

FEAST OF THE PARISH OF PATRIARCH ABRAHAM IN BEER SHEBA

On Friday 5/18 February 2022, H.H.B. the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and His Entourage went to Beer Sheba, the capital of Negev desert in Southern Israel and officiated the Divine Liturgy in a temporary Prayer House which serves the Liturgical needs of the parish until God allows the building of a Church dedicated to the Patriarch Abraham, Saint Sophronios, Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Holy Martyrs Maccabees. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Hegoumen of the H. Monastery of the Shepherds Archimandrite Ignatios, the Hegoumen of Cana Archimandrite Chrysostom, the ministering Priest of Nazareth Archimandrite Seraphim, the Steward of Nazareth Priest Simeon, and the Ministering Priest of Beer Sheba Priest Alexander Yatsevich. The chanting was delivered by the whole congregation of the parish in Slavonic, Greek and Arabic, under the lead of their Hegoumen, His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba.

It should be noted that this was the first Patriarchal liturgy in Beer Sheba in the last 70 years. Despite the presence of tombs in the old Orthodox Christian cemetery in the old city of Beer Sheba since the 19th century, there is no testimony proving the celebration of a Patriarchal Divine Liturgy since the time of the blessed Patriarch Timotheos in 1947 when the remaining Orthodox Christians abandoned the city and moved elsewhere.

In the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude had prepared a Sermon which the ministering Priest of Beer Sheba read translated in Russian. After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen of Beer Sheba

Aristovoulos hosted a festal meal for His Beatitude and His Entourage. The Franciscan Fr. Roman from the Latin Parish was also a guest at the meal.

During the meal His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba delivered the following address:

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

I feel chills running through me watching this historic moment, seeing Your Holy Beatitude among us to bless and support us in the struggle of establishing the parish of our Russian-speaking flock from nought, in a remote area far from the Holy City, where our presence as Orthodox Christians has not yet been entirely accepted by the local community. Especially today, Your Beatitude, amidst Your reverend Patriarchal Entourage, I wish to express my gratitude once more, as from the very first moment that I asked Your blessing, in December 2008 to come to Beer Sheba, You have supported, advised, consoled me in my difficult times, and when we found ourselves in the happy event of officially establishing the parish with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in Pentecost of 2017, You very willingly funded the rent of the first house of prayer, and when the needs of the parish increased and the members of the parish exceeded the 70 families, You again supported us, funding the rent of the present house of prayer.

I raise my glass on a toast to the health of Your Beatitude, wishing from the depths of my heart that God will enable Your Beatitude to soon place the founding stone and later on officiate the consecration of the new Holy Church, which will be a bastion for our Patriarchate in the historic city of the Patriarch Abraham and a spiritual shelter for the Orthodox Christians living herein.”

From Secretariat-General