

THE 13TH ENTHRONEMENT ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS

On Thursday, November 9/22, 2018, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem celebrated the 13th Enthronement Anniversary of His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, at the glorious Throne of the Mother of Churches. For this extremely significant event in favour of the strengthening and unity of the Church of Jerusalem, there was a Doxology Service at the All-holy Church of the Resurrection.

The Doxology was officiated by His Beatitude, with co-celebrants Hagiotaphite Archbishops, Hieromonks and Deacons, Arab-speaking Priests and with the participation in prayer of monks, nuns and many laity. The service was also attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and the Ambassador of Georgia in Israel.

After the Doxology His Beatitude and the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood along with the full congregation returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters.

Therein, first among those who congratulated His Beatitude was Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina with the following address;

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

Today the Holy Sion, the Mother of all Churches, the Church of the Holy Land, the land of the appearance of the divine revelation, rejoices and is glad, along with the venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, on the commemoration of the thirteen-year-ago event, which turned out to be extremely

important for its life and mission in the world.

In the year 2005, after a period of crisis and turbulence, which however did not lead to the submerging of the vessel of the Church of Jerusalem, by the illegally signed documents without the Synodical agreement, which mortgaged invaluable property of the Patriarchate, the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, which is the guardian and the depositary of the Christian presence and property in the Holy Land, fulfilled the cause of its mission, and by the legal and homophonous voting of the Holy Synod, elected Your Holy Beatitude as the 141st Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and all Palestine and as its Hegoumen.

This event is being celebrated festively today, with a Doxology at the All-holy Church of the Resurrection in the presence of the full congregation of monks, clergy and laity, due to its significance as a means of solidarity for the body of the Church, as bonding its unity and as safeguarding the continuation of its episcopal succession, ever since its foundation by the Lord and by its first Hierarch, St. James the Brother of God.

The continuation of the pastoral mission of the Church of Jerusalem throughout its jurisdiction in the three Palestines as far as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, was then placed in the hands of Your Beatitude by the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, and You have ever since proven to have been worthy of their trust on you, in both words and actions for the last thirteen years.

Out of these, worth mentioning are "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28); parishes in towns and villages of the Greek-Ortodox Arab-speaking flock, and especially Your care for the Arab-speaking communities in Jordan, through the recent appointments and Episcopal promotions, with the aim of a better pastoring care of the flock in Jordan, with the King of which the Patriarchate keeps good relations in favour of

all the Christians and citizens of the Kingdom, nevertheless, it does not fail to care for the Russian-speaking flock in Jordan and Israel.

During Your Patriarchal Office, Your Beatitude has shown a special sensitivity and generosity of spending time at the Patriarchate for the reception of the incoming multitudes of pilgrims from all other Orthodox Churches, blessing and teaching them on their spiritual benefit from their pilgrimage, cultivating with their guiding Bishops and Priests good relations of ecclesiastical communication and cooperation and presenting, even at times of crisis, the viewpoints of our Patriarchate, which always aim to maintain the unity of the Orthodox Church under the bond of peace.

Beyond the pilgrimage visits, Your Beatitude has repeatedly received visits of, state, political and diplomatic delegations and representatives, to whom You have presented and projected the cultural and peace-making work of the Patriarchate, in the turbulent and flammable political environment, in which it is ordered to minister ecclesiastically. Your Beatitude has exported this work further than its local boundaries, in Your overseas travels, seeking supporters for the cancelling of the illegal agreements of mortgaging the property of the Patriarchate and the prevention of law enforcements which impose heavy tax measures, and deny its right for the free management of its property.

The interest of Your Beatitude in the historic holy Monasteries of the Patriarchate was displayed by Your relevant actions, so that by the cooperation of the Palestinians with the Israeli Army the installation of water was made possible in the Holy Monastery of Hozeva, and by the permission of the Israeli Army as well, the Holy Monastery of St. John the Baptist in the Jordan was renovated and opened again to the pilgrims' visits.

By the actions and guidance of Your Beatitude irreconcilable was the support, claim and confirmation of our rights in our shrines which were questioned by the Armenians, as for example the presence of the second guard of ours by the Angel's stone inside the Holy Tomb for the reception of the Syriac and Coptic Communities right after our Paschal all-night Vigil and recently, our right in the cleaning of the God-receiving Cave in Bethlehem.

