

PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS: FROM THE BAPTISM SITE THE LAND OF PEACE AND EVANGELISM HE RAISES PRAYERS AND SUPPLICATIONS FOR OUR PEOPLE IN GAZA AND DEMANDS AN IMMEDIATE END TO THE BLOODY CONFLICT AND THE RESOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE

Baptism Site, Friday, January 26, 2024

On the morning of Friday, January 26, 2024, the Greek Orthodox Church of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem performed the annual pilgrimage ceremony to the place of baptism of Jesus Christ – Al-Maghtas in the presence of all the parishes of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the East Bank.

The prayer was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and all of Palestine and Jordan, with the participation of the Patriarchal Representative of Amman His Eminence Archbishop Christophoros of Kyriakopolis, the Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem and Hegoumen of the Theophany Monastery His Eminence Metropolitan Benediktos, and many distinguished Bishops coming from Greece with a group of Priests and Deacons, in the presence of ministers, diplomats, officials and public figures, amid the active participation of Orthodox Scout Groups and members of the Orthodox youth and believers from various regions of Jordan and abroad.

At the end of the prayer, His Beatitude delivered a spiritual and patriotic speech to the faithful, in which He said: *From this holy place the Christian faith began and was transferred to all parts of the world, from the holy land we are called children of God, to walk in His name, we are called to remove from us the eternal darkness and pass into the light and become children of the Kingdom of heaven. From the waters of the Jordan, all nature is sanctified, because our holy land accepted God and became a paradise in Him, was blessed by Him and blessed the whole world.* His Beatitude invited our children from all over the world to come to the Holy Land for pilgrimages to receive the blessings of the Holy Land.

His Beatitude called for peace in Palestine, especially for our people in the Gaza Strip, appealing from the Holy Land to stop the war and for a just solution to the Palestinian issue with the establishment of its state with East Jerusalem as its capital. His Holiness together with the faithful also prayed for the country's leader, His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al-Hussein, for whom Jordan is celebrating this year the twenty-fifth anniversary of his accession to the throne of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the assumption of his constitutional powers.

His Beatitude first thanked Prince Ghazi bin Mohammed, the King's personal envoy and adviser on religious and cultural affairs, for his great efforts with the Baptistry Authority, which he chairs, as this year they celebrate the silver jubilee of restoration and establishment of this Place, and the Tourism Promotion Authority, the Jordanian Arab Army, the security services, and all local and international news stations and websites and the clergy, youth and scouting bodies participating in the organization of this blessed day.

In the end, white doves were released into the sky as a symbol of the Holy Spirit Who appeared above Christ's head in the form of a dove during His baptism in the waters of the Jordan River, and then His Beatitude came with the Bishops and

Priests to the river bank, blessing, as usual, the waters of the Jordan River with the Holy Cross.