

# THE NAME DAY OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS

On Wednesday, the 9th / 22nd of March 2023, the Name Day of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos was celebrated internally, on the commemoration of the holy Forty Martyrs, who martyred in the lake of Sebasteia of Pontus in the year 320 under Licinius, with the Service of Matins, Vespers and the Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts, at the Holy Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, of His Beatitude.

After the Divine Liturgy in the Epitropicon, His Beatitude received the congratulations of the Brotherhood and its wishes for health, prosperity and longevity.

On Saturday, March 12/25, 2023, the Name Day of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos was celebrated with transference on the commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs, in accordance with the Status Quo of the Church of Jerusalem as a "Paresia" with Great Vespers on Friday afternoon at the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection, after which the Fourth Stasis of the Salutations to the Theotokos was held, presided over by His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos.

On the morning of the main day of the feast, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection, officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Metropolitans Kyriakos of Nazareth, Isychios of Kapitolias, Benedictos of Diosaecarea and the visiting Nikolaos of Mesogaia and Lavraiotiki from the Church of Greece, the Archbishops, Theophanes of Gerassa, Damascene

of Yaffo, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Theodosios of Sebastia, Demetrios of Lydda, Isidoros of Hierapolis, Philoumenos of Pella, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, and Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, Archimandrite Mattheos among the other Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the representative of the Moscow Patriarchate Archimandrite Alexander, the representative of the Romanian Patriarchate Archimandrite Ioannis, Arab speaking Priests and others, Archdeacon Mark, Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine choir under the lead of the President of the Byzantine singers of Greece, Mr Georgios Naoum, with the help of Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Gotsopoulos. The service was attended by a large congregation of local faithful and pilgrims, with the honorary presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, the Ambassador of Russia Mr Victorov and the Ambassador of Georgia to Israel Mr Lasha.

After the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, a Doxology was held for His Beatitude's Name Day.

The service concluded with the return to the Patriarchate Reception Hall, where His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina addressed His Beatitude as follows:

“Your Beatitude, Father and Master,

Ascending the spiritual steps of time and of the Holy and Great Lent for the reception of the Holy Pascha, we find the feast of the Holy Forty Martyrs as an oasis of spiritual refreshment and mental recreation. They confessed Christ, exposed to the cold of the lake Sebasteia of Pontus, persevering all night, having their legs broken in the morning and thus exercising well and being crowned during the reign of Licinius in AD 320. The blood of these as well as of all the martyrs is joined with the blood of Christ on the cross and

establishes and strengthens the body of the Church, the ark of salvation for the people. Thanking them for their martyrdom, the Church perpetuates the name of each one and is strengthened by their example and intercessions on its behalf to the Lord.

In honour of their martyrdom, especially of their co-martyr, Saint Theophilos, in whose name Your Beatitude is honoured, the Church of Jerusalem, Mother of the Churches, in accordance with its Status Quo, held a solemn feast at the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection, co-celebrating with the Bishops of the Patriarchate, the Hieromonks of our Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and the clergy of the Patriarchate, with the participation in prayer of the monks and many pilgrims and in the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, the Ambassador of Russia and the Ambassador of Georgia and diplomatic representatives of other states and many faithful people.

Having prayed for the health and stability of Your Beatitude in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, we came to this holy "house" of Ours, so that we may congratulate You on Your Name Day and ascribe to You all that is auspicious, true and honest, due to You, presumed from Your works.

First of all, it should be noted that Your Beatitude took the initiative of cooperation with the Christian Churches of the Holy Land in order to support not only the rights of their Holy Places and properties but also the identity of the existence and residence of Christians in their birthplace. This happened in collective events, such as in the full gathering of the Christmas tree in the Imperial hotel of the Patriarchate in Jaffa Gate, the hotel threatened by the corrupt agreements concluded against it in 2004. In the unreserved support of the other Churches as well as in reciprocity, Your Beatitude visited the place that received sabotage of its tombs, the cemetery of the Anglican Church on the hill of Holy Sion and the chapel of the Franciscans in the

area of Praetorio, in which the relief icon of Christ was broken by extreme fanatical Jewish elements, who didn't even hesitate to attack the Holy Tomb of the Theotokos last Sunday, the day of the Adoration of the Holy Cross. Your Beatitude courageously supported these rights of the Christians in the established meeting of the New Year of the Churches after the President of the State of Israel Mr Herzog.

