceit and vanity of idols. This the Saint did, being inspired by the words of the Lord, Who says: "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). And again: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33).

The prize-bearing George, having diligently cultivated the divine seed of the Gospel of Christ sown within his pure heart, put to shame his persecutors and tormentors, imitating the Passion of the Cross of our Saviour Christ, and thus becoming of one blood with Christ. Wherefore the hymnographer says: "Having been tilled by God, thou wast revealed as the most honoured husbandman of piety, gathering unto thyself the sheaves of virtue. For sowing in tears, thou dost reap with rejoicing; and having contended unto blood, thou hast gained Christ; and by thy intercessions, O Saint, thou grantest unto all forgiveness of offences."

The redeeming blood of the martyrdom of Christ constitutes the foundation stone of the Church, which, according to the divine Paul is "the body of Christ, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:23). Christ "hath purchased" His Body, that is, the Church, "with his own blood" (Acts 20:28), proclaims the God-inspired Paul. And the Church, as the "Body of Christ", likewise offers unto God the Father, as a reciprocal gift, the witness of blood for the salvation of mankind.

And rightly do we ask: how does the Church accomplish this? Through the blood of her holy martyrs, and in particular through her Great Martyr George the Trophy-Bearer. Behold therefore, my beloved brethren, why the memory and martyrdom for the love of Christ of the glorious prize-bearer George is honoured singularly and universally. This indeed the hymnographer also declares most clearly, saying: "The

host of Angels standeth amazed at thy contest, O commander; and the King of the Angels, marvelling at thy beauty, desired thee, O Martyr; wherefore He also deemed thee worthy to reign with Him forever.”

Let us also hear the Holy Hieromartyr Polycarp of Smyrna speaking concerning the martyrs and saying: “For Him [Christ], being the Son of God, we worship; but the martyrs, as disciples and imitators of the Lord, we love worthily because of their unsurpassable devotion toward their own King and Teacher; and may it be granted unto us also to become their companions and fellow-disciples.”

This unsurpassable favour enjoyed by the holy martyrs is because “he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:17), as the wise Paul proclaims.

And we say this because “they that are joined unto the Lord” are those “perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1) in general, and the righteous martyrs in particular. Interpreting the Psalmic verse, “Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth” (Psalm 7:5-6), Basil the Great says: “The soul of the righteous man, being separated from its attachment unto the body, hath its life hid with Christ in God, so that he is able to say according to the Apostle: ‘Yet not I live, but Christ liveth in me,’ and ‘the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith’” (Galatians 2:20).

We honour and magnify the sacred memory of the holy and righteous Great Martyr George, together with the memory of the young George of Cyprus who suffered martyrdom here, because the Great Martyr George, who blossomed forth “like the palm tree” (cf. Psalm 91:12) amidst the diabolical delusion of idols, became a guardian of the Church of Christ, and especially of the Church of the place of the Cross and of the place of the three-day Burial and Resurrection, namely of the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Wherefore we cry unto him: “Entreat the risen Christ our Saviour, together with His Theotokos and Mother, that they may ever preserve from the threat and the fire of war all the people who worship and serve the Lord God, Who made heaven and earth.”

Many happy returns! Christ is Risen!”

After the Liturgy, there was a procession of the holy icon around the Holy Church, a supplication before the tomb of the New Martyr George the Cypriot, a memorial service for the repose of the late Hegumen Philotheos, and a reception at the Rectory.

At this reception, His Eminence Metropolitan Makarios of Ptolemais addressed His Beatitude, followed by the Deputy Mayor of the city, the spiritual leader of the

Druze, Sheikh Muafak Tarif, Sheikh Samir Assi, representatives of the Latin and Anglican Churches, and the representative of the Bahá'í community.

During this reception, His Beatitude bestowed the decoration of the Cross-Bearer of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre upon Mr George Bachou for his many years of activity in the Scout Corps. Thereafter, he celebrated the Blessing of the Waters in the activities hall of the Scout Corps, which had been renovated by the Patriarchate.

A Paschal and festal luncheon followed in the hall of the Monastery, where His Beatitude once again delivered an address (to be posted shortly).

From the Chief Secretariat































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