

THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE ENTHRONEMENT OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS

On the 9th / 22nd of November 2022, the seventeenth anniversary of the Enthronement of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos in 2005 was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

Due to this fact, a Doxology took place at 10.30 am at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The Doxology was presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of the High Priests, Hieromonks and Deacons of the Patriarchate and the participation of members of the congregation of the Church of Jerusalem and pilgrims, along with the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and one hundred and fifty members of the Frigate Salamis of the Hellenic Navy who came from Haifa with the Honorary Consul of Greece in Haifa Mr Constantinos Zenovios and the member of the Greek Embassy – Naval Department in Tel Aviv Mr Tsiros.

After the Doxology, everybody went to the Patriarchate Reception Hall.

Then the Geronda Chief Secretary His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina addressed His Beatitude with the following address:

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

In full joy today, the Church of Zion and the Venerable

Hagiotaphite Brotherhood celebrate in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in a solemn gathering of clergy and people, a historic, very important, joyful and hopeful event, which took place seventeen years ago, in the year of our salvation 2005, of the election of Your Beatitude to the martyred and glorious Patriarchal Throne of Saint James the Brother of God in Jerusalem.

This event, in addition to its importance primarily for the formation, coherence, stability and peace of the institution of the Church, acquires particular importance also because it came to put an end to a – thankfully – short, gloomy and extremely painful-sadly- period of the life of the Church of Jerusalem. The Church and the Brotherhood were then suddenly speechless at the prospect of the conclusion of dishonourable agreements made without their knowledge. These agreements mortgaged, if not sold, the property of the Patriarchate in the Old City of Jerusalem, namely in the area opposite the Church of the Resurrection, of priceless material, much more of cultural value, and disrupted the centuries-old power and Biblical and internationally recognized Status Quo of the Old City. The Brotherhood then protested ecclesiastically, denounced the primacy of these agreements, considering itself as an active communion member of the body of the Church and respecting the institution of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, opposed it, and called a Pan-Orthodox Synod – an event that takes place in critical circumstances of the church of life – and opened the way by electing a worthy Pastor, able to lead the Jerusalem Church and the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood out of their impasse.

In regular elections held on the basis of the Ecclesiastical Canons and the Jordanian Law of the Patriarchate of 1957, Your Beatitude was elected by unanimous vote of the members of the Holy and Sacred Synod as the Primate of the flock of the venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem and Hegoumen of the venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood.

Ever since, the first and main concern of this Patriarchal Office was the annulment of these agreements by the weapons of justice of the right and the left, through the judicial process, which is not specific and through legal political means, through mobilizing the protests of Churches and States, able to protect the Christian Community in the Holy Land from the challenges and pressures of extreme fanatical elements, who covet this property, so that it does not have a dwelling place but hast to remain homeless in its cradle. This burning issue of the protection of the Christians of the Holy Land was brought to the attention of the President of the USA, Mr Joe Beiden, through a special letter by Your Beatitude, when You received and guided him to the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem, in July of this year.

Nevertheless, Your Beatitude was not exhausted from these efforts, but at the same time contributed to other works worthy of memory, such as, after the restoration of the Holy Tomb of the Holy Sepulchre in 2017, the active participation of the present Patriarchate in the basis of a scientific study by the Sapientia University of Rome, starting and continuing through the cooperation of the Three Major Communities, also a historical project of the maintenance of the floor of the Church of the Resurrection in the Seventh Arches and in the northern wing of the rotunda and of the consolidation of the subsoil of these spaces through scientific archaeological excavations. The decoration of the dedicated main space of the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection was and is a priority of Your Beatitude, for which You took advantage of the interest of the well-known pious businessman and Governor of Mount Athos Mr Athanasios Martinos, who visited our Patriarchate twice within a year, and was informed of the offer of sponsorship and of the other ongoing project of operating a scientific Centre for Theological Research in the Holy Monastery of the Holy Cross. In this case, the Patriarchate has already generously spent not inconsiderable sums for materials and conservation work under the expert

conservator from Cyprus, Mr Stavros Andreou, for a multitude of antiquities of the Library of the famous historical Theological School of the Cross and the treasures of the Archive of the Brotherhood.

