

# THE EVE THE OF THEOPHANY FEAST AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday 5th /18th January 2017 the Feast of the Eve of Theophany was celebrated by the Patriarchate according to the typical order of the Church of Jerusalem.

In the morning of this day the Theophany Royal Hours were read at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen at the end of Matins. The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil followed. At the end of the Liturgy H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the service of the Small Blessing of the Waters, for the blessing of the Archbishops, Hieromonks, monks, nuns and pilgrims.

The ascent to the Patriarchate followed, with the priests dressed in their liturgical vestments and the choir singing "When Thou were baptized in the Jordan". Therein, the Priest blessed the Patriarchate Hall, while His Beatitude and the Archbishops waited until the Entourage of the Blessing of the Waters from the Cathedral of St. James the Brother of God led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia arrived, who also blessed the Hall. Having completed the above, a short while later His Beatitude with the Hagiotaphite Fathers departed for the River Jordan via Jericho, accompanied by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos.

In Jericho His Beatitude was received firstly by the Hegoumen of the Monastery of Prophet Elisha, Archimandrite Philoumenos, and then by the Palestinian Mayor of Jericho, whom His Beatitude addressed with the following:

*"Honourable Mouhafez – Governor of Jericho,*

*Reverend Sheikh,*

Mr. Mayor,

Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem,

The feast of Holy Theophany, known as the "Feast of Lights", is marked as the extension and completion of the great Feast of Christmas, which was majestically celebrated at Christ's Birth place, Bethlehem.

His Eminence the President of the State of Palestine Mr. Mahmoud Abbas – Abu Mazen, during his honouring presence, stressed in his speech that this Feast is a Feast for the Palestinian people, meaning both Christians and Muslims.

This very fact is what we ascertain today, being here with you, at the most ancient city of Jericho, where the unspeakable mystery of the Holy Spirit's descent on our God and Saviour Jesus Christ took place, at His baptism by Saint John the Baptist.

The Greek Orthodox (Rum Orthodox) Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which is the source-mother of all Churches, continues throughout the centuries, meaning its long-lived historic active presence, to witness the holiness of the Palestinian land, which the Almighty God sanctified through His Only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ and through His Prophets.

The Holy Monasteries and Churches within Jericho and the neighbouring to the River Jordan areas witness this truth. They also witness that God is the source of Light and He is the Light which enlightens every man coming into the world. This Divine Light, is therefore the Light of love, peace and righteousness. Which means that it is not possible for peace to exist without righteousness.

This very message is being evangelized by the Greek Orthodox (Rum Orthodox) Patriarchate of Jerusalem throughout the centuries. Moreover, the historic treaty between Omar Ibn Khattab and our predecessor Patriarch Sophronios, was

*established based on this principle, that is, peace and righteousness according to the Divine Law: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17), the Apostle Paul says. Furthermore, according to the evangelist Matthew's witness, St. John the Baptist was preaching the way of righteousness: "For John came unto you in the way of righteousness" (Matthew 21:32).*

*We wish, that the Divine Light, which was revealed to the people in the banks of the River Jordan and the surrounding area, may enlighten the hearts of the mighty people of the earth so that they "exercise righteousness" (Acts 10:35), as to our reverend President of the State of Palestine, His Eminence Mahmoud Abbas – Abu Mazen, we wish that he may direct his government representations towards every good action for the Palestinian State, especially towards its complete national independence, peace and conciliation in our region. Many blessed and peaceful returns."*

From the Jericho Town Hall, His Beatitude was driven through the borderline iron gate which separates Jericho from the Israeli Military Command of the River Jordan area. Passing through, His Beatitude arrived at the Holy Monastery of St. John the Baptist. Therein he was graciously received by the Israeli Military Command, the Palestinian Scouts, the Hegoumen of the Monastery of St. Gerasimos Archimandrite Chrysostomos and a great crowd. Having been dressed in the Patriarchal cloak, His Beatitude led the 9<sup>th</sup> Hour of Theophany at the Monastery of St. John the Baptist, which was destroyed at the six-day war in 1967. The Monastery has recently been renovated, funded by the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Sarantaron Mount, Archimandrite Gerasimos.

After the 9<sup>th</sup> Hour, the procession towards the bank of the River Jordan followed, the chanting was by the Leading Choir singer Archimandrite Aristovoulos in Greek, Arabic, Russian

and Romanian, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, a great multitude of pilgrims following or standing on either side of the road, crowded, in order to receive the blessing. When the procession arrived at the bank of the River Jordan, on a platform especially set, His Beatitude led Vespers and the Service of the Small Blessing of the Waters, at the end of which he went down to the river bank and submerged the Sacred Cross in the water, while everybody was singing "When Thou were baptized in the Jordan".

From the River Jordan, His Beatitude went to the neighbouring Holy Monastery of St. Gerasimos of Jordan, where the good curator of the Monastery Archimandrite Chrysostomos offered to many people a fasting meal, as the Eve of Theophany is one of the great fasting days of our Church in order to drink the blessed water on the actual day of the Feast of Theophany.

From Secretariat-General

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<http://youtu.be/Hlbz5L2Y8wI>

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