

INAUGURATION OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHER EXARCHY IN CYPRUS

On the morning of Saturday the 27th of April/10th, the church of the Holy Sepulcher Exarchy was inaugurated in Cyprus, followed by the Divine Liturgy.

The Exarchy building lies at a short distance from the Holy Archbishopric of Cyprus. It was built on land belonging to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and within the older building, preserving all items designated by the Archaeological Department of Cyprus.

The newly erected building includes a church dedicated to the Ascension of the Lord and to St Philoumen the Hagiotaphite who suffered a martyr's death near Jacob's Well.

The entire work was completed with the approval of the Holy Archbishopric of Cyprus, in response to a relevant request by the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Works of reconstruction, reparation and erection of the Church and its surrounding halls intended for the operation of the Exarchy and the dwelling of the Exarch, as well as of visiting Hagiotaphite Fathers, were completed within approximately two years, owing to the diligent efforts of the Exarch, the Most Reverend Timotheos, Metropolitan of Bostroi and the financial support of the Patriarchate's benefactor, Mr Igor Altushkin. Also, thanks to the knowledge and honesty of architects, Mr Ioannis Agisilaou and Mr Georgios Kalavas, and the knowledge and transparency of foreman Mr Andronikou.

The new Exarchy fills the void of the old Exarchy of the Holy Sepulcher at the Holy Monastery of St Chrysostom in Koutsoventis, which has been inoperative since the 1974

Turkish invasion in Cyprus. It is intended to serve as a link between the life and collaboration of these two ancient Churches, namely the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Church of Cyprus, throughout their pastoral, ecclesiastical, and venerating work, as well as in their peacemaking, educational and cultural endeavours in the Middle East.

The Inauguration ceremony was performed after Saturday Matins Service.

In accordance with the typical order of Inauguration, the holy relics were carried from the Altar across the church and around it, after the recitation of relevant excerpts from the Old Testament and the Gospels.

Subsequently, as the Patriarch invoked "Lift up your heads, O ye gates! and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors! and the King of glory shall enter in" thrice, the gates of the Church opened to let the Patriarch in.

The holy relics carried from Jerusalem were then placed on the Holy Altar, followed by a consecration ceremony which involved smearing the icons on the iconostasis with the holy myrrh.

Once the Holy Altar was consecrated, the Divine Liturgy began.

The festive Orthodox service was led by His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem. Co-officiating on his right was His Beatitude Chrysostomos, Archbishop of Cyprus, surrounded by the Most Reverend Chrysostomos, Metropolitan of Kition; the Exarch, Metropolitan Timotheos of Bostroi; the Patriarchal Commissioner in Gaza, Archbishop Alexios of Tiberias; the Elder Secretary-General, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constanina; Archimandrites Evdokimos and Ignatios; other Hieromonks and Presbyters of the Church of Cyprus; Archdeacon Evlogios; Archdeacon Kyprianos of the Holy Archbishopric of Cyprus, and a crowd of faithful and friends of the Holy Sepulcher. Co-praying among them was Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Kyrenia, as the choir sang under the direction of Mr

Christos Pantelis (at Vespers) alongside the Engomi parish choir.

At the conclusion of the divine liturgy, His Beatitude Theophilos delivered an address in Greek.

The Grand Crusader's Medal of the Holy Sepulcher was then presented to Metropolitan Timotheos of Bostroi, on behalf of benefactor Mr Igor Altushkin, absent due to illness.

Metropolitan Timotheos went on to thank God for guiding his steps to the diaconate of the Mother of Churches; His Beatitude, for appointing him Exarch of the Holy Sepulcher, Mr Igor Altushkin, for his generous financial support until the completion of the work, as well as the choirs, before presenting the Archbishop of Cyprus with a prelatric *engolpio* carrying an icon of the Ascension.

The proprietor's inscription was then revealed, followed by a short reception at the forecourt.

Lunch was hosted by the Exarch at the Royal Hotel. During lunch, the Patriarch of Jerusalem addressed guests in Greek.

This completed the liturgical, ecclesiastical and social events marking the opening of the Holy Sepulcher Exarchy in Cyprus.

From the Secretariat-General

