

THE 15-YEAR ENTHRONEMENT ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III

On Sunday morning, 9/22 November 2020, a Doxology was held at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for the fifteen-year election and Enthronement anniversary of the Holy Primate of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III.

The Doxology was led by His Beatitude, and along with Him, the Archbishops of the Patriarchate, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Patriarchal Representatives and Hegoumens of the Holy Monasteries of the Patriarchate and Managers of its parishes, that were able to attend due to covid-19 restrictive measures.

The Service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras with his wife and child and members of the community in Jerusalem.

After the Doxology the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters, where Geronda Secretary-General, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Consantina was the first to address His Beatitude with the following address:

“Your Beatitude, Father and Master,

The Church of Jerusalem and the inextricably linked to it Hagiotaphite Brotherhood celebrate today a quite important and remarkable event, a joyful and exuberant event. This is the anniversary of the unanimous voting of the members of the Holy and Sacred Synod and the representatives of the flock, for the election of Your Beatitude as the Shepherd of the Church of the Holy Land and Hegoumen of the Order of the Studios, and

the consequent ceremony of Your Enthronement and its recognition by all the Orthodox Churches and countries, where our Venerable Patriarchate holds its pastoral mission. This happened in A.D. 2005, after a painful ordeal that shook the foundations of the Church; it shook but did not destroy it, because the One Who founded it in the Holy Land led the Patriarchate back into refreshment.

This event secures the continuation of the unceasing Apostolic succession of the Church of Jerusalem, and the unity of its members for the smooth operation and fulfilment of its divine mission; for this reason, it was festively celebrated – in compromise of course with the covid-19 restrictive measures – at the most precious heirloom of our faith, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It was celebrated with a Doxology to God, as a thanksgiving, because He led us back to refreshment and granted the Church Your Beatitude as its Patriarch and Shepherd. Having thanked God for this, and having prayed for Your health, stability and longevity, we returned to this historic hall of our holy “little house” as the memorable Patriarch Dositheos used to say, in order to wish and congratulate You up close, for all the good works You have accomplished through hardship and toil for our Patriarchate over these last fifteen years.

First of all, we recall that guided by the Ecclesiastical Tradition of the Fathers, You have guided the Hagiotaphite Fathers, Hegoumens of the Shrines and the Holy Monasteries, the clergy and the people to co-operate with the responsible Health Authorities of the governing state for the effective dealing with the fatal epidemic of covid-19 since the beginning of the year. Under this spirit, with the keeping of our Status Quo rights, the Liturgical Services were held at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and at the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem. From the Holy Week Services, the Epitaph Service and the All-night Vigil of the Resurrection were held at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The others,

i.e. Palm Sunday, the Washing of the feet and the Service of Love were held at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, with the participation of the designated Priests and only a few faithful, but without any pilgrims, as no pilgrims have arrived in Israel since the beginning of the pandemic. The former full of pilgrims Holy City has been empty from pilgrims in its streets and pathways ever since. It is worth remembering that despite the pandemic, the Service of the Holy Light was held exactly according to the Status Quo. By special providence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Police Force of Israel, the Holy Light was transferred to Jaffa Gate by an Archbishop, from where it was received by the representatives of all Orthodox countries. The representatives of the Churches received the Holy Light at Ben Gurion airport, where they were secluded inside the landed planes of their countries. With the Patriarchate's actions, the Holy Light was transferred in the same day to its Communities in Jordan, the Palestinian areas and in Gaza.

For the relief of the financially weak people, due to the restrictive measures against the pandemic, Your Beatitude has ordered the distribution of packages of food by the Patriarchate to the neediest families in Jerusalem, in Bethlehem and in Ramallah and exempted from one year's rent the tenants of houses and shops that belong to the Patriarchate. The Fatherly and Pastoral support of Your Beatitude during the pandemic was shown to the Holy Monasteries of the Patriarchate with Your visits and the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in them, along with Your Sermons, which were broadcast through the internet in the Greek, Arabic, English, Russian and Romanian languages.

