

# THE FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday, June 30 / July 13, 2023, the feast of the Synaxis of the Twelve Holy Apostles was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

By saying "Synaxis" the Church, means the gathering of the faithful in the Holy Churches, in order to commemorate the Twelve Holy Apostles, for the sake of the mission they accomplished, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to preach Christ crucified and resurrected and they "enchanted the whole world".

This feast was celebrated by the Patriarchate in the Holy Monastery of the Holy Apostles in the city of Tiberias with the Divine Liturgy in the morning, presided over by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and the Archbishop of Aristarchos Constantina, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks and Arabic-speaking Priests from the neighbouring regions of Galilee. The chanting was delivered by Archimandrite Artemios in Greek and by the choir of Acre in Arabic, in the presence of the Consul of Greece in Haifa Mr Constantinos Zenovios and believers of the Galilee region.

To these believers, His Beatitude proclaimed the divine word as follows:

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I

am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28,18-20).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit that has dwelled on the Holy Twelve Apostles has gathered us all today in this place where Jesus appeared after His resurrection, “by the Sea of Tiberias” (John 21,1), to honour their Synaxis.

The Holy Apostles are the foundation of the faithful members of the body of the Church, as Saint Paul says: “Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2,19-20).

And this because the Lord commanded them to first go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, secondly to teach the nations to observe what they had commanded them and thirdly to assure them that this Lord is with of them [the disciples] all the days until the end of the age, (Cf. Matt. 28, 18-20).

These three characteristics of the character of the apostles constitute the apostolic institution of the Church. We say this because the Apostles of Christ received the Grace of the Holy Spirit not morally but essentially. “And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit” (Acts, 13,52) during their sermon in Antioch of Pisidia, the Apostle Luke writes. And to the apostle Peter, the Lord says: “You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of heaven shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

“When the Splendour of the Spirit appeared to you in deed and

verity, O wise Apostles, ye all took the fulness of it into yourselves, initiated into lofty teachings in the upper room; and now, as is meet, ye are counted blessed" (Matins, Canon of the twelve, Ode 9, Troparion 2) the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

On the foundations of the group of the Holy Apostles, those chosen by our Savior Christ, the earthly Church in the world was built, having as its citizens the Christians, who are already according to Paul "fellow citizens of the saints and householders of God » (Eph. 2:19) and "on earth they live, but in heaven they rule" according to Diognitos; On the other hand, the rule of it [the Church] in the Holy Spirit was shown, since it is the way of life of piety but also the way of governing of this, based on the Synodical system, established by the Apostles in Jerusalem according to the testimony of the author of the "Acts of the Apostles" the Evangelist Luke, saying: "the Apostles and the Elders came together to see about the word..." (Acts 15,6).

On the other hand, the Apostles were appointed by the Lord as His successors, as the holy Pachomius also says: "God the Word, ... ascending to heaven, preordained [=appointed in advance] His apostles as His successors".

The importance and content of Apostolic Succession for the Church and its salvific work is formulated precisely by Hippolytus of Rome, saying: "The Holy Spirit delivered in the Church, the apostles transmitted to the righteous believers; we, as their successors benefiting from this grace, by participating in the priesthood and teaching and are considered to be guards of the Church".

Indeed, my beloved brothers, the Holy Apostles are considered guardians of the Church, because its special component is "Apostolicity". Let us also hear the Apostle Luke, saying in the Acts of the Apostles: "As they pass through the cities, they deliver to them to keep the doctrines that were appointed

by the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem" (Acts 16,4). [And in more detail: as I was passing through the cities I delivered by oral teaching to the believers in them to keep the decisions, which had been definitively judged as the only correct ones by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem].

Notable in this regard is the admonition of the Apostle Paul to his disciple Timothy, saying: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith", (1 Tim. 6, 20-21), "That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us", (2 Tim. 1,14).

Indeed, the Holy Fathers of the Church, gathered in the Holy Spirit, commemorate the "apostolicity" of the Church in the Creed, proclaiming: "I believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church". And this is because the Holy Apostles are those who sit in cities and ordain Elders and Bishops "shepherd the Church of the Lord and God" (Acts 20,28).

So this is why the Apostles are called by Saint Gregory of Palamas "arch-shepherds or even architects of the common piety and virtue". This is again why the schism in the body of the One, Holy and Catholic Church is a great sin: because it endangers the stability of the Apostolic succession, whose genuine and authentic bearers are the normally ordained bishops of the local Churches.