The ever-known interest of Your Beatitude for our Orthodox Arab-speaking flock was also manifested in practice recently, through the selection, ordination and appointment of educated clergy to fill parish positions of the Patriarchate in Jordan and Israel, by sending young people for theological studies in Greece, through the financial contribution of our Patriarchate to the completion and the consecration of the Holy full-sized Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos of the Sakhin Community of the Acre region and of the Kufr Smea Community of the same region, through the Inauguration of a housing settlement in the town of Beit Jala on concessional terms of payment to four hundred and fifty families, through the external grouting of the Cathedral of St. James the Brother of God, thus securing our right of pilgrimage to the Courtyard of the Church of the Resurrection, through the offer of Mr Martinos of a modern X-ray machine for the Polyclinic of Saint Benedict, through the ongoing radical external and internal renovation of the Holy Monastery of the Prophet Elias and for the emergence of the nearby ancient Monastery of the "Seat", delayed, due to non-grant in the case of the Municipality of Jerusalem regular license. Simultaneously Your Beatitude has taken care of the Russian-speaking flock, appointing the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and the Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba for its immediate pastoral care, and by officiating the Divine Liturgy at the prayer house of Patriarch Abraham and the Patriarch of Jerusalem Sophronios in Beer Sheva, waiting for the construction of a decent holy temple by obtaining the required permission from the Municipality there.

The attention of Your Beatitude did not escape the lack of Fathers that has always afflicted the Hagiotaphite

Brotherhood, which You tried to cover by sequestering some of the clergy from Mount Athos or from the Church of Greece and the appointing Elder Dragoman and Managing Director of the School of Zion with the difficult task of selecting young students for the Zion School, as hope for the future.

These well-deserved memorials, Your Beatitudes, Father and Master, are only a few selected from the rich Patriarchal activity of Your Beatitude, giving us the Hagiotaphite Fathers the occasion for the celebration of this blessed anniversary day and the boast we have in Christ. This activity is the basis for our inspiration from Your example, the encouragement and strengthening of us, the clergy and the members of the flock, in the cultivation of an optimistic attitude of stewardship and enrichment of works of good in the field of personal virtues and the field of the rights of the Brotherhood and our Roman Orthodox nation at the Holy Shrines of the Holy Land.

In such an optimistic disposition of soul, I raise my glass, Your Beatitude, on behalf of the Holy and Sacred Synod and of the entire Brotherhood and I wish You as many happy returns as possible, healthy, happy, stable, and fruitful, in the governmental power coming from above, for the glory of God and the praise of our blessed nation. So be it.”

This was followed by the Consul General of Greece, Mr Evangelos Vlioras, through his address below:

“Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences,

Dear Fathers,

Ladies and gentlemen.

It is a special honour for the speaker to represent our Motherland again this year in the solemn celebration of the anniversary of your enthronement, a day of celebration for the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem which takes place in the historical seat of the Mother of the Churches, with its 2,000-year history.

In the difficult and sometimes conflicting conditions that the long-suffering Holy Land and our wider region are going through, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, under your leadership, is a factor of stability, calmness, moderation and a beacon of hope for a future for this region free from intolerance and fanaticism.

Today is an opportunity, Your Beatitude, recalling your journey and your presence, on the Throne of the Zionist Church, to express our respect and appreciation for your great pastoral work and for the important and national work of the preservation and promotion of the Holy Places in the Holy Land and the safeguarding of the rights of the Patriarchate, unflinchingly and with the Hagiotaphite vigour and determination, in spite of the times, according to the best traditions of the Order of the Studious (Spoudaioi) and the Holy Common of the Holy Sepulchre.

Your Beatitude,

The Greek State surrounds you with appreciation and deep respect, recognizing the important work you are doing, as the Head of the Members of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and is always a sincere and constant helper and supporter in your struggle, expressing, moreover, its unanimous, universal and all-round support of Greeks everywhere, as it is proven, and from the influx of devout pilgrims from Hellenism to the Holy Land, after the test of the recent pandemic.

