

# THE FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, August 6/19, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## 1. On Mount Tabor

On this feast, according to the Gospel narratives, the Church commemorates the event that our Lord went up on Mount Tabor before His Passion; the mount is in Galilee and there, before the eyes of His disciples Peter, James and John, He was transfigured, His appearance changed, His human nature was concealed and His Divine nature was revealed in glory. A bright cloud surrounded Him and Moses and Elisha appeared next to Him, conversing with Him about His Passion which was going to happen in Jerusalem, while the Father's voice was heard from heaven saying: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased; hear ye him". Petrified the disciples fell on the ground and Peter asked the Lord to make three tents so that they would stay on the mount. After this vision which was according to the standard of the Resurrection, the Lord commanded the disciples not to tell anyone before His Resurrection.

This event was primarily celebrated at the place where it happened, on Mount Tabor, with an all-night Vigil which was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and visiting clergy from various Orthodox countries. The chanting was delivered by Priest George on the right and by the choir of the Patriarchal representative in Acre Archimandrite

Philotheos on the left in Arabic, at the presence of a large crowd of faithful who prayed in contrition at the outdoor night atmosphere.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude read the following sermon;

“Christ took Peter, James, and John, into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And there appeared Moses and Elias talking with Him. And a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said: This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.” The hymn writer of the Church says.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims,

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in this holy Mount Tabor, where the Lord's feet have stood, in order to celebrate the annual commemoration of the Holy Transfiguration of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The event of the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ holds a special place in the great mystery of the Divine Providence, namely of the infinite philanthropy of God the Father, for the salvation of mankind. And this is so, because on the one hand, on Mount Tabor Christ revealed His Glory to His disciples before His Passion on the Cross; and on the other, He revealed it to those who follow and believe in Him, in the Kingdom of Heaven, and in addition, that Jesus Christ Himself, is the Son of God as the hymn writer of the Church delivers in precision and clarity; “Before Thy venerable Cross and willing Passion, taking the divine disciples whom Thou hadst preferred, O Master, Thou wentest up with them into Mount Tabor, wising to show them Thy glory openly. And as they all looked on Thee transfigured wondrously an shining forth brighter than the sun, they cast themselves down being amazed at thy might and

Sovereignty; and they cried out: Thou art the Timeless Light and the Father's Effulgence, though Thou, O Christ, of Thine own will, without change, art made manifest now in the flesh".

The glory Christ showed and revealed His disciples is no other than the timeless light and brightness of God the Father, namely His Divinity united in one hypostasis with His human nature. "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12) says the Lord. And St. Paul preaches; "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past...Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Hebrews 1:1-3). Moreover, this is being witnessed by the Evangelists who say: "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5).

And the "timeless light" the one that is beyond time and pre-eternal, or else, the uncreated light, is according to St. Paul "the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Tim. 6:15-16). This means that God alone has in Himself immortal and uninterrupted, eternal life, and dwells in a light that no man can ever approach, a light that no man has ever or ever will see. "For there shall no man see me, and live" the Lord says (Exodus 33:20). And the hymn writer of the Church adds; "O Changeless Light of the Light of Thine unbegotten Begetter, today O Word, have we now seen in Thy Light's manifestation the Father and Holy Spirit as Light on Tabor, guiding with Light all creation."

God the Word, Christ, as the hymn writer says, is a "changeless Light". This means that Christ did not receive something He had not already possessed, nor that He was transformed into something He was not, but that He revealed to

His disciples exactly what He was, as St. John Damascene says; "Not that He received something that He did not have, nor that He was transformed into something He was not, but He appeared to His disciples exactly as He was" (Vol. 9, p. 38).

In other words, Christ's disciples who were present on His Transfiguration on Mount Tabor were found worthy of the experience of the vision of the glory, namely of the divine Light of the Transfiguration. And according to St. Chrysostom, not only did the disciples behold the unapproachable and uncreated Light, but they also experienced its energy, as the hymn writer says; "Shining faintly upon Mount Tabor today, Christ laid bare before the disciples the image of His divine brightness as He promised." And again; "The changeless Nature, having been mingled with mortal nature, shone forth past all telling, and in part revealed unto the Apostles the Light of Its own Immaterial Godhead." This means that the disciples, while being men "as we are" (James 5:17) did not see the incomprehensible Nature of God, but His uncreated energy in the human nature of God the Word, Jesus Christ.

In this point, my dear brothers and sisters, we should stress that Christ's disciples saw His Transfiguration provided that they themselves had been transfigured spiritually, which means that they had accomplished their "catharsis" (cleansing) from sin, and therefore were able to accept the Light, or better say, the energy of the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, according to Jesus' words; "ye are clean" (John 13:10).

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, said on the sermon on the mount: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). Interpreting these words, St. Cyril of Alexandria says that pure are those " who having renounced every kind of love of the flesh, have been united with God in the Spirit of the Son, and have differentiated themselves from the worldly pleasures, and while having denied their own lives, they have commended themselves only to the will of the Spirit, leading a by all means pure life in Christ."

