

THE FEAST OF THE MYRRH BEARERS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

Sunday, the 17th / 30th of April 2023, was celebrated by the Patriarchate as the Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women and Joseph of Arimathea in accordance with the Gospel narratives and the book of Pentecost on the 3rd Sunday of the Resurrection.

On this feast, the Church commemorates Joseph of Arimathea, the present day Ramle, who asked for and received the immaculate Body of the Lord from Pilate wrapped it in a shroud, and buried it in an empty Tomb that was close to the place of His Crucifixion. (John 19, 38-42). It also commemorates the Myrrh-bearing women, who "after the Sabbath bought perfumes, so that the Body of Jesus would be anointed, and coming to the monument they saw the stone being measured and a white angel sitting on the monument and saying "he is not here..., see the place where they placed him", (Mark 16,6). These glad tidings were announced by the myrrh bearers to the apostles and by the apostles to the whole world.

This event was celebrated in Ramle, Ancient Arimathea, Joseph's hometown, with the welcoming reception of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos by the Scouts, Priests and Commissioners of the Community of Ramle and through the Divine Liturgy. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, the Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolas, the Archbishops Damascene of Joppa and Aristarchos of Constantina, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archimandrite Hieronymos, Arabic-speaking Priests, Archdeacon Markand Hierodeacon Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by the choir of the Ramle at the attendance of all the Orthodox Community of the City, in the presence of the representative of the Greek Embassy in Tel-Aviv Mr Kleovoulos Tsourkas and the military attaché Squadron Leader Mr Georgios Petros.

His Beatitude delivered the following sermon to this congregation:

“O Thou Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment, when Joseph with Nicodemus took Thee down from the Tree and beheld Thee dead, naked, and unburied, he struck up a compassionate dirge, and with mourning he said: Woe is me, O sweetest Jesus! When but a short while ago the sun beheld Thee hanging upon the Cross, it shrouded itself in darkness, and the earth quaked with fear, and the veil of the Temple was rent asunder. And behold, now I see Thee willingly submitting unto death for my sake. How shall I bury Thee, O my God? Or how shall I wrap Thee with winding sheets? With what hands shall I touch Thine undefiled Body? Or what dirges shall I sing at Thy departure, O Compassionate One? I magnify Thy Passion; I praise Thy Burial and Resurrection, and I cry out: O Lord glory to Thee” (Pentecostarion, Saturday of the Myrrh-bearing Women, Entreaty, Glory).

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The immanent light of the resurrection of our Saviour Christ has gathered us all in this holy gathering of the mystical blessing in the biblical hometown of Christ’s hidden disciples, Nicodemus, who became a Dissenter, Joseph of Arimathea and the myrrh-bearing Women, who were the first ones to witness the resurrection, so that we may celebrate in Doxology the commemoration of these Saints who witnessed the Passion and the resurrection from the dead of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the hymnographer very clearly expresses by saying: “Let the twelve disciples rejoice with us, together with the myrrh-bearing women and Joseph, and the other men and women and disciples of Christ” (Matins, Ode 3, Canon of the myrrh-bearers, Troparion 9).

It is noteworthy that the Most Holy Mother of God is the first

one who saw her Son risen from the dead according to Saint Gregory Palamas: "First among the people, as it was befitting and righteous, the Theotokos received the good news of the Lord's resurrection by the Lord Himself, and she was the first one to see Him risen and rejoice in His divine voice".

To Christ's question to His disciples, "But whom say ye that I am?" "Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ" (Mark 8, 29). And to our question, Who, or rather, what is Christ? Saint John the Evangelist replies that Christ is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1,9).

This very light, my dear brethren, is the Resurrection of Christ, according to His own testimony, "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11,25), "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).

According to Saint Gregory Palamas, "Christ's resurrection is the renewal of the human nature and the gaining of a new life and the return to eternal life of the condemned to death due to sin first Adam, who through death returned once more to the earth from which he was created".

