

# THE FEAST OF THE RETURN OF SAINT SABBA'S RELICS

On Thursday, October 13/26, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the return of the relics of our Holy Father among the Saints Sabba the Sanctified.

On this day the Church, and especially the Church of Jerusalem commemorates that on October 13/26, 1965, the relics of Saint Sabba the Sanctified was returned from Venice, where it had been transferred by the Crusaders. The sacred and incorrupt relics of Saint Sabba was given to the Church it belongs by the Roman Catholic Church, after the removal of the anathemas and the beginning of the dialogue with the Orthodox Church in 1964.

For the return of the relics the blessed Metropolitans Germanos of Petra and Basileios of Caesarea, the Spiritual Father of Saint Sabba Monastery Archimandrite Seraphim and the current Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, who was a Deacon then, went to Venice. After the welcoming reception of the Saint's relics at Jaffa Gate, it was displayed for veneration at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for a week and then transferred to the Monastery Saint Sabba founded, to remain there for the blessing and healing of the Monastery Fathers and the pilgrims.

This event was celebrated this year with an all-night vigil at the Monastery, presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, with the co-celebration of the Spiritual Father of the Monastery Archimandrite Eudokimos, the Hegoumen of the Monastery of the Shepherds and Beit Jala Archimandrite Ignatios, at the chanting of Hierodeacon Simeon. The Vigil was attended by members of the flock from the occupied territories of Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour.

His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos did not attend the Vigil due to the ongoing hostilities, however, He sent the following Sermon:

“Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness” (Ps. 97, 11-12), the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved Fathers and brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians

Today the Holy Church of Jerusalem rends glory and thanksgiving to the Holy Triune God, on the commemoration of the return of Saint Sabba's relics at his Lavra.

The honour given to the holy relics of the Saints by the Holy Orthodox and Apostolic Church is an action of faith and confession to the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And this is, because according to Saint Paul, “But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (1 Cor. 15, 13-14).

According to the testimony of the Holy Bible, the Saints' relics are distinguished for their grace which stems from the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us hear Saint Chrysostom saying: “For it is possible for the one who comes here in faith to gain great benefits; because not only the bodies but also the reliquaries of the Saints themselves are full of spiritual grace. If this happened on the occasion of the prophet Elisha and the dead person who touched the reliquary broke the bonds of death and returned to life, how much more now, that grace is more abundant, now that the power of the Holy Spirit is more, the one who touches the reliquary in faith can receive great power from it. For this reason, God left the Saints' relics with us, wanting to guide us to the same zeal as theirs, and offer us a safe harbour and comfort for the evil

things that always happen to us”.

The fact that the Saint's relics are carriers of the grace of the Holy Spirit's power is steadfast proof that the Saints' dead bodies testify to Christ's resurrection, as Saint John Damascene says: “They have become vessels of God and sacred dwelling places; “as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God” (2 Cor. 6,16). For they are “righteous people who are protected by God and will never suffer torment” (Wisdom of Solomon 3,1). And it is written in the Bible, that the death of the Saints is sleep rather than death; for they toiled forever and shall live until the end; “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints” (Ps. 116,15). What is more honourable than being in the hands of God? For God is life and light and those who are in the hands of God exist in life and light”.

This is precisely what the Resurrection of Christ is, namely the light and life of God. “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), the Lord says.

Our Holy Father Sabba followed Christ, walking in His light, that is why he received the light of life, of the resurrected Christ, and received the incorruption of his earthly body. The incorrupt relics of our Sanctified Father Sabba is an endless source gushing forth fragrance and healing power of the Holy Spirit.

Behold, therefore, my dear brethren, the meaning of the holy relics and the reason why our Holy Orthodox Church holds special honour for the relics of its saints and righteous. Let us hear again Saint John Damascene: “Through the mind, God dwelt in the bodies of the righteous, as Saint Paul says: “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you” (1 Cor. 6,19), “the Lord is that Spirit” (2 Cor. 3,17). How can we not then honour the living souls of the temples of God, the living dwelling places of

God? For they stood in boldness before God, yet living”.

Our God-bearing Father Sabba became such a living temple of God, whose “death is sleep rather than death”, as the hymnographer says: “Since thou wast temperate, guileless, silent and simple and meek, past what is common for men, thou O Father, didst truly appear as immaterial while in the flesh, and an all-worthy house of God; and in thy sympathy, thou dost pass on to us of the gifts that come from Him to thee” (Minaion, December 5, Matins, praises, Troparion 3).