We, my dear brethren, who honour the sacred commemoration of the holy and glorious Apostles, let us join the hymnographer in the prayer: "O Good Saviour, Who by nature art the Friend of man and great in compassion, by the divine supplications of Thine all-hymned Virgin Mother, and the intercessions of Thine Apostles Peter and Paul, send unto us from Heaven Thy mercies and succour" (Matins, Canon of the Chief Apostles, Ode 9, Theotokion). Amen. Many happy returns."

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a reception and a banquet under the well-appointed priest of the Monastery Archimandrite Parthenios.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF THE HOLY APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Wednesday, June 29 / July 12, 2023, the feast of the Holy Glorious and Chiefs of the Apostles Peter and Paul was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

On this feast, the Church honours the Apostle Peter, remembering that he heard the call of the Lord at the Sea of Tiberias and followed Him after his brother Andrew and confessed Him saying: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16,16) and denied Him, but he repented and proclaimed Him to the gathered multitudes on the day of Pentecost and in Judea, Antioch and finally in Rome, where he died by death on the cross.

The Church also honours the apostle Paul, a former persecutor, but enlightened on his march to Damascus and called to the apostolic office and preaching Christ and labouring for all others through Christ and being able to say: " I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20) and wrote his 14 letters and ascended to the third heaven.

The feast of the honour of the two Chiefs of the Apostles was celebrated in the Holy Church in Capernaum by the sea, founded by the late Patriarch Damianos of Jerusalem in 1931.

The Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with their Eminences, the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, and the Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Archimandrite Sillas and Priests from the Galilee district, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba with the choir of Beer Sheva in Greek, Russian, Arabic and Romanian, and by the Acre Byzantine choir, without Fr Philotheos. The service was attended by many faithful Christians, Greeks, Russians from Galilee and others.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation:

“Let us all praise with sacred hymns Peter and Paul the men of God, the foremost of the Apostles and the bright lights of the whole world; the preachers of the holy Faith, the trumpets of theology, revealers of divine decrees, the pillars of the august Church and the destroyers of error” (Matins, Exaposteilarion), the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and Pilgrims

The most sacred grace of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul has gathered us all in this holy place of the biblical seaside town of Capernaum to celebrate their commemoration.

The chiefs of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, are especially honoured by our Holy Church because they were called by the Lord; Peter of faith, “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16,18),

while Paul as a chosen vessel, "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9,15).

Both of them were full of the Holy Spirit and the Divine Grace, just like the rest of the Apostles, Peter, however, confessed the divinity and sonship of Jesus saying: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16,16). "Through the addition of the article [the Son], he confessed Him to be the genuine Son of God by nature", Saint Chrysostom interprets. "He did not say this without the article, but with the article 'the' Son, therefore, He is the one and only...being born of the same essence of the Father", Theophylaktos comments.

Paul received special gifts and revelations from God as he says: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12,2-4).

Peter's correct proclamation of faith and confession of Jesus Christ served as the stone upon which the Church is built, as the Ark of salvation of our souls "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you" (1 Peter 1,9-10), Saint Peter preaches.

And Paul's proclamation, "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), became the cornerstone upon which the faith of Christ crucified and risen from the dead was founded,

as expressed, apostolically, theologically and in doctrine by the Holy God-bearing Fathers of the Church, through the Holy Spirit in the Ecumenical Councils, according to the precise "form of doctrine" (Romans 6,17), which is the rule of the Christian teaching, as Saint Paul says.

It is also noteworthy that the apostolic preaching and the Christian teaching of both Peter and Paul were not limited to the Jews only, but were extended especially towards the nations, namely the idolaters, following the Lord's command, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28,19). Saint Paul, therefore, confesses that he was called by God, "that I might preach him among the heathen" (Gal. 1,16). Moreover, he says to the Christians of the nations, "For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office" (Romans 11,13).

Indeed, my dear brethren, Saint Paul glorified, and honoured his ministry around the nations, preaching and proving at the same time that the Incarnate God the Word Who became man, the Son of God and our Lord Jesus Christ is "the light of the world" (John 8,12), "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14,6) and the freedom; "and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3,17). That is why Paul preaches, "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. 3,19). Similarly, Peter says, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Peter 1,16).