Our Holy Church specially honours Christ's hidden disciples, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, the myrrh-bearing women as well as the Apostle Thomas, because they became "eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word" (Luke 1,2). Joseph is the one who came to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus (cf. Mark 15,43), and along with Nicodemus took Him down from the Cross and buried Him. While the myrrh-bearing Women "bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun" (Mark 16,1-2), and they announced to the disciples that they had seen the Lord.

As for Thomas, he touched the pierced by the spear side of

Christ and confirmed that he had seen “the side whence issued the blood, the water, the baptism, and see the wound through which man, the great wound, was healed, and except I see that He is not a spirit, but flesh and bones” (Tuesday of the 2nd week, Matins, Aposticha of Praises, Glory), as Saint John of Damascus says.

Indeed, man is the “great wound” which stemmed from his free will, “fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (Eph. 2,3), as Saint Paul says. And according to Saint John the Theologian, “the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever” (1 John 2,17). Joseph of Arimathea and Joseph and the myrrh-bearing Women “gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God” (2 Cor. 8, 5).

Christ is the new Pascha (the new Paschal lamb), the one who sacrificed His life for our salvation, the lamb of God Who redeems with His blood the sin of the world, according to the hymnographer.

This new Pascha, my dear brethren, is the God-man resurrected body of Christ, namely our Holy Church, which evangelizes the One who “willingly suffered, and was buried for three days and then rose from the tomb”, the resurrection of Christ, through the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, where we taste the “sacrificed lamb” the flesh and body of Christ. “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life” (John 6,54), the Lord says.

To this cause all of us who confess our Saviour’s resurrection are called, the ones who pay heed to the words of Saint Gregory Palamas: “If you are Joseph of Arimathea, ask for the crucified body of Christ; if you are Nicodemus, the pious disciple of the night, bury Him bathed in spices. If you are Mary, or the other Mary, of Salome, or Ioanna, let the tears flow from your eyes at dawn...and if you are Thomas, absent from the Room where the disciples were gathered when Jesus appeared

to them, when you see, do not lose faith; and if you don't believe, believe in those who talk about this; and if you don't believe in them either, become a believer when you see the marks of the nails".

Let us entreat the eye-witnesses and ministers of the passion on the cross and the resurrection of the Son of God and Son of the Ever-Virgin Theotokos, – through Whom "Hades was cast down and death was slain. Having been put to death, we were raised up and were deemed worthy of life; We received Paradise, the ancient bliss" (Sunday of the myrrh-bearers, Matins, Second Sessional Hymns, Theotokion), that they may intercede with the true God to save our souls. Amen. Christ is Risen!"

A reception followed in the reception hall, where the energetic Hegoumen Archimandrite Niphon addressed His Beatitude, thanking Him for the moral and material support at the renovating work in the Holy Church and the Monastery and for the spiritual uplifting of the Community.

Finally, a meal was offered at noon, where His Beatitude spoke again through His following address:

"For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain" (1 Cor. 15, 16-17), the apostle Paul preaches.

Your Excellencies representatives of the Greek Embassy in Tel-Aviv,

Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Reverend Hegoumen Archimandrite Niphon,

Dear President of the Ramle Community,

Most Holy Brethren

Today's commemoration of the hidden disciples of Christ Joseph the Righteous from Arimathea, i.e. of your birthplace Ramle,

as well as the holy myrrh-bearing Women is the undeniable testimony of their faith and love for the God-man Christ and His Resurrection from the dead. The Myrrh-Bearing Women “stood by the cross of Jesus” (John 19:25). The brothers Joseph and Nicodemus “took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices... Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews’ preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand” (John 19, 40-42), as the Evangelist John informs us.

This irrefutable testimony of the crucifixion, the three-day burial and the Resurrection has been denounced and preached throughout the centuries by the Holy Church of Jerusalem, especially by the living and uninterrupted historical presence of the Rum Orthodox Christians in the Holy Land.

This is due to the fact that the truth and the light of Christ overcame the fear of falsehood and darkness: “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). “But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (John 3:21).

