

THE NAME DAY OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS

On Sunday March 11/24, 2019, on the second Sunday of Great Lent, on the commemoration of St. Gregory Palamas, the Patriarchate also celebrated the Name Day of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, which for reasons related to the Status Quo has been transferred from its actual day of March 9/22, day of the commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs who martyred at the frozen lake of Sebastia of Pontus during the reign of the persecutor Emperor Licinius in the year 320 A.D.

For this feast the Patriarchal Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitans Kyriakos of Nazareth and Isychios of Kapitolias, the Most Reverend Archbishops Damascene of Joppa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Demetrios of Lydda, Makarios of Qatar, Nectarios of Anthedon, Philoumenos of Pella, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis and the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba. There were also the Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank the Elder Kamarasis Reverend Archimandrite Nectarios, Arab-speaking Priests and visiting Priests from other Churches, Archdeacon Mark and other Deacons. The chanting was held by the Choir Leader of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos in the attendance of a congregation of local faithful and pilgrims.

After the Divine Liturgy there was a Doxology and the return in procession to the Patriarchate Headquarters.

Therein the following addresses were read:

The address of Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina;

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

Ascending the ladder of the Holy and Great Lent, we are fortified in our spiritual fight with the commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs who boldly confessed Christ, and fought the good fight well, winning the crown of divine glory, having defied the glacier of the lake of Sebastia in Pontus in 320 A.D., during the reign of King Licinius.

On the feast of these athletes of Christ today, the commemoration of the holy martyr Theophilos is especially projected in the Church of Jerusalem, because Your Sacred Beatitude bears his name.

In the special honour of the holy martyr Theophilos and of Your Beatitude, we offered the bloodless sacrifice at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and a thanksgiving doxology with the vast participation of the Hagiotaphite Fathers, the members of our Greek-Orthodox flock and a large crowd of noble pilgrims.

Filled with the joy of this double feast and in this historic Hall of the Throne, we gratefully remember those things that Your Beatitude has worked for our Patriarchate and flock.

Initially we commemorate the fact that once again there has been a great effort for the pastoral guidance of our flock in the three areas of the Patriarchate’s jurisdiction, especially in Jordan, in gatherings of Priests for their more efficient pastoral activity. A fruit of Your Beatitude’s actions have also been the special festivities organized by the Royal Family of Jordan, which support the Christians in their peaceful co-existence with their Muslim co-citizens. In the Metropolis of the Patriarchate in Amman, members of the flock

of Jordan have been honoured with the medal of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, as they have been distinguished for their charity donations and the construction of a Church. Moreover, with your characteristic sensitivity favoring the pilgrims who have been flooding the Holy Land recently, Your Beatitude has offered much time for their welcoming in the Patriarchate, for their blessing and guidance, along with the stressing of the benefit through their pilgrimage.

Keeping good relationships with our brotherly Churches, Your Beatitude was invited to officiate the consecration ceremony of the beautiful and very large Cathedral of St. Andrew the First-called in Bucharest, in the Patriarchate of Romania, and participated in the national festivities on the occasion of the 200-year-old anniversary of liberation and unity of Romania.

Practicing the leading role of our Patriarchate among the other Christian Churches, Your Beatitude has mobilized them towards the abolition of laws undermining their properties and the raising of their voices in the protection of the continuously lessening numbers of the Christians of the Holy Land. Aiming at this, Your Beatitude has striven by visiting leaders of countries and of Churches and Presidents of international organizations in order to ensure their solidarity to the efforts of our Patriarchate to preserve the internationally and biblically established Status Quo of the Holy Land and the rights of the Christians on them.

The actions of Your Beatitude for the protection of the rights of our shrines and especially of the renovation of the God-receiving Cave in Bethlehem have been most intensive, simultaneously with the equally important preservation and renovation of the Chapel of Stocks in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the historic Monastery of St. John the Baptist by the baptism site in the River Jordan, where a few days ago Your Beatitude received the President of the State of Israel and leaders of the Christian Churches.