Both Peter and Paul became eye-witnesses and seers of God's glory and majesty, and they are an example of repentance for the sinners, as the hymnographer exclaims: "As example of conversion, Thou hast given to them that sin Thy two faithful Apostles, Lord: the one said he knew Thee not t Thy holy Passion, but again repented; the other fiercely strove against



and persecuted the preachings of Thy Name; and both of them became the chiefest of the company of Thy friends, O my Jesus Almighty Lord, Thou divine Saviour of our souls” (Small Vespers, sticheron 3).

My dear brethren, as we honour today the chiefs of the Apostles and teachers of the universe, we are called to imitate their repentance, as Saint Gregory Palamas urges us, beseeching their intercessions, along with those of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, for the salvation of our souls. Amen. Many happy returns!”

After the Divine Liturgy the renovator of the Monastery Monk Eirinarchos hosted a reception and a festal meal with fish from Tiberias Sea.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Friday, June 24th/July 8th, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist in the Holy Monastery dedicated to him, in his birthplace of Oreini / Ein-Karem, near the hospital Hadassah.

On this feast, the Church remembers what was narrated by the Evangelist Luke (ch. 1, 5-80) about the nativity of the Holy Forerunner, that he was a gift from God to his parents, his barren mother Elizabeth and his father the Prophet Zacharias, by the revelation of an angel, which resulted in the

speechlessness of Zacharias and its resolution when he wrote that "John he shall be called". This is the one who pointed to the Lord in the Jordan River saying: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1, 29), who baptized the Lord in the Jordan, about whom the Lord said that "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11) and whom Herod beheaded in prison (Matthew 14:1-12).

In honour of the Nativity of John the Baptist, Vespers in the evening and Divine Liturgy in the morning were held in the above-mentioned Holy Monastery, presided over by His Eminence, Archbishop Theodosios of Sebasteia, with the co-celebration of the Archimandrites; Claudius and Amfilochios, Fr Georgios Baramki and the Head of the Russian Community in that area, Fr Nikolaos Kulinsky, other priests from Russia and Romania, and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by Nuns Danielia and Xenia, as the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, monks, nuns, Russian-speaking and Greek-speaking believers.

After the Divine Liturgy, the good caretaker of the Monastery monk Chariton hosted a reception for the Episcopal entourage and the congregation in the forecourt garden of the Holy Church to the delight of all.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF THE PROPHET**

# ELISHA AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, June 14/27, 2023, the feast of the prophet Elisha was celebrated by the Patriarchate. This feast was celebrated in the Holy Monastery named after him in Jericho, in the area where there is also the sycamore tree of Zacchaeus.

During this feast, the Church commemorates that the prophet Elisha was descended from the village of Abel – Meul and was a farmer by profession. God sent the prophet Elijah to him and anointed him as a prophet. Then the prophet Elisha slaughtered his twelve pairs of oxen with which he was working and offered a feast to the people and followed the prophet Elijah.

God anointed Elisha as a prophet and graced him with the power of many miracles, which are mentioned mainly in the books of Kings of the Old Testament.

Through his prayer, the prophet Elisha turned the bitter and dangerous waters of the spring of Jericho into sweet. He also healed Naaman the Syrian from leprosy, resurrected the son of the Shunammite woman, and made his servant Jezi a leper because of his avarice.

Saint Elisha followed his teacher, the prophet Elijah, until the end when the prophet Elijah was taken up in a chariot of fire into the heavens and threw his fleece down to Elisha, on which he stepped and crossed the Jordan River.

In honour of the prophet Elisha, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos led the Divine Liturgy in the above-mentioned Church, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and the Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks, among whom the Reverend Archimadrites, Ignatios, Hegoumen of Beit Jala, Claudius, Onuphrius and Kyriakos, Fr Stavros Aranki and Fr Youssef Hodali and others, Archdeacon Mark and the Hierodeacon Dositheos. The service was attended

by Jericho believers and pilgrims.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Take as an example, my brothers, the long-suffering and long-suffering of the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord”, (James 5:10) Saint James the Brother of God orders.

Beloved brothers in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The grace of the Holy Spirit brought us all together today in this Holy Monastery of the Prophet Elisha, to celebrate his solemn memory and to thank the Lord our God, “gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4, 11-12).

“Of the prophets, some foretold Christ by word, and those according to him [Christ] revealed Him by their works; by word foretold about Him; Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the twelve with them; by works, He was shown by Elijah the Thesvite and Elisha his disciple”, says the Bishop Basil of Seleucia.