In this judgment of the love of people in the darkness, the holy Church of Jerusalem stands up after its Christian pious flock. Needless to say, the signs of the “judgment” announced by the evangelist John are now visible and palpable in our contemporary era due to the legislative imposition of the New Order of Things.

The Greek Orthodox (Rum Orthodox) Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which is founded on the redemptive blood of Christ, is the only guarantee of the preservation of the saving inheritance, which was given to us by the Risen Christ, Who “hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a

sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7).

For this, my dear brothers, we are called upon to safeguard the precious treasure of the Evangelical Truth, whom God the Father has entrusted to His Son, and the Son of the Most Blessed Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, to those who love Him, through the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in them: "That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us", (2 Tim. 1,14), Saint Paul commanded his disciple Timothy, but also all of us.

May the light of the glorious and brilliant Resurrection of our God and Saviour Christ enlighten your heart and mind. "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John. 5, 20), Saint John the Evangelist preaches. Amen. Christ is Risen".

This feast was also celebrated in the chapel of the Myrrh-bearing Women, at the Cathedral of Saint James the Brother of God, with Vespers in the evening and the Divine Liturgy in the morning, presided over by the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, with the co-celebration of the Archimandrite Nicodemus, the Elder Priests of the Cathedral, Fr Farah and Fr Hader. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and the students on the right and the choir of the Cathedral under Mr Rimon Kamar on the left. The service was attended by the parishioners of the Cathedral and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem of Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

After the Divine Liturgy, a reception took place in the "Ojut" hall, organized by the association of "Myrrh-bearing Women" of Saint James.

From Secretariat-General

THOMAS SUNDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

Sunday, April 10/23, 2023, was celebrated by the Patriarchate as Antipascha or Thomas Sunday, that is, as a commemoration of the fact that the Lord on the eighth day after His Resurrection appeared to the disciples again, as they were gathered in the Upper room with the doors closed when Thomas was also with them and He said to Thomas: “bring your finger here and put it in my side and do not be an unbeliever but a believer”, “because you have seen and believed in me, blessed are those who have not seen and believe”, (John 20, 27-29).

This event was celebrated during Vespers in the evening in the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection and the Divine Liturgy in the morning in the Holy and Life-giving Sepulchre, presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, concelebrated by their Eminences, the Metropolitan Ioannikios of Montenegro and Archbishop Makarios of Qatar, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and deacons. The chanting was delivered by His Eminence Archbishop of Aristovoulos of Madaba and Hierodeacon Simeon. The service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and the Consul Mrs Christina Zacharioudaki and their families, as well as the pilgrims visiting for Easter.

After the end of the Divine Liturgy of the Resurrection, the Episcopal Entourage returned to the Patriarchate, where His Eminence received the pilgrims.

The event of the touching of Thomas was celebrated today also in the city of Cana of Galilee in accordance with the Status Quo of the Community of this town, the one after the event of

the blessing of the marriage by the Lord, and the transformation of the water into wine. The Evangelist John mentions the first of these signs of the Lord (John 2, 1-11) in his Gospel, the passages of which are read on the Sundays after Holy Easter and until Pentecost.

His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, being received by the Scouts, officiated this service with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and the Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Hegoumen of Cana Archimandrite Benedictos, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nektarios and the Russian Priests of Galilee, Archdeacon Mark, Hierodeacon Eulogios and others.

To the assembled people, His Beatitude proclaimed the divine word as follows:

“Come let us drink a new drink, not one marvellously brought forth from a barren rock, but the Source of incorruption, which springeth forth from the grave of Christ, in Whom we are established”, exclaims Saint John of Damascus melodiously.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, suffering by the Cross and abolishing death and rising from the dead, brought us all to this holy biblical place of Cana of Galilee, so that on Easter we may celebrate the manifestation of His [Christ's] glory through signs, but also that of the inauguration of Christ's Resurrection, as well as the touching of the Holy Apostle Thomas.

The Resurrection of Christ is the cornerstone of our Christian faith according to the testimony of the apostle Paul: “If Christ is not raised, therefore our preaching is empty because our faith is also empty” (I Cor. 15,14). Moreover, the Resurrection of Christ is the truth, the answer to Pilate's question: “What is truth?” (John 18:38). This confession was proclaimed by the Lord Himself after parsimony, saying: “I am

the way and the truth (John 14:6)... "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).

