

# THE FEAST OF ST JAMES THE BROTHER OF GOD AT THE PATRIARCHATE (2016)

On Saturday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October/5<sup>th</sup> of November 2016, the Patriarchate observed the memory of St James the Brother of God, first Bishop of Jerusalem, at the Cathedral dedicated to his name, connecting the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood with the Church of the Resurrection and used, over the last centuries, for the veneration needs of the Arabic-speaking Rum Orthodox Community of Jerusalem.

St James is called Equal to the Apostles for, as son to Joseph the Betrothed, he is considered the Lord's brother by law. This was established by the Lord so that he would become, after His Resurrection and Ascension, the first Bishop of the Church of Jerusalem. During his diaconate, St James had played a significant role in the affairs of the Church of Jerusalem, leading the First Apostolic Synod of Jerusalem in 49 AD, and writing his Catholic Epistle in the New Testament "on the twelve tribes of Israel in diaspora". He suffered a martyr's death for Christ, when pushed down by the Jews from the arch of the Temple of Solomon.

His Beatitude Theophilos led Vespers, Matins and the divine Liturgy for the feast, having as concelebrants Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebaste and Michael of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR), Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, i.e. the Elder Kamarasis, Archimandrite Nektarios, the vicar of the church, f. Charalambos-Farah Bantour, Archdeacon Markos and deacon Agapios. The congregation consisted of Arabic-speaking Greek Orthodox faithful, and pilgrims from Greece, Russia and Ukraine.

To the pious, His Beatitude spoke in Greek, quoting words from the Catholic Epistle of St James and the significance of patience in Christ: *“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him”* (James 1, 12). Similarly, Patriarch Theophilos quoted the Apostle Paul from the Epistle to the Romans (5 2-5): *And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*

*“The value of patience”* the Patriarch added, *“has been demonstrated by the Lord Himself, who said: “By your patience, possess your souls”* (Luke 21, 19). *In other words, patience is compared to fire through which gold is tried and cleaned, just like men are welcomed by God once they have been through the furnace of humility, namely of patience through temptation”.*

The commemoration of St James’ death for Christ, Patriarch Theophilos added, invites us, in the words of the Apostle Paul, *“to be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God”* (Col. 1, 9-10).

After the divine Liturgy, His Beatitude and Entourage walked to the roof of Sts Constantine and Helen Church, passed through the Gate of the Central Monastery, and received “blessed loaves of bread” from Archimandrite Paisios and Elder Nun Seraphima.

At the Hall of the Throne, after a supplication and the Patriarchal Polychronism, Patriarch Theophilos wished on everyone the mediation of St James, first elected Bishop of

Jerusalem.

**From the Secretariat-General**

<httpv://youtu.be/Vl5c7L0PB80>



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# **ANNOUNCEMENT ON SCHEDULED VISITS OF PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS**

From Sunday, the 17<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup> to Monday the 18<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup> of October 2016, His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, accompanied by the Elder Secretary-General, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, and Hierodeacon Markos, will participate in the 6<sup>th</sup> International Euro-Mediterranean Conference (EuroMed 2016), in Nicosia, Cyprus. Also, between Tuesday and Wednesday, the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> of October/1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016, the Patriarch, accompanied by Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, will be in Poland in order to participate in an event in support of the German occupation victims during World War II, namely 1940-1944, in Auschwitz, Dachau and other concentration camps.

Details on the aforementioned events will be posted in due time.

**From the Secretariat-General**

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# **ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING MONKS IOANNIKIOS AND GOURIU**

Hagiosavvite monks f. Ioannikios Christodoulou, of Cypriot origin, and f. Gouriu, of Romanian origin, no longer belong to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, neither do they reside within its premises nor at the Monastery of St Savva the Sanctified.

**From the Secretariat-General**

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# **THE PATRIARCHATE PARTICIPATES IN THE GREAT SYNOD OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH**

Between Thursday the 3<sup>rd</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> to Sunday the 13<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup> of June 2016, His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, accompanied by Hagiotaphite Primates and Hieromonks, Advisors and Secretarial staff, participates in the workings of the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church, to take place at the Orthodox Academy of Chania, Crete.

Details for the participation of the Patriarchate will be posted on this website in accordance with the Synod's work programme.

