

## The feast of Saint Photini the Samaritan Woman at the Patriarchate



On Sunday, 27 April / 10 May 2026, the Patriarchate celebrated, in accordance with the book of the Pentecostarion, the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well in Samaria, present-day Neapolis (Nablus).

On this Sunday, the Church, drawing from the Holy Gospel according to Saint John (4:4-44), makes special remembrance of the meeting between the Samaritan woman and the Lord. During this encounter, the Lord "asked of her to drink water" and told her that He was able to give her "living water". He revealed unto her the hidden things of her life, namely that "she had had five husbands, and he whom she now had was not her husband"; that "God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth"; and that He Himself, "Who spake with her, was the Messiah". These life-giving words of the Lord transformed her life, and she believed in Him and bore witness concerning Him, together with members of her family, namely her sisters Photō, Photis, Paraskevi and Kyriake, and her two sons, Joses and Photinos, whose memory is celebrated on 26 February.

In remembrance of this event, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Well and in

the magnificent Church of Saint Photini, which was erected years ago by the zealous Hegumen Archimandrite Ioustinos. His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, Patriarch Theophilos III, officiated the service, with co-celebrants His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, and priests of the region of Samaria, among whom Fr David, Presbyter of the community of Rafidia, and Fr Touma, Presbyter of the community of Zababdeh. The chanting was offered by Dr Yaakoub on the right in Greek, and by members of the choir of Rafidia on the left in Arabic, with the participation of faithful from the neighbouring villages of Samaria.

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

“Let heaven and earth rejoice brightly today, for Christ hath appeared, incarnate as man, that He might raise Adam and all his race from the curse. And wondrous in miracles is He shown, arriving in Samaria and standing before a woman, asking water, He Who is clothed with the waters of the clouds. Therefore, let all we faithful worship Him, Who for our sakes willingly became poor in His tender compassion,” the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved brethren in Christ,  
Pious Christians and pilgrims,

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all together in this sacred place of the Well of the Patriarch Jacob, that we may celebrate in Paschal joy the wondrous event of the meeting of our Saviour Christ with the Samaritan woman.

Truly, today heaven and earth rejoice, because, as the hymnographer says, Christ, the Word of God, was manifested incarnate as man in order to deliver Adam and all mankind from the curse. And the Samaritan woman also became a partaker of this freedom from the curse, she whom the Lord filled with the springing water of life, saying unto her: “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

The water which Christ offers cannot be compared with material water, that is, natural water, for the water of Christ is the water of salvation, the water of eternal life, surpassing every comparison. According to the great Origen, this water “is able to become in him that drinks it a fountain of ever-flowing water, granting streams of salvation.” And these streams, these “waters of salvation”, are none other than the gift of the Holy Spirit, “the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him” (John 14:17), the Lord says.

Wherefore Christ says unto the Samaritan woman: “The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24).

Interpreting these words of the Lord, Cyril of Alexandria says: “He signifies the present time of His own coming, and declares that the types shall be transformed into truth and the shadow of the [Mosaic] Law into spiritual worship... Therefore rightly does the Lord accept the spiritual worshipper, who does not bear the form of piety after a Jewish manner through types and outward forms, but who on the one hand shines forth evangelically through the achievements of virtue, and on the other fulfills true worship through the rightness of the divine doctrines.” [And more simply: Christ reveals the time of His coming and declares that the types shall be transformed into truth and the shadow of the Mosaic Law into spiritual worship. Therefore, the Lord rightly accepts the spiritual worshipper, who does not possess piety in a merely external or Judaic manner through outward forms and observances, but rather shines through the virtues and fulfills true worship through the right confession of the divine doctrines.]

In other words, on the one hand Christ reveals unto the simple Samaritan woman that He Himself is the coming Messiah called Christ (cf. John 4:25). On the other hand, He makes clear that the true worship of God is spiritual, and that it is the Holy Spirit Who grants unto those reborn by Him the ability truly to worship God (cf. John 4:23).

This rebirth in the Holy Spirit is also that which we celebrate during these holy Paschal days, as Saint John of Damascus expresses most clearly in hymnography: “We celebrate the death of death, the overthrow of Hades, and the beginning of another life, eternal; and leaping for joy, we hymn the Cause thereof, the only blessed and most glorious God of our fathers.”

And this beginning of another life, namely eternal life, which we celebrate, is the

foretaste — or rather, the inauguration — of the Kingdom of Heaven within the Holy Church of Christ, through our participation in the mystery of the unbloody sacrifice, that is, the Divine Eucharist. Wherefore the Lord saith: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).

Of this Kingdom of God, the Samaritan woman honoured today also became an heir, she who was named Photini and was revealed as a martyr of the love of Christ and equal-to-the-Apostles of His Gospel. Let us also hear the hymnographer saying: “Coming in faith unto the well, the Samaritan woman beheld Thee, the Water of wisdom; and having drunk thereof abundantly, she inherited the Kingdom on high for evermore, she who is ever-memorable.”

Unto this are we also called, my beloved brethren, that through the intercessions of the holy Samaritan woman we may be counted worthy to partake of the Kingdom of Christ our God. And together with the hymnographer let us beseech the Theotokos, saying: “Having become the dwelling-place of the Light, O Pure One, illumine the eyes of my soul, darkened by the many snares of the enemy, and count me worthy to behold clearly with a pure heart the radiance which shone forth ineffably from thee.”

