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Great feast day of Christmas celebrated by Orthodox Churches following the Julian calendar



Several Orthodox Churches around the world today celebrate the great feast day of Christmas, as based on the Julian calendar.

In the Holy Land, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem celebrates the Nativity of the Lord at the place where Christ was born, in the holy town of Bethlehem. A con-celebratory Vespers was conducted on Thursday afternoon, officiated by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Most Godly Beatitude Theophilos III.

A day earlier, the Service of the Holy Unction was observed after the Vespers at the Holy Cathedral of Sts. Constantine and Helen, as preparation for the participation in the great feast of Christmas. The Royal Hours of Christmas were subsequently read out at the Patriarchal Monastic Church.

Groups of scouts affiliated with the Greek Orthodox Church paraded throughout the town on the occasion of the Christmas feast day.

In another part of the world, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, His Holiness Kirill, in his Christmas message, referred to concern and a feeling of insecurity created around the world by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. His Holiness called on the faithful to praise God for each and every day of their existence, the most precious gift, while adding "…May the Lord grant unto all of you spiritual and bodily health, inexhaustible joy and fortitude, and strength, as you continue to work and follow the path of salvation."

To the southeast of Russia, the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II, in his Christmas message, warned the faithful of the risks that abound due to the pandemic, while at the same time reminding that "…we must not give in to desperation, or be afraid. We must strengthen our belief that death does not mean the end of existence, as the human soul is eternal."

Christmas on Mount Athos

Back in Greece, and specifically on the semi-autonomous monastic community of Mount Athos, the Holy Community's monasteries reverently and solemnly prepared for today's great feast of Christmas, as celebrated based on the Julian calendar.

An all-night con-celebratory vigil was held from Thursday evening into the early morning hours of Friday at the Holy & Great Monastery of Vatopedi, based on centuries-old Athonite rite.

The Abbot of Vatopedi, the Elder Archimandrite Ephraim, officiated at the holy services, and during the vigil, standing before the holy icon of the Panaghia, the Virgin Mary, read out a special prayer and supplication for an end to the pandemic.