Indeed, Elisha was distinguished as one of the great religious personalities of Sacred History. He was called to the prophetic office, anointed by God’s command under the prophet Elijah as his successor (3 Kings 19,16). The Prophet Elijah saw Elisha ploughing his field and called him to follow him, he threw his fleece at him (3 Kings 19,19-20). This act symbolized the calling of Elisha to the prophetic office and the drawing of power and divine authority from it. By means of the fleece of the Prophet Elijah, Elisha divided the waters of the Jordan River and crossed it. From this event, the “sons of the prophets” recognized in Elisha the spirit of the teacher Elijah and worshipped him to the ground (2 Kings 2,7 / 4 Kings

2, 13-15).

The prophetic work of the spirit-bearing Elisha is inextricably linked with extraordinary actions and various miracles, which were recorded by the Holy author of the Books of the Kings. From the power of the miraculous divine energy in him, we can distinguish the change of brackish water into a drinkable spring in the inner region of your city Jericho (2 Kings 2, 19-22), the multiplication of the oil of a poor widow, in order to relieve her from serious debts, (2 Kings 4,1-6), the resurrection of the son of the rich Shunammite woman who hosted him, (2 Kings 4, 18-37), the healing of the leprosy of the Aramean general Naaman, ( 4 Kings 5, 1-14) and after his [Elisha's] death, the resurrection of a dead man, thrown into the Prophet's tomb and coming to touch his bones, (4 Kings 13, 20-21).

The mention of the Prophet Elisha by our Lord Jesus in today's gospel reading is noteworthy: "And many lepers were with Elisha the prophet in Israel, and none of them was clean, except Naaman the Syrian" (Luke 4,27). These words of the Lord infuriated those present in the Synagogue because Jesus "began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4,21). In other words, the work of the prophets and that of Elijah and Elisha was carried out in the person of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, as Saint Cyril of Alexandria interprets. The Psalmist also testifies to this truth, saying: "Touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm" (Psalm 104, 15).

The Holy Prophets and the righteous people in the Old Testament were the anointed ones by the Lord because they were dedicated to Him [God] and inspired by Him. God called these to minister the mystery of the divine Providence, hidden from the ages in God, (Cf. Eph. 3:9), as Saint Paul preaches.

This divine call to the ministry of the mystery hidden in God was also received by our today celebrated Prophet Elisha. Let

us, therefore, hear the Author of the Book of Kings: "And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. He went in therefore and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord. And he went up, lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and stretched himself upon the child, and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes" (2 Kings 4, 32-35).

In the described manner, in which Elisha resurrected the son of the Shunammite woman, the interpreter Basil of Seleucia discerned the pattern of the incarnation of the Son and Word of God, thus he points out saying: "Elisha bears the type of Christ".

In fact, the bright Elisha bears the type of Christ, because he, as his hymnographer states: "the Holy Spirit showed thee to be an uprooter of every evil and a planter of every virtue, O all-blessed Elisha" (Matins, Ode 4, Troparion 1).

And the abundant grace of the Holy Spirit in Elisha is none other than that of the Spirit of Christ. And this Holy Spirit, as the wise Paul preaches, "understands our infirmities", prays with us and "overcomes our groaning and whispering" (Cf. Rom 8:26) for our spiritual progress and salvation.

The prophetic and miraculous speech of the God-bearer Elisha was strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit. This means that the Holy Spirit rests in the hearts of those who live a virtuous life and keep their hearts pure, according to what is said in the Psalm: "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and put your own [and sovereign] spirit in my heart." " (Cf. Psalm 50:12).

For we too, my beloved brothers, beseech the prophet Elisha,

the one who has boldness in the presence of God, that after our most blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, but also of our celebrated Holy Father Methodius Archbishop of Constantinople, that they may intercede for our souls and for the peace of the Holy Land and the universe. Amen. Many happy returns”.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen of the Monastery, Archimandrite Philoumenos, provided a reception.

At noon, a meal was offered by the Central Council of the Jericho Community in a city restaurant.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF SAINT ONUPHRIUS AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Sunday, June 12/25,2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of our Father among the Saints Onuphrius the Egyptian.

On this feast, the Church commemorates that Saint Onuphrius lived in the strictest monastic anchorite striving in Egypt, after the example of the prophet Elijah and Saint John the Baptist. Saint Pafnoutius found his dead body and buried it.

