

THE 12TH ENTHRONEMENT ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS

At 10:00p.m. on Wednesday 9th/23rd November 2017, there Ceremony with the Doxology took place at the All-holy Church of the Resurrection on the completion of twelve years since the Election and Enthronement of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

The Doxology was led by His Beatitude, with co-celebrants the Archbishops and Hieromonks of the Patriarchate, and the participation in prayer of the noble congregation of monks, nuns and laity members of the Greek Community and the Arab-speaking congregation, and the honouring presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and the representative of Romania in Ramalla. After the Doxology the Patriarchal Entourage returned in the Patriarchate. Therein, Geronda Secretrary-General addressed His Beatitude as follows:

Your Beatitude Father and Master,

The Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of Churches, along with our venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, commemorates and celebrates the 12th anniversary of Your Beatitude's election as the Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem, according to the official voting of the Holy and Sacred Synod. This celebration is in the manner of a thanksgiving Doxology and fullness in participation of monks, nuns, clergy and laity, who form the base and of the structure of the holy body of the Church and strengthen its unity in peace, especially at a time that it is being severely tested.

Through the decision of Your election and Enthronement in 2005, the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood denounced illegal contracts mortgaging priceless for its material and more significantly cultural value land and estate property of the Patriarchate, contracts which confound the over the centuries established Status Quo in the Old City of Jerusalem and seriously wound its Christian Churches. At that time, faithful to its mission over the centuries to safeguard the Holy Shrines, the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre stood up for this and protested strongly. Instead of corruption, it chose transparency and placed Your Beatitude an experienced captain of the ship of the Church which began with Saint James the Brother of God, and despite the disintegration and the storm it was not submerged.

Having accepted this mission, Your Beatitude has worthily worked for these twelve years, undertaking decisions and actions which establish the Patriarchate locally as well as in all Orthodoxy and Christianity, as a Church with a leading role among the Christian Churches of the Holy Land, in their mission for the protection of the Christians' rights and the peaceful co-existence with their Jewish and Muslim fellow citizens.

Proof of the leadership and reconciliation of the Patriarchate among the Christian Communities is the participation of Your Beatitude as the representative of all Christians of the Holy Land in the Conference for the peace in the Middle East in New York last July, with the initiative of the peacemaker Rabi Melhior; and above all, recent restoration and renovation project of the Sacred Edicule by the National Technical University of Athens, which was initiated by Your Beatitude and was completed only in a few months, despite the numerous difficulties, with the full co-operation of the Christian Communities.

As far as the Ecclesiastical property is concerned, irrefutable proof of Your Beatitude's interest in its favour

is Your attitude towards the recent wrongful decision of the District Israeli Court, giving effect to the illegal contracts of the Jaffa Gate hotels that belong to the Patriarchate. Ever since, Your Beatitude has not hesitated about neither toil, nor financial cost for the removal of this court order, which if applied, can be destructive for the established since the reign of Constantine the Great Christian Quarter.

In order to protect the Christian Quarter, Your Beatitude has mobilized the Christian Churches of the Holy Land, visited the King of Jordan, the Ecumenical Patriarch, the President of the State of Israel, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, the Pope of Rome, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of Cyprus and the President of the Democracy of Cyprus. This issue was also raised by Your Beatitude at the Conference of the European Churches in Cyprus, and the ongoing Meeting of the World Council of Churches hosted by the Patriarchate in Amman. In all aforementioned meetings Your Beatitude has been warning on the consequences of the implementation of the court decision, and has received serious commitments for its removal and the support of the Patriarchate in its efforts to preserve the Status Quo of the Old City of Jerusalem which guarantees the peaceful co-existence of its citizens in the traditionally set districts for each Quarter.

Praising Your Beatitude for all these, we the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood declare our intention to engage and join You in this mission, subjugating our personal will to the collective and ecclesiastical one, so as with the harmony and sequence of the members of the human body, we operate harmoniously, bearing fruit to our Sacred Community and the Greek Orthodox Arab-speaking Congregation.

Raising my glass on behalf of the Holy and Sacred Synod and all the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, I wish Your Beatitude many happy returns, in peace, joy, steadfastness and health, with a governmental strength guided from on high, for the increase of Your noble works, for the praise of our blessed nation and the

glory of our Trinitarian God. So be it.

The Consul General of Greece as follows:

Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences,

Reverend Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen

In feelings of joy and great honour, we participate today in the festive celebration of the twelfth enthronement anniversary of His Holy Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, here in the See of the Mother of Churches.

Today is a festive day for the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, the Patriarchate, for Orthodoxy and for Greece.

This day is also a chance, Your Beatitude, to express the respect, love and gratitude on behalf of Greece for your great pastoral work, for the important national work of preservation and highlight of the Holy Shrines in the Holy Land and for the defense and projection of the ecumenical values of Orthodoxy.

Your Beatitude,

Your devotion in this sacred mission, Your focus in this very important work, quite often under adverse conditions, Your tireless efforts, within and outside the borders of the region for the defense of the Status Quo which has guaranteed the peaceful co-existence of the Religious Communities in the Holy Land for centuries, Your materialized vision and determining initiative for the restoration of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre, the cornerstone of the Shrines that reconciles the peoples, nations and civilizations, as well as your steadfast promotion of peace-making, mutual understanding and moderation in a turbulent area which continues to face great challenges and where many are those who talk about peace, but

very few the ones who honestly and effectively work towards its achievement, establish this Holy Institution a point of reference with a significant role.

