DISY PRESIDENT, AVEROF NEOFYTOU, VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, the 29th of December 2015/11th of January 2016, Mr Averof Neophytou, president of Cyprus' "Democratic Rally"-DISY party, and Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on European Affairs, in the context of a political visit to Israel, visited the Patriarchate. He was accompanied by his esteemed wife, political associates and the Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus to Israel, Ms Thessalia Siambou.

Mr Neophytou was received by His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, in the presence of Hagiotaphite Fathers.

At the meeting, the Patriarch congratulated Mr Neophytou on the statements he made after meeting with the Israeli President and his counterpart, Mr Tzachi Hanegbi, for peace and the resolution of the Cyprus problem in justice for a unified Cyprus. His Beatitude also spoke of the harmonious relations between the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and Cyprus through the centuries, as well as of Cypriot Hagiotaphites i.e. St Philoumenos the Neomartyr. The apex of such harmonious relations has been the reopening of the Patriarchate's Exarchate in Nicosia.

On his part, Mr Neophytou thanked His Beatitude for the Patriarchate's support of the Church and State of Cyprus, and His contribution to the preservation of different cultures and religious convictions in the region of the Holy Land and the Middle East. Mr Neophytou closed by saying His Beatitude is the symbol of such coexistence envisioned for Cyprus too.

Mr Neophytou went on to offer the Patriarch an Album on the

History of Cyprus by Mr Karageorghis and the emblem of the Cyprus Parliament. The Patriarch offered Mr Averof a blessing cross and an icon of Theotokos Jeusalemite. Pectoral crosses were offered to his wife and son.

On the conclusion of the meeting, His Beatitude Theophilos and Mr Neophytou made joint statements to the Cyprus press (see video link below).

From the Secretariat-General

httpv://youtu.be/P0dkzPTQoHs



MR AZAM HATAB OF THE ISLAMIC WAQF VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, the 29th of December 2015/11th of January 2016, the President of the Committee of Islamic Edifices in Jerusalem, Mr Azam Hatab, accompanied by twenty members of the Committee, visited the Patriarchate on the occasion of Christmas.

They were welcomed by His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, in the presence of Hagiotaphite Fathers.

The representatives of the Islamic Waqf thanked His Beatitude for His efforts towards preserving the status quo in Jerusalem and towards religious solidarity.

At the meeting, His Beatitude informed guests of the report conducted by Professor Moropoulou on conservation works on the Holy Sepulcher, aimed at the safety of pilgrims and at avoiding external interventions.

From the Secretariat-General

httpv://youtu.be/P059JsQzhqo



H.B. OFFERS CHRISTMAS PRESENTS TO CHILDREN AT ST DEMETRIUS NURSERY AND PRIMARY SCHOOL

On the afternoon of Monday the 2nd of December/4th of January 2016, His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, accompanied by the Chairman of the Patriarchate's Arabic-speaking schools, Archimandrite Ieronymos, the Patriarchal Commissioner, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Elder Secretary-General, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, and Metropolitan Joachim of former Zambia, visited the hall of events of the Arabic-speaking School of St Demetrius, that is adjacent to the Central Monastery.

There, in the context of an event organized by the school Principal, Mr Samir Zananiri, and teachers at the school, the Patriarch distributed Christmas presents to more than one hundred pre-schoolers and primary students, extending wishes for Christmas in health and peace, and improved student performance for the New Year.

From the Secretariat-General

httpv://youtu.be/QPu9nGbd8xs



THE PATRIARCHATE VISITS WESTERN CHURCHES ON THE OCCASION OF CHRISTMAS

On Tuesday the 16th/29th of December 2015, the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, headed by His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, visited local Western Churches in Jerusalem, celebrating Christmas according to the Gregorian calendar.

A. The Hagiotaphte Brotherhood visited the Franciscan Friars, founded in the Holy Land since the 13th century, now settled at a small distance to the northwest of the Patriarchate.

During the visit, Patriarch Theophilos addressed Pierre Battista Pizzaballa, Custodian of the Holy Land, in English, see link:

https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2015/12/29/19149

In his reply speech, the Custodian thanked His Beatitude for setting an example of collaboration for all Churches in Jerusalem, and underlined the beneficial effect of the Allholy Shrines to the souls of visiting pilgrims and the need to have Christian Churches work together towards their preservation.