Many blessed and peaceful returns. Christ is Risen!”

Thereafter, a procession followed around the Holy Church, a reception with refreshments, and the festal luncheon, during which His Beatitude again addressed those present as follows:

“Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Honourable Mr President and esteemed members of the Ecclesiastical Committee of Rafidia,

Beloved brethren in Christ,

The grace of the Holy Spirit hath deemed us worthy, amid the trials brought about by the continuing crisis of war and occupation, to celebrate the historic biblical event of the conversation between Jesus Christ and the Samaritan woman at the place of Jacob’s Well.

In this conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus declared plainly that “God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Interpreting this saying of Christ, Gregory of Nyssa says: “Because the

Samaritan woman saith unto the Lord that one ought to worship God upon the mountain, as though in a circumscribed place... therefore the Word, namely Christ, saith unto her who had strayed from the truth, that God is Spirit, that is to say bodiless, and that those who worship Him cannot approach the Bodiless One in a bodily manner.”

This Spirit of God, namely the Holy Spirit, which is also the Spirit of Christ, is offered unto the Samaritan woman and unto all who believe that God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. And unto those to whom the Holy Spirit is given as water, “it shall become in them a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

Our holy Church, which is the Body of Christ and of which Christ is the Head, is itself “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” Such a fountain of living water, ever-gushing and unceasingly flowing, is the holy Church of Jerusalem, known as the Rum Orthodox Church, which throughout the centuries on the one hand preserves the All-Holy Shrines as places of worship, prayer and sanctification; and on the other hand ministers unto and shepherds its pious indigenous Christian flock, which bears living witness by proclaiming the Gospel of love, peace, justice and compassion, but also of mutual respect and harmonious coexistence with their fellow citizens and neighbours of other faiths.

“God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16)... “And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also” (1 John 4:21).

This very commandment constitutes the fundamental mission of the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, together with its pious flock.

We pray that the wellspring and flowing water of life, namely God Himself, may refresh every soul thirsting for justice and peace.

Many peaceful and blessed returns. Christ is Risen.”

His Beatitude also prayed for the recovery of Hegumen Archimandrite Ioustinos, who is presently undergoing medical treatment in Greece, beseeching full health and his return to his ministry.

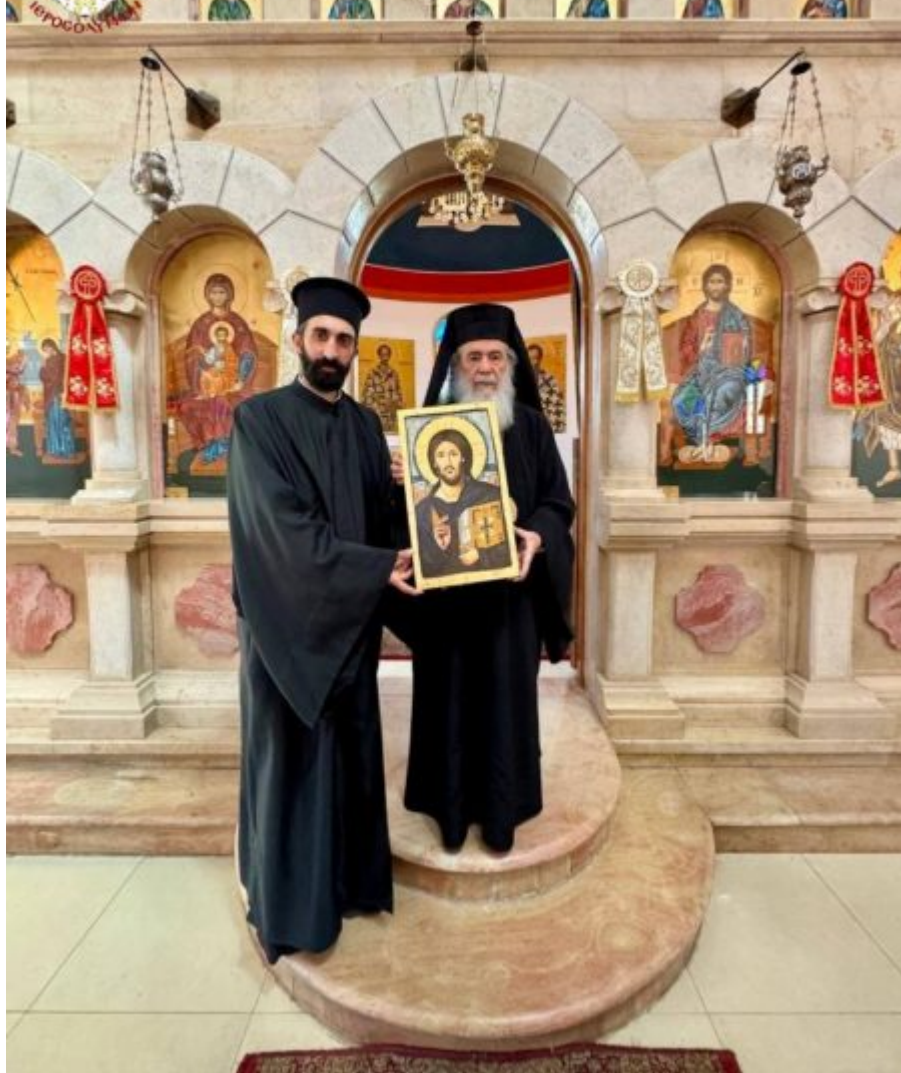
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