We, my dear brethren, who honour the return of the relics of our Holy Father Sabba the Sanctified, let us entreat him and the Most blessed Theotokos saying: beseech Christ to grant our region and the world peace and great mercy. Amen. Many happy and peaceful returns.”

The Fathers returned to Jerusalem via the Holy Monastery of Abba Theodosios according to the custom.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **His Beatitude Theophilos III Holds A Memorial Service For The Gaza War Victims**

Jerusalem

22 October 2023

This morning, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, H.B. Theophilos III, held a prayer and memorial service for the souls of the Gaza war victims, and the victims of the Israeli air strike that hit the St.

Porphyrius Orthodox Church compound on Thursday, killing at least 18 people who had been seeking shelter in the church, which dates back to the 5th century, and is of at least 1616 years old.

“We appeal to you to awaken the longing for a peaceful life in all those who are filled with hatred for their neighbours, especially those now at war or preparing for war,” the Patriarch said.

At least 450 people had been sheltering at the church complex in Gaza city when it was hit by an Israeli air strike.

The Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem issued a strongly worded statement on the attack.

“The survivors of this horrific bombing are resilient and filled with the spirit of Christ,” the Patriarchate said. “Together with them we continue to display faith through the aftermath of this horrific ordeal. We have come together as a community to support one another, praying for healing and strength in the face of adversity.”





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# **TRISAGION FOR THE REPOSE OF THE SOULS OF THE GAZA WAR VICTIMS**

On Saturday morning, October 8/21, 2023, after the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, a Trisagion was held for the repose of the souls of the Gaza war victims.

This memorial service was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the participation in prayer of the Holy Sepulchre Archbishops and Fathers.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF SAINT ISAAC THE**

# **SYRIAC IN DOHA**

The feast of the Cathedral of Doha was celebrated again this year with all ecclesiastical splendour. For pastoral reasons, the holiday was moved to Friday.

On Thursday, September 29/October 12, 2023, the great solemn Vespers was sung, with the blessing of bread. The hymns were sung by the choir of the Holy Church in Greek and Arabic, in the presence of the new Ambassador of Greece in Doha, Mr Ioannis Ioannidis and the Deputy Commander of Defence, Mr Argirios Kostouros. After the end of Vespers, a pre-festal banquet was held, to which the flock members gathered.

On Friday, October 30/13, 2023, Matins and the Episcopal Divine Liturgy were held, officiated by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Qatar with the participation of the Christian congregation of the local Church.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Holy Icon of Saint Isaac the Syriac procession took place.

From the Holy Archdiocese of Qatar

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# **PRAYER FOR PEACE AT THE HORRENDOUS GOLGOTHA**

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, praying daily for the peace of the whole world is praying fervently especially today 4/17 October 2023 according to the statement of the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem released on October 13th, 2023.

The prayer was held today at the Horrendous Golgotha for the cessation of all hostilities in Israel and Gaza and for the prevailing spirit of dialogue and peace and the relief of all those wounded by war and in favour of respecting every human soul as the image of God.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FIRST MARTYR AND EQUAL TO THE APOSTLES THEKLA AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Saturday, September 24th/October 7th, 2023, the feast of the Holy First Martyr and Equal to the Apostles Thekla was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

On this feast, the Church remembers that Saint Thekla came from Iconium in Asia Minor and from the age of 18 she followed the Apostle Paul and was taught the Christian faith by him, and preached Christ in many areas and having suffered a lot, she died at an old age in her own homeland.

This feast was celebrated in the Saint's chapel in the Central Monastery, dating from the 16th century, where ancient icons and the footprint of the Lord's foot from the rock of His Ascension are kept.

The feast was celebrated with Vespers in the evening and the Divine Liturgy in the morning, held by the priests of St. Constantine. The Typikon keeper Archimandrite Alexios had the



lead, in the presence of His Beatitude, with the participation in prayer of the Holy Sepulchre Fathers monks, locals and pilgrims.

After Vespers, the boiled wheat with dried bread and wine was offered in the forecourt of the Central Monastery next to the well and after the Divine Liturgy, the festive treat was provided at the Epitropikon.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS IN THE HOLY CROSS MONASTERY**

On Sunday, September 18th / October 1st, 2023, the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was celebrated, according to the order of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in the Holy Monastery of the Holy Cross, located in West Jerusalem near the Jewish Knesset.