For Greece, the defence of the rights and privileges of the ancient Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, as well as

of the Customary Status Quo, constitute a moral and historical debt and mission, to which we have undertaken, with a sense of responsibility, and bearing in mind that the Holy Institution it is a leading point of reference for the moral and spiritual values of our Faith, a symbol, inextricably intertwined with the Holy Land as a source of life, hope and love.

In this spirit, our Motherland, as evident from the recent visits here of our political and official leadership and donors, honestly and tirelessly takes care of strengthening and consolidating our Patriarchate and the Holy Community of the Holy Sepulchre in its high pastoral and national mission to be the guardian of the timelessness of the Greek and Greek-Orthodox presence in the Holy Land, as evidenced by the inscription on the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre, after the reconstruction of 1810 'Property and dedication to Christ of the Orthodox Romans'.

On behalf of the Greek State and the colleagues who serve at the Consulate General of Greece in Jerusalem, we wish, from the bottom of our hearts, for health, longevity and the Lord's support for your high spiritual and consoling work for the good of our respective Patriarchate, Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, ministers and guardians of the Holy Shrines of the Holy Land and of your Rum Orthodox Flock."

His Beatitude was also addressed by representatives of the Orthodox Churches of Moscow and Romania and of our flock, and representatives of the Schools of the Patriarchate and the representative of the World Council of Churches Deputy Secretary Fr Ioannis Sauka and the representative of Scouts and others.

His Beatitude thanked them through the following address:

"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation (Psalm 68:19) says the psalmist.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Dear Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The divine-human city of the living God, that is, the holy Church of Jerusalem, is celebrating today the Seventeenth Anniversary of the Enthronement of Our Mediocrity on the Apostolic Shroud of the Holy and righteous James the Brother of God and its First Hierarch.

This enthronement anniversary does not refer to Our unworthiness, but to the "God-made scene", according to Gregory of Nyssa, the holy delirium that is the institution of the Church at war in the world, which constitutes the body of the incarnate Son and Word of God the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ. "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory...gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:17, 23), according to Saint Paul.

Being grateful, we went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with the honourable members of the Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood accompanying Us, where we offered a thanksgiving doxology to the Holy Triune God "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Gal. 1:4).

Hearers of the evangelical voice of Luke: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28), we

did not cease our concern for our tested flock, who were under our direct ecclesiastical jurisdiction and spiritual responsibility. "Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah" (John 1:23).

We have not lessened the observance, both of our paternal and apostolic traditions, as well as of the unceasing devotional ministry of the Holy Places, of the true testimony of our faith, "For the Lord hath chosen Zion? he hath desired it for his habitation" (Psalm 132:13), but neither of the indescribable privileges and sovereign rights of the pious and royal race and nation of the Roman Orthodox Christians.

By obeying the order of Saint Paul "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58) we follow the path of justice, the good cooperation with other Christian Communities, in every direction locally and internationally, demanding respect for the existing multi-religious and multinational Status Quo, both on the Holy Places and on the diplomatic "corpus separatum" of the Holy City of Jerusalem.

We confess after Saint Paul, "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. 6:12). We say this because the land of Jerusalem, watered by the redemptive blood of the Righteous One, that of our Crucified and Resurrected Saviour Jesus Christ, is a refuge of comfort and the hope of all people, as the wise Paul preaches saying: "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:18), namely Christ.

Our Mediocrity after the Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2) and remaining unchanged under the mission

assigned to us by the divine Providence, do none other than the redeeming evangelism of love, of peace, righteousness, and the infinite philanthropy of the One who emptied himself and became a subject unto death, death on the cross (cf. *Philippians 2:6-8*).