Your Beatitude's attitude was unwavering in the case of claiming and safeguarding the Pilgrimage rights of our Patriarchate. This was made manifest over last year's Epiphany Feast in Bethlehem, when the Armenian Priests, continuing their decades-long provocative behaviour, prevented us from

the procedure of taking the Orthodox Icon of Epiphany down to the Holy Cave. Thanks to the persistence and guidance of Your Beatitude, the Hagiotope ministers of Bethlehem and those who came to their aid from Jerusalem, despite the physical violence they endured by the Armenians, managed to put the icon in the Cave, having first received the relevant order by President Abu Mazen. We still need to secure our right for this occasion with a special Presidential decree as well, so that it will not be disputed again in the future. A similar event happened over the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross on 14 September 2020, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Armenians tried to prevent us from our right to offer incense in the Altar of Saint Helen's chapel, as they have also done other times in the past. Finally, we performed our right, due to the persistence of Your Beatitude, who stood for more than one hour at the chapel with the Holy Cross placed on Your head, urging the Armenians to withdraw. This happened in the end, of fear of the Israeli Police force who was present video-filming the episode, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Vlioras. These rights of the Orthodox Patriarchate are supported by testimonies written in the pilgrimage codes that we keep, but also in the codes kept by the Custody of the Holy Land of the Franciscans, who supported us in this regard.

Along with the pilgrimage rights, Your Beatitude prioritized also the fortification of the land and building property rights of the Patriarchate, as many times they had been violated, either materially, or by court orders of greedy opportunists. These rights are supported efficiently by the property titles, firmania, veratia, e.t.c., kept in the Patriarchate Archives, for whose better arrangement, Your Beatitude has provided for a new building which is still under construction. For the Archive titles, by Your order and guidance, the Financial Committee and the Legal Advisors of the Patriarchate tirelessly fought in the courtrooms and willingly paid the necessary amounts and the court fees. A

recent example of this is the 2 million Shekels that were paid as a tax by the Patriarchate since the tenant of Petra Hotel by Jaffa Gate had not paid this amount. This was done to save the Patriarchate's property from its seizure by opaque and corrupt multi-year contracts, which were denounced by the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood in the year 2005.

For the more effective operation of the pastoral mission of the Patriarchate, Your Beatitude has especially provided for the Theological or other studies of the Hagiotaphite Fathers, or young people of our flock, granting the relevant scholarships for them, especially in Greece and in Cyprus. By the appointing of new members of the Holy Synod, Your Beatitude has strengthened the Synodical ordinance of the Patriarchate. And by Your care, the renovation project of the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and of the Sacristy is being promoted, with the funding of a reverend source.

All these encourage and strengthen us, Your Beatitude, both the old and the new Hagiotaphite Fathers, in order to stand by Your side and follow You, and also to fight in the good Hagiotaphite cause, for a dynamic Christian Rum-Orthodox testimony in the Holy Land, which will benefit many people.

Raising my glass to a toast, Your Beatitude, on behalf of the Holy and Sacred Synod and of the whole Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, I wish You many happy returns, in health, stability, peace and joy, in governmental power and wisdom from on high, for the praise of our Venerable Patriarchate, of our blessed nation and for the Glory of our Trinitarian God."

This was followed by the addresses of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, His Excellency Mr Evangelos Vlioras, His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Joppa, His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, the Dean Priest of Saint James Cathedral Fr Charalambos Bandour and others.

His Beatitude thanked all with the following address:

“Your Excellency Consul General of Greece, Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved Christians,

Noble pilgrims

“My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever” (Psalm 145:21).

The Holy Church of Christ in Jerusalem, which was sprouted from the rood of Jesse, and which was chosen by the Lord; “He hath desired it for His habitation” (Psalm 132:13), celebrates today the completion of fifteen years of the governing ministry of Our mediocrity, since Our establishment on the God-founded throne of Hieromartyr James the Brother of God and first ordained Hierarch of Jerusalem.

This sacred event has a special significance for the testimony of Christ’s truth all over the world by the Church, and for the pastoral accountability of its spiritual shepherds, as Saint Paul notes: “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:27-28).

According to the Canon of our Hagiotaphite tradition, we went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, accompanied by the reverend members of our Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, where we rendered a thanksgiving Doxology to our God and Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; “to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:6).

Our fifteen-year enthronement anniversary, celebrated amidst the covid-19 pandemic, should be considered an anniversary of

renovation and guarantee of the apostolic succession throughout the centuries, which is followed by every Head of the Church of Jerusalem, having its beginning in the Only-Begotten Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, as Saint John, the Evangelist says: "In the beginning was the Word. The same was at the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1-3).

