

# **SERVICE OF THE BLESSING OF THE WATER AT THE ANCIENT CHURCH OF SAINT STEPHEN IN RAMALLAH**

On Tuesday, November 4/17, 2020, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Service of the Blessing of the water for the restart of the Liturgical life of the ancient Church dedicated to Saint Stephen the First Martyr in Ramallah. This Church, with the surrounding monastery olive-pressing mill, bakery and monastic cells, are preserved in the form of ruins which were brought to light after excavations. It is believed that this is the burial place of the First Martyr Stephen (Acts 8:2) in a field which belonged to the Sanhedrin Gamaliel.

This ecclesiastical and monastic area, which is a property of the Patriarchate, has been preserved and recently renovated by the Hegoumen of Ramallah Archimandrite Galaktion, with the donations from the local flock and those of the expatriate faithful Christians. Archimandrite Galaktion has also built a small chapel, which after today's blessing of the water by His Beatitude, will be used for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy for the faithful Christians of the Rum-Orthodox Arab-speaking Community of Ramallah.

For the Service of the Blessing of the water, His Beatitude was accompanied by His Eminence Archbishop and Secretary-General Aristarchos of Constantina, the Master of Ceremonies Archimandrite Bartholomew and Archdeacon Mark. From Ramallah, the service was attended by the initiator of this project Archimandrite Galaktion, the Steward Fr. James, the Mayor of the town of Ramallah, the Caretakers of the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Lord in Ramallah and its Byzantine

choir members, along with others who supported this God-pleasing and arduous project, which is the result of those who love the beauty of the house of God.

**From Secretariat-General**