18/11/2020

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR GEORGE AT THE PATRIARCHATE



On Monday, November 3/16, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the translation of the relics of the Great Martyr George the Trophy-bearer, at the Church dedicated to him in Lydda.

On this feast, the Church commemorates the translation of the sacred relics of Saint George, and its return from Rome, where he suffered a martyr’s death, to Lydda, his mother’s hometown.

On this day the Church also celebrates the inauguration of the Holy Church dedicated to Saint George in Lydda, which was built by Saint Helen during the decade of A.D. 326-336.

The Divine Liturgy at this Church was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants; Their Eminences Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis and Damascene of Joppa, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, among whom the Archimandrites Nectarios and Niphon, Arab-speaking Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine music singers of the Community and the service was attended by quite a few faithful, despite the Covid-19 measures.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to the congregation:

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”(Romans 8:38-39); “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain”(Phil. 1:21), Saint Paul preaches.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The grace of the mystery of reverence, namely of the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, has gathered us all in this holy place of the sensible worship, in order to celebrate the commemoration of the great martyr George the trophy-bearer and imitator of the Lord’s passion.

The faithful friend of the Lord, George, has a prominent place among the chorea of the martyrs of the Church, and this is because, according to Saint Andrew of Crete, he became a fruitful vine of the true vineyard, whose farmer is the heavenly Father, cultivating for us through Him the spiritual bliss, for the healing of our passions and the regeneration of our souls and bodies.

And which is the true vineyard? It is Christ who said: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman” (John 15:1). Interpreting this verse, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: “You may precisely understand that the Father feeds us to reverence through the Son in the Holy Spirit; He farms us again, namely He watches over and visits us and looks after our improvement making us worthy for

it, through the Son in the Holy Spirit…so that no one may think that we only have the care of the Son, for He has God the Father as a co-worker, calling Himself the vineyard whose vines give life and the ability to bear fruit, while He calls God the Father a farmer". And he adds: "Christ does not say that His flesh is the vineyard, but rather His divinity…neither does He say that the fruit of the holy ones is carnal, rather, it is spiritual".

Indeed, the martyr George became a vine of Christ from Whom he received "life and the ability to bear fruit". Since his early childhood, George paid heed to Saint Paul's words: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). For this reason, Saint Theodore of the Studion says in his hymn: "Let us spiritually acclaim, O Brethren, the noetic adamant of patient endurance, the celebrated Martyr George, who was assayed by the fire for the sake of Christ, perils forged him, torments tempered him, and diverse tortures destroyed his body, which was corruptible by nature. For longing conquered nature, persuading the lover to pass through death to the Beloved, even Christ God, the Saviour of our souls" (Minaion April 23, Glory of Vespers Aposticha).

The son of a rich and noble family in Cappadocia, George served in the Roman army as a grand commander during Diocletian's reign (A.D. 284-305). In the year 303 an imperial decree was issued and mercilessly executed by Diocletian and his colleague Caesar Galerius against the Christians. Many of the greatest martyrs of our Church were crowned during this last relentless persecution.

Saint George did not only boldly proclaim himself a Christian but also exposed the vanity of the idols and ridiculed the emperor and those who believed in the instruments of the demons, namely the idols.

The martyr of the love of Christ did this, paying heed on the one hand to the words of wise Solomon: "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee" (Proverbs 4:25), and on the other hand, to the words of Christ: "But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony" (Luke 21: 12-13).

The above words of the Lord refer to the Apostolic preaching of the Gospel, but also to those who suffered a martyr's death shedding their blood for the sake of the Christian truth. According to the established interpreter Zigavinos, the phrase "for a testimony" means "for a way of testing, so that they may not say afterwards that they have not heard the preaching". "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin" (John 15:22), the Lord

says.

The blessed George, my dear brethren, belongs to the chorea of the great martyrs of the Church. And this is because with his martyr's blood, the great Athlete George confirmed the resurrection of Christ and sealed the truth of the Christian faith. In other words, blessed George sacrificed himself preaching "the Son of Man" (Matt. 8:20), who inaugurated the Kingdom of heaven with His Passion on the Cross. This is precisely the contribution of Saint George, that he testified the testimony of Him, who "for this cause came into the world, that He should bear witness unto the truth" (John 18:37).

George's testimony through his blood for the sake of the truth in Christ made him a communicant of the passion and death of Christ, and for this reason, the Holy Great Martyr received the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8) and the completion of his sanctification (Hebrews 1:14). He became, according to Saint Paul, "planted together in the likeness of his [Christ's] death" (Romans 6:3-5). "This man as a brave soldier bravely defied the tyrants and put them to shame, becoming an imitator of Christ the Saviour's passion. Unto his own clay vessel, he showed no mercy, but cast it naked into the forge, transforming it by means of torments. Let us cry out to him: O prize-winner George, make entreaty that our souls be saved" (Minaion April 23, Glory of praises).

The Saints, and especially the Martyrs of Christ are given a great honour and relevant worship, because they managed the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in their mortal bodies, as Saint Paul teaches very clearly: "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11). The Great Martyr George was also a vessel of the Holy Spirit and therefore he enjoys the "crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:4) and intercedes to God for all those who pray to him.

Behold, therefore, once more, let us say along with the hymnographer: Great Athlete George, beseech God the Father to save our souls, and You, Mother of God, Most Blessed Theotokos, intercede to your Son and God for all of us. Amen. Many happy and blessed returns, free from COVID-19."

After the Divine Liturgy, the good keeper of the Monastery Hegoumen Archimandrite Nicodemos hosted a reception and a meal for the Patriarchal Entourage, the caretakers of the Church and the choir members.

The commemoration of Saint George was also celebrated at the Holy Monastery of

Saint George of the Hospital with the Divine Liturgy which was led by the Hegoumen of Saint George in Acre, Archimandrite Philotheos, under the hospitality of the good keeper of the Monastery, Nun Pansemni.

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