07/06/2021

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY IN TUR'AN OF GALILEE



On Sunday 24 May /6 June 2021, Sunday of the blind man according to the book of Pentecostarion, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of Saint George the Great Martyr and Trophy-bearer, in the Rum Orthodox Arab-speaking Community of Tur'an, a small town near Cana which belongs to the Metropolis of Nazareth.

The Rum Orthodox Community has approximately 400 members and is supervised by Dean Priest Spyridon.

His Beatitude was warmly received by the Scouts, the Priests and the parish members.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences: Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Archimandrites; Parthenios,

Hilarion and Artemios, Dean Priest Spyridon and other Arab-speaking and Russian-speaking Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the parish choir, as the service was attended by the people of this community.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“As Jesus passed by on His way from the temple, He found a man who was blind from his birth; and taking compassion on him, He put clay on his eyes and said unto him: Go wash in the pool of Siloam. And when he had washed, he received his sight, and sent up praise unto God” (Vespers, Sticheron 2).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The almighty grace of our Saviour Christ has gathered us today in your beautiful town Tur’an of south Galilee, to co-celebrate the miracle Christ worked on the man who was born blind.

“Jesus answered, I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing” (John 9:3-7).

Interpreting these words of the Gospel, Saint Cyril of Alexandria notes: firstly, that Christ is both physical and noetic light. “Without doubt, the Only-begotten Son is also noetic light, and knows and is able to illumine not only the things of this world but also the whole of the other creation above this world”.

Secondly: That He cured the blind man willingly and impulsively, while the healed man did not recognize Christ. “The Saviour made the decision to cure the blind man, out of His own will and impulse, without any petition, and without anyone’s asking of Him to do so”.

Thirdly, Christ showed that He was the One who fashioned man out of clay (Gen. 2:7). “The Saviour does not do anything by chance. By anointing the blind man with the clay, He completed that which was lacking from the nature of the eye, and this way, He shows that He is the One who fashioned us from the beginning, the founder and creator of everything”.

It is noteworthy, that in Jesus’ command, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent)”, Saint Cyril distinguishes a hidden reason, as he says: “We consider that the ‘Sent’ is no other than the Only-begotten Son of God, Who was sent by the Father and visited us from above, to banish the sin and deception of the devil. Knowing that the Saviour invisibly swims in the waters of the Holy Pool, we are washed in faith, not for the cleansing of the impurity of the flesh, according to the scriptures (1 Peter 3:21), but for the washing of the infection and impurity of the noetic eyes, and having been cleansed, we may be able to gaze at the divine beauty clearly. This way we believe that Christ’s body is life-giving, since it is both the temple and the dwelling place of the Living Word of God, and has the fulness of the energy of God. Likewise, we say that He is also the reason of illumination. Because it is the body of the One who is light both in nature and truth”.

In other words, the sight the blind man received by Jesus’ touch proved that Christ is the Son and Word of God, perfect man and perfect God. It also proved that not only through the divine power of His word, but also through the divine power of his body and hands, He raises the dead, as He did with the son of the widow in Nain (Luke 7: 13-14), and gives sight to the blind as in the case of this man.

To those who “turn away their ears from the truth” (2 Tim. 4:4), namely those who do not believe and refuse the wonders Jesus worked before them, Jesus says: “But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him” (John 10:38).

Christ, my dear brethren, is present, living and acting from within through the Church, especially at the Holy Eucharist Sacrament. Christ, we repeat, is the physician, the healer and the illuminator of our souls and bodies. This is testified by the words of Saint Luke the Evangelist: “Jesus cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits, and unto many that were blind he gave sight” (Luke 7:21). And He gave this authority and power to His disciples, as Saint Matthew writes: “And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease” (Matt. 10:1).

In other words, Christ, whose God-human body is the One Catholic and Apostolic Church, is the spiritual pool of Siloam, as Saint Chrysostom says: “Just as Christ was a spiritual rock, likewise, Siloam (which means Sent) is also spiritual”.

We are called to seek this divine power of the spiritual pool of Siloam in faith, love and humility. And let us say along with the hymnographer: “Thou spiritual sun of righteousness, Who with Thine immaculate touch didst enlighten both the body and soul of him who from his mother’s womb was deprived of sight, illuminate the eyes of our souls also, and show us to be sons of the day, that we might cry to Thee with faith: Great and ineffable is Thy compassion toward us, O Friend of man; glory be to Thee” (Vespers Stichera Pascha, Glory, tone 5).

Christ is risen! Many happy returns!”

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a reception and then a meal at noon, where His Beatitude addressed those present as follows:

“The Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places” (Psalm 135: 5-6).

Your Excellency Mr President of the Ecclesiastical Committee,

Respected members of the Ecclesiastical Committee,

Dear Brethren in Christ,

Our meeting on this Paschal day, the sixth Sunday after Pascha has a special meaning. Because by the ineffable mercy of our Holy Trinitarian God the forced obstacles of the covid-19 pandemic have been lifted.

Of course, we as members of the Holy Church of Jerusalem never ceased to serve in our ministry in Christ, both the liturgical and the pastoral. This spiritual ministry has always covered the physical distance between us.

The Church of Christ, which is the body of Christ, cannot be comprehended without its members. “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, … and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:12-13) Saint Paul preaches.

The Church of Christ, as we mentioned in our Sermon, is the spiritual pool –

according to Saint Chrysostom – and Christ is Siloam, which means the ‘Sent’ by God the Father, His Son and Word.

This means that we see our Lord Jesus Christ in the Church, as the physical and spiritual healer of our bodies and souls. In other words, my dear brethren, the Church of Christ is our secure refuge, the Ark of salvation and the Pool of our regeneration in the Holy Spirit. These words are not vague but true. These words become clear when our faith in Christ crucified and resurrected remains steadfast and increases. Christ is the Light of the world and especially the Light of those who love and believe in Him. And the Church of Christ is the sanatorium for all our infirmities. Therefore, as Saint Paul advises, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught,… Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work” (2 Thess. 2:15-17).

Christ is risen! Many Happy Returns!”

From Secretariat-General

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