The always granted interest of Mother Greece in favour of the preservation of the indefinable rights of our nation on the All-holy Shrines, has recently been made active by Your Beatitude, through Your invitation to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Markos Bolaris, who, responding willingly, visited the Patriarchate, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Gethsemane, the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem, the Holy Monastery of St. Savvas and the Holy Monastery of the Sacred Cross, intending to support the Patriarchate whenever there is need.

Raising the glass on behalf of the Brotherhood and the Holy and Sacred Synod, to Your health, solidarity and longevity, in fullness of divine blessings, I reassure You, that being encouraged by all the aforementioned, we, the Hagiotaphite Fathers, Your Beatitude, are strengthened and join forces and walk along with You as Kyrinaioi at Your Patriarchal mission of the Cross, increasing our Hagiotaphite fruition for the benefit of souls, the praising of our blessed nation and the glory of our Trinitarian God. So be it."

The Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem also addressed His Beatitude with the following words;

"Your Beatitude,

Most Reverend Archbishops,

Reverend Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today's celebration is of great importance for all of us, as the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and the Holy Church, the pilgrims and the Orthodox Community, honor with due grandeur the 13th anniversary of the enthronement of the Head of the Church of Sion, the Mother of the Churches, His Holy Beatitude, the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III.

It is a special honor and pleasure for me to attend this celebration and I would like to convey our cordial wishes for health, strength, and longevity, in order to continue Your high mission, which is becoming more and more significant and important, in this difficult time.

On this occasion, I would like to express Greece's unconditional support towards the Sacred Institution, the Presbyterian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which has played an exceptionally significant historic role throughout the centuries, and as the centre of Orthodoxy in the Holy Land, it continues to be an endless source of hope, projecting the values of Christianity and the message of the salvation of man from the Holy City towards all directions.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem is of course, a steadfast point of reference for all Greeks, wherever they are, and it symbolizes the long-term presence of Hellenism in the Holy Land, while it can only be an unrelenting bond of friendship and cooperation with the other nations, as well as being the expression of the Orthodox Christians of the region, conserving valuable traditions and conveying the ecumenical message of Orthodoxy towards all directions. For all of us, the Venerable Patriarchate is certainly the depositary of the most important Sacred Shrines of Christianity, which the Hagiotaphite Fathers defend daily with devotion and self-denial, and who always inspire and encourage the faith and reverence of the faithful around the world, as well as the bonds with the Church of Sion.

Your Beatitude,

With Your hard work and tireless efforts, You promote the uplifting of the status of the Patriarchate, the defense of the existing Status Quo in the Holy Land and the protection of the herein Christian presence. With the sincere mood of understanding and reconciliation You demonstrate, You systematically cultivate the relations with the other denominations and religions, as well as the wider effort of reconciliation and peace-making in this much tested region. With a series of your initiatives you promote the restoration and highlighting of the most Sacred Shrines of Christianity, while you take care of the spiritual concord and unity of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, and the spiritual guidance and prosperity of a flock that undergoes significant challenges and trials.

Your Beatitude,

The burden You carry upon Your shoulders is heavy and the struggle it entails is also long and arduous. It is my deep conviction however, that with God's help and the active support of all of us, You will complete your task and accomplish your mission.

All the Staff of the Consulate and I, pray that you may have health, strength and longevity for the good of the Patriarchate, of the Brotherhood, of your Greek-Orthodox Flock, of Othrodoxy and of the peace in the Holy Land.

Many Happy Returns."

Likewise addresses to His Beatitude were delivered by representatives of the Brotherly Churches and some Hagiotaphite Fathers.

In return of those addresses, His Beatitude said the following;

"Your Excellency Mr. Consul General of Greece,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Dear Christians,

Noble pilgrims,

“I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Psalm 34:1).

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem, which has been founded by the redeeming blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, gleefully celebrates today the completion of the thirteen-year ministry of Our Mediocrity since Our undertaking the Apostolic and Patriarchal throne of St. James the Brother of God and first Hierarch of Jerusalem. For this reason, along with the Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, we went to the All-holy Church of the Resurrection, where we had a thanksgiving Doxology to the Holy Trinitarian God, where the love of His Son and our Lord Jesus Christ constrains us (2 Cor. 5:14).

This festal thirteen-year anniversary does not refer to Our unworthiness, but to the Holy-spiritual institution of the Church, namely the mystical body of Christ. “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col. 1:18-20) according to St. Paul.

