

THE SECOND DAY OF PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS' OFFICIAL VISIT TO HUNGARY

At noon of Tuesday, the 11th/24th of May 2016, Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem visited Hungary's Parliament.

The House of the National Assembly is housed at a 19th c. building of fine architecture, on both the interior and the exterior, a traditional cultural jewel of Budapest. The various sections of the building feature different periods from the history of Hungary, as well as aspects of its political, cultural, social, rural and war life.

The building includes the semi-circular assembly hall, equipped with contemporary online tools for the sessions.

Upon entering the Parliament, His Beatitude talked to Hungary's state TV channel, saying among other things: "We have been invited by the Hungarian Government, for the second time since 2012, to bring to the Hungarian people the hopeful resurrectional message of Jerusalem. We met, yesterday, with the distinguished representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Metropolitan Arsenios of Austria-Hungary, and members of the Greek Community in Budapest. Today we have the honour of meeting with Mr Zsolt Semjen, representing Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who is unfortunately ill, and to whom we extend wishes for recuperation by the grace of the Most Holy and Life-giving Sepulchre".

"The Church of Jerusalem", said Patriarch Theophilos, "has remained through the centuries a witness of the Lord's Crucifixion and Resurrection. Today, the holy city of Jerusalem has become the apple of discord, but it can be the key to the resolution of the political problem, given that its

holiness and sacred history for the three religions is respected”.

“The Patriarchate of Jerusalem is recognized as the indigenous local Church by the governments of Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Autonomy”.

“We recommend the exchange of pilgrimages for the spiritual strengthening of pilgrims and for the sake of peace in the Holy Land, as well as for the prosperity of its inhabitants”.

The interview was followed by a guided tour of the Patriarchal Entourage along the various departments of the Parliament. Of special note, beyond the aforementioned Assembly Hall, is the restaurant featuring a large handmade carpet that depicts scenes of fishing and hunting. The Holy Crown is kept in a special showcase at the centre of the building. According to the Hungarian tradition, the crown, said to belong to Constantine the Great, was delivered by Pope Silvester to the first Christian king of Hungary, St Stephen, a saint of the common undivided Church of the first ten centuries.

After the tour, Patriarch Theophilos met with Mr Zsolt Semjen. At the meeting, the country’s deputy Prime Minister expressed joy over the Patriarch’s second visit to Hungary, immediately after the signing of a special agreement between Hungary and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the first Orthodox Church, playing a coordinating role amongst the other Churches in Hungary, Russia, Romania, Serbia and Bulgaria. Metropolitan Arsenios of Austria-Hungary serves as the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s official representative.

In His reply, His Beatitude underlined the peace-making role that Jerusalem can take on for the resolution of the Palestinian Problem, if viewed by political leaders in the light of its holy history.

On the occasion of this visit, His Beatitude offered Mr Semjen an icon of Panaghia Jerusalemite, and an icon for Prime

Minister Urban.

Mr Semjen offered the Patriarch a replica of a 12th c. Hungarian coin.

Subsequently, the Patriarch, His Entourage and Metropolitan Arsenios sat at lunch hosted by Mr Semjen in the presence of the Hungarian ambassador to Ramallah, Mr G. Mihailyi, and the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

During lunch, an interesting discussion took place on the Churches of the Holy Land and the Middle East, and on the need to have its Christian flocks enhanced by European states. Mr Semjen talked of his country's attitude vis a vis the refugee crisis, as well as of the adversities imposed by the Hungarian people by its different conquerors through time.

In the afternoon, Doxology was led by Patriarch Theophilos at the Chapel of the Patriarchate of Serbia in Budapest, in the presence of Metropolitan Silouan, representing the Patriarchate of Serbia, Metropolitan Lucian, representing the Patriarchate of Moscow, and a priest representing the Patriarchate of Russia. During Doxology, His Beatitude addressed guests in English, see link: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2016/05/24/23929>

Doxology was followed by a guided tour at the Museum of Church Art. After a relevant question, the Patriarch also spoke of the Great Synod of Orthodoxy, scheduled to convene in Crete, as a testament to the unity of the Orthodox Churches.

This completed the second day of the official visit of the Patriarch of Jerusalem to Hungary.

From the Secretariat-General

