

Ecumenical Patriarch: Before God all people are equal and have equal rights



His All-Holiness noted this in his homily at the Holy Church of the Birth of the Theotokos, at Belgrade Gate in Istanbul

“The Church embraces all people with its affection and covers all with its maternal mantle, not just those of a high social standing,” said His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, after the Divine Liturgy, during which he presided from the Throne, at the Holy Church of the Birth of the Theotokos, at Belgrade Gate in Istanbul, today, Monday, February 1, 2021. It is on this day that the memory of St. Trypho, patron saint of gardeners, is honored. At the end of the Divine Liturgy, His All-Holiness blessed the kolyva in memory of the Saint, and the Homilist Fr. Panaretos read the exorcism of Saint Trypho, which is read on the day of his feast for gardens and crops.

As His All-Holiness said in his homily, the Church “was founded for all without

exception, because our Lord shed His blood on the Cross for the salvation of each one of us. And in fact, Christ, during His earthly life, drew close to and sympathized more with the poor and humble. He called all those little ones 'His brothers,' saying that whatever is done to them, he considers to be done to Him. And His Church could not follow another line and discriminate in favor of the powerful of this world without ceasing to be the Church of Christ."

Elsewhere he pointed out that "before God, all people are equal and have equal rights. And His Church, as a true inn, accepts all without distinction. It does not condemn, but loves everyone."

His All-Holiness noted that Saint Trypho, who lived in Lampsacus and was buried, after his martyrdom, in Nicaea, Bithynia, "is one of the thousands of martyrs who shed their blood in this blessed land of our Fathers, for the faith of Christ, refusing to worship idols. What inspired the martyrs of the times of idolatry was their belief that there is 'no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved,' except the name of Christ."

And then he emphasized:

"No matter how many centuries pass, the memory and presence of the Saints always remain alive in the life of us Christians, and not only on the anniversary of their memory. And it must always remain alive, on the one hand as an expression of our eternal gratitude to the martyrs, who sacrificed their lives to keep the teaching of Christ intact and to pass it on to us later, and on the other hand as an example of holiness of life, bravery of spirit and boldness in the confession of Christ. This triple message of the Saints is always relevant, always instructive."

He recalled that during the Byzantine period, the Synaxis of Saint Trypho was performed annually at the Apostolic Church of John the Theologian, which was located near the Church of Hagia Sophia.

"He is honored as the protector of those who work with the earth. We continue the tradition and are guardians of the heritage of our fathers, of which we should be proud, and celebrating today the memory of the Victorious Trypho, we also honor our brethren the gardeners, winegrowers and farmers."

Concluding his homily, His All-Holiness congratulated His Eminence Metropolitan Maximos of Selyvria, "for his remarkable achievements as Supervisor of the Region of Ypsomathia and in this far-flung Community, with his diligence and humility, and especially for the renovated Agiasma (Shrine) of the Holy Church, the doors of which we opened exactly one year ago." He also thanked the Hierarchs responsible

of the Holy Church, Rev. Fr. Constantine, the President of the Ecclesiastical Committee, the Honorable Mr. Athanasios Miranko, and all the pillars of the Community.

Previously, His Eminence the Metropolitan of Selyvria, referring to the honored Saint, emphasized the Church's constant interest in the protection of the natural environment and recalled the ecological initiatives of the Mother Church and in particular of His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch. "The Ecumenical Patriarchate with the ecological conferences it organized proved not only how prophetic and up-to-date it is, and above all its burning love for the Creation of God. The Christian Churches and Confessions, Theology, Science and History owe you a great deal for your struggles and initiatives for the protection of the environment," the Metropolitan of Selyvria pointed out, among other things, and asked His All-Holiness to pray for the response to the pandemic and for the treatment of patients, as well as for the strengthening of their relatives, and of the medical and nursing staff fighting the coronavirus.

Metropolitan Maximos also referred to the latest renovation works that have taken place in the Church, such as, among other things, the painting of its interior, which became possible, he said, due to the actions of the Honorable Mr. Stylianos Gioulgioun, President of the Educational Association of Ypsomathia, and with the financial assistance of the local municipality of Fatih. He made a special reference to Ms. Eleni Skoumpri, who is responsible for supervising the maintenance works of the Churches and the sacred relics of the Region of Ypsomathia. The Metropolitan of Selyvria offered to His All-Holiness two volumes in which are described in detail all the renovation works that have been carried out in the Holy Church of the Panagia at Belgrade Gate and in other Churches of the Region of his responsibility.

It should be noted that the Vice-President of the humanitarian organization Turkish Red Crescent, the Honorable Mr. Ercan Tan, also attended the Divine Liturgy.