After the Leaders of the Local Churches, Your Beatitude also worked tirelessly to preserve the Status Quo of the Old City of Jerusalem, including the Status Quo of the Temple of Solomon in cooperation with the King of Jordan, who has the custody of the Muslim and Christian Holy Places in the Holy Land. In order to support and promote the interests of the Patriarchate and all the Christians of the Holy Land, Your Beatitude undertook an overseas trip to the United States of America.

In the pilgrimage sector, with a view to preserving our rights, Your Beatitude cooperated primarily with the Franciscans for the consolidation of the subsoil and the maintenance of the floor of the rotunda and the Seven Chambers of the Church of the Resurrection based on a scientific study by the Sapienza University of Rome.

In particular, Your Beatitude worked for the preparation of studies and the finding of resources for the consolidation and beautification of the dedicated area of the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection and its sacristy and for the reopening of the Museum of the Patriarchate in cooperation with the businessman and Governor of Mount Athos Mr Athanasios Martinos.

Included in this renovation program are the already completed conservation works of precious old icons and the disassembled parts of the chandelier of the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection, found in the Brotherhood's refectory above the Cathedral of Saint James the Brother of

God, since the time of the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophanes. The work was completed by specialist conservators who came from Russia under the guidance of the icon and book conservator from Cyprus, Mr Stavros Andreou, who is also continuing his work in the antiquities of the rich Library of the Monastery of the Cross. In this Monastery, which housed the famous Theological School of the Holy Cross, Your Beatitude is already preparing, in cooperation with the Universities of Athens and Thessaloniki and the Church of Cyprus, the establishment and operation of a Centre for Biblical Research Studies.

Despite the economic difficulties of our time, there was no lack of financial support for the flock, within the limits of the Patriarchate's capabilities, in the maintenance works of its holy Churches, such as Kufr Smea and Sakhnin, and elsewhere, and the guidance of Your Beatitude of them as well as that of the pilgrims, once again flooding the Patriarchal Hall and the Holy Shrines after the severe test of the Covid virus. In these pilgrimage meetings, which were attended by accompanying High Priests from all the Orthodox Churches, Your Beatitude did not cease to emphasize the need to continue the Orthodox dialogue for the restoration once again of the lost Orthodox unity and communion in Christ.

The aforementioned, Your Beatitude, are only a few Analects, emanating from the spiritual waist of the Church of Jerusalem, empowering us, the Hagiotaphite Fathers, so that we work and cooperate, complementing each other and creating pastoral or renovation work, each of us at the place of his ordination, enriching the consignment of our Fathers.

Raising the glass, Your Beatitude, I wish, on behalf of the Holy and Holy Synod and the entire Brotherhood, health, stability, longevity and receiving the Divine energy and strength from above, so that you may continue Your God-pleasing and precious Patriarchal Pastoral work towards the building of souls, praise of the Church of Jerusalem and of

our race and glory of our Triune God. So be it.”

The Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras as follows:

“Your Beatitude

Your Eminences,

Dear Fathers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Participating in today’s celebration is a special honour and joy for all of us, as the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and the venerable Flock, among them those serving at the Consulate General of Greece in Jerusalem, are honouring the Name Day of the Primate of the Church of Jerusalem, His Holy Beatitude, the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III.

Your Beatitude,

On behalf of the Greek State, we express to you, the respect, love and gratitude of our country both for your varied pastoral work and for the important national work of preserving and highlighting the Holy Places in the Holy Land.

At the same time, I would like to express the like-minded support of our Motherland to our respective Patriarchate, especially in the current climate of growing intolerance, condemning, unequivocally, the recent attack on the Holy Shrine of the Mother of God in Gethsemane, as well as the, unfortunately, growing wave of violence against Christian places of worship in Jerusalem.

For Greece, the defence of the institution of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, its rights, as well as the customary Status Quo, is a top priority.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem is a constant point of reference for Hellenism everywhere, a witness and beacon of our

centuries-long presence here and a Shepherd of the Greek Orthodox faithful in the Holy Land.

For all of us, the Holy Foundation is associated with the preservation of the integrity of the Holy Places of Christianity, which it defends with devotion and self-denial.

Today's feast is a timely occasion to reflect on all that we "heard of", "we heard and our hands were lifted up", according to the Biblical verse.

