09/11/2021

THE FEAST OF SAINT JAMES THE BROTHER OF GOD AT THE PATRIARCHATE



n Friday 23 October / 5 November 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Throne, of Saint James the Brother of God, the First Hierarch of Jerusalem.

On this feast, the Church, and especially the Church of Jerusalem commemorates that Saint James was the Lord's brother according to the law, and "the Lord made him the first Hierarch and shepherd and teacher of the spiritual mysteries". He is the writer of the Catholic Letter to the expatriate Jews in the New Testament. He convened the first Apostolic Synod in Jerusalem, which through his election, opened the gates of the Church to accept the heathens in it. Saint Paul used to say about him: "But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1:19). He confessed Christ as the Son of God, for which reason the Jews forcedly pushed him over the wing of the Temple of Solomon to the ground and killed him.

In honour of his commemoration as an Apostle and Hieromartyr, Vespers on Thursday afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on Friday morning were officiated at

Saint James' Cathedral by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude during Vespers were Hagiotaphite Hieromonks among whom the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archimandrites Stephen and Niphon, the ministering Priests of the Cathedral, Charalambos Bandour and George Baramki and others, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and his choir in Greek on the right, and by the Cathedral's choir in Arabic on the left. On Friday morning, co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Archbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina, Philoumenos of Pella and Aristovoulos of Madaba, the Archimandrites Nectarios and Klavdios, Priests Charalambos and George and other Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting for both services was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and his choir in Greek on the right, and by the Cathedral's choir in Arabic on the left. The services were attended by the parish members and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25), Saint James preaches in his letter.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Apostle James "servant of God and Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1), has gathered us all today in his Holy Church, next to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, to celebrate his sacred commemoration in the place of his martyrdom, the Holy City of Jerusalem.

The Biblical Mother of Churches, the dwelling place of God, rejoices and is glad on the commemoration of Saint James, who became the first Hierarch, shepherd and teacher of Jerusalem, but also a faithful steward of the spiritual mysteries. He was called 'righteous', for his utmost holiness and righteousness. This is witnessed by his teaching on true wisdom: "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:17-18).

According to Eusebius of Caesarea of Palestine, the righteous James suffered a martyr's death for his preaching, that Jesus is sat at the right hand of the great

power, that is, of God the Father, and is bound to come back again through the clouds in heaven. In this case, Eusebius references the relevant quote of Clement of Alexandria which reads: “The Lord handed over the knowledge to James the righteous, John and Peter, and they, in turn, gave it over to the other Apostles…two were those with the name James, one was the righteous James, who was pushed over from the wing of the Temple to the ground and beaten to death by a tanner’s wood, and the other is the one who was cut in pieces” (Ecclesiastical History by Eusebius, 2, 23).

Righteous James preached boldly that the only perfect law is that of Christ, namely the Gospel of the New Testament as foretold by Prophet Jeremiah: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah” (Jeremiah 31:31).

This perfect law of the Gospel of Christ, or of the New Testament is distinguished for the freedom it grants to the followers of this law. For this reason, Saint James says: “But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (James 1:25).

Interpreting this word of the Brother of God, Ecumenios says: “By saying that the perfect law is that of freedom, he made freedom the distinguishing feature of this law. For the law according to Christ has set us free from every carnal feature of slavery… granting freedom and comfort to the one who draws nigh”. In other words, the law of Christ is the one that liberates man from the slavery of sin.

Saint Paul repeatedly mentions “the freedom which we have in Christ” (Gal. 2:4), that is why he advises: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1). And the Chief of the Apostles Peter, says: “For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God” (1 Peter 2:15-16).

According to Saint James, free in God is the one who “is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work” (James 1:25). And according to the psalmist, the one who keeps the commandments of the Lord shall have a great reward; “…the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward” (Psalm 19:9-11). Saint Paul also says, “the creature itself also shall be delivered from the

bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Romans 8:21).

Noteworthy is the speech of Athanasius the Great against the Arians, that Christ the Son of the Living God is not of those who groan or are in need of freedom, but He is the One Who adopts and liberates everything. “And if all creation suffers having lost freedom due to the corruption of bondage, the Son is not among those who need freedom, but He is the One who adopts and liberates everything”.

It is made clear from the above, my dear brethren, that “the perfect law of freedom” is no other than the Gospel of Christ, namely the law given by Himself, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, whose disciple, martyr of truth and apostle was the righteous James, who was called the brother of God, and who we honour today. For him the hymnographer of the Church exclaims: “As an Apostle truly great, the chief and foremost hierarch of the divine New Covenant; as an all-wise expounder, and as the truth’s faithful witness, who didst abound above all with an especial dignity as the Lord’s very Brother, thou now hast passed over unto Him, being slain by stoning” (Matins, Exapostilarion).

Apostle of Christ and martyr, righteous James, set us who celebrate your sacred commemoration free from the ongoing sins, interceding with the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary to Christ our God. Amen! Many happy returns!”

After the Divine Liturgy, the Patriarchal Entourage returned to the Patriarchate Reception Hall, through the interior staircase of the Church and the main entrance of the Patriarchate, where the responsible for the bakery of the Patriarchate Nun Seraphima distributed small loaves of bread as a blessing.

At the Hall, His Beatitude addressed those present as follows:

“I have not hidden thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation” (Psalm 40:10), the Psalmist proclaims.

Your Excellency, Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Dear Brethren in Christ,

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem rejoices today on the holy commemoration of the Holy Hieromartyr and righteous Apostle, James the Brother of God.

And this, because our Lord Jesus Christ, “the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2), made James the first Hierarch and shepherd of the Church of Jerusalem, and also a teacher and faithful steward of the spiritual mysteries.

The contribution of the righteous James on the one hand in the organization of the Church in the world, with the convening of the Apostolic Synod in Jerusalem (Acts 15: 6), and on the other hand in the evangelization of both his biological relatives (Romans 9: 3) and the nations, has been crucial. Therefore, Saint Paul mentions that when he went to Jerusalem “other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother” (Gal. 1,19).

He sealed his apostolic authority and the office of Presbyter, that is, the First Hierarch of the Church, his blood shed for the Gospel, and thus became a co-martyr of our God and Saviour Christ.

Our Mediocrity, by the mercy of God, has settled a successor of the Apostolic Throne of James the Brother of God, went down to Saint James Cathedral, which is next to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and celebrated the Patriarchal Divine Liturgy, surrounded by the Holy Archbishops and Priests, the honourable members of our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood.

It is noteworthy, that today’s feast of the commemoration of Saint James does not refer only to its Ecclesiastical institutional feature, but especially to the unceasing historical witness of the Primeval Church and the Jewish-Christian and Rum-Orthodox Community in Jerusalem.

For this reason, our Holy Church gratefully says: “Thee, Lord, did Thy brother proclaim with a freely speaking voice, and became an imitator of Thy Passion when he was put to death” (Matins, Ode 5, Troparion 2).

And we, boasting in the Lord, say along with the hymnographer: “Thy Church doth rejoice in Thee, O Christ our God, as she doth cry out in joy: Thou art my sole steadfastness; my strength and my refuge art Thou, O Lord” (Matins, Ode 3, Heirmos). Amen! Many happy returns!”

At the end of the reception, His Beatitude returned the keys of the Cathedral to its Caretakers and blessed everybody.

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