**From the Secretariat-General**

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# THE HOLY MONASTERY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST BY THE RIVER JORDAN FALLS AGAIN VICTIM TO VANDALISM

On Sunday, the 29<sup>th</sup> of February/13<sup>th</sup> of March 2016, Cheesefare Sunday, the Monastery of St John the Forerunner and Baptist, on the west bank of the river Jordan, fell victim to a violent and harsh vandalism attack.

Over the past years, having obtained a special permit from the Israeli army, this ancient Monastery is being maintained by the subvention of the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which has undertaken to restore the damages it had suffered during the six-day war of 1967.

Today, Lent Monday the 1<sup>st</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> of March 2016, the supervisors of the conservation works underway have discovered that the central gate to the Monastery had been secured from the inside by unknowns using a bolt, which allowed them to commit acts of vandalism, as shown on the uploaded images, namely: writing slogans on the walls of the first-floor rooms above the church, and breaking into a room and destroying the P.C. that contained all archives of works carried out. Also, they have apparently caused damages to the interior walls of the rooms, removing tools, two generators, and other items which they must have loaded on a truck waiting by the Monastery's outside wall, as indicated by the traces of wheels on the desert road.

Once notified, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem informed the Israeli Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Israeli Army and

Police of the Jericho region, who went on to visit the site and record the damages in the presence of Archimandrite Chrysostomos, Hegumen of the Monastery of Abba Gerasimus and supervisor of the Monastery of John the Baptist. The architect of the Church of the Resurrection, Theodosios Mitropoulos, was also present.

In anticipation of the visit of His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, tomorrow, Tuesday, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem would like to state that it promotes dialogue, reconciliation and peaceful interreligious coexistence in the Holy Land, whilst irrevocably condemning this unacceptable act of vandalism. Lastly, the Patriarchate intends to take all necessary legal action towards finding the culprits and protecting its Monastery.

**From the Secretariat-General**



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## **THE ICON OF THE DORMITION OF THEOTOKOS IN GETHSEMANE TRANSFERRED TO UKRAINE**

On Friday, the 26<sup>th</sup> of September/10<sup>th</sup> of October 2015, the reverend Bishop Aleksandr of Pereyaslav Khmel'nitsky and Vishnevsky, aide to the Most Reverend Onuphrius, Metropolitan of Kiev and all Ukraine, arrived in Jerusalem. During a night liturgy on the aforementioned day, Bishop Aleksandr co-officiated at the Holy Sepulcher with His Eminence Joachim, Archbishop of former Zambia.

On the morning of Saturday, the 27<sup>th</sup> of September/10<sup>th</sup> of October 2015, the reverend Bishop Aleksandr and his retinue, accompanied by members of the Russian Spiritual Mission in Jerusalem (Missia), visited the Patriarchate. There, he received by the hands of His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, the icon of the Dormition of Theotokos, kept at the Dependency of Gethsemane, opposite the Church of the Resurrection. The icon will be used for a wake at the Missia, then transferred to Ukraine, to be venerated by millions of Orthodox faithful and contribute to the strengthening of their spiritual life during this trouble period for the country.

Patriarch Theophilos expressed the wish that Metropolitan Onuphrius and Bishop Aleksandr, as well as the distressed Ukrainian people, be helped and protected upon the mediation of the Most Holy Theotokos by means of its icon, a sacred relic of the Church of Jerusalem.

**From the Secretariat-General**



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# **COMMUNIQUÉ OF THEIR BEATITUDES PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA, PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM, AND HIS BEATITUDE OF CYPRUS.**

On Tuesday and Wednesday, the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of July

2015, their Beatitudes, having come from Cyprus, met at the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. His Beatitude Patriarch of Alexandria Mr. Theodoros, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Mr. Theophilos, and His Beatitude the Archbishop of Cyprus Mr. Chrysostomos also concelebrated a night Liturgy in the Holy Sepulcher Church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, praying for divine intercession for peace in the Middle East.

The three heads of Churches discussed among themselves issues related to their Churches, the issue of the Archbishopric in Qatar in order to facilitate the process of the Convention of the Great Synod of Orthodoxy, and the issue of the status of Christians in the Holy Land and Middle East. They expressed their deep concern for the continuation and even closer cooperation between them, aiming for the solution to these problems, as well as the unity of the Orthodox Church and the bonds of peace.