Your diligent efforts for the restoration and promotion of the Holy Shrines of our Faith and for the spiritual guidance and well-being of a flock that is undergoing significant challenges and trials highlight the timeless importance of the Sacred Foundation, for maintaining the necessary balances in the environment of the Holy Land.

Your words and work are undoubtedly an expression of love, anxiety and prayer for the future of the Christian Presence in the Holy Land, which includes both the pain and agony of the Cross, as well as the hope and light of the Resurrection.

In the midst of these challenges, both you and the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood are strengthened by genuine faith and the authenticity of the Christian experience, so that with knowledge and understanding of the circumstances, with vigour and determination, you can take care of the present and the future of the venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Your unceasing prayer and ministry at the holy altar are a source of spiritual nourishment and support for both the clergy and your flock for whom you care tirelessly.

Your Beatitude,

In the turbulent Holy Land, where life encompasses, every day, pain and hope, death and life, in tangible and not distant terms, this high mission does not allow "sleep in the eyes" and "sleepiness in the eyelids" for the Pastor and Church

leader.

Allow me therefore to express to you, both on my behalf and on behalf of my associates, our recognition and appreciation of the important work being done here, as well as of the devotion, zeal and self-sacrifice of the Members of the Brotherhood for the protection and preservation of the Holy Shrines, virtues which we have seen many times and in various ways during our regular visits here.

On this festive day, I express our most sincere and heartfelt wishes for health, longevity and support from the Lord, so that you can continue to carry out your high mission to the Glory of God, for the well-being of the Patriarchate, the Holy Congregation of the Holy Sepulchre, of Your Greek Orthodox Flock and peace in the region. Many Happy and Blessed returns.”

His Beatitude returned their wishes with His following address:

” Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified” (Ps. 70,4).

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Dear Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

Today is the holy and wonderful feast of the holy athletes in the city of Sebasteia, the holy great Forty Martyrs, whose memory is honoured with rejoicing and gladness by our holy Church of Jerusalem, saying, “let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified” (Psalm 70,4).



This saviour, namely the Gospel of the salvation of Christ, was believed by the Forty Martyrs, who were " perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10) with boldness before the persecuting idolaters and their tormentors, paying heed to the voice of Saint Paul: "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils" (1 Cor. 10:20). Moreover, these holy martyrs were inspired by the first martyr Stephen, who, on the one hand, exemplified the love of his martyr's blood shed for Christ, on the other hand, he preached the testimony of the "Son of man", who, responding to Pilate, said: " To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice." (Jn. 18,37).

To the same voice of the truth of Christ, they became subject but also innate to the likeness of His (Christ's) death concerning His resurrection (cf. Rom. 6,5). Praising the martyrdom of the Forty Saints for the sake of truth, Basil the Great says: "We are not going to admire one, nor two alone..., but forty men, as having one soul in divided bodies, in one sympathy and unity of faith, and they showed one inclination towards suffering and resistance to the truth".

Having in mind, the holy Martyrs of this word of the Lord, that "the Spirit of truth, guide you into all truth" (Jn. 16,13), they did not hesitate nor were they seized by fear of cowardice, but on the contrary, like other three children in the furnace, as if from one mouth they sang and glorified and blessed God, saying: "Do not turn away your mercy from us" (Dan. 3,23).

This mercy of God, who regenerated us in hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (cf. 1 Pet. 1,3) was sought by the brave Martyrs "praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20), hoping for their redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of transgressions, the cleansing,

indeed, of their sins, according to the riches of His grace (cf. Eph. 1,7).

This annual solemn feast of the holy Forty Martyrs and especially of their co-martyr Theophilos, whose sacred name is also borne by our Mediocrity, is “a burnt offering of fragrance to their memorial to the Lord” (Leviticus 6:8), and this because, as the psalmist exclaims, “abandoning all the soldiers of the world, the Lord’s Forty Athletes worshipped the Master in heaven”, becoming citizens of the city of the living God, that is, the heavenly Jerusalem of freedom (cf. Heb. 12:22).

Indeed, the holy Forty Martyrs, the divinely crowned and divinely gathered, who were tested by fire and water, imitating Christ’s martyrdom, were shown to be true witnesses and heralds of His righteousness, as the Apostle Peter preaches saying: “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Pet. 3:18).

