

THE 14TH ENTHRONEMENT ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS

On Friday, November 9/22, 2019, a Doxology took place at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for the 14th Election and Enthronement Anniversary of His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

The Doxology was officiated by H.H.B. with co-celebrants the Hagiotaphite Archbishops and Hieromonks, Arab-speaking Priests, Deacons and Monks of all the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and with the participation of a noble congregation from Jerusalem, other Communities of the Arab-speaking flock of the Patriarchate and pilgrims.

After the Doxology, bells tolling, the Patriarchal Entourage returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters.

Geronda Secretary-General, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina addressed His Beatitude as follows;

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

The Mother of Churches is rejoicing today in gleefulness on the quite important and happy occasion of Your Beatitude’s Enthronement at the glorious Throne of St. James the Brother of God and First Hierarch of Jerusalem.

This was accomplished through the devoted endeavours of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood for the preservation of the Status Quo of the Holy Land and of course of the Old City of

Jerusalem, which had been undermined by the illegal agreements of mortgaging its land property of incalculable value. With these endeavours, fourteen years ago, in 2005, the Brotherhood through its representative the Holy and Sacred Synod, unanimously and by normal voting "placed up on the lamppost" Your Beatitude as the worthy Shepherd and navigator of the Primeval Church of Jerusalem. The election of Your Beatitude and the subsequent Enthronement with the participation of all Orthodox Churches and with the recognition of all local governments, dispelled the vortex which severely shook but did not submerge the vessel of the Church of Jerusalem and tightened the joints of its mystical body in the bond of peace.

This event was celebrated today as it should, with the festive thanksgiving Doxology in full participation of Monks, clergy and laity at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. And now, in this historic reception hall of the Patriarchate, we rend Your Beatitude the worthy praise for all the "pious, righteous and just things" You have accomplished for the All-holy Shrines, the Brotherhood and the flock.

First of all, as far as the Shrines are concerned, Your Beatitude at all times both in words and in actions and toward all directions has underlined that they are a special blessing, the special and characteristic feature and the irrefutable privilege of the Church of Jerusalem as places of the Divine appearance of Christ, and for this reason, the mission of the Brotherhood is to preserve and serve them as living liturgical places for the teaching and the sanctification of the many noble pilgrims who visit them. Considering the All-holy Shrines a heritage not only of the Brotherhood but of our nation, they have been renovated, as the Sacred Edicule, the roof of the Basilica of Bethlehem, the Holy Monastery of St. John the Baptist by the river Jordan, the current renovation of the God-receiving Cave, and our rights toward them have bravely been protected, such as the

right of the presence of the second guard in the interior of the Edicule of the All-holy Tomb for the reception of the Coptic and Syrian Communities after the Divine Liturgy on the Vigil of Easter and the right of the Elevation of the Holy Cross at the place of its finding, by the against the Status Quo treacherous manner of the Armenians.

The vivid interest of Your Beatitude for the Rum Orthodox Arab-speaking flock and the detailed watch over its related issues has been noted over this period, through the frequent significant funding of the Patriarchate for the completion of the Holy Church of the Nativity of Theotokos in the Community of Sahnin, through the offering of a wood-carved ikonostasion made in Cyprus as well as of the Holy Church of Saints Constantine and Helen in Koufr Smea in the district of Acre, of the recently consecrated Holy Church of St. Savvas the Sanctified in Yafat Nasra near Nazareth, and of the Holy Church of St. Moses the Ethiopian in Rafidia of Nablus, in Samaria.

Along with the other brotherly Orthodox Churches, Your Beatitude has made many efforts to keep the cooperation determined by the tradition of our Orthodox Church for the unity in Christ, projecting the dialogue in wisdom and mediocrity as the solution for the occasionally arising Inter-Orthodox issues. Appreciating this attitude of Yours, our Brotherly Church of Russia has offered You the prize Alexei II for the year 2018, "for outstanding activities in strengthening the unity of the Orthodox Christian nations and for upholding and promoting Christian values in the life of society". This happened only yesterday in Your visit to Moscow, where You also met with His Excellency the President of Russia Mr. Putin and requested His support for the Christians of the Holy Land and of the Middle East.

Since the beginning of Your Patriarchal Office, the epicenter of the efforts and actions of Your Beatitude has undoubtedly been the by all means preservation of the Biblically

established and internationally recognized Status Quo of the Old City of Jerusalem. This Status Quo is being violated and distorted in the case of the prevailing as legitimate of the long-term leases of the Jaffa Gate Hotels of the Patriarchate, which lack transparency and justice and are full of financial corruption. For the abolishment of these agreements, Your Beatitude has energetically worked toward the awareness and mobility of people and organizations, members of influence abroad, as well as within this country. Worth saying is the initiative of Your Beatitude last July this year, to organize a peaceful march of all the local Churches from our Patriarchate to Jaffa Gate in front of the Imperial and Petra hotels, and the subsequent prayer with the reading of a Message conveying internationally our request to preserve Jaffa Gate as the Gate for the entrance of the Heads of Churches of the Old City of Jerusalem to their Seats and as the natural access point of the Christian pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre, as it has been for centuries.

Encouraged with these accomplished things, Your Beatitude, and warmly congratulating You, the Hagiotaphite Fathers join You in the good fight for the success and the help of God for all initiatives You undertake, and the materialization of all Your aims for the good of our Brotherhood and of the Church of Holy Jerusalem.

