

THE GREEK PRESIDENT, MR PROKOPIS PAVLOPOULOS, AT THE PATRIARCHATE

At 10:00 am of Thursday, the 18th/31st of March 2016, His Excellency the President of the Greek Republic, Mr Prokopis Pavlopoulos, whilst on an official visit to Israel, visited the Patriarchate. Mr Pavlopoulos was accompanied by associates of his, the Greek Ambassador to Israel, Mr Spyridon Lambrides, the Consul-General to Jerusalem, Mr G. Zacharoudiakis, and employees of the Greek Embassy and Consulate in Jerusalem.

His Excellency the Greek President was warmly welcomed by H.B. Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, and several Hagiotaphite Fathers.

At the meeting, Patriarch Theophilos addressed Mr Pavlopoulos in Greek, saying that the Holy Sites of Veneration are inextricably linked to the spiritual grandeur of Hellenism and that "The Greek state, upon its independence, undertook the holy duty of moral and tangible enhancement and defense of its innate privileges and sovereign rights on the Holy Shrines. That is why", His Beatitude added, "during the prelacy of our ever memorable predecessor, Patriarch Benedictus, the guarding power of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and of its well understood interests was recognized both internationally and locally, namely by the State authorities of Israel, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Palestinians". The Patriarch went on to say that the Patriarchate, centered around Jerusalem, the spiritual capital of all religions and all Christian denominations, is de facto called upon to contribute to the arrangement of the current political conflict by means of its spiritual and moral powers. And this, added the Patriarch, because the Holy Shrines provide a guarantee for the stay of Christians in the Holy Land and in

the wider region of the Middle East.

Patriarch Theophilos went on to bestow on Mr Pavlopoulos the supreme distinction of the Great Cross of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre for his contribution to the nation and the Church.

In response, the Greek President conferred upon His Beatitude the supreme medal of Saviour of the Greek State, reserved only for leaders of states and heads of Patriarchates.

“The Order of the Saviour” read the text accompanying the medal, “is hierarchically the first Order of Excellence. Its establishment was decided in 1829 by the Fourth National Assembly in Argos. The name and form of the medal were chosen to remind everyone that the National Regeneration was made possible owing to the divine support of the Saviour”.

The subsequent exchange of gifts was followed by discussion on the work of the Patriarchate and the launched project of conservation and restoration of the Aedicula of the Holy Sepulchre, in alignment with the study conducted by an interdisciplinary team of the National Technical University of Athens under the supervision of Professor A. Moropoulou.

On the conclusion of the meeting, the Greek President, accompanied by the Patriarch and Hagiotaphite Fathers, went on to venerate at the Holy Sepulchre, where he was updated by Professor Moropoulou on the restoration works.

Mr Pavlopoulos also visited Golgotha and the Holy Cross at the Office of the Elder Sacristan of the Church of the Resurrection, where he was welcomed by Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, before continuing his visit to Israel.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/t420Ppj-9zo>