And according to the "Teachings of the Apostles", "the bishop who is the Head, as honoured by God, leads the clergy and rules over all people" (Teachings of the Apostles, B XXVII).

Harkening to Saint Paul saying: "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1) and following the footsteps of Our Predecessors, We make every effort to the best of Our abilities, to safeguard Our unadulterated Apostolic tradition and healthy faith, as well as to accommodate the spiritual and material needs of the Christian flock which has been entrusted to Us. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind" (1 Peter 5:2) Saint Peter orders. Moreover, we strive for the keeping of the biblical testimonies of our faith, namely the All-holy Shrines, which preach the incarnation of God the Word, His Passion on the Cross and His Resurrection.

Needless, again, to say, that the safeguarding of the indelible privileges and sovereign rights of the noble and royal nation of the 'Rum Orthodox' on the All-holy Shrines is a sacred duty of Our ab antique mission in the Holy Land. Therefore, we never cease raising our voice towards every direction, political and diplomatic, local and international organizations and governments, in order to make the established by international treaties multi-cultural and multi-religious Status Quo respectable, for both the Biblical Shrines and for the Holy City of Jerusalem, which is an

international Shrine in itself, as Prophet Isaiah says: "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth" (Isaiah 62:1).

Being rooted and grounded in the love and faith of Christ, "my spirit is overwhelmed within me" (Psalm 143:4), working in clear consciousness (2 Tim. 1:3) for the prevention of the nesting schism in the bosom of Christ's body, which is the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. This, after all, was the mission of the Holy Apostles, who were established in the Church of Jerusalem, the preaching of reconciliation, as this is stated by Saint Paul: "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:19).

Through this enthronement celebration, We are called not to boast, but rather examine the work of our Patriarchal Office, according to Saint Paul's order: "But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another" (Gal. 6:4).

In this ministry, the mission of the martyr's throne of Saint James the Brother of God, we have as accomplices and companions the reverend and dearest Fathers and brothers Hagiotaphite Archbishops, Hieromonks, Priests, Hierodeacons and Monks, who are distinguished for their fervent zeal and God-pleasing self-sacrifice.

Let us pray to God and Father of lights and truth along with the psalmist: "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not" (Psalm 17:5), by the intercessions of our Most-Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and by the prayers of our Father among the Saints Nectarios of Pentapolis. May the grace of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ strengthen all of us who

serve in the All-holy Shrines and shepherd our pious Christian flock.

For all these, we wish for all who prayed with Us and honoured Us with their presence in this Enthronement Anniversary, strength from on high, the grace of the Holy Sepulchre, patience, and every blessing from God, expressing also our gratitude for those who addressed Us; Geronda Secretary General, His Eminence 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 Evangelos Vlioras, the Representative of the Brotherly Holy Church of Russia, Reverend Archimandrite Alexander, who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril, the Representative of the Holy Church of Romania, Reverend Archimandrite Ioannis, who conveyed the wishes of the Patriarch of Romania Daniel, His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Nazareth, His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Joppa, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Joppa, Reverend Charalambos Bandour, who spoke on behalf of Saint James Cathedral, His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, who spoke on behalf of the Russian-speaking Community of Ber Sheva, Father Romanos, who conveyed the wishes and love of His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion, Mr Athanasios Abu Aeta, Mr Ode Issa and Nibel Baramsi, and all who participated in this celebration of the Enthronement Anniversary."

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This event secures the continuation of the unceasing Apostolic succession of the Church of Jerusalem, and the unity of its members for the smooth operation and fulfilment of its divine mission; for this reason, it was festively celebrated – in compromise of course with the covid-19 restrictive measures – at the most precious heirloom of our faith, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It was celebrated with a Doxology to God, as a thanksgiving, because He led us back to refreshment and granted the Church Your Beatitude as its Patriarch and Shepherd. Having thanked God for this, and having prayed for Your health, stability and longevity, we returned to this historic hall of our holy “little house” as the memorable Patriarch Dositheos used to say, in order to wish and congratulate You up close, for all the good works You have accomplished through hardship and toil for our Patriarchate over these last fifteen years.