This confession was confirmed by Christ through His many appearances before His holy disciples after His Resurrection, as the Evangelist Luke testifies in His Acts, saying: "And [Jesus] appeared alive after His suffering [to the Apostles] in many witnesses for forty days, appealing to them and speaking about the kingdom of God" (Acts 1,3).

We also have the presence of Christ with us, my beloved brothers, through His divine-human body, that is, the Church, of which body He is the head, (Cf. Col. 1,18) according to Saint Paul. This does not mean that Christ Himself calls us to approach and touch His body as another Thomas, through our participation in the mystery of the "mystical blessing", that is, of the Divine Eucharist, as Saint Cyril of Alexandria clearly teaches saying: "He comes" [=he visits] "and Christ appears to us all, invisibly and visibly; invisibly as God, and again visibly in the body. He [Christ] also allows his holy flesh to be touched. We draw nigh by the grace of God, in the making of the mystical blessing, receiving Christ in our hands, so that we too may [=properly] believe that He Himself truly raised the Temple", [that is, His Body].

In other words, the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ constitutes a confession of the Resurrection of Christ, who said: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." (John 6, 54-56).

The blood of Christ is the new drink, which we are called by the hymnographer to drink. And this drink gushes from the Tomb of Christ, it is the Blood of Christ, "the one poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins". (Matthew 26,28). Interpreting the meaning of Christ's blood and body, Saint

Andrew of Crete, from Jerusalem, says: "Your body and Blood, crucified above all, did you lay down Oh Word; the blood to wash me; you gave the spirit to bring me, Christ, to your Creator".

"This is what Jesus did at the beginning of the signs in Cana of Galilee and revealed His glory and His disciples believed in Him" (John 2:11). As you know, there are two signs that Jesus performed here, in the city of Cana of Galilee. On the one hand, the sanctification and blessing of marriage through His physical presence in it. "The honoured marriage was sanctified, and the[ancient] curse against the woman was abolished" says Saint Cyril of Alexandria. On the other hand, the transformation of water into wine by the unspeakable power of Christ: "By an unspeakable power the water was turned into wine. What is therefore [=difficult] to the all-powerful"? says Saint Cyril again.

According to Saint Clement of Alexandria, the wine at the wedding of Cana symbolizes the blood of Christ. "The scripture called the wine a secret symbol of holy blood. He proved again to the disciples that the blessed [water], was wine, saying: "I will not drink of the fruit of this vine until I drink it with you again in the kingdom of my Father" (Mt. 26,29).

In other words, the disciples of the Lord and all those who believe in Him will share in His joy and He in the joy of His disciples in the kingdom of His Father. "The drinking of wine does not only satisfy the need but offers to the senses the diverse pleasure; then the Resurrection from the dead, by which the decay of human bodies will have been removed and this nature of all things will be transferred to a place of renewal, so that even this joy of ours may be renewed by Christ Himself, our Saviour, Who instils His own innate joy into the souls of those who revere Him" says Saint Ammonios.

This, precisely, "the innate and unique joy of our Saviour Christ", we too, my beloved brothers, are called to settle in

our hearts during this time of the Resurrection of Christ, listening to the exhortation of the Theotokos who says: "Whatever he says to you, do it." (John 2,5). And this is because the Risen Christ is He, "in whom we established", according to the hymnographer Saint John of Damascus, invoking the Holy Bible which reads: "My heart is established in the Lord", (1 Kings 2,1). Our firmness is none other than our faith in the Risen Christ (Cf. Col. 2:5), but also from the communion of the holy Body and Blood of Christ, who invites us all through the hymnographer exclaiming: "Come on this auspicious day of the Resurrection, let us partake of the new fruit of the vine of divine gladness and of the Kingdom of Christ, praising Him as God unto the ages" (Canon of Pascha, Ode 8, Troparion 1). Amen! Christ is Risen.

