

The feast of the Holy Hieromartyr Philoumenos of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood



On Friday, November 29/16, 2024, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy Hieromartyr Philoumenos of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood at Jacob's Well in Nablus of Samaria.

On this feast, the Church of Jerusalem remembers that the Holy Hieromartyr Philoumenos came from Cyprus and joined the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood at a young age. He served in various ministries with devotion. During his last appointment as a Hegoumen at Jacob's well he was attacked brutally on the day of the feast of the Apostle and Evangelist Matthew, November 29/16, 1979, while he was praying in the chapel next to the well. That attack took away his earthly life and gave him the inheritance of eternal life.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, with a Synodical Decision proceeded in his

canonization in the chorea of the Hieromartyrs in 2009.

In the Church of Saint Photeini, the Samaritan woman, above Jacob's well, which also includes the chapels of Saint Philoumenos and Saint Justin the philosopher from Nablus, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences, the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and the Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the first in rank of the Hieromonks, the Exarch of the Holy Sepulchre in Athens, Archimandrite Ieronymos, the Archimandrites Meletios and from the Monastery of Saint Gerasimos Fr Kyriakos, other Priests of the Patriarchate, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacons Simeon and Dositheos and also the Master of the Ceremonies of the Patriarchate Archimandrite Bartholomew participated. The chanting was delivered by Dr Yacub in Greek and the local choir in Arabic. The Liturgy was attended by faithful Christians from the neighbouring areas, Jerusalem and Saint Gerasimos Monastery.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. 3,14) Saint John the Theologian writes in the book of Revelation.

Dear brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians,

The Holy Church of Jerusalem, who like another Paul, "bears in her body the marks of Jesus" (cf. Gal. 6,17), celebrates the holy commemoration of the Holy Hieromartyr Philoumenos of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, in this shrine of Jacob's well, where Jesus Christ spoke with the Samaritan woman, and where Saint Philoumenos martyred.

As a member of the Order of the Studios (Spoudaioi) of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and a genuine Priest of the Church of Jerusalem, our Father Philoumenos, "called by God's grace since he was separated from his mother's womb" (c.f. Gal. 1,15), carried the signs of the ministry of the Holy Places, which testify Christ who suffered for us, was crucified and resurrected, as the Apostle Peter preaches: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter, 2.21).

These words of Saint Peter imply the precise imitation of Christ, as it is possible to man. According to Saint Cyril of Alexandria, "to follow His footsteps" means to

“have in ourselves the death (of Christ), which is the inability to work sinful deeds”. This is also what the Lord says, “he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10,38), and “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matt. 16,25).

These words of the Lord mean that Christ gave His sacred blood on the Cross as ransom for the salvation of the souls of all men, becoming thus, according to Saint John the Theologian, “the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God” (Rev. 3,14). In other words, Christ is the primary faithful and true witness, who gave His blood for our sake. Origen says regarding this: “Man has nothing which can be given as a ransom for the kept by death man’s soul, nothing that can save him from death. While man has nothing to exchange for his soul, God gave the precious blood of Christ as a ransom for the souls of all men”.

From the above, the meaning of the redeeming martyrdom of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, the faithful and true witness, becomes crystal clear.

Therefore, this begs the question: Why does the Holy Church of Jerusalem honour especially the commemoration of its martyr, Saint Philoumenos? Because Saint Philoumenos is enlisted in the “cloud”, the multitude of the martyrs for the love of Christ. The “cloud” (Hebrews 12,1), “of the martyrs of the sufferings of Christ” (c.f. 1 Peter, 5,1), are those who following the “faithful and true witness” (Rev. 3,14), gave the testimony of their blood to the Church and the world.

This testimony of our holy father Philoumenos’ blood, is his confession, that Christ is the fulfilment of the Law of Moses and of the Prophets, “the light of the world” (John 8,12), “the way and the truth” (John 14, 6).

Our Hieromartyr Philoumenos, as the hymnographer says, “fiercely beaten with leather whips, thou yet didst never renounce the saving Name of the Saviour Christ, nor wast thou subdued in mind, nor to idols didst thou sacrifice, but thou didst become a pure sacrifice and a perfect voluntary victim, willingly slain for thy Master’s sake” (Vespers, November 11, Aposticha Troparion 1), imitating the faithful witness, Christ, and following the footsteps of the Samaritan woman’s martyrdom, and that of her children.

Indeed, our Father Philoumenos suffered a horrendous death inside the chapel of the Patriarch Jacob's well, while praying and chanting the words of David: "I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me. I am thine, save me: for I have sought thy precepts. The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies" (Ps. 119,93-95).

Yes, the wicked ones, that is, those who murdered him, waited to kill him with an axe and grenades, believing that they offered a sacrifice to God; "yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16,2). Saint Philoumenos' murderers did not realise that "There were some who pleased God and were loved by him, and while living among sinners were taken up" (Solomon's wisdom 4,10), to the eternal life, "to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which is written in heaven" (Hebrews 12,23).

According to Saint Chrysostom, "The martyrs' death is the comfort of the faithful, the boldness of the churches, the unity of Christianity, the abolition of death, the proof of the resurrection, the mocking of demons, the devil's accusation, the teaching of philosophy...and the root of every good deed". Behold, therefore, my dear brethren, why we pay tribute to the commemoration of the holy martyrs, and their co-martyr Philoumenos.

We should note that "we do not worship the martyrs, but honour them as genuine worshippers of God; we do not venerate the people, however, we admire those who respected God in times of temptations", Asterios of Amaseia says. "We worship Christ as the Son of God, while we love his disciples and imitators of the Lord, as it is befitting for their unmeasurable love for the King and Master", Saint Polycarp of Smyrna teaches.

This tribute we pay today to the Hieromartyr Philoumenos, with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, as he "through patience fought the unjust archon, that is the devil, and received the crown of immortality, along with the Apostles and all the righteous, and rejoicing he glorifies God the Father and Almighty and blesses our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of our souls and Master of our bodies and Shepherd of the Catholic Church all over the world.

Let us entreat the martyr of Christ's love Philoumenos, that along with the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos, they may pray to the God of peace and righteousness and conciliation, for our souls and especially for the cessation of the war in our tested region. Amen. Many happy and peaceful returns!"

The Liturgy was followed by a procession with the relics of Saint Philoumenos and

finally with a reception and a meal hosted by the Hegoumen of the Shrine, Archimandrite Ioustinos.

From the General Secretariat



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