

# CHRISTMAS DAY

On Christmas day, Saturday, December 25th, 2022/7 January 2023, the celebration began with the service of Matins, as the Patriarchal Commissioner His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias entered the Basilica through the Baptismal Gate, and read the Six Psalms and the choir chanted the rest of the Matins.

From 12:00 midnight, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos came in His Patriarchal vestments out of the Altar of the Basilica, which has been renovated by the Patriarchal Representative His Eminence Metropolitan Benedictos of Diocaesarea, accompanied by High Priests and Hieromonks, having on His right the President of the Palestinian state Mr Mahmoud Abbas – Abu Mazen, and on the left the representative of Jordan, Princess Mariam-, wife of the prince of Jordan His Highness Emir Gazi and the Consul General of Greece to Jerusalem, Mr Evangelos Vlioras. As the Troparion “Come all ye faithful let us see where Christ was born” was being chanted they went down into the Grotto of the Nativity, and then the Gospel of the Nativity was read: ” And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed” (Luke 2,1) in Greek and Arabic and then the Christmas Message was read by His Eminence Archbishop Arristarchos Constantina in Greek and by Fr Issa Musleh in Arabic. Consequently, His Beatitude venerated the Star and the Manger, then the High Priests and the Consul General of Greece to Jerusalem and they went up through the north gate and from the steps of the Armenian chapel and started the litany inside the Basilica chanting the Katavasias, “Christ is born, give Him glory” and of the other troparia. The litany concluded at the centre of the Basilica of the Nativity.

Afterwards, the Service of Matins continued with the troparia

of the 9<sup>th</sup> Hour, the Praises and the Doxology, with which the Divine Liturgy began.

The Divine Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina and Nectarios of Anthedona, Hiagiotaphite Hieromonks and Priests from other Orthodox Churches, at the chanting of Hierodeacon Simeon with Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos and the Patriarchal School Students in Greek and by Mr Lawrence Samour in Arabic, in the presence of a large congregation of local Arabic speakers and pilgrims.

At the Grotto of the Nativity, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolas.

A multitude of believers joined the Holy Communion, in great joy, peace and thanksgiving and praise to God for such a joyous celebration of the Nativity of Christ.

After the dismissal, the Patriarchal Representative of Bethlehem Metropolitan Benedictos of Diocaesarea hosted a rich meal.

In the morning, the Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos went again to the Grotto for veneration and inspection and thus the Christmas celebration in Bethlehem was sealed.

**From Secretariat-General**