This means my dear ones, that the divine and uncreated light which shone upon mount Tabor is Christ, while the cloud that overshadowed the disciples is the presence of the Holy Spirit. Not everybody became communicants and participants of this vision of the uncreated light and the overshadowing cloud from which "a voice was heard", but only the disciples and the prophets that were present.

Let us who co-celebrate this uninterpreted mystery of the Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ, pray that the light of Christ's Transfiguration may shine in our minds as St. Paul also says; " But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). Amen! Many happy returns!"

Immediately afterward the faithful received the Holy Communion.

Before dismissal His Beatitude read the prayer for the blessing of the grapes.

At the end of the Vigil the Hegoumen and renovator of the Holy Monastery Archimandrite Ilarion offered a reception.

On the morning of the feast day, at the ample light of Tabor, the Divine Liturgy inside the Church was led by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, with co-celebrants Hieromonks and Priests from the Galilee district, in the presence of a large congregation, pilgrims from Greece, Russia, Romania and local Palestinians from the borders of Galilee, and Acre-Ptolemais.

## 2. At Gethsemane

The commemoration of the Holy Transfiguration was celebrated at the sacred shrine of Gethsemane Theotokos' Tomb, according to the Status Quo. The Divine Liturgy was led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, with co-celebrants

Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the ministering Priests of the Shrine of Gethsemane Archimandrites Meletios and Dionysios, while the chanting was delivered by Hieromonk Euphrosynos at the presence of a noble congregation.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen of Gethsemane Archbishop Dorotheos of Avela offered a reception at the hegoumeneion.

### 3. In Ramallah

The Transfiguration of the Lord was also celebrated at the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration that belongs to the Patriarchate in Ramallah, led by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the presence of a large congregation of the Orthodox faithful of the city in contrition and prayer.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Galaktion offered the Episcopal entourage a fasting festal meal of fish.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE D. LITURGY AT THE BASILICA OF THE NATIVITY IN BETHLEHEM**

On Sunday, July 30/ August 11, 2019, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine

Liturgy at the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem, above the God-receiving Cave, where our Lord Jesus Christ was born in the flesh.

This Divine Liturgy was celebrated on the centenary completion since the foundation of Jamaeye, namely the Greek-Orthodox community in Bethlehem, whose parish Church is the Basilica.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the Hegoumen of Beit Sahour and Beit Jala Archimandrite Ignatios and Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos, the Priests of the Basilica Fr. Spyridon, Fr. George and Fr. Issa, Archdeacon Mark and other Deacons. The chanting was delivered by Mr. Yakub in Greek on the right and by Mr. Samih in Arabic on the left, along with the Community choir under Mr. Lawrence Samour, as the service was attended by the Greek Orthodox flock of Bethlehem.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude preached the Divine Word as follows;

“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10) St. Paul advices.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters and Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the God-receiving Cave of the incarnation of God the Word our Lord Jesus Christ who was born through the pure blood of our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, has gathered us all in this most sacred universal shrine of the Biblical town of Bethlehem, in order to celebrate the

Divine Liturgy, namely the great sacrament of the Divine Eucharist, the sacrament in the blood and body of Christ, of our communion and love, as well as the Christian Rum-Orthodox witness in Palestine throughout the centuries.

And this witness is no other than the witness of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John, according to whom "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

It is precisely this witness of the love of God the Word that the established Biblical Church of Jerusalem evangelizes, the Church for which St. John Damascene exclaims; "Rejoice Holy Zion, Mother of Churches, and God's dwelling place". This witness is proclaimed also both in words and in action by the primary monastic order of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood with its Christian flock, which has been tested by the worldly powers of darkness of this era (Eph. 1:16), which powers of darkness, namely "your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8) according to Apostle Peter. This means that the Christians' persecutors and accusers were inspired and moved by Satan, whose purpose is the disorder (1 Cor. 14:33) which opposes the peace in Christ and the unity of the Church.

And for Christ, "who is the head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18), God the Father was pleased to agree and reconcile everything to Himself. "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, whether they be things in earth [the people on earth with God and with one another], or things in heaven [the angels]" St. Paul preaches (Col. 1:19-20).

In other words, Christ came in the world to unite everything. He suffered death on the Cross and was resurrected from the



dead that "he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John 11:52). After all, this is the content of Christ's fervent prayer a little while before his passion on the Cross, that His disciples may remain united by the Holy Spirit in the bond of love, unity and peace. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one" (John 17:20-21).

The institution of the Church which is not and should not be considered neither a social nor a political-financial organization – it is the mystical body of our God and Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As for the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, it is the one Who brings together and constitutes the unity of the institution of the Church.

Those who bear the Name of Christ, the members of the Church, who bear the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit, should be distinguished for their unity in one manner of thought, and in one mind, as St. Paul advises by saying; "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10).