After the end of the Divine Liturgy, there was a litany three times around the Holy Church, with a large crowd of faithful Christians following in gladness, rejoicing and praying.

At noon during the meal that was offered for the Patriarchal Entourage, His Beatitude delivered the following address to those present:

"This chosen and holy day is the first of the sabbaths, the queen and lady, the feast of feasts, and the festival of festivals, wherein we bless Christ unto the ages" (Canon of Pascha, Ode 8, Heirmos), Saint John of Damascus exclaims.

Honourable President and members of the Ecclesiastical Committee,

Your Eminences,

Reverend Hegoumen Father Benedictos,

Beloved Brethren in Christ

The queen and lady of feasts, the feast of Pascha, has gathered all of us in the biblical and historical town of Cana

to celebrate the event of the revealing of Christ's glory through the signs which He worked in this holy place.

The active presence of the Church of the Rum Orthodox, namely of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem throughout the centuries is also witnessed by the Christian presence of the local Christian community which preaches and confesses the moral principles and values of love for one another, even for the enemies, of peace, conciliation and good coexistence with all the fellow citizens and religious communities who live here. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Ps. 133,1) the psalmist proclaims.

This message is relayed to the whole world, given that Cana is inextricably linked with the great sacrament of marriage, which our Lord Jesus Christ blessed, but also with the divine power through which He transformed the water into wine.

Cana of Galilee is a biblical and historical place, attracting thousands of pilgrims and visitors and it is a source of blessing, hope, and strengthening as well as relaxation. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11,28) the Lord says.

We also experienced this during our blessed ministry as the Hegoumen and humble spiritual shepherd for the people in Cana, in particular for our pious flock.

Because of this, today's company with you has special meaning, which refers to the unity between our Christian flock and the Patriarchate, according to Saint Paul's order: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4,3).

The presence of the Christians in the Holy Land, and of course in this blessed town of Cana in Galilee is encompassed in this order of Paul. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2,1). This advocate is the Holy Spirit, Who brings together and sustains the whole institution

of the Church, that is why the Lord says, “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 26,18), especially when it comes to the Holy Church of Jerusalem. Amen. Christ is risen!”

After the meal, His Beatitude made a Pastoral visit to the members of the congregation, which He had ministered in the past as an Archimandrite Hegoumen.

From Secretariat-General

THE BAPTISM OF THE DAUGHTER OF MR ANASTASIOS KONSTANTARAS & MRS CHRISTINA ZACHARIOUDAKI AT THE GROTTTO OF BETHLEHEM

At noon on Bright Thursday, April 7/20, 2023, the sacrament of Baptism was performed in the Grotto of Bethlehem by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias for the infant Angelina, daughter of the Consul at the Greek Embassy in Tel Aviv – Anastasios Konstandaras and the Consul at the Greek Consulate General in Jerusalem Mrs Christina Zacharioudaki.

In accordance with the Status Quo, the performance of the sacrament of Baptism in the Grotto constitutes a unique right by the approval of the Patriarchate for the children of Greek Diplomats in the Holy Land.

The Godmother of the baptism was Mrs Elisavet Eliadi.

The grandfather of the baptized, Ambassador Mr Georgios Zacharioudakis, and his wife, Mrs Angeliki Zacharioudaki, attended the ceremony.

His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos also attended the sacrament, accompanied by His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem, Metropolitan Benedictos of Diocaesarea, the Geronda Secretary-General, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Archdeacon Mark.

His Beatitude offered the newly-baptized infant a pectoral cross along with His wishes to her parents for her health and success.

From Secretariat-General

THE WEEK OF THE PASSIONS AND HOLY EASTER IN DOHA, QATAR

With dignity and ecclesiastical order, with the great participation of the pious flock, the Church Services of Holy Week and of the Bright Resurrection were held in the Holy Archdiocese of Qatar.

The Holy Services were presided over by the Most Reverend Archbishop Makarios of Qatar, with the co-celebration of the Steward Fr Sotirios.