In this area, the tradition of the Church maintains that the three-composite wood of pine, cedar and cypress was planted by Lot, from which the Cross was made, on which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified for our salvation.

In honour of the Holy Cross and its exaltation, Vespers was celebrated on Saturday afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning, presided over by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda with the co-celebration of the Archimandrites Claudius, Amfilochios, Fr Dometian from the Patriarchate of Moscow and of Fr Ioannis from the Patriarchate

of Romania and many Priests of other Orthodox countries, the Hierodeacons Simeon and Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by the "Tropos" Byzantine choir from Greece by Mr Angelidis. The services were attended by Christians from Jerusalem and pilgrims, in the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Demetrios Angelosopoulos.

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a procession into the Church, the service of the exaltation of the Holy Cross and its veneration by the Archbishop, the Priests, and all the faithful.

Afterward, the Hegoumen and curator of the Monastery Elder Dragoman, Archimandrite Matthaïos, hosted a reception for the Episcopal entourage and the congregation in the reception hall and the courtyard of the Monastery.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF THE UNIVERSAL EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Wednesday, September 14/27, 2023, the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

During this feast, the Church remembers that Saint Helen, sent to the Holy Land by her son Constantine the Great, saw on the Horrendous Golgotha the Tomb of the Lord and the Cross, on which he was attached for our salvation, and she built the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the decade 326-336 AD.

To the glory of our Crucified and Resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, Saint Helen performed the Inauguration of his surrounding Church on September 13, 336 AD in the presence of the Archbishop of Jerusalem Makarios. Then he raised the Cross of Christ, so that the assembled multitudes could look at it from afar, and they repeatedly called out "Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy".

This act has remained as a tradition since then in the Church, celebrated the day after the feast of the Inauguration, that is on September 14th.

In honour of this event, Great Vespers was held on Tuesday afternoon in the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection after incense and the blessing of bread presided over by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

On the morning of the feast, Wednesday, September 14/27, 2023, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection, led by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitans Isychios of Capitolias and Panteleimon of Xanthi, two Bishops from the Patriarchate of Serbia, the Hegoumen of the Monastery Vlatadon, Reverend Bishop Nikiforos of Amorio, the Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Philoumenos of Pella, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks, priests from other Orthodox Churches, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Angelos Gianopoulos with the help of Byzantine singers from Greece. The service was attended by a large congregation and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Demetrios Angelosopoulos.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a litany which marched from the Catholicon to the Shrine of Deposition, went down the stairs to Saint Helen's chapel and after the incense offering

at the Altar of the Armenians and the throne of Saint Helen, it went to the Cave of the finding of the Cross. The exaltation of the Cross followed there, held by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the Holy Wood was exalted at the four parts of the horizon, under the chanting of the apolytikion of the feast. The Holy Cross was placed at the place of its finding and it was venerated by the High Priests and the Consul General.

The litany continued to the Holy Sepulchre, thrice around the Sacred Edicule as the Holy Wood was held on top of the heads of H.H.B. the High Priests and concluded at the Horrendous Golgotha. There the Cross was exalted again at the four parts of the horizon by His Beatitude, while the large crowd of people were chanting the apolytikion of the feast. The High Priests and the Consul General venerated again the Holy Cross there, holding basil branches in their hands, which they will keep as a blessing in their homes.

After the dismissal of the Liturgy, all the congregation venerated the Holy Wood which is kept in the case of King Justin.

At the end of the service, the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate Reception Hall, along with a large crowd of faithful Christians to whom His Beatitude delivered the following address:

“Christ on the cross; let us come together as partakers of His sufferings, so that we may also be born of His glory. Christ in the dead, let us die to sin, that we may live in righteousness... Christ in hades; let us come together to the highest humility, that we may also meet and be exalted and be glorified, forever seeing God and be seen”, says Saint John of Damascus.

Beloved brothers in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The power of the Holy and Life-giving Cross deemed us worthy to celebrate in this place of its finding under Saint Helen, but also in the place of the Crucifixion of our God and Saviour Christ in the Horrendous Golgotha, the so-called "Skull Place", its Universal Exaltation.

The truly great mystery of the divine Providence, as well as of the Holy Cross, whose "word to those who are lost is a blessing, to those who are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18), cannot be understood by human logic, but only through faith and the purity of the soul, as Saint John of Damascus says: "Great grace, admittedly, the mystery of the divine Providence will not be understood, it will be believed only by one who is free, of a pure mind, out of fear of God and with a desire to be given."