First of all, we recall that guided by the Ecclesiastical

Tradition of the Fathers, You have guided the Hagiotaphite Fathers, Hegoumens of the Shrines and the Holy Monasteries, the clergy and the people to co-operate with the responsible Health Authorities of the governing state for the effective dealing with the fatal epidemic of covid-19 since the beginning of the year. Under this spirit, with the keeping of our Status Quo rights, the Liturgical Services were held at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and at the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem. From the Holy Week Services, the Epitaph Service and the All-night Vigil of the Resurrection were held at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The others, i.e. Palm Sunday, the Washing of the feet and the Service of Love were held at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, with the participation of the designated Priests and only a few faithful, but without any pilgrims, as no pilgrims have arrived in Israel since the beginning of the pandemic. The former full of pilgrims Holy City has been empty from pilgrims in its streets and pathways ever since. It is worth remembering that despite the pandemic, the Service of the Holy Light was held exactly according to the Status Quo. By special providence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Police Force of Israel, the Holy Light was transferred to Jaffa Gate by an Archbishop, from where it was received by the representatives of all Orthodox countries. The representatives of the Churches received the Holy Light at Ben Gurion airport, where they were secluded inside the landed planes of their countries. With the Patriarchate's actions, the Holy Light was transferred in the same day to its Communities in Jordan, the Palestinian areas and in Gaza.

For the relief of the financially weak people, due to the restrictive measures against the pandemic, Your Beatitude has ordered the distribution of packages of food by the Patriarchate to the neediest families in Jerusalem, in Bethlehem and in Ramallah and exempted from one year's rent the tenants of houses and shops that belong to the Patriarchate. The Fatherly and Pastoral support of Your

Beatitude during the pandemic was shown to the Holy Monasteries of the Patriarchate with Your visits and the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in them, along with Your Sermons, which were broadcast through the internet in the Greek, Arabic, English, Russian and Romanian languages.

Your Beatitude's attitude was unwavering in the case of claiming and safeguarding the Pilgrimage rights of our Patriarchate. This was made manifest over last year's Epiphany Feast in Bethlehem, when the Armenian Priests, continuing their decades-long provocative behaviour, prevented us from the procedure of taking the Orthodox Icon of Epiphany down to the Holy Cave. Thanks to the persistence and guidance of Your Beatitude, the Hagiotaphite ministers of Bethlehem and those who came to their aid from Jerusalem, despite the physical violence they endured by the Armenians, managed to put the icon in the Cave, having first received the relevant order by President Abu Mazen. We still need to secure our right for this occasion with a special Presidential decree as well, so that it will not be disputed again in the future. A similar event happened over the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross on 14 September 2020, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Armenians tried to prevent us from our right to offer incense in the Altar of Saint Helen's chapel, as they have also done other times in the past. Finally, we performed our right, due to the persistence of Your Beatitude, who stood for more than one hour at the chapel with the Holy Cross placed on Your head, urging the Armenians to withdraw. This happened in the end, of fear of the Israeli Police force who was present video-filming the episode, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Vlioras. These rights of the Orthodox Patriarchate are supported by testimonies written in the pilgrimage codes that we keep, but also in the codes kept by the Custody of the Holy Land of the Franciscans, who supported us in this regard.

Along with the pilgrimage rights, Your Beatitude prioritized

also the fortification of the land and building property rights of the Patriarchate, as many times they had been violated, either materially, or by court orders of greedy opportunists. These rights are supported efficiently by the property titles, firmania, veratia, e.t.c., kept in the Patriarchate Archives, for whose better arrangement, Your Beatitude has provided for a new building which is still under construction. For the Archive titles, by Your order and guidance, the Financial Committee and the Legal Advisors of the Patriarchate tirelessly fought in the courtrooms and willingly paid the necessary amounts and the court fees. A recent example of this is the 2 million Shekels that were paid as a tax by the Patriarchate since the tenant of Petra Hotel by Jaffa Gate had not paid this amount. This was done to save the Patriarchate's property from its seizure by opaque and corrupt multi-year contracts, which were denounced by the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood in the year 2005.