Referring to the highest meaning of the unity of the Church says: "The name of the Church is a name of agreement and unity". On the contrary, the divisions among the members of the Church in different deployments as well as the schisms of the Churches which disintegrate the unity of the body of the Church of Christ, are a grave sin, so that "not even the blood of martyrdom can wash out such a sin", St. Chrysostom teaches.

We Christians, my dear brothers and sisters, should not be satisfied only in a dry and intellectual faith, but we should try to prove it in practice, as Prophet Isaiah preaches; "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but

have removed their heart far from me” (Isaiah 29:13).

The great Apostle of the nations Paul, anxious as a spiritual father for the spiritual state in Christ of the Christians, says encouragingly; “ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God... be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1-2).

Paul’s word: “be not conformed to this world” refers to the manner of living of those people who were not reborn through Christ. It refers to the fallen and corrupt nature of the people who follow this transitory world, as St. John the Evangelist teaches by saying: “And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever” (1 John 2:17).

We, my dear brothers and sisters, who have the ark of salvation, namely the Church, the mystical body of Christ “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3), are called to be worthy of God’s gifts; “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11:36). Many happy returns!”

After the dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan, who is the Patriarchal Representative and renovator of the shrine, currently working on the preservation of the wooden ikonostasion with the “Artis” team, offered a reception at the hegoumeneion.

Finally, the Community under its President Mr. Fretz offered the Patriarchal Entourage and others a meal at the “Casa Nova” Hotel which is next to the Basilica.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN THE NEW HOZEVITE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, July 28/ August 10, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of our Holy Father John the New Hozevite from Romania at the Holy Monastery of his ascetic life, the ancient Monastery of Hozeva, which is located by the bank of brook Chorath, near Jericho.

On this day, primarily the Church of Jerusalem, but also the Church of Romania commemorate Saint John the New Hozevite, who came in the Holy Land from Romania in mid- 20<sup>th</sup> century and lived an ascetic life in Holy Monasteries of the river Jordan district and in that of Saints George and John the Hozevites. Due to his marvelous signs he was canonized a Saint by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 2016.

The feast of the Dormition of Saint John was celebrated with an all-night Vigil, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, who was welcomed by the Hegoumen Fr. Constantine with the following words;

“My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the Lord...” (Psalm 130:6-7).

Your Beatitude Father and Master,

With Your Reverend Entourage,

In our time people have lost hope to a great extent; the Saint we celebrate today wrote about hope in November 1952:

“Hope is being born simultaneously with the man’s soul and it

is the pillar of life. If the virtue of hope had not existed, nor faith, neither love would remain within the soul, and therefore life itself would be lost. This is the wondrous power of the soul which elevates those who have been hurt – the bright ray of light that leads to the truth. In short, we can say that the person who has unshakable hope within him can never be defeated by the storms and the hardships of life”.

Your Beatitude,

Our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, and first among all Your Beatitude, marches – through difficulties, temptations and sorrows – in this present life, based precisely on this hope the daughter of patience according to Saint Paul (Romans 5:4). Having as an anchor of Hope the Faith in the Trinitarian God and His Saints, one of whom is Saint John the New Hozevite who we honour today.

Welcome!”

After the welcoming speech, according to the typikon order, the Vigil started with the Compline, Salutations of the Saint and Vespers, followed by the Divine Liturgy. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Priests from the Romanian Patriarchate, and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine singers Leonidas Doukas, Christos Stavrou, Gregorios Zarkou and Dionysios Thanasoulis, as the Vigil was attended by a Congregation of Monks, Nuns, and laity who came from the world for the elevation of their souls and prayed in deep contrition.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude read the following Sermon;

“Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth” (Psalm 26:8) the Prophet-King David sings.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble pilgrims and Christians,

Let us rejoice in the Lord, for by the grace of the Holy Spirit we are gathered today in this sanctified and sacred place, the Monastery of Hozeva, in order to celebrate the sacred commemoration of our Father among the Saints John the New Hozevite from Romania.

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (James 1:12) St. James the Brother of God says. Blessed is the one who willingly endures temptation, because he will become experienced and cleansed just like the pure gold, he will receive the crown of life and become the dwelling place of Christ, the heavenly King. The God-man Christ will come therein with his grace and make His abode with him (John 14:23), just as He truly says, according to our Father John.

Indeed, my dear brothers and sisters, our Father John, who loved this ascetic place of Hozeva, was tested and found worthy of the crown of eternal life as the Holy Bible proclaims; “But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God...like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them” (Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-6). And in more detail, God accepts the many hardships of the tested faithful like a sweet fragrance, just like the “sacrificial burnt offering” (Wisdom of Solomon 3:6), namely the burnt offerings of the sacrifices that are being completely burnt in the altar.

And hearkening to the God-inspired words of the psalmist: “When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek” (Psalm 27:8), the Holy Righteous John managed to form Christ within him through his ascetic striving and unceasing prayer, according to St. Paul’s advice;

“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (Gal. 4:9). Interpreting these words, St. Cyril of Alexandria says; “until the great and extremely intelligent character of Christ is gradually doubled in our minds”.