The glorious Forty Martyrs stand out in the midst of “the surrounding cloud of martyrs” (Heb. 12:1) of the Church, because these, as Basil the Great says, not having the same ethnic origin, “each of them came from a different place” were shown to be the nation of God and our Saviour Christ. “Race, the human one, another the spiritual one, one of all. God the Father is common to them, and all are brothers, not born of the same biological parents, but of the adoption of the Spirit in the unity of love joined to one another”.

“World of the Church and the joy of the people and the glory of God the strengthener ... the satellites of Christ, the builders of the Churches ... and those who fought to the end against the common enemy of humanity,” says the father of the Church, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, praising “the great and according to the blessed (Forty martyrs) phalanx”.

Our holy Church of Jerusalem joyfully honouring and upholding the holy commemoration of the holy Forty Martyrs as well as their co-martyr and of the same blood Theophilos, celebrated in the place of the crucifixion and the tomb of the Resurrection of our Saviour Christ, the bloodless sacrifice of thanksgiving, presided over by Our Mediocrity and surrounded by the honourable members of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, High Priests, Priests and Hierodeacons, pious pilgrims and pious Christians from our Christian tested flock, who are praying together with us, manifesting thus our admiration to God's Saints. "We," says Asterios Amaseias, " do not worship the martyrs, but we honour them as true worshipers of God; we do not revere people, we admire them for respecting God well in times of temptation."

Moreover, we rendered a thanksgiving doxology to the holy Triune God, in the name of the holy martyr Theophilos, keeping Our holy Name Day, and "we blessed – according to the holy martyr Justin – the Creator of all things through His Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit".

The solemnity of this day of the holy Forty Martyrs and especially of their co-martyr Theophilos does not refer to Our Mediocrity only, but mainly to the Apostolic and Patriarchal institution of the Church of the body of our Saviour Christ, "in whom we have redemption through His blood (Eph. 1:7). " God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5,8).

This divine and perfect love, which "casts out fear" (1 John 4:8), was noted as light in the hearts and minds of the holy martyrs who demonstrated "the perfect work of love", according to Clement of Alexandria, that is, "that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15,6).

This commandment of Saint Paul, " that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify Christ" (Rom. 15,6), is denounced to all

of us and in particular to our brothers in Christ, the honourable Prelates of the Holy Orthodox Churches of those who are in a state of “separating themselves, having not the Spirit” (cf. Jude 19), today and in the midst of the welcome time of repentance and blessed fasting, by the honoured holy Forty Martyrs, “equal in striving and equal in opinion and equal crowns holding” according to their hymnographer.

Having, therefore, accomplices and perceivers “from the adoption of the Spirit in the unity of one another by love”, according to Basil the Great, the holy Forty Martyrs and their co-martyr and our spiritual guardian Theophilos, we beseech them and the Blessed Theotokos and Mother of God Ever-Virgin Mary, so that in peace, temperance and repentance we may reach the glorious Resurrection of God and our Saviour Christ.

Therefore, we call on all those praying with Us and honouring this solemn commemoration of the holy Martyrs, strength from the Holy Cross, illumination from on high, the free gift of the Holy Spirit, the grace of the Holy and Life-giving Tomb, patience and all the blessing of the philanthropic God, expressing warm thanksgiving to those who addressed Us, the Elder Chief Secretary, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, who spoke on behalf of the members of the Holy Synod and our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras, who spoke on behalf of the Greek State, the Ambassador of Russia to Israel Mr Victorov, the Ambassador of Georgia to Israel Mr Lasha, the representatives of the Greek Navy, the Reverend Archimandrite Alexander, representative of the Holy Church of Russia, who relayed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril, the Reverend Archimandrite Ioannis, representative of the Holy Church of Romania, who relayed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Romania Daniel, His Eminence, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Nazareth, His Eminence, Archbishop Damascene of Yaffo, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Yaffo, His

Eminence, Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, who spoke on behalf of the newly-founded Community in Beersheba, the Reverend Fr Farah Bandour, who spoke on behalf of Saint James' Cathedral parish, the Reverend Archimandrite Ignatios, who spoke on behalf of the Beit Jala Community, the Reverend Archimandrite Philotheos, who spoke on behalf of the communities in the Acre-Ptolemais district, Mrs Panagiota Kafetzi, who spoke on behalf of Saint Demetrios School, Mr Athanasios Abu-Aeta, from Beit Sahour, and all those who participated in this festivity.

Cheers to all!"

At noon, a monastic meal was offered.

**From Secretariat-General**