

CUTTING ST BASIL'S PIE IN SCHOOL OF ST SION

On the afternoon of Tuesday, the 21st of January/3rd of February 2015, Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem cut St Basil's pie during a modest ceremony at the School of St Sion.

In attendance at the ceremony was the Greek Consul-General to Jerusalem, Mr Georgios Zacharoudiakis and his associates, as well as Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the President of the School Board and Elder Sacristan, Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, Hieromonk Martyrios, Vice-Principal Mr Mexis, Hierodeacon Dionysios, teachers and students.

The ceremony began with the *troparia* of the Circumcision of the Lord and of St Basil, after which His Beatitude went on to cut the pie, with student Georgios Politis finding the "flourin", namely the lucky coin.

Novices at the School sang the Carols while the pie was distributed.

The ceremony also included gifts offered by His Beatitude and the Consul-General, courtesy of the latter.

The two addressed students on the School's mission and the Christian and humanitarian ethos cultivated by it, whilst Mr Mexis thanked them for their avowed interest.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/6NgpFv9vx3U>



METROPOLITAN ARSENIOS OF AUSTRIA VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, the 20th of January/2nd of February 2014, His Eminence Arsenios, Metropolitan of Austria, heading a group of Orthodox pilgrims from his congregation, as well as members of other Churches in Austria, Hungary, Germany and France, visited the Patriarchate.

Metropolitan Arsenios and the group of pilgrims were welcomed by Patriarch Theophilos in the presence of Hagiotaphite Fathers, after they had already visited most of the holy shrines and the Monastery of St Catherine in Sinai.

At the meeting, His Beatitude talked of the Lord's ongoing redeeming work through His Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection on the sites now visited by pilgrims as witnesses of the work performed for their salvation.

The Church of the Holy Land attests the work of God for man on these sites, through deprivation and sacrifice. "This work", the Patriarch pointed out, "is enhanced by the presence of pilgrims like you, hence why we congratulate Metropolitan Arsenios for his pastoral contribution that we ourselves had witnessed two years ago on a visit to Hungary".

Bishop John, representing the Patriarchate of Serbia to Croatia, was also present at the meeting.

Metropolitan Arsenios thanked His Beatitude for His words, adding that "the Orthodox Church unites us, just as it unites this group of pilgrims hailing from different countries with

the blessing of the Ecumenical Patriarch, the Patriarchate of Romania, and especially your own blessing”.

Metropolitan Arsenios pledged to convey the Patriarch’s words to the German-speaking members of his group.

Gifts were exchanged at the end of the meeting, followed by the distribution of *eulogias* by His Beatitude to the pilgrims.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/S71moGXc0-A>



HIS BEATITUDE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CYPRUS VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

On the afternoon of Monday the 13th/26th of January 2015, His Beatitude Chrysostomos, Archbishop of Cyprus, while in Tel Aviv for affairs pertaining to the Holy Archbishopric of Cyprus, extended His visit so as to venerate at the Church of the Resurrection.

The Archbishop of Cyprus, accompanied by Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem, Hagiotaphite Primates and other Fathers, venerated at the Holy Apokathelosis, the All-holy and Life-giving Sepulcher of the Lord, at the katholikon, the Horrendous Golgotha, and at the Holy Cross in the Office of the Elder Sacristan, His Eminence Isidoros, Archbishop of Hierapolis.

From the Church of the Resurrection, the Archbishop of Cyprus proceeded to the Patriarchates, where He was welcomed by Patriarch Theophilos and offered a set of *engolpiya* and an icon of Theotokos along with wishes for good health in carrying on His valuable ecclesiastical and patriotic work.

His Beatitude the Archbishop of Cyprus thanked the Patriarch for the warm welcome, adding He was confident that the Resurrected Lord, the Life-giving Sepulcher and the Horrendous Golgotha would enhance His mission in the Church of Cyprus.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/qaxNq506sgE>



MEETING OF THE M.E.C.C. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

On the 9th and 10th/22nd and 23rd of January 2015, the Executive Committee of the Middle East Council of Churches (M.E.C.C.) was convened at the Marriott Hotel by the Dead Sea.

Leaders or the Representatives of Leaders of the Four Families comprising the M.E.C.C. participate in this Committee, namely: the Eastern Orthodox (Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Church of Cyprus) the Pro-Chalcedon (Armenians, Copts, Syrians), the Catholic and the Evangelical Churches.

Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem was the president of the Orthodox Church in this Committee. He was accompanied by the

Elder Secretary-General, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, and Archimandrite f. Ieronymus, Abbot in Fhes.

The opening address of Patriarch Theophilos, in English, has been posted on the Patriarchate's Website, at: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2015/01/22/11624>

An address was also delivered by the Syrian Catholic Patriarch of Lebanon, His Eminence Ignatius, who underlined the acts of violence committed against Christians and other innocent citizens in Iraq and the whole of the Middle East. The Lutheran Bishop in Jerusalem, His Grace Munib Younan, pointed out the significance of the meeting of Churches on the site where the Lord was baptized, especially today when atrocities are being committed against the innocent, asking how the M.E.C.C. may put a halt to these acts of violence and find a balance between freedom of religion and freedom of expression.

On the conclusion of the speeches, father Michael Jallack, acting general secretary of the M.E.C.C., read his report in English, see link: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2015/01/23/11616>

Also posted on the Patriarchate's website is a video featuring the report of Ms Wafa Gousous, M.E.C.C. Director of the Amman Office, on the activity of the Office as regards Syrian and Iraqi refugees in the Zaatar camp.

The deliberations of the two-day meeting of the M.E.C.C. were concluded on Friday the 10th/23rd of January, at noon. The relevant press release will be posted here in due time.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/ZLYyCQNOVQY>



FIRE BROKE OUT AT CAPERNAUM MONASTERY

At the dawn of Wednesday the 1st/14th of January 2015, fire broke out in three rooms opposite the Church of the Apostles Peter and Paul in the Monastery of Capernaum. The fire was caused by a short circuit.

Because of the fire spread, three rooms, two of which served as candle making workshops, were completely ruined.

The renovator of the Monastery, monk Irinarchos, aided by his father Stavros, on a visit to the Monastery, notified the Galilee Fire Service to distinguish the fire.

On the afternoon of the same day, Patriarch Theophilos visited the site of the fire. He was accompanied by the Patriarchal Commissioner, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, and the Elder Secretary-General, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina.

From the Secretariat-General



H . B . BLESSES CHRISTMAS

CONCERT BY BETHLEHEM CHOIR

On the afternoon of Saturday, the 21st of December 2014/3rd of January 2015, a concert was given under the auspices of the President of the Palestinian Autonomy, Mr Mahmoud Abbas-Abu Mazen, with the blessings of Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem. The concert, performed by the "King Christ" Choir, was held at the CCI Convention Center, of the late Rum Orthodox Said Hourri, under the pastoral guidance of Archbishop Theophylaktos of Jordan and the musical direction of Professor Jandalla Masri.

In attendance at the Christian Concert was the Patriarch of Jerusalem, accompanied by Hagiographite Fathers, namely: Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Archimandrite Chysostomos, Archimandrite Ieronymus, Assistant Dragoman Archimandrite Bartholomew, Archimandrite Ignatius, Protosyncellus Leontios, Archdeacon Evlogios, and Arab-speaking priests as f. Issa Mousleh. Guests included Mr Hsen Araz, representing President Abu Mazen, the Director of the Divan, Minister Ziyad Bandak, Tourism Minister Ms Rula Maya, representatives of the Police, the Mayors of Bethlehem, Beit-Jala and Village of the Shepherds, the Director of the Convention Center, Mr George Bassous, Commissioners of our congregation, and faithful from the occupied areas, mainly Bethlehem, and also from the Village of the Shepherds, Beit-Jala, Nablus and Samaria, as well as from Communities of Israel i.e. Remli, represented by Archimandrite Niphon.

The Concert began with the National Anthem of the Palestinian Autonomy and the Nativity Hymn. It included an address by the Patriarch, followed by the representative of President Abu Mazen, who welcomed guests to this event held on the occasion of Christmas, a feast celebrated by the entire Palestinian people.

The concert also included Palestinian dances and songs for the Incarnate Lord by the “Bayat” Choir and “Diar” Dance Association from Malia, Northern Israel. Mr George Bassous referred to the life and contribution of the founder of the Convention Center, the late Said Houri. Mr Hsen Araz, Archbishop Theophylaktos and Mr George Bassous were honoured by His Beatitude for their contribution to the Community of the Patriarchate.

