28/06/2022

THE FEAST OF PROPHET ELISHA AT THE PATRIARCHATE



On Monday, 14/27 June 2022 the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy Prophet Elisha.

On this feast, the Church commemorates the events written in the Book of Kings in the Old Testament, according to which the Prophet Elisha came from Jericho and left his profession when Prophet Elijah called him. He offered a feast to the people with the twelve pairs of oxen he used on his farm, followed Prophet Elijah and became a benefactor for the people of the Jordan district through the signs and miracles that God deemed him worthy to work.

Near Jericho, at the foot of Sarantarion Mount, he turned the bitter waters into drinkable. He saw his teacher, Prophet Elijah being ascended to heaven on a fiery chariot and received his grace twofold. He received his teacher's fleece with which he parted the waters of the river Jordan and crossed the river to the other side. He slept in the Lord in B.C. 839.

To the Prophet's honour, the Divine Liturgy on the morning of the feast day was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos at his H. Monastery in Jericho. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences the Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, Isidoros of Hierapolis, the Archimandrites Klaudios, Kyriakos from the H. Monastery of Saint Gerasimos of the Jordan, Onuphrius from the H. Monastery of Sarantarion Mount and Priest Nectarios. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon, Archimandrite Chrysostom and Mr Varaklas in Greek and by the Jericho Community choir in Arabic. The Liturgy was attended by Arab-speaking and Greek faithful from Jericho and Greece.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"Having received a double portion of the Spirit's grace, thou didst become a wondrous Prophet known throughout the earth, ever rescuing from dangers all them that hymn thee; and thou grantest thy rich grace of wondrous miracles unto those who hasten unto thee with fervent faith and cry out to thee: Rejoice, O Prophet most marvellous" (Kontakion), the hymnographer exclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The Holy Church of God honours joyfully today the sacred commemoration of the Holy Prophet Elisha in the Holy Monastery dedicated to him near the river Jordan, in the historical city of Jericho.

Prophet Elisha was anointed by Prophet Elijah and became his successor according to God's command, as written in the Book of Kings: "And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint …and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room… So he departed thence, and found Elisha… and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee…Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him" (3 Kings 19:15-21). According to Sirach, when Prophet Elijah ascended into heaven, Elisha

was filled with Elijah's spirit; "Elijah was covered by the whirlwind, and Elisha was filled with his spirit" (Sirach 48:12).

The righteous Elisha was distinguished among the Prophets as well as a religious figure. He displayed a great and vigorous social activity and worked many miracles, of which most prominent were, the division of the waters of the river Jordan with Prophet Elijah's fleece, (4 Kings 2:14), the making of the waters of the spring in Jericho suitable to drink (4 Kings 2:19-22) and the healing of Naaman the Syrian from his leprosy (4 Kings 5:1-14).

The casting down of Elijah's fleece on Elisha symbolised the latter's calling to become a prophet and receive from him the divine power and authority according to the saying; "Light is sown for the righteous" (Psalm 97:11). Interpreting this psalm, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says, "the noetic and divine light rises in the mind and heart of anyone who is pure and righteous".

Elisha's power and authenticity are praised by the Wisdom of Sirach; "When Elijah was enveloped in the whirlwind, Elisha was filled with his spirit. He performed twice as many signs and marvels with every utterance of his mouth. Never in his lifetime did he tremble before any ruler, nor could anyone intimidate him at all. Nothing was too hard for him, and when he was dead, his body prophesied. In his life he did wonders, and in death his deeds were marvellous" (Sirach 48:12-14).

In today's Gospel narrative according to Saint Luke, we heard, my dear brethren, that while teaching in the Synagogue in Nazareth, Christ mentions especially the Prophet Elijah and his disciple Elisha. And this is because Elijah was sent in Sarepta of Sidon to a widow, while Elisha healed Naaman the Syrian from his leprosy only (cf. Luke 4:25-27). It is noteworthy that both the widow and the Naaman were gentiles, idolaters.

Through the commemoration of these events, Jesus meant that both Prophets, Elijah and Elisha, foretold the Christ of God, the Son and Word of God on the one hand, and on the other, preached to the Church of the nations, namely to the worshipers of the idols, who were going to accept Christ and be cured of their spiritual leprosy, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Prophets most ardently sought not only to learn about the salvation in Christ but also tested everything related to it, as the Apostle Peter says: "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you. Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it

testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1:10-11).

Interpreting these words, Ecumenios says: "having said the spirit of God, he theologizes Christ", while Theophylactos notes, "[the Scriptures] write that the Holy Spirit that spoke through the Prophet's was Christ's Spirit".

This very Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ enlightened the mind and heart of our Holy Prophet Elisha. That is why his hymnographer exclaims: "Rejoice Elisha supremely wise, for after cleansing thy mind of the carnal desires and lusts, thou within thee didst receive God the Spirit's clear-shining beams, which thou didst pass on to all, O glorious one, and didst appear wholly like unto the light. Hence, thou art gone to dwell in the never-setting light that is on high, ever praying for us all, who praise and honour thee" (Vespers, sticheron 1).

To this never-setting light, namely the Kingdom of Heaven, did also Saint Methodios Archbishop of Constantinople dwell, the co-celebrant to Saint Elisha, just like all the saints and righteous of God, who "loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them" (Revelation 12:11-12), Saint John the Theologian says.

Let us pray, my dear brethren, to our God and Father of lights, that through the intercessions of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and of the righteous Prophet Elisha, we may be deemed worthy to dwell in the never-setting light of Christ's glory. Amen. Many happy returns".

After the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude read a prayer for the grapes and other fruit. At noon the good caretaker of the Monastery Archimandrite Philoumenos hosted a meal.

From Secretariat-General


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