

26/04/2021

## THE FIRST SERVICE OF THE BRIDEGROOM AT THE PATRIARCHATE



On Palm Sunday evening 12/25 April 2021, the 1st Service of the Bridegroom was held at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

On this Service of Holy Monday, as well as on Holy Tuesday and Holy Wednesday, the Church projects the Lord to the faithful as the Bridegroom of our souls, with Whom we are called in a mystical union so that with cleansed minds and mortified passions, experience the redeeming Passion of the Cross and the luminous and glorious Resurrection.

This contrite Service was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-prayer of the Hagiotaphite Fathers. The Service was attended by some local faithful Christians, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras but not any pilgrims due to the continuing covid-19 restrictions.

At the end of the Service His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Behold the Bridegroom comes in the middle of the night and blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching, but unworthy is he whom He shall find in slothfulness. Beware then, O my soul, and be not overcome by sleep, lest thou be given over to death and shut out from the Kingdom. But return to soberness and cry aloud: Holy, holy, holy art Thou, O God: through the Theotokos have mercy upon us” (Matins of Holy Monday, Troparion 1).

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The Holy and Great Week of the Passions of our Lord Jesus Christ begins with the commemoration of the blessed Joseph and of the fig tree which was cursed by the Lord and withered.

And this is so because Joseph depicts Christ. Joseph was Patriarch Jacob’s eleventh son; his brothers were jealous of him, threw him in a pit and sold him to foreign merchants, he was sold again to others in Egypt, where he was slandered for his chastity, sent to prison, to be finally released from prison and receive great glory and honour by the King. Joseph became the Lord of all Egypt, distributing grain to all the people, and throughout his life course, he had imprinted in him the Passions and later on the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his Synaxarist.

As for the fig tree which was cursed by the Lord and withered, it depicts the synagogue, which did not have the appropriate fruits of virtue and reverence, and became bereft from every spiritual grace through Christ’s curse.

And having Joseph in mind, who is according to the type of Jesus, the hymnographer blesses the vigilant for the salvation of his soul servant. On the contrary, he considers unworthy the lazy servant, who neglects the care of his soul. This negligent servant resembles the fruitless fig tree, therefore, he is condemned to lose his soul.

Our Holy Church, my dear ones, calls us through the hymnographer by saying, “return to soberness, O my soul, crying aloud: Holy, holy, holy art Thou, O God”. Return to soberness, means to recover from the intoxication of the silly and harmful desires and actions, as well as from the darkness of the mind from the fallacy of the wrong teachings, according to Zigavinos and Ecumenios (Ref. 2 Tim. 2:26).

The calling of the Church to return to soberness and of course to be vigilant is in

effect until the last hour, however, the Lord is nigh, Saint Paul warns us (Phil. 4:5) and advises us: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil.4:8).

Let us hear, my dear ones the voice of Paul and of the Holy Fathers; “the Lord is nigh”, “Christ in His love hastens to His sufferings, He consents to be hung upon the Tree, that He may save mankind” (Matins, Troparion 2).

Let us say along with the hymnographer: “let us fear the punishment of the fig tree, withered because it was unfruitful; and let us bring worthy fruits of repentance unto Christ, who grants us His great mercy” (Aposticha idiomelo 3).

Have a blessed week of the Passions of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, and a Happy Easter. Amen.”

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