The incorrupt and fragrant complete relic of our righteous and God-bearer Father John that lies before us, is an irrefutable and tangible and visible witness and proof that Christ is the light and the truth of the world. “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12) says the Lord.

This true light of life is being announced and preached by our Holy Orthodox Church through its saints amidst the generation of the distorted and perverted people of our time.

And we say this because the righteous, namely the saints of God, are shown as luminaries in the world on the one hand (Philip. 2:15) and on the other, they “shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matthew 13:43). Moreover, the Saints will sit upon twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel according to Evangelist Matthew; “And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28).

The incorrupt and fragrant holy relic of our righteous Father John foretells and announces the “rebirth”, namely the resurrection from the dead on Judgement Day. For this St. John advices all those who follow our Lord Jesus Christ through St. Paul’s mouth, to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1). “that we may have boldness in the day of judgment” (1 John 4:17), as St. John the Evangelist preaches.

Rendering glory and thanksgiving to the Holy Trinitarian God, for "He is wondrous in His saint" (Psalm 67:36) our Father John, let us entreat him so that along with the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, may intercede for the salvation of our souls. And let us say along with the hymn writer; "As we the faithful delight today, on thy memory, our righteous Father John, we glorify Him that made thee glorious, Christ our Lord, the supremely good. Beseech Him ceaselessly, O all-venerable, that we attain to the splendour of the Saints, and to everlasting glory since thou hast boldness to speak freely unto Him at any time." Amen. Many happy returns!"

After the Divine Liturgy the reorganizer and Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery Fr. Constantinos offered a meal.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR AND HEALER PANTELEIMON AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Friday, July 27/ August 9, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy Glorious Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon at his Holy Monastery which is located between the Patriarchate and Jaffa Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem.

On this day the Church rends a special honour to the commemoration of Saint Panteleimon who came from Nicomedia by an idolater father named Eustorgios and a Christian mother named Euvouli, from whom he was taught the sacred scriptures.

Having studied the science of medicine, he healed the sick for free, working signs and miracles by the power of Christ, Whom he confessed and martyred during the reign of Maximian in the year 305 A.D.

In the Holy Church of this Monastery Vespers was held in the evening, and the Divine Liturgy in the morning, led by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis with co-celebrants the Hegoumen of Beit Jala and Beit Sahour Archimandrite Ignatios and the Hegoumen of the H. Monastery of St. Catherine Archimandrite Stephen, at the chanting of the Hegoumen of the H. Monastery of Saints Theodoroi and Typikon Keeper of the Holy Church of Saints Constantine and Helen Archimandrite Alexios and Monk Raphael. The services were attended by a congregation of monks, nuns and pilgrims.

During the Divine Liturgy H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem and Hagiotaphite Fathers came for veneration.

The Episcopal entourage and the congregation were offered a reception by the renovator of the Holy Monastery Abbess Haritini.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF THE HOLY RIGHTEOUS MARTYR PARASKEVE AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Thursday, July 26/ August 8, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy Righteous Martyr Paraskeve at the chapel of the Holy Monastery of St. Basil,



where the icon of the Saint is being kept. The Saint confessed Christ in Rome, was tortured and beheaded during the reign of Emperor Anthony in the year 140 A.D.

In honour of the Saint, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated on the morning of the feast by Priest Nikitas and Archdeacon Mark, under the chanting of nuns with the participation of monks, nuns and laity.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy the good keeper of the Monastery reverend Abbess Thecla offered a reception to all present at the hegoumeneion.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF ST. ANNA AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

The commemoration of the Dormition of St. Anna was celebrated by the Patriarchate, at her Holy Monastery by St. Stephen's Gate inside the wall of the Old City of Jerusalem, on Wednesday July 25/ August 7, 2019.

On this feast the Church while honouring the Dormition of St. Anna, commemorates also her life, which was according to God's Will, her faith to God and that of her husband Joachim, which evoked God's mercy and gave her, the former barren woman, Mary, the Most Holy Theotokos, and by the Holy Spirit the Mother of our God, to be the fruit of her womb.

In honour of St. Anna Vespers was held in the aforementioned Holy Monastery in the evening, and the D. Liturgy in the

morning by the Master of Ceremonies Archimandrite Bartholomew.

After the Divine Liturgy the Hegoumen Archimandrite Meletios offered a reception at the hegoumeneion.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM VISITS THE RUSSIAN NUNNERY OF ST. MARY MAGDALENE IN GETHSEMANE**

On Sunday July 22/ August 4, 2019, the commemoration of the Holy Myrrh-bearer and Equal-to-the-Apostles Mary Magdalene, was celebrated with especial liturgical brilliance at the Holy Russian Nunnery dedicated to the Saint in Gethsemane.

