

# CHRISTMAS 2015 IN BETHLEHEM

On the evening of Christmas Eve, the 24<sup>th</sup> of December/6<sup>th</sup> of January 2015, to the 25<sup>th</sup> of December/7<sup>th</sup> of January 2015, at 10:30 pm, celebrations began for Christmas Day, as the Patriarchal Commissioner, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias was welcomed at the Baptismal gate. From there, the Prelatic Retinue entered the nave where Matins began for the feast of Christmas.

During Matins, His Beatitude entered the Holy Bema, then walked through the Beautiful Gate with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on his right, and on his left the Jordan Minister of Labour and the Greek Consul-General to Jerusalem.

In this Holy Land, where divinity was revealed to humans in a bodily form, the excerpt on the Nativity was recited from Luke's Gospel, followed by the Patriarch's Message of Christmas by Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina in Greek, see:

<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/gr/2014/12/22/19407>

and by presbyter f. Issa Mousleh, the Patriarchate's liaison with Arab-speaking Mass Media, in Arabic.

His Beatitude and the Primates went on to venerate at the Star and the Manger, before the procession began in the interior of the basilica. Upon the completion of the third circle, a supplication was made, followed by Matins in the nave, in front of the iconostasis.

Matins and the d. Liturgy were led by Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem. Co-officiating were: Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishops Theophanes of Gerassa, Dorotheos of Avila, Aristarchos of Constantina, Theophylaktos of Jordan, and Demetrios of Lydda. In attendance were Hieromonks and priests visiting from Orthodox countries, such as Greece,

Russia, Romania, Moldavia and Ukraine, Archdeacon Evlogios and deacons. The choir chanted in Greek on the right, in Arabic on the left, for a great congregation hailing from Bethlehem, Beit-Jalla, and Village of the Shepherds, as well as visitors from Greece, Russia, Romania, Moldavia and Ukraine.

Many among them received Holy Communion, thanking God for the experience of the divine Liturgy, offered to them by Christ on the site of His Nativity in the flesh.

Mass was followed by festive lunch, hosted by Archbishop Theophylaktos of Jordan.

After lunch, His Beatitude, fathers and the crowd left for their city in heavy rain, in anticipation of significant snowfall.

**From the Secretariat-General**

<http://youtu.be/LLIj3-7UqFo>

