

THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THEOTOKOS IN NAZARETH

On Thursday, the 25th of March/7th of April 2016, the feast of the Annunciation of Theotokos was observed by the Patriarchate in panegyric memory of the fact that the Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to Mariam, the pure daughter of Nazareth, and addressing her "Rejoice, O Full of Grace", told her that by the Holy Spirit she would conceive the Son the of God, to which she replied "I am the servant of the Lord, may your word to me be fulfilled".

The incarnation constitutes "the chapter of our salvation and the revelation of the age-long mystery": the Son of God became the son of the Virgin, acquired our human nature, that in Himself through His entire work has blessed and deified.

The feast was observed in Nazareth, where the Annunciation had taken place. On the morning of the feast-day, the divine Liturgy was led by Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem, having as concelebrants: Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and Isychios of Kapitolias; Archbishops Jean of Charioupolis from the Ecumenical Patriarchate; Metropolitans Alexandros of Pereyaslav-Khmel'nitsky and Vishnevsky; Symeon of Vinitski and Barsky, and Archbishop Vladimir of Dneprodzerzhinsk and Tsaritsnanski; Archbishops Damascene of Joppa, Aristarchos of Constantina and Methodios of Tabor; the former Metropolitan of Zambia, Joachim; Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, led by Archimandrite Ieronymos, hegumen in Fhes, Jordan; Archimandrite Timotheos, hegumen at the Monastery of Tiberias; Archimandrite Sophronios, hegumen at Ai Lambun; Archimandrite Chrysostomos, hegumen in Kana, Galilee; Archimandrite Leontios of the Russian MISSIA in Jerusalem; Arabic-speaking presbyters and Archdeacon Evlogios, as well as other deacons, and Archimandrite Philotheos, hegumen in Accra. A pilgrim from the

Metropolis of Langadas sang in Greek and the Nazareth Choir in Arabic, in the presence of the Greek Consul-General to Jerusalem, Mr G. Zacharoudiakis, and the Greek representative to Tel Aviv, Mr Gennimatas. A great crowd of pious locals and pilgrims from Greece, Russia, Romania and other countries participated in the service. In fact, so many were the faithful, that this Orthodox feast was observed as a feast of the entire city, led by the Head of our salvation, the Nazarene.

The Patriarch delivered a sermon in Greek, quoting the words of the Evangelist Luke as follows:

God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to the virgin Mariam. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you. Blessed art thou amongst women... And she said "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you". "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her. [Luke 1, 26-38]

"Mary's unquestionable contribution to the human race", said the Patriarch, "lies in the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ became incarnate through her, and saved us from the fallacy of the devil and of the ancestral curse. In other words, the Virgin Mary liberated man from the chains of sin and the attrition of death. Also", added the Patriarch, "the name of the Virgin is interpreted as "Lady", which signifies that Theotokos stands above all as the source and root of the freedom of men".

After Communion and the Apolysis, a procession followed from the Church of the Annunciation to the town's centre, terminating at the Shrine in bliss and for the glory of God.

At noon, the Metropolitan of Nazareth and the Community

Council hosted His Beatitude and Entourage and several others to meatless lunch with fish.

After lunch, the Patriarch and Primate visited the town of Touran near Nazareth, where His Beatitude inspected the renovation of the Church now underway by the subvention of the Patriarchate.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/eYMxNdMNlPM>

<http://youtu.be/6zD82XU-0nE>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dd-PguRBq74>