A multitude of believers reverently and contentedly participated in the Holy Communion and many came from the cities of the Emirates and from Saudi Arabia to the Sacrament

of the Holy Unction and for Confession.

The services were held in Greek, Arabic, Slavonic, Serbian, Romanian and English for the fuller participation of the multilingual flock. The cantors rendered the hymns in a wonderful way and the choirs sang the Praises of Good Friday in Arabic, Greek and Serbian.

On Good Friday and the night of Holy Saturday, the Russian Ambassador, Mr Dimitri Dugadkin, the Counselor of the Greek Embassy in Doha, Mr Georgios Zafiris, and the Deputy Head of the Serbian Embassy, Mr Slobodan Radeka, attended the service.

On Good Friday, in an atmosphere of deep sadness and emotion, the Epitaph Service and the procession took place inside the Holy Church of the Episcopate.

On the night of Holy Saturday, a large congregation of Christians filled the Holy Cathedral and its courtyard. They stayed to participate in the Divine Liturgy, almost all partaking of the Holy Communion, which was followed by the blessing of the Easter eggs and delicacies.

From the Holy Archdiocese of Qatar

EASTER MONDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Easter Monday, 4th/ 17th April 2023, the feast of Pascha was celebrated with its befitting brilliance at the monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, led by the Hegoumen of

the Brotherhood, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, as the service was officiated by the Typikon keeper of the Church Archimandrite Alexios, with the participation in prayer of High Priests and Priests and the representatives of the Russian Church, Archimandrite Alexander and the Romanian Church, Archimandrite Theophilos. The service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and a very large congregation of pilgrims.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Patriarchal Entourage went to the Patriarchate Hall.

The Apostolic Delegate – representative of the Pope in the Holy Land came for his Easter visit, whom His Beatitude honorary received and offered Easter eggs.

His Beatitude also gave Easter eggs to the Brotherhood and the happy pilgrims.

At noon there was a festal Paschal meal.

From Secretariat-General

THE SERVICE OF THE SECOND RESURRECTION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

At noon of the luminous day of Pascha Sunday, 3rd / 16th April 2023, the service of the Second Resurrection was held at the Patriarchate.

The service started at the Patriarchate Hall, where His

Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the High Priests and the Priests read the 9th Hour of Pascha and got dressed in their liturgical vestments.

Then under the chanting of “Christ is risen” in a slow Byzantine rhythm by their Eminences, Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Brotherhood marched in procession to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and stopped at the Court Yard for a supplication.

The Vespers of the day followed at the Catholicon and after the Entrance of the Gospel, the officiating the service, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the High Priests read the Easter Gospel narrative according to Saint John in Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, Romanian, Russian, English, German, French and Serbian, for the universality of the Easter Gospel message, at the chanting of His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba. The service was attended by a large congregation of pilgrims and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

Finally, bells tolling, the Patriarchal Entourage returned to the Patriarchate and the Holy Week ended, sealed by the day of Pascha.

From Secretariat-General

THE VIGIL OF THE RESURRECTION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

Early on Sunday morning at 01.00, 3rd/ 16th April 2023, the Service of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the

feast of Pascha, was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

On this feast the Church commemorates that the incarnate Jesus Christ, our Lord, was crucified, died in the flesh and was risen from the dead as God-man, granting to His believers eternal life and the resurrection from the dead.

For this feast the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where bells tolling, the Canon of Holy Saturday was chanted, while the clergy, with their Primate, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos were being dressed. This was followed by a litany, three times around the Holy Sepulchre.

Then His Beatitude read the Gospel narrative of the Resurrection according to Saint Mark, followed by Christ is risen and the rest of the service of the Resurrection, with the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom.

The Service was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the visiting Metropolitan Makarios of Anea from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina and Theodosios of Sebasteia, and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios and representatives from the Patriarchates of Moscow and Romania, Archimandrites Dometianos and Ioannis, many Priests from other Churches, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacons Eulogios and Dositheos.

The service was attended by a large congregation along with the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, the Consul Mrs Christina Zacharioudaki, and the Ambassador of Georgia, Mr Lasha.

