

# THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FIRST MARTYR AND ARCHDEACON STEPHEN

On Wednesday, December 27, 2018/ January 9, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy First Martyr and Archdeacon Stephen at the Holy Church bearing his name, which lies on the place of his tending to death, at the valley of Gethsemane near the Tomb of the Mother of God.

On this feast the Church honours St. Stephen, who is mentioned in the book of the Acts of the Apostles (ch. 6-7) as a member of the First Christian Community of Jerusalem, being the first out of seven deacons, who had been elected to minister at the common meals. St. Stephen was full of divine zeal and confessed Christ before the Jewish Sanhedrin, for which reason he was stoned to death, while he was praying for those who stoned him. Saul, the later Apostle Paul was present at the stoning and kept the garments of those who stoned St. Stephen.

In the evening there was Vespers in this place and the Divine Liturgy was celebrated on the day of the feast, which was led by the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod Most Reverend Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, with co-celebrants Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and ministering Priests of the Shrine of Gethsemane, the Archimandrites Makarios and Dionysios and Hierodeacon Synesios. The service was attended by monks, nuns and pilgrims.

After the Divine Liturgy there was a litany of the holy icon and a special prayer at the place of the stoning of the Holy First Martyr Stephen, and afterward, the Hegoumen of the Shrine Archimandrite Epiphanius offered a reception to all present at the hegoumeneion.

**From Secretariat-General**