On the conclusion of the event, Mr Bassous hosted guests to dinner in memory of the late Said Houri.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/cy55tzaUd58>



HIS BEATITUDE OFFERS GIFTS TO STUDENTS AT ST DEMETRIUS SCHOOL

On Friday, the 20th of December 2014/2nd of January 2015, H.B. Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, visited the Arab-speaking School of St Demetrius, which is adjacent to the building of the Patriarchate’s Central Monastery. There, in the framework of a well-organized ceremony which included a performance of the Christmas Carols, Christmas songs and other festive events, He distributed Christmas gifts to pre-school and elementary school students.

In the course of this agreeable event, Principal Samir

Zananiri thanked His Beatitude for His interest in the School and for offering gifts to students, as tokens of the cordiality marking the twelve-day festive period of the *Dodecaorton*.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/XAoVm9FkvCE>



RECEPTION AT THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE OF ISRAEL ON THE ADVENT OF 2015

On Tuesday, the 17th/30th of December 2014, the Annual Reception of the Heads of Christian Churches in the Holy Land took place at the Presidential Palace of Israel on the advent of the new year 2015.

The meeting was hosted by the President of Israel, Mr Reuven Rivlin. In his welcoming address, Mr Rivlin pointed out that on the occasion of the Hannukah, Christmas, and the advent of the New Year, guests gather to remember those who, unjustly, and due to religious fanaticism, were wronged, exploited and killed. "We grieve and pray for them, drawing on our Holy Scriptures, as God's creations, as images of Him as our Joint Father, on the word of the prophet Malachias", he said.

Against crimes committed in areas of worship we protest, as does Pope Francis of Rome. This message we give in this Land, the land of the prophets David, Solomon, Jesus and his

adherents, and as children of the three Abrahamic Religions, children of a single Father, condemning violence against man and extending wishes for a peaceful and blessed New Year.

Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem addressed guests in English, see [link: https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2014/12/30/10866](https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2014/12/30/10866) .

From the Secretariat-General



HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS OF JERUSALEM ADDRESSES THE KING OF JORDAN IN KARAK

On Wednesday, the 11th/24th of December 2014, the king of Jordan visited the historical city of Karak (ancient Kyriakoupolis) in South Jordan, to meet with subjects of his kingdom, Muslims and Christians alike, on the occasion of Christmas.

Today, the city numbers approximately 10.000 inhabitants, whereas the overall Governorate of Karak has a population of 100.000, of whom 6,000 are Christians, 3,000 Orthodox among them.

The city has a long history. It belonged to the Byzantium until the year 638 AD, when the Byzantines were defeated by Caliph Omar Al-Hatab.

The meeting was held in order to further strengthen the current peaceful symbiosis between Christians and Muslims, enjoyed by the citizens of Jordan owing to the pacifying rule of King Abdullah II ibn al-Hussein, advocating religious tolerance.

His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, was the first among speakers to address guests in Arabic, through f. Issa Musleh, the Patriarchate's Arab-speaking press liaison. The speech will be posted soon.

From the Secretariat-General



THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM ADDRESSES GUESTS AT AN EVENT ORGANIZED BY THE ISRAELI MINISTRY OF TOURISM

On Tuesday the 10th/23rd of December 2014, the Israeli Ministry of Tourism organized an event which had as guests representatives of Judaism and Christianity. The event was held in celebration of the Hanukah (the rededication of the Temple of Solomon), Christmas and the New Year 2015, at the Mercaz Shimson in Beit Shmuel, West Jerusalem, opposite David's Gate and the hill of the Holy Sion.

At the event, the Israeli Minister of Tourism, Mr Uzi Landau, and his associates, hosted lunch for the representatives of Christian Churches in Jerusalem, namely the Greek Patriarch,

the representative of the Latin Patriarch, the Custodian of the Holy Land, the Ethiopian Patriarch and the Representative of the Lutheran Church. Also in attendance was Mr Cesar Margiye, Head of the Office of Christian Affairs at the Foreign Ministry, representatives of the Police and the Israeli Civil Administration, Ambassadors of states, etc.

The purpose of the event was to inform guests on the efforts made by Israel's Ministry of Tourism towards creating conditions that encourage pilgrims and tourists to visit Christian shrines in Israel.

In his address, Minister Landau said that, to the best of his knowledge, the virtues of love, tolerance and the personal pursuit of peace are of great importance to Christianity and that, in the spirit of the days, the Ministry of Tourism invites the representatives of Christian Churches in the Holy Land, to assure them that pilgrims visiting the Holy Land in view of Christmas do so in safety provided by the state of Israel.

Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem also addressed guests. His greeting may be reached here:
<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2014/12/23/10753>

From the Secretariat-General

