

PRIEST'S ORDINATION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday, 13/26 February 2021, during the All-night Vigil at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Hegoumen of the Shrine of Saint George in Lydda, Hierodeacon Marcellus was ordained a Priest. Father Marcellus came from the Monastery of Saint Anthony of Arizona, which was founded by the memorable Father Ephraim Philotheitis and joined the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood two years ago.

Hierodeacon Marcellus was ordained to Priest by His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, after the decision of the Holy and Sacred Synod and the appointment by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

His Eminence addressed Father Marcellus before the ordination as follows:

“Reverend Hierodeacon Marcellus,

At this hour, as we stand before the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb, which received the Creator as being asleep so that He would sanctify and recreate the original beauty of our defiled by sin nature with His resurrection, we are called, by the order, permission and encouragement of His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, and by the approval of the Chaired by Him Holy and Sacred Synod, to entreat the All-Holy and Ceremonial Spirit, in order to ordain you, with the placing of our hands, to the second degree of Priesthood, that of the Priest, and make you a Minister of God's Sacraments.

A great honour for you; greater is the gift for you; and greatest is the responsibility for you! The Divine Providence of the All-holy Trinitarian God “who trieth the hearts and reins” (Psalm 7:9), has reserved many blessings and unexpected

experiences for you. Having been nurtured and brought up spiritually to all matters concerning the angelic-like manner of living at the Holy Monastery of Saint Anthony in Arizona of the USA, under the lead of Geronda Ephraim, you came to the Holy Land and were appointed the duty to serve at the God-receiving Cave in Holy Bethlehem. Then, our most wise Father and Patriarch Theophilos III, along with the Holy and Sacred Synod, approved your application to join our venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, and having assessed your gifts, suggested that you should undertake the duty of the Hegoumen at the Holy Shrine of the Holy Great Martyr George in Lydda, as well as to receive the high ministry of the Priesthood.

And behold! Today "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee" (Luke 1:35)! From today, you are lifted up in the air, from today you are reshaped, from today you are transformed! You receive the Priesthood and with it a new ministry and mission. Your new mission has three positions from which you can behold God.

First the Priesthood. Know that from henceforth you will be a Priest of the Highest! Your task is to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, during which "thousands of Archangels and myriads of Angels" (prayer of the D. Liturgy) will be standing by you. The Holy Altar will be in front of you, where, you will no longer be a servant, but a Minister, receiving and distributing the Divine Grace! From the Holy Altar, you will receive strength, and you will turn to it at your hardships. Watch out, because the cleaner the Priest's life, the more Grace he receives at the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Keep in your mind the vision of Prophet Isaiah, when he saw "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his glory filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1), and be sure that during the celebration of the Bloodless Sacrifice, this vision will be unfolded before you, even if you won't be able to view it with your human eyes.

The second is the Pastoral mission. From henceforth, you are

called "not to give sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids" (Psalm 132:4). From today you become a vessel of the Divine Grace, in order to convey to every man coming to you the water of Eternal Life, that "shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). Your care for the flock of our Patriarchate in Lydda and for the pilgrims who come from all over the world makes it imperative for you to have unceasing continuous care so that they may be benefited spiritually and carry on to their path to salvation. Keep in your heart the words of Saint John of the Ladder; "the true shepherd is revealed by his love. For it was out of love that the Shepherd was crucified" (Ladder of the Divine Ascent, to the Shepherd, 24).

The third and last position of your mission is that of the Hagiotaphite. As a Hagiotaphite Hieromonk, continuator of the tradition of the Order of the Studious Ones, in addition to the aforementioned advice, you should have a tireless watch over the Holy Shrine which you are called to serve. Be a sleepless guardian, preserving and sustaining the spiritual and material property which has been handed over to us by the older Fathers, as well as all other precious items of our noble Faith. And be aware that our Fathers of old preserved these holy places with blood, tears and sweat. Rest sure, that the Great Martyr and Trophy-bearer George, who "was a soldier of the King of the ages" (Vespers of St George), will be your guardian and companion in this struggle.

Having admonished you with these, as a brother and as a Father, obeying the order of His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch Theophilos III, we invoke for you the Grace of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb, of the God-receiving Cave, the intercessions of the Most Holy and Most-Pure Theotokos who received the Annunciation in Nazareth, and of the Holy Glorious Great Martyr and wonder worker George the Trophy-bearer, and call you, to "enter into His tabernacles...to the place of his footstool" (Psalm 132:7)."

With the invocation of the Divine Grace and the placing of the Metropolitan's hands, the members of the Lydda parish and the Hagiotaphite Fathers exclaimed the words "Axios, Axios!" for the ordained.

After the Divine Liturgy, the ordained Priest hosted a reception for the ordaining Metropolitan and all present at the Office of Geronda Sacristan, His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis.

The next morning, Hieromonk Marcellus came to the Office of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and received His blessing and instructions for the care of our Arab-speaking flock at the Shrine of Lydda.

From Secretariat-General