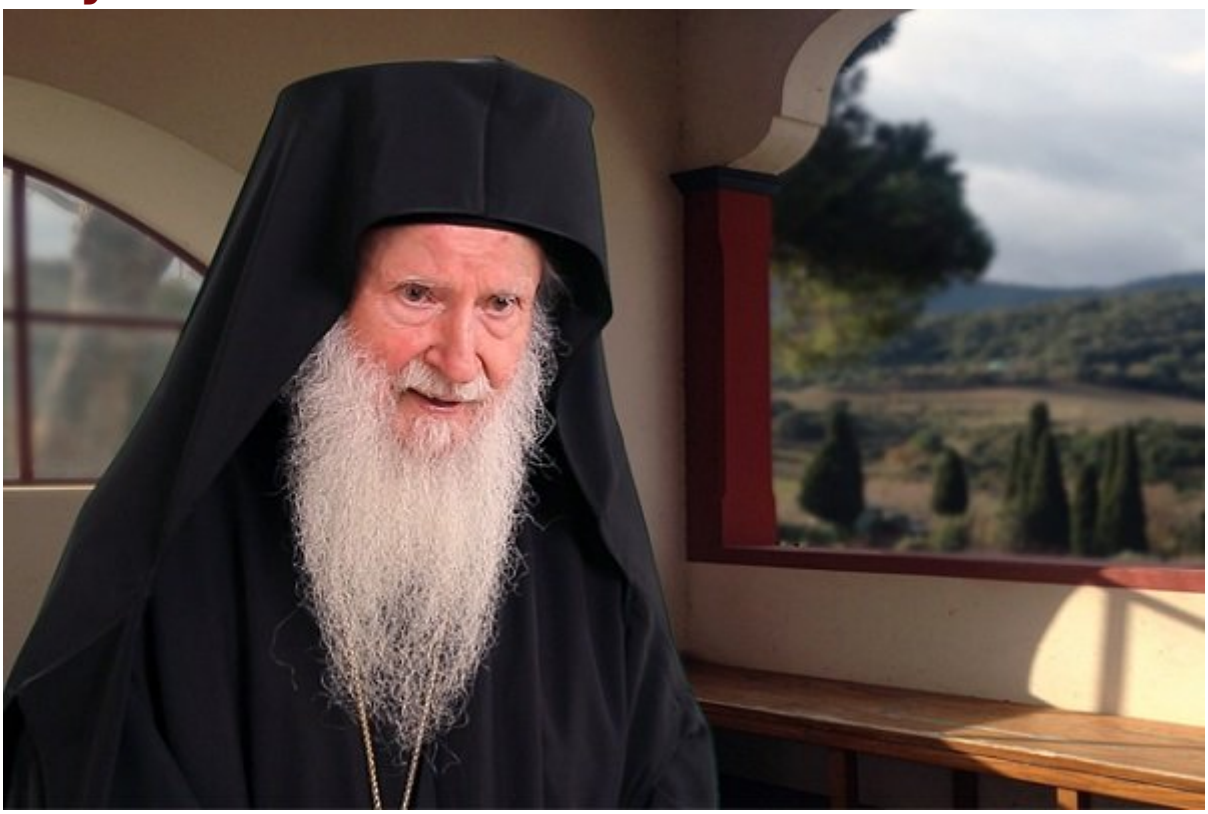
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Homily on the Lord’s Ascension



Metropolitan of Pisidia Sotirios

With the Ascension of Jesus Christ into Heaven, we may think that His Disciples were sad to be separated from Him. Up until that moment, the Lord was with them. He spoke to them, and they heard His voice. Now He’s gone, and they won’t see Him again! That is how the Ascension appears to human eyes. But if we look at it through the eyes of the soul, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, we see it very differently. The Ascension is not a separation or ending, but a continuation of the Lord’s Resurrection. In this light, it becomes the most joyous event. It is the fulfillment of our Lord Jesus Christ’s mission, for which He became man, and entered the world.

It was at the time of the Annunciation that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Only Begotten Son of God, received humanity and “was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man.” So Jesus Christ, born of the glorified Mary, is perfect God and perfect man. As the God-man, he embraced the Cross to cleanse us, was buried and resurrected, and finally, in His united being, ascended to Heaven. The Lord sits at the right hand of the Father in His glory, fully God and man. We declare this in the Symbol of Faith (the Creed) every time we say “I believe…” The fact that Jesus Christ took our human nature and became man like

us, is of immense importance for all of us , who believe in Him as our Lord and God. We Orthodox are clothed with Christ by our Baptism, and with Holy Communion are united with Him. Since we the faithful are united with the Human Body of Christ that He ascended with, we too will also one day ascend into the heavens to be with Him.

Do we realize the great honor that the Lord is giving us? Adam, in his disobedience, lost Paradise. The Son of God came as the new Adam, united with our human nature, and takes us with Him into Heavenly Paradise. The Lord Himself said to His Disciples, “I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2), meaning His Ascension to Heaven. He goes on to say in the next verse that “I will receive you to Myself; that where I am, you may be also.” With this, we can understand that Christ opened the way for us to Heaven to live with Him. The Lord said, “I will honor those who honor Me” (1 Kings 2:30). It is enough for us to follow St. Paul’s exhortation: “Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:20). It is our decision whether or not we want to participate in the Ascension of the Lord. We must decide to free ourselves from the passions, which enslave us with earthly pleasures, and to be released from the burdens of sin. In this way, we can be lifted up to the throne of God’s Grace.

Let us deeply reflect on this. Christ did not come down from Heaven just to give us some teachings and then leave! He came to commune with us, and prepare us to be with Him in Heaven. With His Ascension, He also secured our ascension. That is why these days is celebrated with so much joy! The Holy Disciples were the first to feel this, as St. Luke the Evangelist states at the end of his Gospel: Jesus “lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and glorifying God “(Luke 24: 50-53). We too, rejoice in these events because with Christ, our humanity has been elevated, with resurrection and ascension now possible for us. Nothing can drive this spiritual bliss from our hearts, not insults, attacks from the wicked, or our own faults and mistakes. For people who put their trust in the merciful Lord, fear has no place in the heart. Where there is faith and hope, despair cannot enter.

My dear brothers and sisters, may we continually hymn and glorify God, as the Holy Apostles did after the Ascension of the Lord, giving thanks for all he has done and continues to do for us. For the great blessings that He gives us every day, and above all, to thank Him for becoming a man and being sacrificed with love, glorifying our humanity and securing for each of us our salvation and ascension to

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