This feast was celebrated at the Holy Monastery dedicated to him, opposite the pool of Siloam, at the potter’s field which was bought by the Pharisees “to bury the foreigners” (Matt. 27, 7-8), with the thirty silver coins that Judas returned to them (Matt. 27,3-6).

Inside and around the monastery there are tombs carved in the

rocks. One of them belongs to the first Patriarch of Jerusalem, Saint Iouvenalios during whose Patriarchal Office the Church of Jerusalem was declared a Patriarchate in AD 451.

At the Church of this Monastery, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, and the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina and Makarios of Qatar, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks and Priests from the Holy Metropolis of Patra, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and pilgrims.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Godly-wise Father Onuphrius, by separating thyself from the turbulence of the world, thou wast lifted to the height that is found far above the world; and longing after the very Source of Good, thou hast in truth reached what thou didst most desire. Since thou art all aflame with the shining rays thereof, O blest of God, by thine intercessions snatch us from the gloom of sin” (Vespers, stichera 3) the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The noetic heavenly light, the Holy Spirit that enlightened the eyes of the heart of our Holy Father Onuphrius the Egyptian has gathered us all in his Holy Monastery, in this biblical place of the potter's field, which is called “the field of blood unto this day” (Matt. 27, 7-8), to celebrate his commemoration in honesty and truth (cf. 1 Cor. 5,8).

And we say this because the purpose of the feasts of our Holy Church is the rendering of honour to those who have renounced



the world and bore their cross and followed Christ, on the other hand, the promotion of their virtues to the faithful, in imitation of the saints.

Our Holy Father Onuphrius was such a true imitator of Christ, who heard of the lives of the prophet Elijah and Saint John the Baptist and retreated into the deeper desert, seeking to be blessed by holy anchorite men, whose burning desire was the immigration to the heavenly city, as Saint Paul preaches: "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Hebrews 13,14).

This ardent desire had also captured the soul of our Father Onuphrius, just like that of the psalmist who exclaims: "I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments. Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name" (Psalm 119,131-132).

In this ardent desire and honest love for Christ, Saint Onuphrius had God the Father as his accomplice, as Saint Paul confirms: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8,28).

Interpreting the phrase "to them who are the called according to his purpose", Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "According to his purpose means according to their will, just as some righteous and holy men became saints not only because God called them, but also because this was their own will".

Our Holy Father Onuphrius obtained these two wills. And this is so, because he "loved the Lord God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind" (cf. Matt. 22,37), according to Christ's command. The exceeding power of the love for God is praised by the hymnographer of Saint Onuphrius, saying: "O love, thou transcendently shining light! O sum of all the virtues, whoever fillest the heavenly orders with

gladness and grace, and hast made thy dwelling in the Saints, the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles: by their prayers also dwell in us, that with them we may sing to God: Alleluia" (Matins, Oikos).

Saint Onuphrius, whose holy commemoration we celebrate today, shines like a bright light in our contemporary world of apostasy, lawlessness and the prevailing disorder. And it shines like a light, because he became a migrant from the confusion of the world, living and being fed off in the deserts and on the mountains, clothed with Christ and always listening to the voice of St. Paul saying: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3,20), therefore, "Be careful of nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4,6).

Interpreting these words of Saint Paul, Ecumenios says, "Be careful of nothing, do not say anything, not even curse against the enemies, do not say anything when in sorrow". In other words, my dear brothers and sisters, we should put such trust in the Divine Providence, that our mind and heart will be free from any agony and concern of our needs. We should rely on God, so much so, that we keep the peace and tranquillity of our hearts unshakable. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," Saint Paul says (Romans 8,18).

The vision of this very future divine glory did our God-bearing Father Onuphrius achieve, having thus boldness towards God. Therefore, as we honour his holy commemoration, let us entreat him, along with our Most Blessed Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and the also celebrating today, our Holy Father Peter of Mount Athos, that they may intercede with our Lord God for our souls and for the peace of our region and of the whole world. Amen. Many happy returns!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a litany at the tombs of the founders of the Monastery and a memorial service at the tomb of the blessed nun Seraphima, concluding with the prayer for the fruit.