Before the Holy Communion, the Pascha message by His Beatitude was read (see link):

<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/blog/2023/04/12/pascha-2023-message-by-his-beatitude-the-patriarch-of-jerusalem-theophilos-iii/>

At the end of the service, the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate where they were given cheese and Easter eggs.

From Secretariat-General

THE CEREMONY OF THE HOLY LIGHT AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Holy Saturday, 2nd/15th of the month of April 2023, at 13.00 summer time, the ceremony of the Holy Light took place at the Patriarchate.

The Church commemorates in this ceremony the light of the Risen Christ from the dead, the one coming from His face and from His Tomb and was held, as defined by the Status Quo and the Typikon of the Church of Jerusalem.

At 12:00 (winter time) /13:00 (summer time) p.m., while large crowds of believers had gathered at the terrace of Saint Constantine, protesting that the Israeli Police did not allow them to enter the Church of the Resurrection, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos went down from the Patriarchate through the steps of Saint James, and through the Holy Deposition, He entered the Holy Altar and the representatives of the Armenian, Coptic and Syriac Churches asked for the blessing to receive the Holy Light.

Right away the litany began three times around the Sacred

Edicule. After the third circumambulation, the officiating the ceremony, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, entered the interior of the Holy Sepulchre and, after praying, transmitted the Holy Light from the north door first and then from the facade of the Holy Tomb.

The assembled faithful received the Holy Light with joy, and gladness through the bundles of 33 candles and placed it on their bodies, lips, eyes, and foreheads and received it also in their homes glorifying Christ, the Risen from the dead.

Finally, from the hall of the Patriarchate, His Beatitude transmitted the Holy Light to the ecclesiastical Greek Delegation from Greece, a Mission consisting of the Most Reverend Metropolitan Theoklitos of Stagon and Meteora, and the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Katsaniotou.

From Secretariat-General

THE EPITAPH SERVICE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Holy Friday evening, April 1/14, 2023, the magnificent and contrite Epitaph Service was held at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In this service, the Church commemorates the Deposition from the Cross of the immaculate body of the Lord, by Joseph from Arimathaea, and the Lord's burial at the Tomb near Golgotha.

The service began at the Catholicon with the Canon of Holy Saturday Matins, while the officiating of the service, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the High

Priests with the Priests got dressed.

Then the procession around the shrined followed, and at the Horrendous Golgotha, the Gospel narrative of the crucifixion was read, before the silk corporal was lifted up from the Holy Altar.

The High Priests carried the silk corporal at the Deposition slate, where the Gospel narrative of the Lord's deposition from the Cross by Joseph and Nicodemus was read.

This was followed by a litany three times around the Holy Sepulchre, as the silk corporal was being carried by the High Priests.

The lamentations followed, with the incense offering at each stasis.

Before praises, His Eminence Geronda Secretary-General, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina delivered the following sermon:

"Your Beatitude, Father and Master,

Reverend Chorea of Hierarchs,

Mr Consul General of Greece,

Reverend Fathers,

Reverend pilgrims,

Indeed great, wondrous and beneficial are God's works for man. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen" according to Saint Paul (Rom. 1,20). With His creatures, God also gave man the knowledge of His eternal power and perfection. And these, "God, hath spoken unto us by his Son" (Hebrews 1:2), since the beginning of the creation of the universe. God came down to earth from heaven. Having reconciled with men, "God was manifest in the flesh" (1

Tim. 3,16). He appeared among men, incarnate, in human flesh. The Only-Begotten Son of God also became the son of man, son of the Virgin, through the Holy Spirit. He was made known as God-man in one hypostasis, with two natures, wills and actions. In Christ Who appeared and was seen on earth, "God was manifesting all things".

