29/06/2021

THE FEAST OF PROPHET ELISHA AT THE PATRIARCHATE



On Sunday, 14/27 June 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of Holy Prophet Elisha in Jericho, the main place of his life and action.

On this feast, the Church commemorates that Prophet Elisha, son of Safat from the town Avel Meoul in the land of Manasi, was a farmer by profession and was called by Prophet Elijah to follow him. In the Books of the Old Testament and especially in 4 Kings there are many signs of God's gifts to him.

In Jericho, he turned the bitter into drinking waters with his prayer. He saw his teacher Prophet Elijah being lifted up into the heavens in a fiery chariot and this was the sign that he was going to receive double the Prophet's grace. Prophet Elijah threw down on Elisha his fleece and he placed it on the surface of the River Jordan and crossed on the other side.

In honour of this prophet, "who drove away sicknesses and healed the leppers", the Divine Liturgy was officiated at the Church bearing his name in Jericho, by the

sycamore tree of Zacchaeus, by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Saint Gerasimos, Archimandrite Chrysostom, the Hegoumen of Beit Jala and Beit Sahour, Archimandrite Ignatios, the Hegoumen of Sarantarion Mount, Hieromonk Onuphrius, Father Gabriel and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by Archimandrite Chrysostom in Greek on the right, and the Jericho Byzantine Choir on the left in Arabic, at the attendance of faithful from Jericho and other towns.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“But the righteous live for evermore; their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the Most High. Therefore, shall they receive a glorious kingdom, and a beautiful crown from the Lord’s hand: for with his right hand shall he cover them, and with his arm shall he protect them”, we read in the Holy book of the Wisdom of Solomon (Wisdom of Solomon 5:15-16).

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in this biblical place of the ancient city of Jericho today, on this Sunday after Pentecost, to celebrate the feast of All the Saints, and especially honour the commemoration of Prophet Elisha, in his Monastic Church.

“The righteous live for evermore; their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the Most High” the holy writer says (Wisdom of Solomon 5:15). To the question, who are righteous? Our Lord Jesus answers by saying: “Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, he will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, he will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32-33).

In other words, if one confesses God on this earthly life, Christ will confess for him before the Father in the eternal heavenly life, namely in His Kingdom. And if someone denies Jesus Christ as God-man and Saviour before the people in this world, Christ will also deny him before the people and the holy angels in eternal life.

The “Righteous”, in essence, are those who confess Christ as perfect God and perfect man, having received flesh from the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin and Theotokos Mary through the Holy Spirit. These Righteous are, according to Saint

Paul, the ones who make “the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven” (Hebrews 12:23), and they are the ones who pleased God of old, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Ascetics, Hierarchs, Teachers, Righteous and the chorea of the Holy Women. That is why the hymnographer says: “They that have borne witness in all the earth and have transferred their dwellings to the Heavens, who have imitated Christ’s Passion and take away our passions, are assembled here today, showing that the Church of the first-born furnisheth a figure of the Church above as she crieth out to Christ: Thou art my God; preserve me through the pure Theotokos, O Thou Who art greatly merciful” (Pentecostarion, Feast of All Saints, Matins, Oikos).

“Therefore, shall they receive a glorious kingdom, and a beautiful crown from the Lord’s hand: for with his right hand shall he cover them, and with his arm shall he protect them” (Wisdom of Solomon 5:15-16). This means that God the Father, Who has undertaken the care of the righteous, will reward them in His Kingdom. All Saints, namely the Righteous, will be crowned with a glorious crown in the Kingdom of Heaven.

All the Saints, or the Righteous, include the Holy Prophets of the Law of Moses, among whom Prophet Elisha, who we honour today is distinguished. Blessed Paul refers to the innumerable crowd of the martyrs of truth and projects them to the temporary Christians as an example to imitate, with the words: “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2). [And in more detail: therefore, as we are surrounded by such a great cloud of people who suffered a martyr’s death for the sake of the truth of faith, let us free ourselves from the weight of any worldly cares, moreover of sin, to which one can be easily drawn, and let us run patiently the race that the enemy puts in front of us. And let us not turn our eyes and attention to no other but Jesus Christ, Who is the Chief and founder of our faith, and makes us perfect in it].

Interpreting these words of Paul, “we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1), Saint Chrysostom denotes that the Apostle is not only referring to those who preached the truth in the New Testament but also in the Old; “as they also martyred the majesty of God”.

And what is God’s majesty? It is the mystery of the Divine revelation, the Divine Providence, which was dimly revealed to the Prophets, but in full essence in God

the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. And we say this, because Christ is the fullness of the Law of Moses and of the Prophets, as the Lord Himself says: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Matt. 5:17).

Our Holy Church honours and venerates the commemoration of Holy Prophet Elisha, because he acquired the deepest knowledge of the beyond-our-mind mystery of God, prophesied about the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ and many wonders did God make through Elisha, who was a disciple of prophet Elijah.

As for us, my dear ones, let us entreat the holy prophet Elisha and say along with the hymnographer: “With hymns let us the faithful honour Elias and Elisseus, the pinnacles of the Prophets, those brightly shining luminaries of the whole world; and let us cry out in harmony unto Christ: O compassionate Lord, by the entreaties of Thy Prophets, [the also celebrated today, Saint Methodios, Archbishop of Constantinople, Holy Hieromartyr Cyril, Bishop of Gortyna of Crete, along with the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary] grant Thy people forgiveness of sins and great mercy. Amen. Many happy returns, free from the corona plague!”

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a small reception and then a meal, hosted by the good keeper of the Monastery Archimandrite Philoumenos and Archimandrite Chrysostom. His Beatitude thanked them for their Hagiotaphite care and later on visited the neighbouring Monastery of the Life-giving Spring and the newly constructed buildings by Archimandrite Chrysostom.

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