**From the Secretariat-General**

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## **THE POSITION OF THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM ON THE INTERRUPTION OF COMMUNION BY THE PATRIARCHATE OF ANTIOCH**

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem expresses its sorrow on the recent decision of the Patriarchate of Antioch to break off communion with it, and would like to sincerely and truthfully inform the sister Orthodox Churches and its flock about the



following:

**Firstly,** the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, responding to an invitation by the Christians of Qatar, a geographical territory within its ecclesiastical jurisdiction, appointed Theophilos, now Patriarch of Jerusalem, as officiating priest there in 1997, when there was neither a church in the region nor was the Christian worship performed. Ever since and to this day, Orthodox Christians in Qatar attend the liturgy, initially in Houses of Prayer, and since 2009 in the Church of St George, the Glorious Great Martyr, and St Isaac the Syrian, founded by the Patriarchate on a plot of land offered by His Highness Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani.

**Secondly,** the late Patriarch Diodoros of Jerusalem paid a pastoral visit to Qatar in 1999, His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, in 2010. In the course of this pastoral activity of eighteen years but also prior to that, the Patriarchate of Antioch had never had a presence there, neither had it ever protested for any reason. Its protests were first put forward when the Patriarchate consecrated Archimandrite Makarios, serving there since 2004, as Archbishop of Qatar. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, by the help of God, developed its project in Qatar into an Inter-Orthodox Multilingual Liturgical Center for a flock of approximately 12.000 souls, far from any racial discrimination. By contrast, the Antioch Patriarchate places the question on an ethnic-racial basis, as may be seen in its letter addressed to the Qatar Foreign Ministry, suggesting that "Patriarch John X of Antioch and All East is the only recognized Patriarch from the Orthodox Community (Taife) across the entire Middle East and represents the Orthodox Community in all Arab countries, including for example Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Jerusalem, Egypt, Bahrain, the Emirates, Iran".

**Thirdly,** the Patriarchate of Jerusalem irrevocably refutes the unsubstantiated claim of the Patriarchate of Antioch for an

alleged agreement to alter the title of Archbishop Makarios of Qatar reached during a meeting at the Directorate for Churches of the Hellenic Foreign Ministry in July 2013, invoking the testimony of the delegates of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and of the Directorate for Churches.

**Fourthly**, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem remains firmly committed to conciliation and dialogue, a stance it had held since the very beginning, and proposes the setting up of a Committee of Canon Law Experts to rule on the issue, without interrupting the memorial of the sister Orthodox Church of Antioch, for the sake of the unity of the Orthodox Church.

**From the Secretariat-General**

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## **THE TRUTH ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF PSEUDO-BISHOP “ROMANOS” RANDWAN AT A FUNERAL SERVICE**

On Monday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June/6<sup>th</sup> of July 2015, H.B. Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, assigned His Eminence Theophanes, Archbishop of Gerassa, to lead the funeral service for the late presbytera and mother of presbyter f. Saleh Houry, Head of the Greek Orthodox Arabic-speaking Community of the Patriarchate in the city of Sakhnin, North Israel.

Present at the service was pseudo-bishop “Romanos” Randwan, former presbyter of the Patriarchate, wearing primatial insignia. Following his defrocking and demotion to layman, he was paradoxically and irregularly ordained Bishop, though married, at a schismatic Russian-speaking Church in America.

The truth on the aforementioned facts is exposed in a report by Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, cited herein below in English:

*“NOTE*

*By Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa*

*On events having transpired in Sakhnin*

*on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July (N.S.) 2015*

*On the aforementioned date I was sent, accompanied by Archimandrite Stephanos and Hierodeacon Dionysios, to the city of Sakhnin so as to perform the Funeral Service for the mother of f. Saleh Hourì.*

*Upon my entrance to the underground part of the Church, where the service was to take place, I embraced Priests from the adjacent villages as well as various officials and faithful.*

*Instantly we observed that the defrocked, married priest “Romanos” was in attendance, wearing a primatial engolpion and a veil over his kalimavka, and that behind his seat there was a primatial staff.*

*Father Saleh and a few laymen asked me not to take issue, especially in the presence of other religions’ followers.*

*In return, they were told that, based on the Holy Canons of the Church, it is impermissible for the so-called “Romanos” to appear in this manner and that he should definitely remove the primatial insignia.*

*I then approached “Romanos” and, after embracing him, I very amicably asked him to hide the engolpion, remove the black veil from his headdress and attend the service in a cleric’s simple attire, albeit improperly.*

*He hid the engolpion for a while. However, soon after, he appeared wearing it. I approached him again and informed him his behavior was neither canonical nor ecclesiastical. He hid the engolpion, but soon appeared wearing it again.*

