

THE INSPECTION OF THE WORKS IN THE ROTUNDA AND THE SEVEN ARCHES IN THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

On Thursday evening, June 3/16, 2022, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, venerated the Holy Tomb and inspected the ongoing project of renovation and maintenance of the floor of the Rotunda around the Sacred Edicule and the area under the seven arches, which is supervised by the team of the University Sapiientia of Rome, after the agreement of the Three Major Communities, the Rum Orthodox, the Latins and the Armenians, according to the Status Quo.

His Beatitude was accompanied by Geronda Secretary-General His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Geronda Sacristan His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Patriarchal Representative in Constantinople His Eminence Archbishop Nectarios of Anthedona, the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod Hierodeacon Simeon and others, the Franciscan brothers of the Custody in the Holy Land, the Custos His Grace Fr Francesco Patton, Fr Dobromiro and other representatives of the Armenians, His Eminence Sevan, Archimandrite Samuel, Hegoumen of the Armenians at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Father Gurion and other members of their brotherhood, the Architect of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Mr Theodosios Mitropoulos.

The members of this Delegation from the three Communities entered the project area and saw the excavation site, and received archaeological explanations from the specialists of

the University Sapiientia regarding the wall layers and the structure dating back to the Roman period, before the construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre during Constantine's era. They were informed about the various maintenance and renovation periods at the times of the Byzantine Emperors and saw the rock of the north-east side of the Rotunda which supports the Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre and is carved to form the "new and empty" Life-giving Tomb of our Lord. It has been decided that this project will have a duration of 26 months with a cost of €11.000.000, funded by pious donors and sponsors.

After the archaeological research with the collection of the necessary artefacts, the excavated site will be covered anew, placing the intact slates back to their original position, while the damaged ones will be replaced by others, responding to the sanctity of the site and to the conclusions of this multifaceted work, but also through glass constructions that will facilitate the view.

We remind our readers that this is the second phase of the work carried out according to the aforementioned scientific methods and Status Quo agreement, after the successful completion of the first phase of maintenance and renovation of the Sacred Edicule, which was carried out by a scientific team from the National University of Athens under the supervision of Professor Antonia Moropoulou. The first phase was inspired and initiated by His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the Communities of the Greeks, Latins and Armenians cooperated for its completion.

Nevertheless, we should also mention that all this work is a continuation of the prototype set by the renovation project in the '60s, funded by the Greek Government, after the initiative of the memorable Patriarch of Jerusalem Benedictus, with the cooperation of the Sacristan Archimandrite Germanos, the blessed Vice-Sacristan Archimandrite Daniel, the Architect Leonidas Kollas and Mr Athanasios Economopoulos, who founded a

technical office.

From Secretariat-General