

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GREECE MR. DEMITRIOS DOLLIS VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE.

On Wednesday the 6th / 19th of January 2011, the day of the Epiphany, after the ceremony of Sanctifying the water at the Church of Resurrection, the Catholicon of the Church was Sanctified. The Holy Liturgy then took place at the Holy Sepulchre following a reception for the pilgrims who congregated at the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. At the Hall of the Throne His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III received Mr. Demitrios Dollis who, in his capacity as the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, was on an official visit to the State of Israel. Mr. Dollis was accompanied by the Secretary General of his Ministry, Mrs. Niki Kamva, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr. Sotirios Athanassiou and his assistant, the Consul Mrs. Aspasia Mitsi.

Within the framework of this visit, the Deputy Minister said to His Beatitude: «It is with much respect and deep emotion that I make this first official visit to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem following the one at the Ecumenical Patriarchate. I consider it my duty to visit the Patriarchate and also to convey the wishes of the Prime Minister of Greece Mr. George Papandreou before the start of my appointments tomorrow in the State of Israel».

His Beatitude replied to the Deputy Minister: «Your visit has great significance for the Patriarchate because it is not ceremonial or formal but indicative of your interest in the different religions and the Church. This fits also with the fact that yesterday, along with other leaders of the Christian

Churches you were a guest of the British Consul in Jerusalem, Sir Vincent Fean, at a dinner in honour of Mr. Alistair Burt, who demonstrated lively interest in religious matters and concerns for the Christians in the Middle East».

The Minister then said: «The language, the civilization and our creed are the three elements that have always united us. I say this having served in Australia for thirty years and having negotiated the exit of the Palestinians from the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem some years back».

«For this action and your benevolent attitude Mr. Deputy Minister,» said His Beatitude, «We have decided to honour You with the Medal of the Higher Taxiarch of the Holy Sepulchre and to give a gold cross to Your assistant, Mrs. Niki Kamva, who has previously served with dedication at the Consulate General (of Greece) in Jerusalem.».

Visibly moved and showing his gratitude, Mr. Dollis presented His Beatitude with an ornate encolpion.

After the event at the Patriarchate, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, accompanied by Fathers, members of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, hosted a meal in honour of the Deputy Minister and His escort at the American Colony Hotel in Jerusalem.

Chief Secretary's Office.

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