

SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS CELEBRATED IN SHEPHERDS VILLAGE

On Sunday the 16th/29th of December 2013, the Feast of the Holy Forefathers was observed in commemoration of the Forefathers, according to the flesh, of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lived before the Law and under the Law, namely Abraham the Patriarch, his son Isaac, David the righteous king, and the prophet Daniel and his three children who transformed the fire into dew. The feast was observed at the church dedicated to them, in the Village of the Shepherds – Beit Sahour.

In this Village, named after the Shepherds who, urged by angels, proceeded to see the infant Jesus lying in the manger, the Patriarchate preserves a very ancient Greek Orthodox (Rum Orthodox) Community, numbering today approximately seven thousand members.

His Beatitude Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, was warmly received by the priests of this Community, Boy Scouts, Commissioners, and the people, before leading the Matins procession and the divine Liturgy. Co-officiating were the Most Reverend Isychios, Metropolitan of Kapitolias, His Eminence Dorotheos, Archbishop of Avila, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and deacons. The Community Choir chanted while a great crowd of Orthodox people participated in piety.

To the pious congregation, His Beatitude Theophilos preached the Word of God. This is an excerpt from His speech:

[...] The unspeakable and indeed great and paradoxical mystery of the incarnation of the Divine Logos, namely our reformation and that of our Forefathers, is proclaimed today by the

present festive gathering in this holy site, where the Shepherds living in the fields nearby were terrified when they listened to this angelic hymn: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests" (Luke 2, 14). "And it came to pass" says the Evangelist Luke, "as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us" (Luke 2, 15).

This very fact, my dear brothers, which the Lord made known to us is none other than the Nativity of Christ, our God and Saviour, from the pure blood of the All-Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. This same fact is a folly and a scandal to the whole world "lying in wickedness" (I John 5, 19), whereas for the world of the Church, it is a great and paradoxical mystery. And this because, according to the Evangelist John, "we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and he is eternal life" (1 John 5, 20).

[...] Today, the festive commemoration of the Holy Forefathers and Prophets, is intended for this sacred purpose, namely the preparation and arrangement of the cavern within us, in other words the spiritual cavern of our heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5, 8) says the Lord. "Put to death, therefore" preaches the wise Paul, "whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry; rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Col. 3, 5-10).

The entire speech may be read in Greek here:
<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/gr/2013/12/29/10276>

And in Arabic here:
<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2013/12/29/2996>

At the end of the divine Liturgy, a reception was held at the Events Hall, followed by lunch at the town's hotel, hosted by the Community.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/T87QmCJcIEI>