Raising my glass in a toast, Your Beatitude, on behalf of the Holy and Sacred Synod and all Hagiotaphite Fathers, I wish You many happy returns, in health, gleefulness, peace and stability, full of Divine strength and enforcement, so that You may increase and enrich Your Patriarchal Office that has been entrusted to You by the Divine Providence, for the benefit and the praise of the blessed nation of the Rum Orthodox and for the Glory of our Trinitarian God.”

Likewise, the Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and the representatives of the Orthodox Churches of the Patriarchate of Moscow and the Patriarchate of

Romania addressed His Beatitude.

His Beatitude replied to all with the following words;

“Your Excellency Mr. Consul General of Greece,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved Christians,

Noble pilgrims

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).

The appearing Church of the incarnate God Word in the place of His “provision” (Psalm 132:15) and “of habitation” (Psalm 132:13), our Holy Church of Jerusalem, rejoices today on the completion of the fourteen-year-old ministerial navigation of Our Mediocrity since the taking over of the lot of the ministry (Acts 1:25)] of the Apostolic and Patriarchal Throne of St. James the Brother of God and First Hierarch of Jerusalem.

This sacred and ecclesiastical event possesses a special meaningful significance for the centuries-old expanding mystical body of Christ, the Church, on the one hand, and for its life in the world on the other. And it should be noted that according to St. Paul, the faithful members of the Church are called “fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph. 2:19) and that “they dwell on earth but actually live in heaven” according to the epistle to Diognitos (Vol. 2, p. 253).

Because of these, we went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, escorted by the Reverend members of our Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, where we rendered a thanksgiving Doxology to our Holy Trinitarian God, Who has been glorified “through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever” (1

Peter 4:11).

Today's celebrated fourteen-year-old enthronement anniversary does not refer to Our unworthiness, but to the established institution of the Church which has been founded by the redeeming blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, on which foundation "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11) as St. Paul preaches. And according to St. Ignatios of Antioch; "the apostolic" and "episcopal" throne of the Church encompasses a place of God; "Heads of the Bishops in the place of God, and of the Priests in the place of the synod of the apostles and of the deacons...who have been entrusted the ministry of Jesus Christ" (Epistle to Magnesians 6).

Our Patriarchal, monastic and Pastoral ministry so far, on the Hierarchic and Apostolic throne of St. James the Brother of God, of the Church of Jerusalem, has only one sole purpose, the preservation of the consignment of the healthy faith that has been handed over to Us by the Apostolic succession, and the upholding of the word of truth, and especially of the care of the Christian flock that has been entrusted to us, according to the teaching of St. Paul; "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12). Moreover, the preservation of the All-holy Shrines as places of the logic worship and a source of healing, where pilgrims flock from all ends of the earth for their spiritual refreshment, hearkening to the psalmist saying; "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 42:1-2).

Needless to say that the privileges and sovereign rights of the noble and royal nation of the "Rum Orthodox" Christians on the All-holy Shrines, is a sacred duty in its "ab antiquo" mission in the Holy Land. Therefore, every effort is made to

all directions, political and diplomatic, local and international governments to respect the existing multi-cultural and inter-religious Status Quo which has been established by international treaties, for both the biblical shrines and the Holy City of Jerusalem (which on itself is a universal pilgrimage).

Nevertheless, we submit to the advice of the God-inspired Paul; "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3), we have not wasted any time working in all humility for the keeping of the unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church of ours, "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (1 Tim. 3:9).

And we say this because Jerusalem, and therefore the Church of Jerusalem, being the primeval and inexhaustible source of the blood of righteousness, of peace and of eternal life, namely of Christ, is the point of reference of reconciliation of all of us, as St. Paul preaches by saying: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10).

This fourteenth enthronement anniversary of our Mediocrity calls us not to the boast of the things of our own, but that we "may 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. 1:120). Calling upon this testimony of our conscience, we shall not cease to strive for the good fight in the vineyard of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, namely in His Church, hearkening to the Lord's words: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Co-witnesses to this annunciation of the testimony of Christ's light and of the glory of God the Father are our co-workers the reverend and dearest Hagiotaphite Fathers and Brothers,

Archbishops, Hieromonks, Deacons and Monks, who are devoted body and soul to our sacred mission.

Let us therefore entreat God the Father of lights and of truth "to guide our steps to the working of His commandments" through the intercessions of our Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and through the intercessions of our Holy Father Nectarios of Pentapolis. May the Grace of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb of our Resurrected Saviour Christ fortify all of us who serve in the ministry of the All-holy shrines and in the pastoring of our Christian flock.

With all these, we call upon all who prayed along with us and honoured us with their presence in this festive enthronement anniversary, wishing them strength from on high, the grace of the All-holy Tomb, patience and every blessing from God, expressing our warm thanks to all 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 our Holy Brotherly Church of Russia, who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril, Reverend Archimandrite Theophilos, representative of the Holy Church of Romania, who conveyed the wished 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. Charalambos Bandour, who spoke on behalf of St. James Cathedral, Reverend Archimandrite Artemios and Fr. Alexander and Fr. Igor who spoke on behalf of the Russian-speaking Community in Ber-Sheba, the Most Reverend Archbishop Christophoros of Kyriakoypolis, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Jordan and on behalf of the Respected Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Mr. Ode Kawas, General

Magager of the Education Committee in Palestine, Reverend Fr. Boulos, who spoke on behalf of the Community of Beit Jalla and our dearest Steward Fr. Savvas, who spoke on behalf of Beit Sahour, Mr. Abu Aeta and Mr. Yousef Nasser, and all participating in this festivity of the Enthronement anniversary.

To the health of all of you!"

From Secretariat-General