*I then instructed the Priests to convince him to remove the insignia of a Primate, otherwise we would leave. Nothing changed. Then I declared we were leaving, but officials and priests requested we stayed, stopping us from exiting the church.*

*“Romanos” then appeared standing again, wearing a Primate’s insignia. I approached him, removed his black veil and tried to remove the engolpion too, but a small group, supporters of his, stopped me by yelling and swearing. An altercation ensued, between exponents of our position and the other man’s supporters. After that, we strongly protested that the presence of “Romanos” as a primate was irrevocably unacceptable and in view of his presence in this specific manner, we would leave.*

*We finally entered the Bema, where everyone put on their sacerdotal vestments. We remained inside the Bema, whereas the Priests walked in procession outside, to bring the relic.*

*Then we once more saw “Romanos”, following the procession with Primatial insignia.*

*By then considering we were being mocked, we left without being perceived whilst the Thrice-Holy Hymn was performed behind the Bema curtain in order to avoid further turmoil, seeing that the defrocked Priest would attend the service with Primatial insignia.*

*We then informed Patriarch Theophilos on the phone of what had transpired, and He approved of our stance.*

*The priests showed their support of us, whilst f. Saleh attempted to reconcile the irreconcilable.*

*“Romanos” had demonstrated cunning apathy and satanic persistence.*

*Few of the laymen were evidently in favour of “Romanos”; most of them were either against him, or confused, or apathetic.*

*In the Holy City of Jerusalem, 7/7/2015*

**Archbishop of Gerassa**

***Theophanes”***

The Patriarchate irrevocably condemns the utterly anti-canonical and anti-ecclesiastical behavior of “Romanos” Randwan, a member of the laity, and praises Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa for his stance in the course of the aforementioned event.

**From the Secretariat-General**

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# **SYRIAN IRAQI REFUGEE RELIEF PROGRAM SPRING REPORT.**

Orthodox Initiative and Middle East Council of Churches

Amman, Jordan

April 2015

Christ is risen!

The Easter season is a special time for Christians throughout

the world. It is a time to reflect upon our faith, gather in community, and worship and praise our Lord; resurrection is a renewal of hope.

The Middle East has seen turbulent times the past few years with wars and violence tearing apart countries and families. Millions of people have been forced from their countries, many celebrating religious feasts away from home for the first time.

At the Orthodox Initiative and Middle East Council of Churches Office in Amman, Jordan, we have been working to do all that we can for the most vulnerable. Since we began, our work has expanded to meet the ever-changing needs of our community. Originally, our work focused on the refugees fleeing from Syria in the north of the country. We provided food, clothing and other relief items to many living in refugee camps along the Syria-Jordan border. As times changed, our work adapted moving through out the Kingdom to where we could be most effective. In the past year, our work has adapted once again to accommodate the large number of Iraqi Christians who have been forced to flee their homeland seeking safety and security from the brutal violence of ISIS. Many of these Christians have found themselves in Jordan, being hosted by local churches, often coming with few possessions. The local churches are providing all that they can in the true spirit of Christian community, however more is needed not only in physical assistance, but also in acts of community building to strengthen dignity and inspire hope.

Over the past year, we have worked together on many projects with the Syrian Orthodox Church of Amman. Early this spring, we met with members of the church to discuss the prospects of incorporating Syrian and Iraqi refugee children into the Scout program that meets at the church. Many refugee children in Jordan are having a hard time continuing with schooling and finding activities to keep busy. With the Scouts, the youth will have opportunities to learn skills, go on camping trips

and adventures, and give back to the hosting community; all while being in company with other youth. As the Easter season approached, we continued to work to develop this project as the Scouts play a large role in the festivities around the Holy Week and Easter. Hoping to inspire and ease the burden of this large project, our team was able to provide new uniform shirts to the scouts in the weeks leading up to Easter, giving them the ability to start the process of incorporating more members into the program. This project has many parts and expenses; however, the potential of being able to incorporate the youth into this program will have great returns to the whole community for generations to come.

Our work with the Syrian Orthodox Church and the refugees that they are hosting continued into Holy Week. On Good Friday, we were able to provide over 300 vouchers to purchase new clothes for Easter, a step that not only meets the need for new clothes with the coming spring and summer, but also a small step in humanization by giving the guests the ability to celebrate with new clothes, a tradition during the Easter season.