Last but not least, worthy to be mentioned is the project of the modest Christian presence in Qatar, which began during the Patriarchal Office of the late Patriarch Diodoros and was recently completed with the consecration of the beautiful Church of St. Isaac the Syriac, St. George the Great Martyr and St. Makarios, Archbishop of Jerusalem, along with the Episcopal Headquarters and completed parish facilities, for the comfort, support and sanctification of the Orthodox and other Christians who live there.

From all these, Your Beatitude, we the Hagiotaphite Fathers take an example and are encouraged to co-operate with You as the members of the body with its head and among us harmoniously, in order to reflect the witness of unity to the world and that the name of our venerable Brotherhood and of the Holy Church of Jerusalem may be praised and the venerated Name of the Most High may be glorified.

Raising the glass Your Beatitude, on behalf of the Holy and Sacred Synod and the whole Brotherhood, I wish health and strength and protection from on high, so that You may guide the vessel of the Church of Jerusalem steadily and in good course, for the fulfillment of its peace-making, reconciliatory and salvific mission in the Holy Land and in the full body of the Orthodox Church. So be it.”

The address of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos;

“Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences,

Reverend Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen

The present day, when the memory of the Holy Forty Martyrs is celebrated, takes on special importance, since the

Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and the pious congregation, the pilgrims and the Orthodox Community, honoured with the proper splendor the Name-Day of the Head of the Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of Churches, His Holy Beatitude, Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III.

In attending this celebration with feelings of sincere joy and particular honour, I would like to express the unwavering support of Greece to the Presbyterian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and to extend to You our cordial wishes for health, strength and longevity, in order to continue Your high, national as well as religious mission, which is becoming more and more important and significant in this difficult time.

During its centuries-long journey, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem has played an extremely important historical role and, as a religious centre of the Holy Land, continues to be an inexhaustible source of hope and to point out in all directions from the Holy City, its universal message of salvation, while defending with the dedication and self-denial of the Holy Fathers, the most important holy pilgrimages of Christianity.

The Sacred Institution is a fixed reference point for all Greeks and symbolizes the long-standing presence of Hellenism in the Holy Land, while it is an indissoluble bond of friendship and cooperation with other peoples, and it is the spokesperson for Orthodox Christians in the region, preserving valuable traditions and transmitting, in every direction, the Universal message of Orthodoxy.

Your Beatitude,

In a time of instability, fluidity, and continuous redeployments that seem to favor intolerance, empathy and rivalry, Your multifaceted work, which is governed by sincere mood of mutual understanding and reconciliation, not only in relations with other doctrines and other religions, but also

in the context of the wider peace effort in this much tested area, gives moral stature to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, in the context and defense of the Christian presence in the Middle East, promoting its role as a factor of moderation and stability. With a series of initiatives, You promote the restoration and promotion of the Sacred Shrines of Christianity, while ensuring the preservation of the Status Quo in the Holy Land and the spiritual guidance and prosperity of a flock undergoing significant trials.

Because the challenges of the time and the lurking dangers are many. However, it is certain that those who are treacherous against the Patriarchate struggle in vain. Their efforts strike and will always strike in the hurdle of the power that the Sacred Institution draws from the long history and tradition, from unity, from the deep faith and devotion of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and from its leadership, Your Beatitude, who, with conscious knowledge and perception of the circumstances, with vigor and determination, take care of its present and its future.

Your Beatitude,

The load you have been given is great and the struggle that this involves is long and laborious. It is my deep conviction that with the help of God and the active support of all of us, You will continue Your work and carry on Your high mission.

Many Happy Returns.”