B. On the conclusion of the first meeting, the Hagiotaphite

Brotherhood went on to visit the Latin Patriarchate, headed by the Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem, Monsignor Fouad Twal. Due to illness, the Monsignor was represented at the meeting by his aide, Bishop Somali.

Addressing Bishop Somali, Patriarch Theophilos said that the exchange of visits between the Christian Communities on feast-days are helpful in that they demonstrate the testament of the Lord of peace and justice, Whose grace we seek for Christmas and the New Year.

Bishop Somali replied that at a time of criminal actions, abductions and displacement, the memory of the Nativity of Christ and the visits between the Churches come as a strong presence and consolation.

- C. After the Latin Patriarchate, His Beatitude, accompanied by the Patriarchal Commissioner, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, and the Elder Secretary-General, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, visited the Apostolic Delegate, Nuncio Giuzeppe Lazzaroto, representative of the Pope to Jerusalem
- D. Finally, His Beatitude, again accompanied by the Patriarchal Commissioner and the Elder Secretary-General, visited the Anglican Bishop to Jerusalem, Mr Suheil Dawani.

From the Secretariat-General

httpv://youtu.be/PT82dI-r5_U



HIS BEATITUDE BLESSES CONCERT BY MUSIC SCHOOL OF ALIMOS AT HOLY ZION PATRIARCHAL SCHOOL

On the evening of Tuesday, the 16th/29th of December 2015, the Instrumental Byzantine Group of the Music School of Alimos, under the direction of Ms Ioanna Angelou, performed at the hall of events of the Patriarchal School of the Holy Zion.

The concert was blessed by the presence of His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, accompanied by the President of the School Board and Elder Sacristan, Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, the Patriarchal Commissioner, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Elder Secretary-General, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Zambia, Archbishop Makarios of Qatar, and other Hagiotaphite Fathers.

Also in attendance were the representative of the Greek Consul-General to Jerusalem, Mr Vasilios Koinis, and the former Principal, f. Nikolaos Zervis, now Education Counsellor to His Beatitude.

The members of the Byzantine Group, performing musical instruments, sang Christmas carols from various areas of Greece, moving the souls of those gracing the event by their presence, conveying the message of love and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, incarnate in human form for us.

PROGRAMME

Part I

Christmas Apolytikion (Dismissal Hymn)

Christmas Matins

- 1) Byzantine Christmas Carols "Beginningless God".
- 2) Carols from Cerasus, Pontus.
- 3) Propontis Christmas.
- 4) Christmas Carols from Asia Minor-Smyrna.
- 5) Christmas Carols from Moreas.
- 6) Christmas Carols from Crete.
- 7) Christmas Carols from Samos.
- 8) "Theophany" from Patmos.
- 9) Church Carols Engomia of St Basil, Farasa, Cappadocia.
- 10) Nocturnal Carols from Rhodes.
- 11) New Year praises from Chios.

Part II

- 1) "Constantis the Only Son", acritic song from Thrace.
- 2) "Ekaen kai to Tsampasin" from Pontus.
- 3) «Karavi karavaki" from Constantinople.

On the conclusion of this humble event, His Beatitude extended thanks to the Music School of Alimos for its contribution to the Byzantine music tradition and praised Ms Angelou and the members of the Music School for their excellent performance.

From the Secretariat-General

httpv://youtu.be/URqud-v0jmo

H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM ADDRESSES THE PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL ON THE OCCASION OF THE NEW YEAR 2016

On Monday, the 15th/28th of December 2015, the Leaders of the Christian Churches in Jerusalem made a long-established visit to the President of the State of Israel on the occasion of the new year 2016.

In the context of the meeting, the President of Israel, Mr Reuven Rivlin, addressed the Heads of Churches and their Entourage, underlining the following:

The meeting takes place 50 years after the "nostra aetate" declaration that had condemned antisemitism, and after Mr Rivlin's recent meeting with Pope Francis. The Bible's principle and value is to love your neighbour like yourself and this value is preserved in the state of Israel. The state of Israel preserves the freedom of worship for adherents of all religions within its territory, cultivating dialogue. The Presidential Palace, said Mr Rivlin, is open to all of you, and went on to extend wishes for a Merry Christmas and a blessed and peaceful New Year.

Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem replied in English to the President's remarks on behalf of all religious Leaders, see link: https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2015/12/28/19093

In His address, Patriarch Theophilos expressed the gratitude of the Heads of Churches in the Holy Land to the President of the State of Israel for his stand on the recent incidents of violence against Holy Shrines and Churches. "It is absolutely unacceptable", said His Beatitude, "to use religion allegedly in the name of God, in the image and likeness of Whom all human beings are created. The fact that we have all been created from the same earth should remind us of our human nature. Our duty is to safeguard the spiritual richness and beauty of Jerusalem, the spiritual capital of the nations. This beauty is upheld by the status quo". The Patriarch went on to reiterate commitment to education through schools. "We assure you, Mr President, of our commitment to maintaining accessibility to the Holy Places for the thousands of pilgrims who are coming to the Holy Land as messengers of peace".

The Patriarch's words marked the end of the visit of the Heads of Christian Churches to the Presidential Palace of Israel on the occasion of the New Year.

From the Secretariat-General



THE UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On the evening of Wednesday the 10th/23rd of December 2015, the President of Ukraine, Mr Petro Poroshenko, on a visit to the state of Israel, visited the Patriarchate. He was accompanied by his esteemed wife and three children, the Ukrainian ambassador to Israel, Mr Hennadii Nadolenko, and a group of

his political associates.

At David's Gate, the President was met by the Patriarchal Commissioner, the Most Reverend Isychios, Metropolitan of Kapitolias, and the Assistant Dragoman and Master of Ceremonies, Archimandrite Bartholomew.

His Excellency the Ukrainian President and his entourage were welcomed at the Patriarchate by Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem and Hagiotaphite Fathers.

At the meeting, His Beatitude addressed Mr Poroshenko in English, see link: https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2015/12/23/19029

In recognition of his services to his nation, his support of the Church of Jerusalem and his contribution to the unity of his state, Patriarch Theophilos bestowed upon Mr Poroshenko the Great Cross of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher and an icon of Panagia Jerusalemite. Gold pectoral crosses were offered to the President's wife and three children.

Moved, Mr Poroshenko thanked the Patriarch for the honour conferred upon him and the Patriarchate's support of the nation of Ukraine through the ever-memorable Patriarchs Theophanes and Paisios, and for His personal contribution to the unity of the Ukrainian people. Finally, the Ukrainian President invited the Patriarch to visit Ukraine, the Lavra of the Caves of Kiev, and to pray for the unity of the Ukrainian people.

His Excellency the President offered the Patriarch an alabaster lamp, whilst the Patriarch offered the Head of Protocol, Mr Boris Sloskin, a nine-branched candelabra. To entrepreneur Mr Feldman Alexander, and other members of the presidential entourage, He offered Jerusalemite eulogias.

On the conclusion of his visit and after signing the guestbook, Mr Poroshenko, accompanied by the Patriarch, went

on to venerate at the Church of the Resurrection, the Apokathelosis, the Holy Sepulcher, the Golgotha and the Sacristy, where he was welcomed by the Elder Sacristan, His Eminence Isidoros, Archbishop of Hierapolis. There, Archbishop Isidoros wished the President that the goals of his government be met by the grace of the Holy and Life-giving Sepulcher.

From the Secretariat-General

httpv://youtu.be/hvT0xwPGEDQ



ISRAEL'S GENERAL MILITARY COMMANDER VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday the 10th/23rd of December 2015, the General Military Commander of Israel in the Occupied Territories, Mr Mordechai Poli, accompanied by a fifteen-member group of men of the Israeli Army and others, visited the Patriarchate.

Amongst them was the Military Commander of Bethlehem, Mr Dani Zandler, Mr David Menachem, and the Director of Christian Affairs at Israel's Ministry of Religious Affairs, Mr Sesar Margie.

Mr Poli was welcomed by His Beatitude in the presence of Hagiotaphite Fathers.