Finally, the renovator of the monastery, Abbess Paisia hosted a reception for His Beatitude and the congregation.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FUNERAL SERVICE OF THE BLESSED ARCHIMANDRITE PHILOTHEOS OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE BROTHERHOOD**

At 11:00 am on Saturday, June 11/24, 2023, the funeral service for the repose of the soul of the blessed Archimandrite Philotheos Vardakis of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, who served as an Episcopal Commissioner at the Province of Acre – Ptolemais of Northern Israel and slept in the Lord on the evening of Thursday 9th / 22nd June 2023, after falling from scaffolding while repairing the wall of the Holy Church of Saint George in Acre.

The Funeral Service was presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with the Holy Sepulchre High Priests and Hieromonks, in the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, Jerusalem faithful and Greek Orthodox Arabic-speaking Priests and the faithful people, who came from the communes of the

region of Acre.

The obituary was delivered by the Elder Secretary-General, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina as follows:

“The sudden and violent departure to the Lord of our beloved brother Archimandrite Philotheos, Hierarchical Commissioner of the Metropolis of Ptolemais – Acre, gathered us together in mourning around the completion of his funeral service. We stand in tears before his corpse, just like the Lord stood in tears before the tomb of this four-day-dead friend Lazarus, whom He resurrected from the dead. Our soul is captured by fear and cowardice before the mystery of death, but never despairing, since even our Lord was afraid before His death on the cross and begged the Father, “If it is possible, let this cup pass from Him”. Cowardice before death is one of the ineradicable human passions, which the Lord condescended to, becoming Incarnate for our salvation. Circling the dead body of our beloved brother, we are “sad for the parting” and hear the words of the hymnographer, “I mourn and weep when I think of death”.

Nevertheless, while we humanly contemplate these things, it does not distract our attention that death was redeemed through death, namely the death on the Cross of the Son of God, the God-man Jesus Christ. Our Lord willingly accepted death and through His death, He redeemed our death. He died as a man and rose as a God-man. Life arose from the grave, the grave shone bright with life. In the power and light of the Resurrection of Christ, death is only the separation of the soul from the body. It is sleep. Death is the sleep of those who sleep in hope of the resurrection. As the Holy Bible says: “those in the monuments are raised”. Those who believe in Christ pass to eternal life in the soul and in the spirit and enjoy the joy of the uncreated works of the Holy Trinity.

Moved by this faith, our deceased loved one, born in 1962, left his hometown of Charakas, Monofatsiou, Heraklion, Crete,

at the age of twelve, and came to the Holy Land, in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and studied at the Holy Zion Priestly School with care and conduct excellent and praiseworthy – the speaker had this student for six years. After graduating, she accepted the monastic schema in 1979 and joined the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood. He ministered initially as a deacon and then as a Hieromonk in various ministries assigned to him, such as that of the Hegoumen of Beit Jalla, the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Saint Charalambos, the Hegoumen of Hoseva and the Hegouen of Haifa. He was sent by the Patriarchate for theological studies in Belgrade and after transferring universities, he graduated from the Theological School of the University of Thessaloniki.

In the years 2001 and 2002, he served as the Patriarchal Representative of the Metropolis of Ptolemais – Akris, and from the year 2003 until his death as the Hierarchical Commissioner of this Metropolis, which had under its spiritual and pastoral responsibility twelve communes; Acre, Abelin, Sakhnin, Kufr – Yasif, Kufr Smea, Rame, Pkea, Sfaamer, Baane, Zdeide, Tarshiha, and Maker. In these, he developed in consultation with the Patriarchate for over twenty years a remarkable and praised Pastoral work of spiritual Orthodox catechesis and excellent teaching of Byzantine Music by a group of male and female Byzantine chanters, spreading contrition to the souls of the faithful in the Patriarchal liturgies of Tabor, Nazareth and others. He was esteemed and loved by all.

His main concern was the dignity of God's house and for this reason, we can pray for him saying "Sanctify them, Lord, who love the dignity of your house". In this work, he was prematurely interrupted by death, when he accidentally fell from the scaffolding, from which he was building the wall of the Holy Church of Saint George in Acre by his own hands. Asking myself why this happened to him like this, I said that "as unsearchable is His will". The Lord only knows!

Nevertheless, I found comfort in recalling that in the year 1979, the Archimandrite Modestos met his death, just after rescuing a pilgrim during the pilgrimage baptism in the Jordan River. In 1990, the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Hoseva, Archimandrite Anthony, while repairing the narthex of the Church, met his death by landslide stones that covered him. Saint Athanasios the Athonite met his death with other monks from the collapsed dome of the Catholicon of the Great Lavra Monastery, which he had climbed to inspect.