The Cross is the sacrificial power of God, and this is because in the Cross and through the Cross the great mystery of man's salvation was accomplished. It is written; "God our king, centuries ago, worked salvation in the midst of the earth" (Ps. 73,12). The Son of God, "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (Eph. 5:2). Because of this, all who obey him "he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him"(Hebrews 5:9).

The Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is "the beauty of the Church", "the support of the faithful", and the "weapon against the devil". The Cross is the trophy of Christ, through which the demons flee. "The cross is a trophy for Christ; Once it was stood up, forever it is woe to the demons who are driven away", says Saint John of Damascus.

Saint Cosmas, bishop of Maiouma, extolling the sermon of today's great feast, of the exaltation of the Holy Cross, exclaims hymnologically: "O Theotokos, thou art a mystical paradise, which being untilled hath blossomed forth Christ, by Who the life-bringing Tree of the Cross was planted in the

earth. In worshipping Him now through its exaltation, thee do we magnify" (Ode 9, Heirmos).

In other words, Jesus Christ, as perfect God, is the one who planted "the tree of life in Paradise" (Genesis 2:9). He Himself planted "the life-giving tree of the Cross on earth" from the pure blood of the Virgin and Theotokos Mary during His incarnation.

The life-giving tree is none other than the wood of the Cross, on which he was crucified and in which "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1, 7- 8). Through the cross, we worship "Christ our God, who was lifted up on the cross and sacrificed for our sins". Let us honour and magnify the most blessed Theotokos and Mother of God, who gave birth to our God, the Word and our Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory and the kingdom now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen. Many happy returns".

After this address, His Beatitude blessed all present. He awarded the honorary distinction of the Superior Brigade of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre to the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Vlatadon, His Eminence Bishop Nikiforos of Amori in recognition and appreciation of the accomplishments of the centre of this Monastery of outstanding theological and uniting work of the Churches and the provision of hospitality to students of the Patriarchate in it.

The multitudes of the faithful, receiving the Patriarchal blessing glorified to God for the salvation He provided to the world through the Cross of His Son.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS IN BEIT JALA

On Sunday, September 11/24, 2023, the feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos was celebrated by transference in Beit Jala.

On this feast, the Rum Orthodox Arabic-speaking community of Beit Jala commemorates that the Theotokos was given to the Ancestors of God Joachim and Anna as a gift for themselves and for the whole of humanity so that Christ our Saviour would be born in the flesh from her.

This feast was celebrated at the beautiful 19th-century Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos.

His Beatitude had a very warm welcoming reception by the Hegoumen of Beit Jala Archimandrite Ignatios, the priests and the scouts.

The Divine Liturgy and all the feast were presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with their Eminences, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Archimandrite Ieronymos and the Priests of the community, Fr Boulos, Fr Yusef and Fr Elias, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the community Byzantine choir as the service was attended by a large congregation praying in joy and reverence.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following sermon:

“Thy Nativity, O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy the whole world; for from thee hath dawned the Sun of Righteousness,

Christ our God, annulling the curse and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting" (Apolytikion).

Beloved brothers in Christ,

Dear Christians

The grace of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Most High, who overshadowed the Virgin Mary, brought us all together in this magnificent Church, to celebrate her Nativity, listening to the exhortation of our Holy Father John of Damascus: "Come all nations, every race of people and every language and age and every position, let us celebrate with joy the nativity of the universal joy".

It is indeed an event of universal rejoicing the Nativity of our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, because as the hymnographer says to her "In thee O immaculate Maiden is the mystery of the Trinity praised and glorified. For the Father was well pleased and the Word dwelt among us, and the Divine Spirit overshadowed Thee" (Matins, Ode 6, Glory).

The Nativity of the Theotokos Mary marked the "beginning of salvation for the world", that is, the lifting of the curse on the one hand and the abolition of death on the other. Both Adam and Eve were under the law of sin, curse and death due to their disobedience to God's commandments. On the contrary, through the gracious Virgin Mary, who became the Mother of the Sun of Righteousness, the joy of Christ was proclaimed to the whole world.

The Nativity of the Theotokos brought joy to the whole world because as Saint John of Damascus says, the Virgin Mary gave birth to the world of a treasure of goods that cannot be taken away because with Her the Creator transfigured/transformed all nature through the human nature of Christ. That is to say, if the man who stands in the middle of mind and matter is the link of all visible and invisible creation, the word of God



since He was united with the nature of men, through Him has been united with all creation.

