

ARTICLE ON THE RESTORATION OF THE HOLY AEDICULA OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE PUBLISHED IN “DIMOKRATIA NEWS”

On the 20th of March 2016, Mr Stathis Vasilopoulos published in “Dimokratia” newspaper an article on the study conducted by an Interdisciplinary Team from the NTUA, coordinated by Professor Antonia Moropoulou.

The article was titled **“Salvaging restoration of the Holy Sepulchre by the Metsovion!”** followed by the subtitle **“The four-member group given the “green light” by Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem will complete the project by 2017 and signed by Stathis Vasilopoulos.**

The project is described as a landmark in the architectural and veneration history of the Church of the Resurrection, as the National Technical University of Athens has been called upon to undertake the restoration of the Aedicula of the Holy Sepulchre, where Jesus beat death and opened the gates to eternal life. “The salvation of the Holy Sepulchre” the writer says, “a monument of global status and pole of attraction for millions of faithful across the world, rests upon a four-member team of the NTUC, led by Professor Moropoulou of the School of Chemical Engineers”.

The writer goes on to add that the study was grounded on the triptych “documentation-diagnosis-proposal”, after the scientific group had carefully examined structural damages and decided on the necessary interventions for conservation and enhancement. Of note is the fact, says the writer, that the operation of the Holy Sepulchre had not been interrupted during the course of the study.

In a statement she gave to "Dimokratia", Ms Moropoulou said: "A great honour but also a blessing was the fact that the Patriarch of Jerusalem, in agreement with the Christian communities jointly managing the Holy Sepulchre, has entrusted us with such an important world monument that brings together different peoples, different religions and different cultures".

In March 2015, scientists from Israel proposed to intervene, asking that the Aedicula be closed to the faithful. "Then", Professor Moropoulou adds, "I travelled to Jerusalem right away and explained to the competent persons that there was no immediate risk that would impose interruption of the veneration, given that we would immediately submit our proposal for the necessary interventions". Conservation and restoration works are scheduled to begin next week, a few days before the Catholic Easter, celebrated on the 27th of March.

Mass interventions will take place after the 1st of May, barring any delays in the financing of the project. More than 25 professors from five different Schools and seven laboratories of the NTUA will be engaged in the restoration works, aiming to complete the project by January 2017.

A crane will be used for the execution of the project, whilst the structural materials will be stored in special boxes and sacks. Around and over the Holy Aedicula, cameras will be installed for the constant documentation of works and finds. With a view to keeping the Holy Sepulchre open to pilgrims throughout the restoration works, the scientists have proposed the construction of a protective roof and permanent fencing. The Bank of Attica has borne the cost for the installation of scaffolding, whilst the National Bank looks at whether the project can be placed within the Crowdfunding fund, and the World Monuments Fund has already expressed an interest in contributing financially to the restoration works.

Reference is also made to the fact that, in its present-day form, the Aedicula of the Holy Sepulchre was erected in 1810 by architect Komninos, whilst the year 1947 saw the last intervention by British scientists with the addition of iron caging as remedy for the monument's disfiguration.

The article closes with the miracle of the Holy Light that takes place every year on the Holy Saturday when, after lamenting Christ's crucifixion, the Patriarch steps into the Holy Sepulchre and prays to Jesus for the blessing of the light. It is then that the torches the Patriarch holds become miraculously lit.

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From the Secretariat-General