

## **THE SUNDAY OF THE ADORATION OF THE PRECIOUS AND LIFE-GIVING CROSS AT THE PATRIARCHATE**



On March 18/31, 2019, The Patriarchate celebrated the Sunday of the Adoration of the Precious and Life-giving Cross, for the encouragement of the faithful, so that they may continue the difficult period of the fast towards the Holy Pascha.

### **Vespers**

Great Vespers of Parresia was held at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrant the Archbishops in the Holy Altar and the Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and deacons, at the chanting of the Choir Leader of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos. The service was attended by a congregation of local faithful and pilgrims.

At the end of Vespers the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters.

On the day of the feast

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Life-giving Tomb of the Lord, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants Archbishops of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Emanuel of France, and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Amphilohios of Andrianoupolis, the Archbishops of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Most Reverend Archbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina, Demetrios of Lydda, Nectarios of Anthedon, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis. Also Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, under the chanting of the Choir Leader of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos and Archimandrite Demetrios. Present at the service was the Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, along with a large congregation.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a litany, three times around the All-holy Tomb and around the shrines, with the veneration of the Precious Cross with the Precious Wood.

The return at the Patriarchate Headquarters followed, where His Beatitude addressed all present as follows;

“In paradise of old the tree stripped me bare; for by giving me its fruit to eat, the enemy brought in death. But now the Tree of the Cross that clothes men with the garment of life has been set up on earth, and the whole world is filled with boundless joy. Beholding it venerated, O ye people, let us with one accord raise in faith our cry to God: His house is full of glory” the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Today my beloved brothers and sisters, day of the veneration of the precious cross, we came to the place of skull, in Golgotha, where our Lord Jesus Christ offered for us His salvific Passion but also His life-giving resurrection and by the Eucharistic Divine Doxology we became participants and communicants of the joy and the power of the wood of life, of the Cross.

“The Lord said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34). Whosoever wants to become my disciple and follow me as my student, let him stop every friendship and relation with the corrupt by sin self of his and let him steadfastly decide to suffer for my

sake not only sorrow and trials but also death on the cross, and then he may follow me, imitating my example.

Christ demands self-denial of those who wish to follow Him, because His birth, life and death were a continuous act of self-denial and self-kenosis, as St. Paul preaches by saying: "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philip. 2:7-8).

In other words, Christ's Cross is not only the symbol per se, but also the incarnation of Christ's kenosis, namely of His self-denial and outmost humility. The preaching of the Cross is the foundation of the faith and the spring of the salvific power of the believers in Christ crucified and resurrected. Therefore St. Paul says; "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). This means that our faith should not be founded on the noetic wisdom of the people, but on the steadfast power of God; "your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" St. Paul says again (1 Cor. 2:5).

Behold why our Holy Church, by the inspiration of the Holy Fathers, placed the veneration of the Holy Cross in the middle of the fasting period of the Great Lent; "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness" (Ephes. 6:14) St. Paul orders. And the breastplate of righteousness is no other than the Sacred and Life-giving Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This Cross of Christ's righteousness did the martyrs of Christ's love follow, as well as all the Saints. This very Precious Cross of Christ, or better say, the unexplored mystery of the Cross, are we called to study as good soldiers of Christ, to study and live according to the word of the Cross and have it as a manner of thinking and living. We should do this so that the true light may guide our footsteps to the eternal life of the Kingdom of Heaven.

And along with St. John of Damascus let us say; "this [Cross is] the resurrection of the dead, the support of those who stand, the walking stick of the ill...salvation of soul and body, it drives away all evil, creates all good things, it is the refutation of sin, the resurrection plant, the wood of eternal life. May those of us who venerate it be granted our share in the crucified [and resurrected] Christ. Amen. Have a good Easter."

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