

## **HANDING OVER OF HOLY RELICS BY THE PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA TO THE METROPOLITAN OF MIKHAILOVSKY**

**On June 6, 2023, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and all Africa** handed to His Eminence George, Metropolitan of Mikhailovsky-Košice, Hierarch of the Autocephalous Church of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, a fragment of the holy relics of the Holy Glorious New Martyrs Gabriel and Kyrmidoli, kept in the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St George in Old Cairo, following the relevant prayerful request of His Eminence George of Mikhailovsky.

During the handover ceremony, which took place in the Holy Chapel of Saints Theodori of the Patriarchal Palace in Alexandria, His Beatitude expressed his joy at the fact that the Grace of the Holy New Martyrs, through their holy relics, is also being transferred to Slovakia, praying that “they would become one more spiritual link in the unshakable unity of faith in the bond of love in Christ between our Churches”.

He also expressed his pleasure and his just praise of the energetic Abbot of the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St. George Old Cairo, the Very Reverend Archimandrite Damaskinos Alazrai, who tirelessly takes care of making the two New Martyrs known to Orthodoxy under heaven.

Receiving the holy relics, His Eminence Metropolitan George expressed his emotion saying among other things: “It is a very significant event to receive this blessing from the hands of the Venerable Primate of the Supreme Church of Alexandria, the Church of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark, the Holy Alexandrian Fathers and Teachers and of Saint John the Merciful, Patron of our Holy Metropolitan Church in Košice, Slovakia, in order to transfer it to my country and to my Holy Metropolis, whose Christian and saint adoring flock will always have respect, gratitude and love for the ancient Second-throne Patriarchate and His Beatitude Patriarch Theodoros”.

**Saints Gabriel and Kyrmidolis** were martyred in Egypt on October 18, 1522 AD. Both were young, highly educated, and descended from pious parents. Once, they were slandered to the Emir of Egypt, Haer Mek, ostensibly that they were throwing garbage and filth into a Turkish Mosque. They were taken bound to the Court, where they were asked to change their faith to avoid torture. However, because they firmly confessed Christ, they were delivered to the judge. But even there they remained steadfast in their faith, despite the flattery, and suffered horrible tortures. Thus both were martyred in the 25th year of their age. Kyrmidolis was killed with knives and stones, while Gabriel was beheaded.

The tomb of the Holy New Martyrs is located within the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St George and is considered another living testimony of the operation of the Monastery for so many centuries. The saints were martyred in 1522, during the Patriarchal tenure of the Patriarch of Alexandria, Saint Joachim of Panis, and their lives were recorded by Saint Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and Patriarch Theophilos II of Alexandria. The Service for the Saints is found in codex 379 of the Patriarchal library of Cairo.

It is noted that in recent years a significant effort has been made to highlight the Saints. On the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the martyrdom of Saints Gabriel and Kyrmidoli (1522-2022), at the prompting of the His Beatitude, the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St George issued the first edition of the Service of the Saints, which contains the Lyric Hymns Service, the Supplicatory Canon, the Commendation Praise by the late Patriarch Theophilos II of Alexandria to the Saints, as well as the Arrangement of the litany of their Holy Relics.

Also in this edition, which was diligently edited by the historian and researcher Mr. Ioannis Fortounas, photographs are also presented concerning the icons of the Saints found in the Holy Monastery of St George, their graceful relics kept in the Church of the Holy Monastery, the Chapel and the tomb of the Saints, as well as photographs from the most ancient Divine Liturgy of the Apostle Mark, which was served by His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa in their memory at the tombs of the Saints on October 18, 2020.

Finally, the year 2023 calendar of the Orthodox Arabic-speaking Communities of Egypt was dedicated to the memory of the Holy New Martyrs Gabriel and Kyrmidoli.