

THE FEAST OF CHRISTMAS EVE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

The celebration of Christmas Eve began on Saturday morning December 24, 2017/ January 6, 2018, according to the Church Order and the Status Quo of the Patriarchate.

At 11.15 a.m. of this day, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos left the Patriarchate in a formal procession, and from Jaffa Gate He was taken to the Monastery of Prophet Elijah by the Patriarchate entourage of vehicles.

His Beatitude was received by Military Officials at Kfar Etzion district and distinguished members of the congregation. There was a short prayer and a small fasting reception by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Paissios at the Monastery.

At 12.30 p.m., His Beatitude and Entourage left the Monastery to the border check point of Rachel's tomb.

Passing through the border gate, 5 Palestinian motorcyclists honourably preceded His Beatitude's entourage, until the entourage reached Bethlehem square.

There, His Beatitude was welcomed and addressed by the Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan, the Mayor of Bethlehem, the Police Chief, other members of the local authorities, the Priests dressed in their liturgical vestments and Christians from Bethlehem and the neighbouring areas.

Putting on His cloak, His Beatitude blessed the Holy Entrance while the faithful were standing on either side of the road in respect. The Priests led the way heading to the courtyard, and entered the Church through the

humble door of the magnificent Basilica. The Choir leader of

the All-holy Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos and Mr. George Alvanos sang the Christmas apolytikion on the right and the Basilica Choir under Mr. Lorence Samour repeated it on the left when His Beatitude entered the Basilica. His Beatitude reached the Ikonostasion, and went down to the God-receiving Cave and the manger through the south staircase, followed by His entourage.

Then His Beatitude returned to the Catholicon through the north gate of the Cave, stood before the Ikonostasion and blessed the people. The Service of Vespers began according to the Typikon of the Orthodox Church and finished at 3.30 p.m. according to the Status Quo of worship. Archimandrite Aristovoulos sang on the right in Greek and the Basilica choir on the left in Arabic.

The Service of Vespers was followed by a meal at the Hegoumeneion, offered by the renovator of the Monastery Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan.

At 7.00 p.m. of the same day, His Beatitude hosted a reception for the Palestinian Prime Minister Mr. Rami Hamdallah and members of the Government, the representative of Jordan Interior Minister Mr. Ghaleb Zu'bi, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and members of our congregation.

From Secretariat-General

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