Before the end of the Divine Liturgy, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos visited the Holy Nunnery, escorted by Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Archdeacon Mark, and was welcomed by the Metropolitan Mark of Germany from the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR), Archimandrite Romanos, the Abbess of the Nunnery, Nun Elizabeth, and the Abbess of the Russian Nunnery of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives Nun Veronica.

His Beatitude addressed the congregation of the Nunnery with the following words in English and offered in the end an ivory sacred cross for the blessing of the congregation;

“Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Reverend Fathers,

Dear Mother Abbess Elizabeth,

Beloved Sisters of this Convent,

Noble Pilgrims,

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

It is a great blessing for us to be able to join you in this wonderful celebration of this special feast.

We gather today in this holy place on the feast of St. Mary Magdalene, the holy and great Myrrh-bearer and Equal-to-the-Apostles, who was also the Apostle to the Apostles, and we sing together with the hymnographer;

Saint Mary Magdalene, thou didst again run to the apostles, saying unto them,

“I have seen the Lord”,

and therein thou art the first proclaimer of the Resurrection.

Thou art recognized by the Holy Church as Equal-to-the-Apostles,

for thou didst pray with them and travel with them

to proclaim the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

and to witness of his teachings.

The witness – the martyria – of Saint Mary Magdalene remains of the same crucial importance in our won day, especially here in Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

Let us remember her martyria:

Saint Mary Magdalene had been delivered by our Lord Jesus Christ of seven demons, and so through her experience of the invisible world of evil powers she was able to recognize Christ as the Saviour. From that moment, she remained faithful to the Lord, even through his crucifixion and death, and she witnessed his burial.

She was the first witness to the resurrection of our Lord, and she brought the glad tidings to the Apostles.

Here is the model for each of us of our own Christian discipleship, a model that we must imitate.

For we too, live in a world of unseen cosmic evil powers that seek to destroy the beautiful creation and the children of God, and we pray fervently to Jesus Christ our God and Saviour for protection and deliverance.

We too live in a world in which Christ is crucified anew every day wherever there is persecution, conflict, terrorism, violence, or lack of respect to the human person who is made in the image and likeness of God.

And we too know the power of the Uncreated Light that shines from the Holy Tomb and that brings light and life to the world.

Jerusalem and the Holy Sites of this Holy Land are the testimony to this sacred history and the witness of the lives of the great saints of the Holy Bible. And the Mother of all the Churches, our beloved Patriarchate of Jerusalem, exists in her mission throughout the ages to be an eyewitness of all this, and to guard the unity of the Orthodox Church. This is a unique and precious privilege to us to whom the guardianship of the Holy Places has been entrusted, and it is a great blessing to all who come here on pilgrimage. It is therefore our moral obligation to pray always for the unity of all and particularly of the Orthodox Church, and never lose hope.

Let us never forget that the heart of the life of the Church is the kerygma- the proclamation – of Christ’s Anastasis, which we experience so intimately in the Divine Eucharist. For the Eucharist makes the Church, and the main characteristic of the Church is the Eucharistic synaxis. As we read in the Letter to the Ephesians, we must do all in our power, with the help of God, to remain faithful to;

“the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all”. (Eph. 4:1-5).

All of us who celebrate the feast of Saint Mary Magdalene here today, whether we call the Holy Land our home or whether we are pilgrims from other lands, cannot keep this experience to ourselves. We must be messengers in our turn like Saint Mary Magdalene, who proclaimed the resurrection and spread the Good News in a world that thirsts for union with God.

Please allow us, Your Grace, to present this cross as a blessing of your pilgrimage in Jerusalem.

May God bless you, dear Mother Elizabeth, and all the sisters of your monastic community, on this blessed feast, and May God bless all who are here today in pilgrimage and our beloved Holy Land.

Amen.”

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE FEAST OF PROPHET ELIJAH IN MA'ALULE OF NAZARETH

On Saturday, July 21/ August 3, 2019, the commemoration of the Holy Prophet Elijah the Thesbite was celebrated at his Holy Church in Ma'alule town, suburb of Nazareth.

This Church belonged to the Arab-speaking community of the Patriarchate, who deserted it along with the whole Ma'alule town when the State of Israel was established in 1948. The church remained abandoned until the '90s. Then the Patriarchate asked for its return from the Israeli army which used it until that time, the Church was returned to the Patriarchate and it was restored and renovated by the funding of the Hegoumen of the H. Monastery of the Transfiguration of Mount Tabor Archimandrite Hilarion and of the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth. Ever since the Church has been used for various services of worship and for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on the Feasts of Prophet Elijah and of the Ascension, to which it is dedicated.

For the Feast of Prophet Elijah, one day after the actual feast day, the Divine Liturgy was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Archimandrite Hilarion, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Eulogios, under the chanting of the Arab-speaking faithful Christians of Nazareth district.

His Beatitude delivered the following sermon to this congregation;

"Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on

the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (James 5: 17-18), St. James the Brother of God says in his epistle.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and Pilgrims

The Divine Grace has gathered us all in this biblical place, which is related to Prophet Elijah, in order to honour his annual commemoration.

