

PATRIARCHAL CIRCULAR FOR THE CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS

For the celebration of the Despotic feast of Christmas according to the ecclesiastical tradition and order, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed the flock with the following circular:

Prot. No

734

To the most devout and reverend Stewards and Priests of the parishes and the honourable Presidents and members of the Local Councils of our flock all over the jurisdiction of our Patriarchate, dearest children in the Lord of Our Mediocrity, grace and peace from God the Father.

Beloved children in the Lord,

Acting pastorally and Fatherly, we communicate with you in writing to remind you once again, that the Christmas Feast, as a great Despotic one, has been celebrated since antiquity with the befitting liturgical brilliance by our Patriarchate and the venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood on 25th December (old calendar) which corresponds to 7th January (new calendar), and our Christian congregation follows this rule.

“Keeping that which is committed to thy trust”, namely the consignment (ref. 1 Tim. 6:20) of the Patriarchs and Teachers before Us, and “following after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Romans 14:19), we urge the Priests of our flock so that on the day of 12th December (old calendar), which corresponds to 25th December

(new calendar) they open the Holy Churches and observe the service of our Father among the Saints Spyridon, Bishop of Trimythus the wonderworker, which includes the Catavasiae and other pre-festal Christmas hymns, and not the service of Christmas day of 25th December; after the service of Matins the Divine Liturgy should be celebrated.

As is well known, the adoption of the new calendar brought the Orthodox Church face to face with pastoral issues, which also have social implications, which we are called to face with a sense of responsibility. During this day, after the observed service of the feast of Saint Spyridon, the members of the Greek Orthodox flock may proceed to demonstrations of a social but not ecclesiastical character.

Expecting your conformity to Our prompting, for the celebration of the great feast of Christmas in peace in unity, We abundantly bestow our Fatherly wishes and Patriarchal blessings from the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb and remain,

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, 13 November 2021

Fervent Supplicant for all before God,

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem