

THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM OFFICIATES IN TURAN COMMUNITY, NEAR TIBERIAS

On Sunday, the 5th/18th of September 2016, His Beatitude Theophilos of Jerusalem led the divine Liturgy at St George church of the Rum Orthodox Arabic-speaking Community of the town of Turan, near the Tiberian sea and the city of Kana, numbering approximately 700 members.

The divine Liturgy was performed in memory of St Zacharias the Prophet, father of the Forerunner, and on the occasion of the completion of the Community's church on behalf of the Patriarchate.

Co-officiating were Metropolitan Kyriakos Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of former Zambia, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the head of the Community, f. Spyridon, and Hierodeacon Markos acting as Archdeacon. The Nazareth and Turan Choirs sang for the Orthodox faithful attending in piety and joy.

To enhance their Christian Orthodox feelings, His Beatitude preached the word of God during Communion, saying that Christ is the head of the body of the Church for we are "members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones" [Ephesians 5, 30] according to the Apostle Paul. "This", the Patriarch said, "means that the restoration of this church pertains essentially to the restoration of the body of each and every one of us, according to Paul: *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.* (1 Corinthians 3, 16-17). It is precisely this temple of God that the devil hates and wants to destroy,

prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. (1 Peter 5, 8-9)".

On the conclusion of the divine Liturgy, His Beatitude distributed Jerusalemite blessings among the faithful.

The service was followed by a small reception in the events hall, then lunch hosted by the Community Council, during which the Patriarch addressed attendants in Greek.

"The annunciation of Christ's love and justice, as well as peace and reconciliation, and respect to every human being beyond discriminations constitutes the essential purpose of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem", the Patriarch said, adding: "The dispersed presence of Christian Communities, either large or small in numbers, provides tangible and visible testament to the centuries-long existence of local or indigenous Christians, both in the Holy Land and in the wider region of the suffering Middle East".

The Rum Orthodox Patriarchate is the one that guarantees the Christians' identity and stay in their ancestral homes, His Beatitude said, which "was clearly demonstrated during the recent meeting of the General Assembly of the Middle East Council of Churches in Amman, Jordan".

In closing, Patriarch Theophilos thanked the Very Reverend Archimandrite Timotheos, for tirelessly and with self-sacrifice serving the Christian Community in Turan, as well as to all those having worked for the completion of the restoration works, especially Archimandrite Hilarion, hegumen at the Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Saviour on Mount Tabor, and the contractor, Mr Nander Nassar. He then offered an icon of Theotokos to the Community and hieratic vestments for f. Spyridon.

From the Secretariat-General

httpv://youtu.be/9aPDLTjx6_8

<httpv://youtu.be/wFSYv-0yKAI>