The birth of the Virgin Mary heralded the freedom not only of man but also of all creation from the slavery of decay and death. This is why Saint Paul preaches saying: " Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8,21).

Moreover, the birth of the Virgin Mary revealed the energy of "the mystery hidden from ages and from generations", (Col. 1,26) " Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel", (Is. 7:14) exclaims the prophet Isaiah. This so-called Son Emmanuel is none other than the manifested Christ, as the hymnographer says: "We faithfully celebrate and worship thy holy nativity, which came of a promise, O immaculate Virgin, whereby we were delivered from the curse of our first father when Christ appeared" (Matins, Ode 7, Canon 2, Troparion 1).

Also noteworthy is the use of the Prophet Amos saying: "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen" (Amos 9:11). In this prophetic word of Amos, Saint Cyril of Alexandria discerns the resurrection in Christ of the human tabernacle, that is, of the human flesh, saying: "For we are a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) according to the scriptures, for his sake; and death dug down (Amos 9:11) all [people's] tabernacles, and God the Father in Christ rebuilt them."

The hymnographer of the Church at the birth of the Virgin Mary discerns the pattern of the salvation of man in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ saying: "The prophecy of the Lord is fulfilled, let it be; I will raise up the tabernacle of the holy David, in you, They were prefigured, through whom the companion of men, in the flesh of God, was

incarnated.”

The birth of the Virgin Mary, who protected her chastity and virginity, has a special significance for the Church of Christ, which according to the great Paul is the body of Christ (Col. 1, 18) and he is the saviour of the body of the Church (Eph. 5:23).

In other words, in the person of the most blessed Mary, we consider the mystery of the divine Providence, according to which “the whole of earthen men was incarnated in the flesh of the pure blood of the Ever-Virgin Mary under the Son and Word of God the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ. “It was well-pleasing to the Father so that not from a physical connection, but from the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin, supernaturally the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us”, preaches Saint John of Damascus.

Today, my beloved brothers, our Holy Church calls us through the righteous Joachim and Anna, who were ambassadors of the world’s salvation with the birth of their All-Holy daughter Theotokos, to celebrate this great gift of our God to mankind and assign all hope in Him. And after the hymnographer, we say: “O Adam be made new again; our mother Eve, be magnified, ye Prophets with the Apostles, dance in delight with the righteous. Today the world is filled with joy common to Angels and to men: From chaste and righteous Joachim and godly Anna is born now the Theotokos and Virgin” (Exapostilario 2). Alone, and only her introduced Christ into the world for the salvation of our souls.

Many happy returns and blessed the new year of the very goodness of the Lord. Amen”.

After the Divine Liturgy, a litany took place around the Church accompanied by the Scouts’ parade.

After this, a treat reception took place in the hall next to the Church, and finally, a meal where the Patriarchal

Entourage, the Mayor of the city and representative of the Head of the Ecclesiastical Supreme Palestinian Committee, Mr Ramzi Khouri were present.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF THE HOLY ANCESTORS OF GOD JOACHIM AND ANNA AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Friday, September 9/22, 2023, the Synaxis of the Theotokos' parents Joachim and Anna was celebrated. The Holy Ancestors of God were given a child from God at an old age, and offered Mary the Mother of our Lord to God as the hymnographer says:

“She that was released by prayer from the bonds of here sometime barrenness, doth call us to celebrate with her because of the wonder, and to offer gifts unto her that is born, while entreating her with longing, before whom the virgins ran on aforetime, dancing and crying out: behold, the restoration of all is come; behold, Adam is set free; for Anna hath budded with fruit, even the only pure Mother who hath not known man” (Oikos).

For this feast the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Holy Monastery dedicated to them, the former house of Joachim and Anna by the Sheep's Pool, according to the testimony of Saint John of Damascus, next to Saint Stephen's Gate of the Wall of the Old City of Jerusalem.

The Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Eminence Theodosios of Sebasteia, with Archimandrites Ieronymos and Makarios and

Hierodeacon Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by Mr Angelos Gianopoulos as the service was attended by monks, nuns, local Christians and pilgrims.

After the Divine Liturgy the renovator of the Shrine and the Church, Hegoumen Archimandrite Meletios hosted a reception for the Episcopal entourage and the congregation.

**From Secretariat-General**