Addresses were also delivered by representatives of the flock of areas belonging to the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate, representatives of other Orthodox Churches and finally His Beatitude thanked them all with the following words;

“The Martyrs, O Christ God, esteemed the lake as Paradise and the cold as warmth. The threats of the tyrants did not affright their mind, nor did the noble Saints fear the assaults of torments, since they possessed the Cross as a

divine weapon; for with it, as mighty men, they put the enemy to flight. Wherefore, they have also received the crown of grace” the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

“Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious” (Psalm 66:1-2), the Church of Christ cries out through the mouth of Prophet David, on the sacred commemoration of the athletes of Christ and Great Forty Martyrs who martyred in the town of Sebastia. These “wondrous prizewinners with minds staunch with courage, they endured the pains of martyrdom nobly, and having as a divine weapon the Cross they defeated the enemy and gained the crown of grace”, namely the Christian calling through which they abide in the highest, according to their hymn writer.

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem, which honours the sacred memory of the holy forty martyrs, especially of their co-martyr Theophilus whose sacred name is given to our Mediocrity, we came to the place of martyrdom and the three-burial of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where we celebrated the divine and great sacrament of the Eucharist. Moreover, we offered a thanksgiving doxology to the Holy Trinitarian God on the occasion of the sacred commemoration of Martyr Theophilus, surrounded by the sacred members of our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, and we prayed along with our Christian congregation, the noble Christians and the visiting pilgrims.

We did all these according to the words of St. Paul: “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:20).

This annual commemoration of the holy forty martyrs and their co-martyr Theophilos, which our Holy Church of Jerusalem jubilantly celebrates, does not only refer to our mediocrity, but especially and primarily to the institution of the Patriarchal office, through which it is made clear that the Church of Christ has been founded on the crucified and redeeming blood of Christ and of the holy ones who became co-martyrs of His sacred blood. Therefore the wise Paul says: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

The holy martyrs of the love of Christ are those who martyred with their blood for the sake of truth and faith in the crucified and resurrected Christ. For this reason St. Paul advises his disciple Timothy saying: "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord; For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7-8).

Today's commemorated holy Forty Martyrs with their co-martyr Theophilos worthily gained the divine glory, having gone through water and fire and became wondrous by our Holy Trinitarian God, towards whom they have boldness and pray for us. "Likewise, the souls of those who have not in vain been chipped for the sake of the witness in Christ in the heavenly altar, minister those who pray asking for the remission of their sins" according to Origen.

The holy martyrs are projected as an example to imitate for the fight they fought in their earthly life in order to become heirs of the kingdom of God. "...we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

Ecumenios says; "our present life is a fight; a fight against sins and desires and all thoughts who fight against us. For this we strive against and accomplish in the fight".

In this fight of the witness of the love of the gospel of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ are we also called, my dear brothers and sisters, especially during this blessed period of the fast of the Great Lent, having as helpers and protectors the holy forty martyrs, their co-martyr Theophilos and the Most Blessed Theotokos and Mother of God, Ever-Virgin Mary. Let us entreat them so that we may be deemed worthy to the three-day Resurrection of our God and Saviour of our souls.

For this, we pray for all who prayed along with us and honoured this feast, that they may have power from on high, the grace of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb, patience and every blessing coming from God.

We warmly thank 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, Reverend Archimandrite Dometianos, Representative of the brotherly Holy Church of Russia, who conveyed to Us the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril, Reverend Archimandrite Theophilos, representative of the brotherly Holy Church of Romania, who conveyed to Us 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 Archimandrite Raphael who spoke on behalf of the flock in North Jordan, the Most Reverend Archbishop Makarios of Qatar, who spoke on behalf of the Holy Archdiocese of Qatar, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, who spoke on behalf of the newly founded Community in Beersheba, the Reverend Archimandrite Ignatios, who spoke on behalf of the

Community of Beit Jalla, Reverend Farah Badur, who spoke on behalf of St. James Cathedral, the Managing Director of our Patriarchal School, Reverend Archimandrite Mattheos, the Steward Savvas, who spoke on behalf of the Community of Beit Sahour, Mr. Abu Aeta from Beit Sahour, Mr. Michele Frez from Bethlehem and all who participated in this feast.

To the health of all of you!"

A festal fasting meal followed where the Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos was the guest of honour and to which His Beatitude offered the officion of the Archimandrite to Hagiotaphite Hieromonk Martyrios who ministers in Madaba.

From Secretariat-General