Having come to earth, Christ revealed the Father to us, while all things that He did, were done by the goodwill of His Father. He said that "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5,30). Christ's actions are His Father's, for He said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10,30). Being the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets, Christ our God fulfilled all providence of the Father, He did not abolish but completed the Law of Moses. He set us free in liberty (cf. Gal 5,1) from the ordinances of the Law. Instead of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (Exodus 21,24), he taught and applied love, not only for our fellow men but also for the enemies. By His divine power, He cured the sick, gave sight to the blind, mobility to the paralyzed, He raised the dead. He inaugurated the time of the kingdom of God, the time of the Gospel, the Law of Grace, "to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4,19). He called unto Himself "all that labour and are heavy laden, to give them rest" (cf. Matt. 11,28). Those who are hungry and thirsty and foreigners and prisoners, He named "His brothers", "the least of these" (cf. Matt. 25, 31-46). He did not allow the adulterous woman to be stoned to death but sent her forth to live a new life. He did not condemn the thief on the cross next to Him but made him the first to enter paradise, setting repentance as the key to enter therein. To what cause all these? For man to be saved, especially since He said, "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2,27). The supreme value for the Most High is man, so that his soul may not be lost.

And because, as the Church sings these days, "He becomes

everything in order to save man", he even willingly suffered the Cross. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die", according to Saint Paul, "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:7-8). Through His Cross, Christ went down to Hades and sought the led astray Forefather and all his descendants. His descent into Hades is also His resurrection, as the Orthodox icon of the resurrection denotes. This mystery of the Cross, according to Saint John of Damascus is the greatest and most wondrous of Christ's miracles. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness" (1 Cor. 1,18), as Saint Paul says, for those who by their own free will walk in the path of their demise, it is foolishness. The Cross of Christ is "unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor. 1,23), because, the crucified Christ is a stumbling block for the Jews who are waiting for Christ as the Messiah, as an earthly king, a stumbling block upon which they stop and do not believe, while for the idolater Greeks, the crucified God who did not win over His enemies is presented as a foolish idea. However, for the Jews and the Greeks who believe, the crucified Christ is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1,24) and the salvation.

This Cross of the Crucified and Resurrected Christ does His body, the Church carry. The Resurrected Christ for the Church is the Crucified Christ, "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified" (Mark 16,6), said the Angel to the Myrrh-bearing women. Christ is always projected by the Church behind the Holy Altar, as its Crucified Bridegroom. Just as the Lord's earthly life was crucified and resurrected, likewise, the life of the Church on earth is crucified and resurrected. The Church is not praising itself, it does not boast, but suffers, co-suffers with the suffering man, the man who suffers from his passions, from the lack of a direction in life, from the exploitation by the "leaders of this world", and by the bloodshed, at times among brothers, in the battlefields, where the human life is not being considered important.

Co-suffering with all who suffer around the world, especially with the children of its local flock, among whom and the large crowds of the reverend pilgrims, the Church of Jerusalem, the Holy Zion, “the mother of Churches, who was the first to receive the remission of sins through the resurrection”, has the privilege the blessing, to testify and preach Christ Crucified and Resurrected to all the places where the Lord appeared in the flesh, and at this hour, during this modest contrite service, of the Holy Epitaph, in remembrance of the Lord’s burial and the descent into Hades, which is presided over by the Holy Primate of Jerusalem, His Beatitude the Patriarch Theophilos, it prays for the peace and good state of the whole world, and for the peace and the unity in Christ of the Orthodox Churches, for the praise of our blessed nation and the glory of our Triune God. Amen.”

The rest of the service continued before the Holy Sepulchre and finally, the silk corporal was placed on the Holy Altar. Finally, bells tolling, the Patriarchal Entourage returned to the Patriarchate.

From Secretariat-General

THE SERVICE OF THE PASSION

On Holy Thursday evening, March 31/ April 13, 2023, the Service of the Passion was held at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, who presided over this service, read the first Gospel narrative, followed by Hagiotaphite High Priests and Priests, who read the remaining of the 12 narratives, according to the Order.

This service, which is the Matins of Holy Friday commemorates the Lord's Passion, the spitting, the beating, the vinegar, the nails, the spear and the death on the Cross, through which He saved us.

At the end of the service, the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate.

From Secretariat-General