BREACH OF PILGRIMAGE STATUS BY THE ARMENIANS IN THE CAVE OF THE NATIVITY IN BETHLEHEM

On Saturday, October 16th / 29th 2011, His Holy Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, escorted by the Elder Dragoman Holy Metropolitan of Eleftheroupolis Christodoulos and His Eminence Elder Chief Secretary Archbishop of Constantina Aristarchus went to Bethlehem.

There at our priory/hegoumeneio He met with His Eminence Patriarchal Vicar in Bethlehem Archbishop of Jordan Theophilaktos and with the Custodian of the Franciscan Holy Land F. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, F. Athanasius Makora and the abbot of the Franciscans in Bethlehem F. Stephen and all together descended to the Cave that accepted God.

Here they inspected wear, that is scrapes in the marble joints on the ground and removal of marble parts, caused by the Armenians arbitrarily on October 27th/ 28th 2011, on the floor, to the repairs, which had been made by the Orthodox and the Franciscan the previous day , 26th / 27th October 2011.

This act of the Orthodox and the Franciscan was conducted, as in past occasions, in accordance with their agreement, having as entitled the right to take this action in the Cave that accepted God according to the pilgrimage status.

This act by the Armenians, that is scraping with a tool and cleaning the plaster from the cracks of the broken marbles and removing these pieces was done by contravention of the pilgrimage status since according to this status they do not have any rights to repairing or cleaning in the Cave that has accepted God other than their right to use it to conduct their Liturgy.

After this inspection, the Orthodox and the Franciscan agreed to proceed to the necessary actions and protests for the prevention of the consequences of this arbitrary action of the Armenians aiming at the distortion of the pilgrimage status through the acquisition of non-vested pilgrimage rights.

Chief Secretary's Office

(translated from the original document in Greek by Mrs. Irini Valasi)

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