Prophet Elijah is distinguished not only for his prophetic office, but also for his Godly zeal, the harsh ascetic life in the desert and the apostolic ministry he developed, fighting the idolatry to which the people of the moral monotheism, namely of the Law of Moses were drawn. Elijah's weapon in this mission was the power of prayer, as the Holy Apostle James mentions in his epistle.

The unceasing prayer of the heart is the special characteristic by which the prophets of the Old Testament achieved the experience of deification, namely the vision of God's glory, just as it happened with the Disciples and the Prophets who were present on Mount Tabor on the day of the Transfiguration of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And the experience of the deification, or the vision of God's glory was being confirmed by both the vision of the uncreated divine light and the hearing of the voice of God the Word, as St. Simeon the New Theologian says; "the prophets' vision was the hearing and the hearing of the Lord's word by the prophets was a vision." And according to King-Prophet David the Prophets were calling upon the Lord and "He answered them. He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them. Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their

inventions" (Psalm 99:6-8).

Moreover, the true Prophet was distinguished from the false one because the former had had the experience of the Living God, the God of the revelation, and not the god of the philosophical wisdom, of the human invention and thinking. The true Prophet is the righteous man of God, for whom the Psalmist says: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Psalm 97:11). Interpreting this psalm, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "the noetic and divine light rises in the mind and heart of everyone who is benign and righteous".

This noetic divine light of the Trinitarian God which rose upon Elijah's mind and heart, made him a vessel of the Lord's Will and a preacher of the truth of the religion of the moral monotheism, which monotheism was being threatened by the idolatry, namely the comparative religion of magic, superstition and pan-theism in his era.

In other words, Elijah's prophetic mission was the fight against the false prophets on the one hand, and the proclaiming of the true and Living God on the other. Elijah accomplished this, not only through his prophetic word, but also through the wondrous signs he performed as proof of these words, among which was the coming down of fire and the burning of the evening sacrifice of a cow, when he prayed on Carmel Mount, as we read in the Bible; "And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their



faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God" (3 Kings 18:35-39).

Speaking on the gift of the prophets, St. Gregory Palamas says: "the prophets know God's will, which has always existed in Him before it was ever accomplished". In other words, the Prophets of the Old Testament, according to St. Gregory Palamas' remarks, used to behold God the Word before He became Incarnate and simultaneously foresaw and foretold Christ's incarnation and could see the Incarnate Divine Word being born by the Virgin at the appointed time. Prophet Elijah also had this experience, who was present on Mount Tabor on the day of Jesus' Transfiguration according to the witness of the Evangelists and Disciples Matthew (17:1-9) and Mark (9:2-9) and as the hymn writer very clearly says; "As a seer of God, the Thesbite with Moses beholdeth upon Tabor that which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which the heart of the earthborn men hath not considered, even the Almighty Lord incarnate".

"A true seer of God", namely a communicant of God's glory, our Prophet Elijah has joined the synaxis of the chosen and beloved children of God, who have become citizens of the heavenly Church as St. Paul says: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Hebrews 12-22-23).

This means that Elijah the Thesbite has a great boldness towards God, and God listens to him. Behold what his hymn writer says; "We know thee to be a vessel containing the Divine Spirit, and an Angel upon the earth, breathing the fire of divine zeal, turning away impiety and reproofing kings, anointing Prophets, and cutting down with the sword the priest of shame, O Elijah". For this reason our Holy Church especially honours and venerates his sacred commemoration.

As far as we are concerned, my dear brothers and sisters, let us try to imitate his Godly zeal, namely his great and steadfast faith, and ask him to deliver us through his prayers from every sorrow, every illness of the body and soul and every treachery of the evil one. Amen.”

After the Divine Liturgy there was a reception in the courtyard in the shade of the pine trees and at noon the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth offered a meal.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF PROPHET ELIJAH AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Friday July 20/ August 2, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of Prophet Elijah the Thesbite in his historic Holy Monastery, which is located between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, near the ancient Monastery of Theotokos' Seat.

On this feast the Church projects Prophet Elijah as a person full of strong and extreme zeal for the name of God, for which reason God graced him with the Divine power so that he was able to work many miracles and perform signs, as recorded in the books of Kings in the Old Testament and in St. James Epistle in the New Testament.

Worth mentioning among these is that he entreated God to stop the rain and there was no rain for three years, until he asked again and then it rained (James 3:17-18). With his prayer God sent down fire and burnt down the altars of the false gods on Carmel Mount near Haifa. He was ascended in heaven in a fiery

chariot and threw his fleece down to his disciple Elisha who stood watching by the river Jordan and then Elisha stepped on the fleece and walked on the waters, crossing the river as if it were land.