The enthronement of this seventeen-year anniversary of Our Mediocrity calls us not to "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God" (*2 Cor. 10:5*), but "to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (*Col. 2:2-3*) according to the wise Paul. We say this because the throne of Christ's grace is in the Church of "the general assembly and church of the firstborn" (*Hebrews 12:23*). "As God, Christ has the eternal throne, as man, and high priest, and apostle of our confession, He hears, sit at my right hand", says Theodoritos Kyrou. According to Clement of Alexandria, "he who knows himself is the throne of the Lord" a throne of grace and mercy, according to Paul's words, "Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (*Hebrews 4:16*). Saint Hippolytus commenting on the verse of Isaiah: "Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud and shall come" (*Isaiah 19:1*) says: "Lord and the Word, cloud and hollow the cleanest tent, [said] where the enthroned Our Lord Jesus Christ came into the life [of man] to destroy the fallacy". In other words, today's enthronement anniversary refers to the inauguration of the throne of Christ in our hearts, and indeed in our contemporary time, of the "new order of things", about which Saint Paul said, "perilous times are coming" (*1 Tim. 3,1*). "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine? but after their own lusts they shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (*2 Tim. 4:3*). "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (*2 Thess. 2:7*).

We who are aware of our infirmity, that "God hath chosen the

weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Cor. 1:27), do not stop the work on our Patriarchal, ecclesiastical and pastoral ministry of the apostolic and martyr's throne of the holy and righteous James the Brother of God. But we do not even hesitate, because we have co-ministers, the respected and beloved in Christ, our Hagiotaphite brothers, Arch Priests, Priests, Hieromonks, Deacons and Monks, distinguished by the Hagiotaphitic sacrificial self-denial and their ecclesiastical mindset, the unity and love, according to the exhortation of the Holy martyr Ignatius of Antioch: "Let us all love one another in unity, and none of us see our neighbour according to the flesh but in Christ Jesus. Let not what is possible divide you among you, but be united to the bishop, submitting to God through him in Christ".

We truly say that we do not hide our dismay at the prevailing disorder and dissension in the body of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church. For even the Episcopal and Patriarchal throne of the city, sanctified by the redemptive blood of Christ the King, is not silent prayerfully working for the observance of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (cf. Eph. 4,3).

Let us beseech the God of patience and supplication and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that H

is holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, "guide us into all truth" (cf. Jn. 16,13), through the of the intercessions of our most blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and of the prayers of our holy Father Nektarios of Pentapolis.

May the grace of the Holy and Life-giving Tomb of our Saviour Christ strengthen us all in our mission of witnessing love, peace and justice in the world and in our region.

Therefore, we call on all those praying with Us and those who, through their presence, are honouring Us on this Enthronement

feast, power from on high, the illuminating energy of the Holy Sepulchre, patience and all God's blessing. We express our heartfelt thanks to the Geronda Secretary-General, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Cosntantina, who spoke on behalf of the reverend members of the Holy and Sacred Synod and our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, and to all who addressed Us, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras, His Eminence Archimandrite Alexander, representative of the brotherly Holy Church of Russia, conveying to us the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow, Cyril, the Reverend Archimandrite Theophilos, representative of the brotherly Holy Church of Romania, conveying to us the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Romania, Daniel, His Eminence the Metropolitan of Nazareth, Kyriakos, speaking on behalf of our flock in Nazareth, His Eminence the Archbishop Damascene of Joppa, speaking on behalf of our flock in Joppa, Reverend Fr Charalambos Bandour, speaking on behalf of Saint James Cathedral, His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, speaking on behalf of the Russian-speaking Community of Beer Sheva, Archimandrite Philotheos, speaking on behalf of the communities in Acre region, Reverend Treasurer Fr Savva, speaking on behalf of the Community of the Shepherds Village, Deputy Secretary Fr Ioannis Soukas, speaking on behalf of the World Council of Churches, Mr Ode Kavas, speaking on behalf of the Arabic-speaking Schools of the Patriarchate and Mrs Panagiota Kafetzi speaking on behalf of the School of Saint Demetrius and all who participated in the celebration of this Enthronement anniversary.

Cheers to all of you!"

At noon, a meal was offered at the refectory of the Patriarchate.

From Secretariat-General