In the midst of Holy Week, our team headed to the south of Amman to visit Our Lady of Peace Center. Known for its work with the disabled, this center has recently taken in close to 50 Iraqi Christians who fled from ISIS last fall. Now living in caravans behind the center, a small community is forming. No one knew each other before arriving at the center, but they have quickly started to develop systems and structures to help them make the best of their difficult situation. Although they have caravans and a place to stay, these refugees fled their homes bringing little with them and are facing the common struggles of finding aid and resources. Our team joined a group of Jordanian women who volunteered to assist those refugees. Together, we were able to help by bringing vouchers for new clothes and both perishable and nonperishable food. We were also providing resources for beds and sanitary items to

help accommodate them. Seeing this group and taking account of their stories weighed heavy on our hearts, yet at the same time, their resilience and ability to form relationships with each other through hardships and struggles reinforced our faith in the power of community. The AYA group of women are the best example of the hosting community stepping in with local NGOs and the government assisting the refugees and taking part of the burden the Jordan is carrying. Our goal is to work with them as one team as a step towards strengthening this personal initiative and empowering women in our country.

Over the past few months, our team has been working with the Armenian Catholic Church on top of Ashrafiya, in East Amman. Over the past months, we have done various distributions of food parcels and clothing vouchers to the members of this community. This past fall and winter, the church was hosting Iraqi Christians in their meeting hall, giving them shelter and safety while they searched for apartments. This space is now empty as the refugees have moved into the neighborhood, but it is still being utilized for gatherings. The Church has hopes for continuing to renovate this space so that it can be used for large events such as weddings and funerals, providing income for the church to continue its work in serving the refugees. The workers who are renovating the church are the same refugees who first lived in the church hall, and they refuse to be paid in return for their work as they consider that this work of the Lord and a thank you to the church community for all that it has done for them.

A week before Easter, we made our way up the hill to visit with Father Boghos of the church and the Iraqi Christians to distribute clothing vouchers. We had heard that some of the children were very sad as this year, they felt left out not being able to have new clothes for Easter when many others around them did for Palm Sunday. Seeing the continuous need for clothing, and an opportunity to put a smile on family faces, we felt it necessary to bring clothing vouchers. During



this distribution, only the men were present, as it is expensive to find transportation throughout the city, yet there was an air of excitement for bringing these gifts back home to families and children.

Although holidays like Easter and Christmas are opportunities for gift giving and direct assistance, it is also important to come together as a community and celebrate. This year, our team provided Easter lunch for the Iraqi and Syrian Christians at the Armenian Catholic Church. Easter weekend in Amman saw unusual weather with cold winds and rains covering the Kingdom, yet this did not stop the festivities. On Easter Sunday, our team made its way up to the church to find the hall that was once divided and full of small living spaces, full of families with children running around playing. We sat down to eat and had a delicious meal of ouzai, which is rice and meat wrapped in bread, with the Iraqi and Syrian Christians and the Church community. Although the rain and cold weather was keeping many at home, our team was able to provide buses and transportation for the guests to come to lunch, bringing warmth and happiness to the hall, as well as a token of gratitude to the refugees who volunteered to set the tables and serve. After a busy Holy Week with visits and distributions throughout Amman, Easter lunch was a highlight reminding us of why we continue with our work. We spent a large portion of the afternoon with the refugees, hearing about heartbreaking stories, and at the same time, seeing their immense hope and continued faith in what the future holds. Although the day was cold and rainy, spirits were warm and happy.

Through out the spring, we have been continuing work on the youth center being built in Karak. After Jordan faced a long and heavy winter, progress has been delayed, yet with warm weather we have been able to continue forward. We are working on finishing projects such as painting and interior works. We look forward to seeing the completion of these projects and

beginning to work to develop them into places where all members of the community can come together to meet and find support and safety, and develop programs the center can offer.

In the past years our region has faced many challenges and tragedies. However, through our hardships we have been able to come together. The Easter Season has given us opportunities to reflect on the strength of our communities, both in Jordan and throughout the world. We have been able to continue with our work in helping the most vulnerable around us, and develop new projects to move forward. As we continue, renewed from Easter, we have faith that our community and our team can continue forward stronger than ever.

Yours Sincerely,

**Wafa F. Goussous – An Advocate for the Christian Presence in the Middle East**

**Nathaniel Bailey – Media and Communications**

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