01/06/2021

THE FEAST OF THE SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN



On Sunday, 17/30 May 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman at the shrine of Jacob’s well in Nablus of Samaria.

On this feast, the whole Church and especially the Church of Jerusalem commemorates the meeting and the conversation of the Samaritan Woman from town Sychar with our Lord Jesus Christ, at Jacob’s well, when the Lord revealed her manner of living and told her He is the Messiah the Christ. He also told her that “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”, neither on Mount Gerizim nor in Jerusalem (John 4:5-42).

In commemoration of this redeeming Evangelical event, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the magnificent Church built above the well by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Ioustinos. The Church is dedicated to the Samaritan Woman who believed in the Lord and suffered a martyr's death for Him and her family members, sisters Saints Anatoli, Foto, Fotida, Paraskevi Kyriaki and her two sons, Saints Foteinos and Iosis.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences; Metropolitan Timotheos of Bostra, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Arab-speaking Priests and Deacons, at the chanting of Doctor Yacubi and other Byzantine singers, from the neighbouring parishes, as the service was attended by many local faithful and pilgrims from Israel, and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"When the Lord came unto the well, the Samaritan Woman entreated Him Who is compassionate, saying: Grant me the water of faith, and I shall receive the streams of the font of baptism, unto exceeding gladness and redemption. O Giver of Life, Lord, glory be to Thee" the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (Vespers, Idiomelo 2 of the Saint).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

Christ our God, the fountain of life and immortality, has gathered us all in this holy shrine of Patriarch Jacob's well, where the Samaritan Woman met the Lord, to celebrate her feast in Paschal doxology and thanksgiving.

In His meeting with the Samaritan Woman by Jacob's well, when "Jesus, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well" (John 4:6), He said to the Woman: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw" (John 4:13-15).

Interpreting these words of the Lord, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "we should know that the Saviour calls the grace of the Holy Spirit 'water'. If anyone becomes a participant of this grace, then he will have in him the spring of the divine

teachings, namely the power of the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. He will be able to admonish with blessings those who thirst for the divine and heavenly word. Such men were in their earthly life the Holy Prophets and the Apostles, and the heirs of their [apostolic] mission".

The Samaritan Woman became also a participant of this grace of the Holy Spirit, according to the Lord's word, "the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

It is also noteworthy, that the Samaritan woman was not in the position to fully understand the meaning of the Lord's words; however, Jesus revealed Himself to her, as Saint John the Evangelist testifies: "The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he comes, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He" (John 4:25-26).

Not only did Christ reveal Himself to her, but also taught her the truth that is preached in the Old Testament (3 Kings 8:27), that "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

We say this, because, as Saint Cyril of Alexandria points out, Christ does not reveal Himself to uneducated people such as the Apostles who were fishermen, nor to illiterate people who sinned in ignorance, such as the Samaritan woman, but also to people whose souls thirst for the truth, and the faith for the knowledge of the perfect mysteries has been born in them (in their souls).

In other words, Christ "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4), challenges, somehow, the Samaritan Woman, not to remain in her introductory faith, but to proceed to the perfect faith, which leads to deification, namely to her enlightenment by the Holy Spirit; which is what happened, because she became equal to the Apostles and a martyr of the love of Christ.

The fervent desire of the perfect faith is brilliantly described by Saint Ignatios the God-bearer in his epistle to the Romans with the words: "The love [eros] of mine is crucified and there is no material fire in me; "living water" (John 4:10) is inside me, talking to me and saying: rush to the Father. I find no pleasure in the food of corruption, nor in the delights of this life. The bread of God I want, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, from the seed of David, and the drink I want is His Blood, which is love incorrupt".

The Samaritan Woman, who was later on given the name Foteini by the Lord, who also received the crown of martyrdom by Roman Emperor Nero, is dancing with all

the Saints in heaven.

Saint Foteini never ceased to preach the correct manner of “worshipping God the Father in Spirit and in truth” (John 4:14), as well as the fear of God in reverence, which means to live our Christian lives in Godly actions and vision.

And we say this because “not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21) the Lord says. Rebuking those who have distant to the Divine Will thoughts, desires and works, Jesus refers to the Prophet Isaiah’s words: “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:8-9 / Isaiah 29:13).

In other words, my dear Brethren, the Samaritan Woman whom we celebrate today, is an example to imitate, regarding our interest for the truths of our Orthodox Faith, and Tradition, and of the healthy worship of God.

Now let us thank our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who was born by the Virgin Theotokos, and worship Him in Spirit and in truth, in repentance and humility of heart and say along with the hymnographer: “Thou art the water of life, cried the Samaritan Woman unto Christ. Give me to drink, therefore, who always thirst for Thy divine grace, O Lord, that I may no longer be held by the drought of ignorance, but may proclaim Thy mighty acts, O Lord Jesus” (Matins, Ode 7, Troparion 4 of the Samaritan Woman). Amen! Christ is Risen!”

At the end of the feast the Hegoumen Archimandrite Ioustinos hosted a reception and then a meal, where His Beatitude addressed all present as follows:

“Thus saith the Lord unto the woman of Samaria: if thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee: Give Me water to drink, thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee to drink, that thou mightiest never thirst unto eternity, saith the Lord” (Matins, Praises, Stichera of the Samaritan Woman, Troparion 2).

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece,

Reverend Archimandrite Ioustinos,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Let us thank our God and Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Resurrected from the Tomb, Who deemed us worthy to celebrate in Paschal festivities the feast of the

Samaritan Woman, at this place of Jacob’s well, where she drank from the spiritual waters of God’s gift.

This gift of God is the Holy Spirit, Who brings together and unites the institution of the Church, namely the body of our God Jesus Christ. And the greatness of this divine gift cannot be put into words, as Saint Paul says: “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (2 Cor. 9:15).

My dear brethren in Christ, being members of the Precious Body of Christ, we become communicants and participants of the Holy Spirit, namely of the heavenly gift (Hebrews 6:4), through the Holy Baptism.

This heavenly gift is granted by our Holy Church, which testifies throughout the centuries the infinite love and philanthropy of God worldwide, especially in our region. We are called to appreciate this invaluable gift of our calling to Christ and His Church, especially at this time of disorder and apostasy, hearkening to Saint Paul’s advice: “I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:16-18).

Let us entreat the Samaritan Woman, whom we honour today, who became a martyr of the love of Christ, so that along with the new co-martyr of hers, Saint Philoumenos the Hagiotaphite, may intercede the Lord our God, for all of us, and for the peace in the Holy Land, and moreover, for the relief from the covid-19 plague.

Christ is Risen! Many Happy Returns!”














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