At the meeting, Mr Poli extended his joy for the meeting on the occasion of the feast of Christmas and talked of the visit's importance as regards the alleviation of the recent, unprecedented incidents of violence in Syria, Egypt and Israel.

Mr Poli also informed the Patriarch on the actions taken by the Israeli army towards the cessation of violence and the prevalence of peace, i.e. granting entry permits to thousands of Palestinian workers, merchants and Christian pilgrims from the occupied areas and Gaza, for the celebrations.

In His reply, His Beatitude said the Patriarchate contributes to such actions by means of its peace-making tactics, so as to help the members of its flock, but also adherents to other religions, to live in peace, prosperity, justice and security, and wished that the spirit of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence prevail at all times, especially during this period of the great feasts of Christianity, in the town of Bethlehem, the birthplace of Christianity.

From the Secretariat-General

httpv://youtu.be/2V35qDgrTfA



THE ALBANIAN PRIME MINISTER VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, the 8th/21st of December 2015, His Excellency the Prime Minister of Albania, Mr Edi Rama, in the context of a visit to the state of Israel, visited the Patriarchate. He was accompanied by his esteemed wife and a group of his political associates.

The Prime Minister and his retinue were welcomed at David's Gate by the Patriarchal Commissioner, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, and the Assistant Dragoman and Master of Ceremonies, Archimandrite Bartholomew.

The Prime Minister went on to meet Patriarch Theophilos at the Patriarchate, in the presence of Hagiotaphite Fathers.

An interesting discussion took place in the context of the meeting, on the Patriarch's peaceful visit, of two years ago, to the autocephalous Church of Albania, the revival of which has been greatly aided by His Beatitude Anastasios, Archbishop of Albania.

Reference was also made to the multi-religious and multi-communal environment of Albania and Jerusalem, ruled by mutual respect amongst the adherents to the three Monotheistic religions since the 7th c. AD, when the ever-memorable Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem had signed the *Ahtiname*, the Pact of Umar, with Caliph Omar Khattab.

On the occasion of the visit, His Beatitude addressed the Albanian Prime Minister in English, see link: https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2015/12/21/18968

Subsequently, the Patriarch bestowed on Mr Rama the Great Cross of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher in recognition of his contribution to interreligious peaceful coexistence and his support of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem. Patriarch Theophilos also offered Jerusalemite eulogias to the Prime Minister's wife and members of his retinue.

Extending thanks for this distinction, Mr Rama asked for the Patriarch's blessing and proceeded, accompanied by Hagiotaphite Fathers, to the All-holy Church of the Resurrection, where he was welcomed by the Elder Sacristan, His Eminence Isidoros, Archbishop of Hierapolis.

From the Secretariat-General

httpv://youtu.be/0EsHSjHs3oc



THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM HOLDS EVENT FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES

On the evening of Saturday, the 29th of November/12th of December 2015, the Patriarchate's Amman Office of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) organized a charity dinner with the aim of securing financial aid for Syrian refugees, as two millions of them reside in refugee camps in Jordan.

Heading the event was the Director of the aforementioned Amman Office, Ms Wafa Gousous.

Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem honoured the event with His presence. He was accompanied by Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of former Zambia, the Patriarchate's Liaison with Arabic-speaking media, f. Issa Mousleh, the Hegoumen in Fhes, Archimandrite Ieronymos, and Archdeacon Evlogios. Diplomatic representatives of Russia, Japan and other countries attended the event, as well as the Secretary-General of the MECC, f. Michel Jalakh, the representative of the Patriarchate of Antioch to the MECC, f. Samer Lahham and others.

The event, that followed a similar charity organized by UCLAN

Cyprus University under the title *Christian Experience*, was attended by many eager to contribute in favour of refugees.

Patriarch Theophilos addressed guests in English, see link: https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2015/12/12/18868

Addresses were also made by the Secretary-General of the MECC, the Head of the Armenian Catholic Church, and Ms Wafa Gousous.

After dinner, guests visited an exhibition featuring items made by refugees and their children. Proceeds from the sale of items will be used for the financial support of refugees.

From the Secretariat-General