For the more effective operation of the pastoral mission of the Patriarchate, Your Beatitude has especially provided for the Theological or other studies of the Hagiotaphite Fathers, or young people of our flock, granting the relevant scholarships for them, especially in Greece and in Cyprus. By the appointing of new members of the Holy Synod, Your Beatitude has strengthened the Synodical ordinance of the Patriarchate. And by Your care, the renovation project of the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and of the Sacristy is being promoted, with the funding of a reverend source.

All these encourage and strengthen us, Your Beatitude, both the old and the new Hagiotaphite Fathers, in order to stand by Your side and follow You, and also to fight in the good Hagiotaphite cause, for a dynamic Christian Rum-Orthodox testimony in the Holy Land, which will benefit many people.

Raising my glass to a toast, Your Beatitude, on behalf of the Holy and Sacred Synod and of the whole Hagiotaphite

Brotherhood, I wish You many happy returns, in health, stability, peace and joy, in governmental power and wisdom from on high, for the praise of our Venerable Patriarchate, of our blessed nation and for the Glory of our Trinitarian God.”

This was followed by the addresses of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, His Excellency Mr Evangelos Vlioras, His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Joppa, His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, the Dean Priest of Saint James Cathedral Fr Charalambos Bandour and others.

His Beatitude thanked all with the following address:

“Your Excellency Consul General of Greece, Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved Christians,

Noble pilgrims

“My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever” (Psalm 145:21).

The Holy Church of Christ in Jerusalem, which was sprouted from the rood of Jesse, and which was chosen by the Lord;“ He hath desired it for His habitation” (Psalm 132:13), celebrates today the completion of fifteen years of the governing ministry of Our mediocrity, since Our establishment on the God-founded throne of Hieromartyr James the Brother of God and first ordained Hierarch of Jerusalem.

This sacred event has a special significance for the testimony of Christ’s truth all over the world by the Church, and for the pastoral accountability of its spiritual shepherds, as Saint Paul notes: “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you

overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:27-28).

According to the Canon of our Hagiotaphite tradition, we went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, accompanied by the reverend members of our Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, where we rendered a thanksgiving Doxology to our God and Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; "to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 1:6).

Our fifteen-year enthronement anniversary, celebrated amidst the covid-19 pandemic, should be considered an anniversary of renovation and guarantee of the apostolic succession throughout the centuries, which is followed by every Head of the Church of Jerusalem, having its beginning in the Only-Begotten Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, as Saint John, the Evangelist says: "In the beginning was the Word. The same was at the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1-3).

And according to the "Teachings of the Apostles", "the bishop who is the Head, as honoured by God, leads the clergy and rules over all people" (Teachings of the Apostles, B XXVII).

Harkening to Saint Paul saying: "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (Acts 23:1) and following the footsteps of Our Predecessors, We make every effort to the best of Our abilities, to safeguard Our unadulterated Apostolic tradition and healthy faith, as well as to accommodate the spiritual and material needs of the Christian flock which has been entrusted to Us. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind" (1 Peter 5:2) Saint Peter orders. Moreover, we strive for the keeping of the biblical testimonies of our faith, namely the All-holy Shrines, which preach the incarnation of God the Word, His Passion on the Cross and His

Resurrection.

Needless, again, to say, that the safeguarding of the indelible privileges and sovereign rights of the noble and royal nation of the 'Rum Orthodox' on the All-holy Shrines is a sacred duty of Our ab antique mission in the Holy Land. Therefore, we never cease raising our voice towards every direction, political and diplomatic, local and international organizations and governments, in order to make the established by international treaties multi-cultural and multi-religious Status Quo respectable, for both the Biblical Shrines and for the Holy City of Jerusalem, which is an international Shrine in itself, as Prophet Isaiah says: "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth" (Isaiah 62:1).

Being rooted and grounded in the love and faith of Christ, "my spirit is overwhelmed within me" (Psalm 143:4), working in clear consciousness (2 Tim. 1:3) for the prevention of the nesting schism in the bosom of Christ's body, which is the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. This, after all, was the mission of the Holy Apostles, who were established in the Church of Jerusalem, the preaching of reconciliation, as this is stated by Saint Paul: "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:19).

Through this enthronement celebration, We are called not to boast, but rather examine the work of our Patriarchal Office, according to Saint Paul's order: "But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another" (Gal. 6:4).