Worthily commemorating his good works in his Funeral Service today, we beseech the Most High to consider him and forgive him as a human being who sinned intentionally or unintentionally and rank his soul among the faithful and righteous in Paradise. So be it”.

The deceased was accompanied by their Eminences, the Archbishops Theofanes of Gerassa and Makarios of Qatar, and all congregation to the place of his burial in the Holy Zion Cemetery.

May his remembrance be ever-lasting!

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **FORTIETH-DAY MEMORIAL SERVICE OF THE BLESSED METROPOLITAN CORNELIUS OF PETRA**

On Saturday, June 11/27, 2023, after the Divine Liturgy on the Horrendous Golgotha, which was officiated by His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, there was the fortieth-day

memorial service for the repose of the soul of the blessed Metropolitan Cornelius of Petra.

The memorial service was presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the participation in prayer of Archimandrites and Hierodeacons of the Holy Sepulchre, Archdeacon Mark and Priests from other Churches, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, local faithful Christians and pilgrims from Crete, among whom the relatives of the blessed Metropolitan.

After the service, there was a reception at the Patriarchate Hall.

The Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood wishes for his eternal memory.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

Sunday, May 29th/June 11th 2023 was celebrated by the Patriarchate as All Saints' Sunday, the feast of all the Saints of the Old and New Testaments, Patriarchs, Prophets, Forefathers, Apostles, Preachers, Evangelists, martyrs, confessors, retainers, new martyrs, Who are the fruit of the activity, of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

If the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, did not come, we would not have the miracle of the institution of the Church and its myriad saints.

With the feast of All Saints, the cycle of Pentecost holidays

closes.

This holiday was celebrated in the chapel of All Saints, inside the Holy Church of the Most Holy Monastery of Panagia Sayda Naya in the Old City of Jerusalem.

It was celebrated with Vespers in the evening and with Divine Liturgy in the morning, presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, with the elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, Archimandrite Claudius and Hierodeacon Dositheos and Fr Farah. The chanting was delivered by Dr Yacub and His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, as the service was attended by many believers from the parish of Saint James and pilgrims from Greece and other countries, in the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

During the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude came for veneration, accompanied by the Holy Sepulchre Fathers.

The Patriarchal and Episcopal entourages and the congregation were offered a rich reception by the Abbess, Reverend Nun Seraphima.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF THE MONDAY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AT THE HOLY ZION**

Monday, May 23/June 5, 2023, was celebrated as the Monday of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity,



especially on the hill of the Holy Zion, because it was on this hill that the Holy Spirit descended upon the holy disciples and apostles in the form of fiery tongues.

In honour and adoration of the Holy Spirit and in memory of the event of the inspiration, Vespers was held on Sunday evening in the chapel of Pentecost in the Cemetery, presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, with the participation of the priests and parishioners of Saint James Cathedral, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, nuns and pilgrims.

On Monday morning, a Divine Liturgy was held in the Holy Trinity Church on the ground floor of the building of the Patriarchal School of Zion, presided over by His Eminence Archbishop Theodosios Sebasteia, with the co-celebration of the Archimandrites, Raphael, the Exarch of Athens and Amphilochios, and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba and Hierodeacon Simeon along with the students.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, a procession marched from the Church after the recitation of the prayers of the Kneeling service, one prayer in the Church, the second in the chapel of the School's estate (catacomb), the third in the Upper Room.

On the way down from the upper room, the officiating Archbishop and his Entourage entered the interior of the tomb of David and prayed.

A supplication was also offered for the departed in front of the south door of the Cemetery.

The Episcopal procession in litany went to the ceremony hall of the School, where the Managing Director Archimandrite Mattheos offered a reception.

On this day, the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pela presided over a Divine Liturgy in the celebratory Church of

Pentecost in the county of Toubas, the area of Samaria after Jacob's Well.

From Secretariat-General

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# **HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY AT THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY OF MISSIA IN NEW JERUSALEM ON THE MONDAY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Patriarchate celebrated Monday, May 23/June 5, 2023, according to the divinely inspired book of Pentecost, as Monday of the Holy Spirit. It was honoured as a day of dedication especially to the Holy Spirit, because of His great work enlightening the Holy Glorious Apostles. The Holy Spirit, "God and deifying", "fire divided into different gifts", came from the Father through the Son to the apostles and sat in a kind of fiery tongues on their heads and strengthened and enlightened them "so that they could speak in different languages the greatness of God".

