

THE FEAST OF ST NICHOLAS OBSERVED AT THE PATRIARCHATE

A. AT THE MONASTERY DEDICATED TO HIS NAME IN JERUSALEM

On Saturday, the 6th/19th of December 2015, the feast of St Nicholas was observed at the Monastery dedicated to his name, opposite the Patriarchate to the northwest. His Eminence Theophanes, Archbishop of Gerassa, led Vespers and the divine Liturgy. Archbishop Theophanes preached the Word of God about St Nicholas, “the icon of serenity, teacher of abstinence, who had conquered elevation in humbleness and wealth in poverty, and mediator between us and Christ for the benefit of our souls” for a pious congregation of chanting nuns, Greek-speaking and Arabic-speaking faithful, nuns and pilgrims from Greece, Russia and Romania.

On the conclusion of the service, the hegoumen and renovator of the Church, Archimandrite Aristovoulos, hosted Primates and the congregation to a reception at the hegoumeneion.

B. AT THE MONASTERY OF HOSIOS SAVVA THE SANCTIFIED

The feast of St Nicholas the Miracle-Maker, Bishop of Myra, Lycia, was observed on Saturday the 6th/19th of December 2015, at the monastery dedicated to his name, known as “God-built” as its greatest part lies within a natural cave. This has been the first church of St Savva Monastery, dated to the time when hosios Savva arrived at Cedars Stream to commence his monastic life.

Metropolitan Joachim of former Zambia led Vespers and the divine Liturgy, having as concelebrants Archimandrite Ignatios, hegoumen at the Monastery of the Shepherds, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and deacon Markos. Monks from St Savva Monastery sang for a pious congregation of Arabic-speaking

faithful from Bethlehem, the Village of the Shepherds and Beit Jala.

After the service, a Memorial Service was held for the departed Hagiosabbite Fathers in the Church's forecourt, which is also the roof of the cemetery of St Savva Monastery. The Memorial Service was followed by entry into the Katholikon.

There, the priests and the faithful received *kollyva* on the invitation of Archimandrite Evdokimos, Spiritual Father of the Lavra. Later, Primates and the congregation were hosted to monastic lunch as a token of God's gift for the pains of their Vigil.

After lunch, Primates went on to venerate at the Monastery of St Theodosius the Cenobiarch, where they were welcomed by the hegoumen, Archimandrite Ierotheos.

C. IN BEIT JALA

On Saturday, the 6th/19th of December 2015, the memory of St Nicholas, Bishop of Myra in Lycia, was observed at the church dedicated to his name in the town of Beit Jala, adjacent to Bethlehem.

Beit Jala is one of the biggest towns of the Palestinian State, numbering approximately ten thousand Christians. St Nicholas is the town's patron-saint, whilst a second church is dedicated to the Nativity of Theotokos.

The divine Liturgy was led by Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem, having as concelebrants Archbishops Methodios of Tabor and Demetrios of Lydda; the hegoumen in Beit Jala, Archimandrite Narkissos; priests f. Pavlos Doret, Joseph Hondali; Archdeacon Evlogios and deacon Markos. The Community Choir sang in Arabic in the Byzantine style for a great crowd for Orthodox.

After Communion and the Apolysis, a procession followed in the

forecourt of the church and the cave of St Nicholas as well as around the church.

After the procession, His Beatitude distributed icons to the congregation. The reception was followed by lunch at a town restaurant, hosted by Archimandrite Narkissos and the Beit Jala Community Council.

From the Secretariat-General