19/09/2022

THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS IN BEIT JALA



On Sunday, September 5th/18th 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Nativity of our Lady and Immaculate Mary in the Holy Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God in Beit Jala.

During this feast, the Church remembers that the Theotokos is a gift of God to her childless parents, Joachim and Anna, and to all humanity, because from her the Redeemer of the world, Christ, was made flesh by the Holy Spirit.

This feast was celebrated with a warm welcome of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theofilos, under the abbot of Beit Jala Archimandrite Ignatios, the Priests, the Local Authorities and the Bodies of the Scouts of Beit Jala before the Divine Liturgy, which was officiated by His Beatitude. Co-celebrants of His Beatitude were their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias and Archbishop Methodios of Tabor, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Hegoumen of Saint George Al Khader, Archimandrite Porphyrios, the Community Priests, Fr Pavlos, Yusef and Issa. The chanting was delivered by the Community Byzantine Choir in the presence of the entire congregation of Beit Jala and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“May the Lord give you a sign; behold, the Virgin will bear and bear a son, and you shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14), exclaims the prophet Isaiah.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Dear Christians,

The grace of the Holy Spirit brought us all to blessed by the Lord city of yours so that after the holy and righteous Godfathers Joachim and Anne we celebrate the beginning of our salvation, the only Theotokos and Mother of God.

Today we also celebrate the pure Virgin who sprang from the root of Jesse, the source of Life, that is, the Mother of the Son and Word of our Lord God, Jesus Christ, as the hymn of the Church says “Today God, Who resteth upon the noetic thrones, hath made ready for Himself a holy throne upon the earth. He that established the heavens in wisdom, hath prepared a living Heaven in His love for man. For from a barren root He hath made a life-bearing branch to spring froth for us, even His Mother: O God of wonders and hope of the hopeless, O Lord, glory to Thee” (Great Vespers, Sticheron 1).

The sign that Isaiah prophesied that the Lord would give you is none other than the holy throne, which God prepared for Himself on earth, the Virgin Mary. This is the sign by which the Lord made His Saviour known before the nations; He revealed His righteousness according to the psalmist. His Saviour is the incarnate One from the pure blood of the Virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit, God the Word our Lord Jesus Christ, whose saving work concerns the whole human race according to the testimony of the Evangelist Luke “And all flesh shall see the salvation of God “, (Luke 3,6/ Is. 40,5).

Through the birth of the Virgin Mary, the renewal of the world came with her. And this is because in this virgin Mary the regeneration of the old Adam and the recalling of Eve were born. This was the source of incorruption and the release of decay, through which we were made gods and redeemed from death according to the hymn. Through the Virgin, in other words, the lifting of the curse of the first-born and the giving of the blessing, as this is expressed by the hymn saying: “Thy Nativity O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy to the whole world; for from thee hath dawned the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, annulling the course and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting” (Apolytikion).

Eternal life was given to us humans through the Theotokos, who, according to Saint John of Damascus, the Theotokos is the one who binds people tightly to God and the one with whom the heavens and the earth were united, returning the things of men to God and the things of God to man.

Today we celebrate a paradox, indeed a miracle, glorifying and praising God the Father, Who revealed to you a hidden mystery of eternal times, (Cf. Rom. 16:25), that is, the predestined Mother of God for our salvation. The paradox of this mystery is not understood “in persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the evidence of the Spirit and power, so that your faith is not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2, 4-5), Saint Paul preaches. According to Saint John of Damascus: “By faith, we understand that all things have been made from nothing into being by the power of God; and all things divine and human we accomplish by faith. And faith is consent without much examination”. This means that the knowledge of God or the knowledge of divine things is not scientific knowledge, which is acquired through research and research methods; it is a gift and at the same time an experience and the fruit of faith. This is why the psalmist begs, saying: ” Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me”(Ps. 51:12); interpreting David’s word, Hesychius says: “Right spirit is the Spirit of God and not the vital spirit in you. [Prophet David] wants this Spirit of God to be

initiated in the most vital parts inside him. For Spirit is the true salvation, namely Christ. ” All creation blesses the virgin born of the barren Anne, and especially the holy Church of Christ because she (the virgin) fulfilled the promise given to the prophets (Acts 13:32) “Lord my God, I will praise you; I will praise your name because you have done wonderful things, an ancient true will”, (Isaiah 25,1), exclaims the prophet Isaiah.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria says that our Saviour wanted to give those who knew Him extraordinary grace, that is, the grace to be with Him and see His glory because He says ” for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” (John 17,24), thus showing that the power of the mystery concerning the Saviour is the most ancient, and the way of our salvation, which was accomplished through his mediation, was known in advance, [foreseen by God the Father]. Especially those who know themselves are granted the grace that the Saviour willed from his conscience and they see his glory: “loved He says before the foundation of the world”, its antiquity, however, shows the power of the mystery in itself, and that the way, accomplished through Christ’s mediation, remains foreknown to the God and Father of our salvation”.

Of this way, indeed of our salvation, accomplished through the mediation of Christ, a humble subject and accomplice was the Virgin, born of the righteous Joachim and Anna. For we too, after the hymn, cry out and say: “Thou art become a golden censer, for the Fire dwelt in thy womb, even the Word by the Holy Spirit; and He is seen in man’s form, O pure Birth-giver of God” (Ode 6, 2nd Canon, Both now). The one and only who introduced Christ into the world for the salvation of our souls”. Amen. Many happy returns”.

This was followed by a litany of the Holy Icon, a treat in the event hall of the Church and a meal for the Patriarchal Entourage under the Community, where once again His Beatitude spoke as follows:

“Thy Nativity O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy to the whole world; for from thee hath dawned the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, annulling the course and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting” (Apolytikion).

Beloved brothers in Christ, Your Excellency Mr President and respected members of the Ecclesiastical Council and other holy institutions,

Today, we enjoyed the sacrament of the divine and bloodless sacrifice, that is, the Holy Eucharist the proclaimed joy to all the world by the Mother of God and Ever-

Virgin Mary.

The Theotokos and Mother of God the Word and of our Saviour Christ, but also Mother of the Church of Christ was destined and chosen by God the Father before the foundation of the world to give us this joy in the Holy Spirit.

Our holy Church of Christ, being the Body of Christ is the vine and we are its branches, as the Lord says: “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned”(John 15,5-6).

Indeed, my beloved brothers, we who are clothed with Christ in holy baptism, those who receive the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, have become branches of the true vine, that is, of Christ. For we are called to abide in Him. The Lord says, ” He that abideth in me, and I in him ” (John 15:5).

We say this in order to emphasize that the Church of Christ, and especially the Church of Jerusalem, is the protection and safe haven of those who praise and magnify the Mother of God, by whom the Sun of righteousness rose, our Saviour Christ, but also the physician of souls and bodies; So along with Saint John of Damascus we say to the Virgin Mary:

“Rejoice thou who are full of grace the most joyous name and thing of all joy, from whom Christ was born into the world, unrepeatable joy, the hospital (=healer) of Adam’s sorrow. Many and blessed returns. Amen.






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