For Greece, the defense of the Institution of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, and of its lawful rights is a priority of prime importance. The Mother of Churches symbolizes our long-term presence in the Holy Land, as well as the attitude of friendship and cooperation with all other peoples, according to the ecumenical values of Orthodoxy.

Your Beatitude,

The Greek Government and the faithful Greeks surround You always with their love and devotion. Greek Officials and civilians flock to the Patriarchate as pilgrims annually, highlighting the indestructible historic bond with it, as well as the importance they give to Your mission, Your work and the work of the Hagiotaphite Fathers.

Feeling the burden of Your responsibilities and sharing Your anguish, the staff of the General Consulate of Greece stand by Your side and pray as humble pilgrims that You may have health, strength and longevity to continue Your work, for the benefit of the Patriarchate, the Brotherhood, Orthodoxy, Your Greek-Orthodox Congregation, for the peace in the region and for the Nation of Greeks.

His Beatitude thanked and blessed them for their addresses and replied as follows:

Your Excellency Mr. Consul General of Greece,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved Christians,

Noble pilgrims

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who

has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).

Today, on the completion of the twelve-year ministry since Our climb to the indeed martyr’s Patriarchal throne of our Church of Jerusalem, we went to the All-holy Church of the Resurrection along with the venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood in order to praise the Trinitarian God in a thanksgiving Doxology, “for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Phil. 2:13).

This festive twelve-year anniversary does not refer to Our unworthiness, but to the God-founded Institution of the Church in the Holy Spirit, “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, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:9-10) according to St. Paul.

Our spiritual and pastoral responsibility on the Hagiataphite established Mother of Churches so far, has aimed at nothing but the keeping of the Sacred and Apostolic consignment of our holy, immaculate and unadulterated Orthodox Faith, according to the order of the Apostle of Nations: “Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us” (2 Tim. 1:14). Moreover, Our aim has been the preservation and ministry of worship of the all-holy and most sacred shrines and the inalienable privileges and lawful rights over them of the noble nation of the Roman Orthodox people.

In addition, hearing the words of Prophet Isaiah: “For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet, till her vindication shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch” (Isaiah 62:1), We have set on an international campaign for the preservation of

the existing multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and interreligious, namely Judaic, Christian and Islamic, Status Quo of the Old City of Jerusalem, which is being threatened by radical partisan groups and messianist settlor movements.

We do this by our Patriarchal and Moral Mission of "peace in Christ by which God has called us to live in" (1 Cor. 7:15). "God is not of disorder but He is the God of peace" the wise Paul preaches. And this is so because the Holy City of Jerusalem is the universal spear and eternal emblem of the blood of divine righteousness, namely of the prophets and especially our Lord Jesus Christ, who "died, the righteous for the unrighteous" (1 Peter 3:18) according to Apostle Peter.

Today's twelfth anniversary on the Patriarchal Enthronement calls us not to boast in the things that have been done by Us, but to give "glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God" (Romans 15:17). "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience" (2 Cor. 1:12). At the same time, this anniversary calls us to be alert in view of the current clutter in the world in general and in our region of the Middle East in particular. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity" (1 Cor. 16:13-14), St. Paul orders us.

In this sacred mission of Ours we have as collaborators and communicators Our reverend and dear Hagiotaphite Fathers and brothers, Archbishops, Hieromonks, Deacons and Monks, with whom, as the God-inspired St. Ignatios says "we take care to work all things in unity, under the Lead of the Bishop who is according to God, and the Presbyters who are according to the mind of the Apostles and the Deacons...who have been entrusted the ministry of Jesus Christ, Who had been with the Father before all ages and in the end was made manifest to us" (Vol.2, p.269).

Truly we say along with St. Paul, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers,

against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). This truth is more obviously witnessed by the history of the Church of Jerusalem, namely of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, being surged on the waves of falsehood and slander but not submerged under them.

Let us pray to the Father of Lights "that He may guide our footsteps in the work of His commandments" by the prayers of our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and the intercessions of our Father among the Saints Nectarios of Pentapolis. And the Grace of the All-holy and Life-giving Sepulchre of our Saviour Jesus Christ fortify us in the ministry of the All-holy Shrines, the irrefutable witnesses of our faith, and in pastoring our pious Christian congregation.

For all these, we call upon all those who prayed along with Us and have honoured this feast, the strength from on high, the grace of the Holy Sepulchre, patience, and every blessing coming from God, expressing heartfelt thanksgiving to those who addressed Us namely; Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, who spoke on behalf of the members of the Holy and Sacred Synod and our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, the Most Reverend Archimandrite Leontios, representative of our Brotherly All-holy Church of Russia, who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril, the Reverend Archimandrite Theophilos, representative of the Brotherly All-holy Church of Romania, who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Romania Daniel, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, who spoke on behalf of our Parish in Nazareth, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Benedict of Philadelphia, who spoke on behalf of our congregation in Jordan, the Most Reverend Archbishop Damascene of Joppa, who spoke on behalf of our congregation in Joppa, the School Director of our Patriarchal School of Zion, who spoke on

behalf of the School, the Reverend Fr. Charalambos Bandour, who spoke on behalf of St. James Cathedral Parish, the Reverend Mr. Abu Aeta, representative of the Community of Beit Sahour, Archimandrite Narkissos and Fr. Jouseph Hodali, who spoke on behalf of the Community of Beit Jalla, as well as all participants in the celebration of this Enthronement Anniversary.

To the health of all of you!"

The reception at the Patriarchate was followed by lunch.

From Secretariat-General

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