

# **H. B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM PRESENTS THE RESTORATION PROJECT OF THE H. EDICULE TO THE GREEK EXPATRIATES IN BRUSSELS**

On Tuesday evening 1st/14th March 2017, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, invited by former European Commissioner Mr. Spyridon Pappas, spoke to the Greek expatriates in Brussels on “The meeting of civilizations in Jerusalem and the role of Orthodoxy with a focus on the restoration of the Holy Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre” at the Argo/Le Châtelain Hall.

Underlined in this speech were the technically multipart and complicated aspects of this project, which were solved by the scientific study of the National Technical University of Athens (N.T.U.A.) due to the coordination of Professor Mrs. Moropoulou and the agreement among the Three Major Christian Communities. This project conveys the message of conformity, reconciliation and cooperation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was buried in it and Resurrected from the dead.

Welcoming His Beatitude and Mrs. Moropoulou, Mr. Pappas expressed his joy particularly for receiving them in Argo, which is the ark of principles, the centre of the European values. European Union has two gateways, the Greco-Roman Civilization and the Greco-Christian Civilization. European Union citizens experience a cultural cohabitation in a globalized society.

Thanking Mr. Pappas for his welcoming, His Beatitude underlined that the Holy Sepulchre is the heart of Orthodoxy

and the Greek nation. Jerusalem Patriarchate is the source of the Christian message. The first Hierarch of the Jerusalem Patriarchate was St. James the brother of God. The Patriarchate preserves the Shrines as places of worship in the Holy Land, which is the place of co-existence as well as conflict between Judaism and Islam. A special indicative of Jerusalem is its having being washed by the blood of the prophets, and thus of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jerusalem is considered to be Holy for the Three Monotheistic Religions. Jerusalem Patriarchate has not only a religious role, but also a cultural and a political one, as an adjuster in the Status Quo of Jerusalem. The Status Quo in Jerusalem, as we know, is corpus separatum. After 638 A.D. Jerusalem Patriarchate has undertaken a governmental office, with the treaty between the Patriarch of Jerusalem Sophronios and Caliph Umar al-Khattab. The Roman nation was the succor of the Holy Shrines. The fruit of this aid is the venerable and material property of the Patriarchate. The Holy Sepulchre is the crown of the Shrines and the Patriarchate boasts for them the way St. Paul boasted in Christ. The Holy God allowed us to renovate the Holy Edicule. The Hagiotaphite Fathers protected the Shrines through many sacrifices, toils and labours, but also with money, and sacrifices of blood, such as the recent events with St. Philoumenos, who martyred at Jacob's Well, and the Hegoumen of Chozeba Monastery Archimandrite Germanos, who was murdered near the Monastery. The Holy Sepulchre is an Ecumenical place. The Resurrected Christ took upon Himself the whole of the human nature. All people are saved by His power. Our mission is the message of reconciliation and peaceful co-existence. St. Justine the Philosopher and Martyr, from Neapolis of Samaria, mentions the "seminal word" existing in every man. We thank the President and the Argo members for this rather important for the Hellenism and Orthodoxy Symposium. Christianity preserves the spiritual and biological entity of man. This identity is also outlined today by the restoration project of the Holy Sepulchre.

Thereinafter, the Professor of the National Technical University of Athens presented the technical aspects of the restoration project of the Holy Edicule, saying that they connected the former structural components the way Komnenos had done (he did not destroy the existing components). He conjoined the Byzantine with the Crusaders' components and erected the existing Edicule on top of them. The Edicule had undergone through structural deformations. "For this", Mrs. Moropoulou said, "the Commanding English Government in 1947 had placed fixative iron pillars around the Edicule, which have been removed after the restoration work of this project. Venturing on the restoration project was a toiling work, as we had to knock down the stones, number, and keep them in the Franciscan area of the Church until we repositioned them. This project is being completed thanks to the donations of the noble benefactors and the donation of the World Monument Funder, the King of Jordan His Majesty Abdullah II among others.

During these operations the Lord's Tomb remained open for sixty hours in order to strengthen it. With this work, we restored the vertical position of the pessaries which had been strongly tilted. Upon removing the metal frame we found layers of soil which Komnenos had kept, and we kept them too. Komnenos did not knock down the pre-existing structural components, instead, he built the Edicule of 1809 on top of them. The bottom slab in the Lord's Tomb is of the Constantine period, the top one of the Crusaders'. We opened an internal window, glass protected, in order to make the internal rock visible. We discovered murals which had been covered and were unknown.

We discovered the cross of the top of the Edicule, which was made by Kalfa Komnenos at his 1809 project, and we repositioned it. We ensured the sustainability of the monument. Action was taken so that the monument be protected from rainwater and the incoming pigeons. At the point of the

Angel's stone, the Edicule is unfortunately fixated on alluvial mixture, because there have been arbitrary excavations, with the danger of sedimentation of the Edicule on that point. The monument needs a venting and dehumidifying system and securing of the floor coverings. For all these, there is need for monitoring work from the N.T.U.A. for at least 5 years.

With this project, the Holy Sepulchre remains an Ecumenical Centre for the pilgrims and conveys the message of reconciliation and peace for the Christian pilgrims, the followers of other religions who visit it, the people of the Middle East, and all humanity".

From Secretariat-General