For the worship and honour of the Holy Spirit, especially on this day, a Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the Church of the Holy Trinity of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Spiritual Mission to Jerusalem (MISSIA), presided over by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of

their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Head of MISSIA Archimandrite Alexander, Archimandrite Dometianos, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nektarios and the representative of the Church of Moldavia of Russia His Eminence Archbishop Ungheni & Nisporen Petros, Arabic-speaking Priests and Priests from of the Gornesky Mountain Monastery, chanting in the choir of the monks of MISSIA and of the Gornesky Mountain Monastery, with the participation in the prayer of many Russian-speaking mainly believers.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude spoke through the following speech from Greek translated into Russian as follows:

“Come receive the fire-breathing dew of the Spirit as the reason cleansing from faults and offences, O all ye that are the Church’s light-formed children; for now is the Law come forth from holy Sion: tongues formed of beacon-fire, even the Spirit’s grace” (Matins, 2<sup>nd</sup> canon, ode 5, heirmos) Saint John Damascene, the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Reverend Archimandrite Father Alexander, Superior and representative of His Holy Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow, Cyril in the Russian Spiritual and Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem,

Beloved brothers in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The grace of the Holy Spirit that has shone upon us today, brings us all together in this Church of the Holy Trinity, to celebrate Pentecost, the epidemic of the Holy Spirit, the participating in the Eucharistic divine mystery of the Body and Blood of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit emanating from the Father and being worshipped

and glorified together with the Father and the Son is the one who, as the hymnographer says: "the Holy Spirit provideth all things; He gusheth forth prophecy; He perfecteth the priesthood; he hath taught wisdom to the illiterate. He hath shown forth fishermen as theologians. He holdeth together the whole institution of the Church" (Vespers, Troparion 3).

An essential component of the institution of the Church, but also of Orthodoxy, are the Apostles, who on the one hand "were filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4) on the day of Pentecost; on the other hand, the Lord Himself "breathed upon them saying: receive Holy Spirit, if you forgive their sins, they are forgiven; if you keep them, they are kept" (John 20:23). Go ahead, he said to them, to the Apostles, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world", (Matthew 28,19-20).

From the order of the Lord "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (28,20) it is shown that this must form the basis of the teaching of the Apostles. Because even Basil the Great, in his interpretation of these words, says: "Teaching them, not keep some of them, while leaving aside others, but keep everything I have commanded you", and Saint Cyril of Alexandria, commenting on the Lord's words: even if [Jesus] goes to the Father, presenting Himself in the flesh on our behalf ... but receives as co-habitants the righteous through the Spirit [the Holy One] and co-exists with the saints for all things"; and Saint Chrysostom interprets more analytically saying: "he did not only say he will be with them but also after all those who believe in them. The Apostles were not going to remain on earth until the end of time, but they would converse with the faithful as if they were one body", and for those then and those after this such and such promised grace, Zigavinos notes.

Through all this it becomes clear that the Communion of the Holy Spirit acts through the unity of the Church according to the word of the Lord: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). The Church, being the body of Christ is the abode of the Holy Spirit: "You are the body of Christ and members in part", (1 Cor. 12, 27), "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13), Saint Paul preaches.

This unity of the faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit is pervaded today by the participation of the brotherly Churches of Jerusalem and Russia and not only in the common cup of the "mystical blessing", of the divine thanksgiving of the Body and Blood of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. "Love unity, shun divisions; imitate Jesus Christ, as also He of His Father", orders Saint Ignatius the God-bearer. " 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), the wise Paul preaches.

However, the disturbed order and unity in the body of our One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church causes us agony and sorrow. And this is because, as Saint Paul preaches, "And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12, 26).

Therefore, we too, my beloved brothers, as members on behalf of the body of Christ, who "gives us the ministry of redemption" (2 Cor. 5:18), and who "receive not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit emanating from God the Father and resting in the Son", (Cf. 1 Cor. 2:12), let us pray to the Lord and after the psalmist, say: "Create in me a clean heart, God, and put a right spirit within me", (Psalm 50,12) Amen.

Many happy returns, blessed and peaceful.”

**From Secretariat-General**