

# THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FOREFATHERS IN THE VILLAGE OF THE SHEPHERDS

On Sunday, the 12<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> of December 2016, the memory of the Forefathers of Christ, especially Abraham the Patriarch, was celebrated in the Village of the Shepherds where the shepherds had heard the angelic hymn “Glory be to God in the highest heaven” and were urged to go to Bethlehem, present-day Beit Sahour.

At the Church of the Rum Orthodox Arabic-speaking Community, numbering approximately 7,000 members, Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem was welcomed on the morning of the aforementioned day by Boy Scouts, the Patriarchal Commissioner in Bethlehem, Archbishop Theophylaktos of Jordan, the town priests, and a crowd of faithful. Patriarch Theophilos went on to lead Matins and the divine Liturgy, having as concelebrants Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, and Archbishop Theophylaktos of Jordan. Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the Hegumen, Archimandrite Ignatios, and Hierodeacon Markos prayed with the church priests, Presbyters Savvas, Issah and Ioannis. In attendance was Mr Vassilis Koinis, representative of the Greek Consulate-General.

His Beatitude delivered the sermon in Greek, saying that we honour the Holy Forefathers because through them was the “mystery hidden for long ages past” revealed (Romans 16, 25). According to St Paul: *“Although I am less than the least of all the Lord’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in*

*the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 3, 8-10).*

*In this very town, the Shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch of their flock, became eye witnesses of this revealed mystery, says the Apostle Luke. “An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.” (Luke 2, 8-11, 13, 14).*

*The Nativity of Christ, said His Beatitude, is about our own rebirth, but also about the progress of God’s perfect knowledge through works of justice. This is precisely what the wise Paul tells us in today’s excerpt from the Apostles: “But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator”. (Col. 3, 8-10).*

After the divine Liturgy, a reception was hosted at the events hall next to the Church, where the Patriarch addressed the Community and extended wishes for Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

At noon, the Community hosted His Beatitude to lunch at Saint Gabriel, owned by Rum Orthodox, Mr Athanasios Abu Aepa.

**From the Secretariat-General**

<httpv://youtu.be/AiC3EcplPTg>