In this ministry, the mission of the martyr's throne of Saint James the Brother of God, we have as

accomplices and companions the reverend and dearest Fathers and brothers Hagiotaphite Archbishops, Hieromonks, Priests, Hierodeacons and Monks, who are distinguished for their fervent zeal and God-pleasing self-sacrifice.

Let us pray to God and Father of lights and truth along with the psalmist: "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not" (Psalm 17:5), by the intercessions of our Most-Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and by the prayers of our Father among the Saints Nectarios of Pentapolis. May the grace of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ strengthen all of us who serve in the All-holy Shrines and shepherd our pious Christian flock.

For all these, we wish for all who prayed with Us and honoured Us with their presence in this Enthronement Anniversary, strength from on high, the grace of the Holy Sepulchre, patience, and every blessing from God, expressing also our gratitude for those who addressed Us; Geronda Secretary General, His Eminence 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 Evangelos Vlioras, the Representative of the Brotherly Holy Church of Russia, Reverend Archimandrite Alexander, who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril, the Representative of the Holy Church of Romania, Reverend Archimandrite Ioannis, who conveyed the wishes of the Patriarch of Romania Daniel, His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Nazareth, His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Joppa, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Joppa, Reverend Charalambos Bandour, who spoke on behalf of Saint James Cathedral, His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, who spoke on behalf of the Russian-speaking Community of Ber Sheva, Father Romanos, who conveyed the wishes and love of His Eminence

Metropolitan Hilarion, Mr Athanasios Abu Aeta, Mr Ode Issa and Nibel Baramsi, and all who participated in this celebration of the Enthronement Anniversary.”

At noon His Beatitude hosted a meal for the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood.

From Secretariat-General On Sunday morning, 9/22 November 2020, a Doxology was held at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for the fifteen-year election and Enthronement anniversary of the Holy Primate of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III.

The Doxology was led by His Beatitude, and along with Him, the Archbishops of the Patriarchate, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Patriarchal Representatives and Hegoumens of the Holy Monasteries of the Patriarchate and Managers of its parishes, that were able to attend due to covid-19 restrictive measures.

The Service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras with his wife and child and members of the community in Jerusalem.

After the Doxology the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters, where Geronda Secretary-General, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Consantina was the first to address His Beatitude with the following address:

“Your Beatitude, Father and Master,

The Church of Jerusalem and the inextricably linked to it Hagiotaphite Brotherhood celebrate today a quite important and remarkable event, a joyful and exuberant event. This is the anniversary of the unanimous voting of the members of the Holy and Sacred Synod and the representatives of the flock, for the election of Your Beatitude as the Shepherd of the Church of the Holy Land and Hegoumen of the Order of the Studios, and the consequent ceremony of Your Enthronement and its recognition by all the Orthodox Churches and countries, where

our Venerable Patriarchate holds its pastoral mission. This happened in A.D. 2005, after a painful ordeal that shook the foundations of the Church; it shook but did not destroy it, because the One Who founded it in the Holy Land led the Patriarchate back into refreshment.

This event secures the continuation of the unceasing Apostolic succession of the Church of Jerusalem, and the unity of its members for the smooth operation and fulfilment of its divine mission; for this reason, it was festively celebrated – in compromise of course with the covid-19 restrictive measures – at the most precious heirloom of our faith, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It was celebrated with a Doxology to God, as a thanksgiving, because He led us back to refreshment and granted the Church Your Beatitude as its Patriarch and Shepherd. Having thanked God for this, and having prayed for Your health, stability and longevity, we returned to this historic hall of our holy “little house” as the memorable Patriarch Dositheos used to say, in order to wish and congratulate You up close, for all the good works You have accomplished through hardship and toil for our Patriarchate over these last fifteen years.

First of all, we recall that guided by the Ecclesiastical Tradition of the Fathers, You have guided the Hagiotaphite Fathers, Hegoumens of the Shrines and the Holy Monasteries, the clergy and the people to co-operate with the responsible Health Authorities of the governing state for the effective dealing with the fatal epidemic of covid-19 since the beginning of the year. Under this spirit, with the keeping of our Status Quo rights, the Liturgical Services were held at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and at the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem. From the Holy Week Services, the Epitaph Service and the All-night Vigil of the Resurrection were held at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The others, i.e. Palm Sunday, the Washing of the feet and the Service of Love were held at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine

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flock.

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