

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS BLESSES THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday morning, 3/16 July 2021, the Divine Liturgy on the commemoration of Saint Yakinthos and Saint Anatolios Patriarch of Constantinople was celebrated at the Patriarchate's Holy Church of the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Lord in Ramallah. The Liturgy was officiated by the Priest of Beit Jala Fr Pavlos Alem and the Priest of Bethlehem Fr George Zakaman, and was attended mainly by the young people of the parishes of the Patriarchate from Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Taybe, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour.

The Liturgy was also attended by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, who came from Jerusalem along with their Eminences, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Father Issa Mousleh and Archdeacon Mark. His Beatitude blessed the approximately 140 young boys and girls, who received the Holy Communion, as the chanting was delivered by the Byzantine Choir of the young people of Ramallah.

After the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude addressed the young ones through Fr Issa in Arabic and gave each of them an icon as a blessing. His Beatitude's address is as per below:

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1) the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved children in Christ, young boys and girls.

Our presence with you in this brotherly gathering of the

youths of the Rum-Orthodox communities urges us to cry aloud with the hymnographer: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity", and especially in the name of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20), the Lord says.

Indeed, my dear ones, this blessed gathering is in the name of our Saviour Christ and the Church, which is His body and He [Christ] is the head of this body, namely of the Church (Col. 1:18,24), as Saint Paul preaches. And the Church as another "hen gathereth her chickens under her wings" (Matt. 23:37).

Our gathering has special importance for the faithful members of the Church. And this, because the challenges, the signs of the times, are multiple; climatic, environmental, socio-political, economic and especially health issues.

The Prophets and the Holy Apostles also had this experience of this disorder in the world. That is why Christ would say to them: "Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven" (Luke 21:10-11).

As far as the correct Christian faith and teaching are concerned, Saint Paul sends his disciple Timothy saying: "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

We, our beloved children, who belong to the local Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of all Churches, boast in the Lord that the Holy Church of Jerusalem is founded upon Christ's blood on the Cross, and has its apostolic beginning by Saint James the Brother of God and First Hierarch of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Moreover, the Lord made all of us, both clergy and the people, who live in the Holy Land, ministers of His true witnesses, the All-holy Shrines, which testify the Nativity, the Passion on the Cross, the three-day burial and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also the redeeming work of the mystery of the Divine Providence.

We rend glory and thanksgiving to our Lord and God because He gave us His Holy Church, which as an oasis of the Holy Spirit, rises amidst a dry and arid land, amidst the worldly powers of this era. In this oasis, light shines upon them "that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Luke 1:79). "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Psalm 97:11) according to the psalmist.

We do not exaggerate when we say that the Holy Church of Jerusalem, "the habitation of the incarnate God the Word and the Mother of the Churches", according to Saint John of Damascus, became and is proven to be, throughout the centuries, both the safe harbour of our souls and bodies and the safe harbour of our cultural inheritance and national-religious identity. It is noteworthy, that this identity was kept intact and unadulterated, despite the various adversities and insults of the opponents, as the psalmist says: "They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage" (Psalm 94:5). "Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place" (Psalm 66:12).

Therefore, dearest children in the Lord, we have a sacred obligation to preserve this consignment, the cultural inheritance and our national-religious identity, always paying heed to the words of Saint John of the Ladder who says: "it will be a pitiful spectacle to see those who were saved at sea, to end up shipwrecked in the harbour".

The present aeon (Gal. 1:4) in which we live, is the aeon of globalization, confusion, and disorientation, while its days

are evil (Eph. 5:16). The Church of Christ, and specifically for us, the Rum-Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the primary place of our protection, our salvation: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28), the Lord says.

Because of this, Saint Paul exhorts us to a brave fight, saying: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:10-12).

Behold the time, my dear brethren and children of the Lord, to know the wealth and the depth of the glory of the mystery of the Church, of which Christ is its body and head (ref. Col. 1:27).

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

The hosts of this ceremony, Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery Archimandrite Galaktion and the Priest of the Church Fr Iakovos thanked His Beatitude for His Fatherly interest.

From Secretariat-General