For this great Prophet, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in his Monastery, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Hagiotaphite Archimandrites Ignatios and Meletios, and Arab-speaking Priests. The chanting was delivered by Fr. George Banoura in Greek on the right, and St. James Cathedral choir under Mr. Rimon Kamar in Arabic on the left, as the service was attended by representatives of the Greek Consulate, and a congregation of Greek, Russian pilgrims and local Arab-speaking faithful from Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude read the following Sermon;

“Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit” (James 5: 17-18), St. James the Brother of God says in his epistle.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and Pilgrims

The Divine Grace has gathered us all in this biblical place, which is related to Prophet Elijah, in order to honour his annual commemoration.

Prophet Elijah is distinguished not only for his prophetic office, but also for his Godly zeal, the harsh ascetic life in

the desert and the apostolic ministry he developed, fighting the idolatry to which the people of the moral monotheism, namely of the Law of Moses were drawn. Elijah's weapon in this mission was the power of prayer, as the Holy Apostle James mentions in his epistle.

The unceasing prayer of the heart is the special characteristic by which the prophets of the Old Testament achieved the experience of deification, namely the vision of God's glory, just as it happened with the Disciples and the Prophets who were present on Mount Tabor on the day of the Transfiguration of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And the experience of the deification, or the vision of God's glory was being confirmed by both the vision of the uncreated divine light and the hearing of the voice of God the Word, as St. Simeon the New Theologian says; "the prophets' vision was the hearing and the hearing of the Lord's word by the prophets was a vision." And according to King-Prophet David the Prophets were calling upon the Lord and "He answered them. He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them. Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions" (Psalm 99:6-8).

Moreover, the true Prophet was distinguished from the false one because the former had had the experience of the Living God, the God of the revelation, and not the god of the philosophical wisdom, of the human invention and thinking. The true Prophet is the righteous man of God, for whom the Psalmist says: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Psalm 97:11). Interpreting this psalm, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "the noetic and divine light rises in the mind and heart of everyone who is benign and righteous".

This noetic divine light of the Trinitarian God which rose

upon Elijah's mind and heart, made him a vessel of the Lord's Will and a preacher of the truth of the religion of the moral monotheism, which monotheism was being threatened by the idolatry, namely the comparative religion of magic, superstition and pan-theism in his era.

In other words, Elijah's prophetic mission was the fight against the false prophets on the one hand, and the proclaiming of the true and Living God on the other. Elijah accomplished this, not only through his prophetic word, but also through the wondrous signs he performed as proof of these words, among which was the coming down of fire and the burning of the evening sacrifice of a cow, when he prayed on Carmel Mount, as we read in the Bible; "And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God" (3 Kings 18:35-39).

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As far as we are concerned, my dear brothers and sisters, let us try to imitate his Godly zeal, namely his great and steadfast faith, and ask him to deliver us through his prayers from every sorrow, every illness of the body and soul and every treachery of the evil one. Amen."

Finally, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Paissios offered a reception and a meal.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM BLESSES THE JUBILEE OF STEWARD PRIEST GEORGE AWAD**

On Sunday July 8/21, 2019, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of the Holy Great Martyr George the Trophy-bearer, in town Jifna – Biblical Gofna – at the outskirts of Ramallah.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated also on the celebration of the golden jubilee, the completion of fifty years of fruitful dedicated Priestly ministry of Fr. George Awad from Beit Sahour, who has served in Gaza, Toulkarem, and Rafidia of the town of Samaria.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Archimandrite Ignatios, Hegoumen of Beit Sahour and Beit Jalla, Arab-speaking Priests, Fr. George's son, Archimandrite Porphyrios from the Holy Metropolis Rethymnis and Avlopotamou of the Church of Crete, and his son who serves at the H. Metropolis of Fthiotida of the Church of Greece, Fr. Issa Mousleh, Representative of the Patriarchate Press in the Arab-speaking M.M., Fr. Boulos from Beit Jalla, and Fr. George Banoura from Beit Sahour. Present at the service were the Orthodox faithful of the town, as well as Governmental Representatives of the Palestinian State.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude read the following sermon;

“A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed. For it is the jubilee; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field” (Leviticus 25:11-12) the Lord orders through His servant Moses.

Reverend Father George, Steward of our Hagiotaphite noble flock of the town of Jifna, and officiating Priest of the Holy Church of St. George the Great Martyr,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, noble Christians

“Grace and peace of our God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ be with you”; we have been gathered in this holy Eucharistic service in order to celebrate the jubilee year, namely the fiftieth year (Leviticus 25:10) of the Priestly ministry of Father George in our Holy Church.

The Biblical reference of the jubilee year does not only refer to the completion of fifty years according to the Law of Moses, in the Old Testament, but also to the “proclaiming liberty throughout the land” namely of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the New Testament.

The jubilee year has been called also “year to proclaim liberty” because during this year there was a proclamation of liberty from debts but also liberty of the people from slavery. It was also a year dedicated to the Lord, therefore it was called holy (Leviticus 25:11-12).