Our so far hierarchical, monastic and pastoral ministry “unto the throne of grace of the great Hierarch Jesus Christ the Son of God” (Hebr. 4:15-16), namely of the Biblical Mother of Churches, and Dwelling place of the God of Holy Sion, had one and only purpose, the preservation of our Apostolically-delivered consignment of the healthy faith and the right division of the word of truth according to St. Paul; “Study to

shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Moreover, the preservation of the all-holy shrines as places of the logical worship and sources of divine and therapeutic energy, but also the safekeeping of their indefinable privileges and sovereign rights of the reverend and royal nation of the Roman Orthodox Christians.

Nevertheless, hearkening to the words of Paul: "let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebr. 12:1-2), we have not ceased our overseas international campaign in order to awaken the consciousness of those who love the City of the King of kings, the earthly Jerusalem, which is the visible symbol of peaceful co-existence and reconciliation of nations, peoples, and religions, on the one hand; and on the other, we have been striving for the guarantee of the Christian presence and of the Churches in the Middle East and in the Holy Land.

And we have been working on this cause, under the spiritual and religious mission of the Mother of Churches, namely the primary institution of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which has been preserving the existing Status Quo, on both the pilgrimage and the demographic areas in the Holy City of Jerusalem, which has been threatened by those who covet its distortion.

We say this, because Jerusalem has been the primordial and inexhaustible source of the blood of righteousness, always remaining the shelter of those who desire God the Father of love and peace, according to the psalmist; "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God" (Psalm 41:1-2).

This thirteen-year enthronement anniversary of Our Mediocrity calls us not in boasting over the things done by us, but that we "may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which

pertain to God" (Rom.15:17). "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience" (2 Cor. 1:12).

It is precisely for this testimony of our conscience that we are called to continue our ecclesiastical and hierarchical mission amidst a world suffering from confusion and especially in our region of the Middle East. "Quench not the Spirit", St. Paul orders (1 Thess. 5:19).

In this sacred ministry of the throne of the apostles and martyrs of St. James the Brother of God, as well as of the mystery of the divine Providence, we have as collaborators and communicators our dear Fathers in Christ and Hagiotaphite Brothers, Archbishops, Hieromonks, Deacons and Monks, along with whom, according to St. Ingatius the God-bearer, "in concord we watch over all things that should be done, with the Bishop who is the Head in resemblance of God, and the Presbyters in resemblance of the Apostles, and the deacons to whom the ministry of Jesus has been entrusted, just as it has been along the centuries with the Father and it has finally been revealed" (Vol.2, p. 269).

We honestly say that our fight is a fight "against the doctrines of deceit" (Eph. 4:14). For this reason St. Paul advices us saying: "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked (Eph. 6:14,16), "for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44) according to John the Evangelist. These methods of deceit and lies of the devil are being recorded in the sacred history of the past but also the present times of the Church of Jerusalem, namely of the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate, which has been challenged but not debilitated by the sons of the darkness of this generation (Luke 16:8).

Let us pray to God the Father of lights and of truth, "that he may guide our footsteps in the working of His commandments" by

the intercessions of the Most Blessed and Ever-Virgin Mary, our Lady Theotokos, and those of our Father among the Saints Nectarios of Pentapolis. And may the grace of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ fortify all of us in the ministry of the All-holy Shrines, the irrefutable witnesses of our faith, as well as in the pastoring of our reverend Christian flock.

As far as all these are concerned, we call upon all those who participated in the prayer with Us and honoured with their presence this feast of Enthronement, and pray for strength from on high, the grace of the All-holy Tomb, patience and all blessings of God, expressing our warmest thanksgiving for those who addressed us, 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 Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, His Excellency the Ambassador of Georgia, Reverend Archimandrite Alexander, the representative of our Brotherly Holy Church of Russia, who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril, Reverend Archimandrite Theophilos, representative of our Brotherly 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 flock in Nazareth, the Most Reverend Archbishop Damascene of Joppa, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Joppa, Reverend Fr. Halalambos Bandour, who spoke on behalf of St. James Cathedral, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, who spoke on behalf of the Madaba Community in Jordan and of the Russian-speaking Community in Ber-Sheba, Reverend Archimandrite Philotheos, who spoke on behalf of the Communities of Acre, Reverend Steward Fr. Savvas, who spoke on behalf of the Community of Beit Sahour, Reverend Steward Fr. Yusef Hodali, who spoke on behalf of the Community of Beit Jalla, the School of St. Demetrios, Mr. Abu Aeta and all who participated in the celebration of this Enthronement

anniversary.

To the health of all of you!"

At noon there was a festal meal.

From Secretariat-General