“The proclamation of liberty”, namely the wailing of the promise of the people’s freedom from the curse of the Law was done by our God and Saviour Jesus Christ who was crucified, as St. Paul preaches; “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 3:13).



In other words, the testament of Grace that had been agreed for us in Christ is our freedom from the law and the power of sin and of death as St. Paul says; "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2).

We enjoy the freedom in Christ within the Church, which is the body of Christ, and according to Paul, Christ is the head of this body; "And he is the head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18). Interpreting these words our Father among the Saints Theophylactos says: "[St. Paul] did not see the fullness of the congregation of the Church, but the body, in order to show the precision of His closeness to us and that He took upon Himself "homoousion" (same essence) flesh to ours."

"Homoousios (of the same essence) is the head to the body; likewise He also is homoousios (of the same essence) to us humans".

Moreover the Church is the vineyard of the Lord and in this vineyard the Priests and the deacons of the bloodless altar of the Lord are continuously ministering as workers, offering the praise of sacrifice to God through Christ (Hebrews 13:15). In addition, the ministers of the Lord offer "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1). They take care of the Church of God, as St. Paul says (1 Tim. 3:5). Therefore the psalmist prays by saying; "Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness" (Psalm 132:9), while the Lord says: "I will also clothe her priests [of Jerusalem, that is the Church] with salvation" (Psalm 132:16), I will surround them with the power of salvation. And this power of salvation is the grace of the Holy Spirit which establishes and perfects the Priests.

Our Lord's words "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16) do not only refer to His disciples and apostles, but also to their successors the Bishops and the

Priests who minister the mystery of the divine incarnation of God the Word's Providence, who give glory to the Lord in this Temple according to the psalmist; "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 29:2).

Dear Father George,

Your undertaking of the degree of the Priesthood in the yard of the Lord, the Church of Christ, has made you its worthy minister, therefore your motherly Church of Jerusalem salutes you today with the words of the Lord; "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matt. 25:21).

And what is the joy into which you are called to enter? It is the "transmission of many good things" according to Zigavinos, it is "the fullness of beatitude" according to St. Chrysostom. This is the completion of the fiftieth year of liturgic and pastoral ministering of the Church. For this reason St. Paul says: "For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 3:13).

You have preached this very Orthodox faith and tradition of our Holy Fathers and Apostles with boldness, ministering the word of truth, the Gospel of Christ's love on the one hand, and promoting the harmonious co-existence among the faithful of the other Christian and Islamic communities on the other hand, in the towns of the Palestinian State; Nablus, Rafidia, Beit Sahour, Gaza and in present Jifna.

Your Priestly contribution to the Church and the tested Palestinian people has been recognized by our Holy and Sacred Synod and by the initiative of our Patriarchal Mediocrity has decided your awarding with the honorary distinction of the famous Order of the Cross bearers of the Holy Sepulchre,

hearkening to St. Paul's words; "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (1 Tim. 5:17).

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ through the prayers of our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and the intercessions of today's honoured Holy Great Martyr Prokopios and you Patron Saint George the Trophy-bearer, be with you. Amen. Many happy returns."

After the end of the Divine Liturgy His Beatitude honoured Fr. George with the medal of the Order of Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, offered him an icon of the Theotokos and a pectoral cross and wished him the continuation of his ministry for many years to come after his jubilee.

The President of the Care takers of the Church also addressed the Priest.

At noon Fr. George offered a meal to His Beatitude and other guests. There, His Beatitude addressed Fr. George as follows;

"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men" (Romans 14:17-18) St. Paul proclaims.

Dear Father George,

Dear friends present

Feeling the ending of his ministry approaching, Great Paul says; "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Today's honorary distinction of the celebration of the jubilee of your Priesthood Farther George refers to this fact of the

ministry in the Church.

The biblical term of "jubilee" which our Church especially honours has as its only purpose to preach that the mission of the Priest, of the spiritual Father and leader is not the enjoying of material things as "eating and drinking" but the evangelizing of the righteousness, of peace and of the joy in the Holy Spirit.

In other words the spiritual Father and leader should possess these spiritual and moral values which also are the fundamental principle of progress and prosperity of society as a whole and particularly of the religious communities.

And we say this because the harmonious co-existence of the various religious communities and in our case of the Muslims and Christians, depends a lot on the spiritual leadership of the community for which we also boast, hearkening to the words of Christ's Gospel; "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21).

Concluding, we would like to thank all those who honoured this feast with their presence, especially our much respected and dearest, His Excellency the President of the Palestinian State Mahmoud Abbas, through his representatives.

As for Father George, we wish strength from on high, health and longevity so that he may be pleasing to Christ our God and reliable to the people and our Roum-Orthodox Patriarchate. Many happy returns and blessed jubilee of his Priestly ministry.

Moreover we would like to congratulate warmly his wife who has been proven a true and invisible Cyrene to him during his Priestly pastoral and liturgical ministry in the Lord's Church. Amen."

**From Secretariat-General**

