

THE FEASTS OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST AND OF SAINT BASIL THE GREAT AT THE PATRIARCHATE

At 1:00 am in the early morning on Saturday, January 1/14, 2023, the Despotic feast of the Circumcision of the Lord and the commemoration of our Holy Father Basil the Great began in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

In the beginning, Matins was held in psalms of the divinely inspired contrite theological Kathismata and the Canons, iambic and rhythmic of the Megalynaria of the 9th Ode and the Praises and the Doxology.

After this, the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great began in the Holy Sepulchre, 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 Theodosios of Sebastia, along with Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Priests from other Orthodox Churches. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos, as the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, monks, nuns and many pilgrims.

After the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, a litany took place around the Holy Sepulchre and the shrines, carrying the relic of the right hand of Saint Basil the Great.

In the end, His Beatitude cut the Vasilopita in the Office of the Elder Sacristan, he also cut another cake in the morning at seven o'clock in the Commissary, and a third one during lunch at the refectory of the Patriarchate.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT MELANI AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday, December 31, 2022/January 13, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of St. Melani of Rome in her chapel located inside the Nunnery of Megali Panagia, adjacent to the Patriarchate to the southwest.

On this day, the Church remembers that St. Melanie came from a rich family to Rome, and after her husband and children died, she undertook a charitable journey to Egypt, where she fed thousands of monks and Christians who were suffering, and who were persecuted by heresies, and ended up in in the Holy Land and in Jerusalem, where she founded a guesthouse and a monastery. She lived until the year 411 AD in truth, monastic striving and philanthropic activity.

In her honour, Vespers was held on Thursday afternoon and Divine Liturgy on Friday morning under the ministering Priest of the Monastery of Archimandrite Makarios and Archimandrite Stephen, at the chanting of Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos with the help of Hierodeacons and Monks of the Patriarchate, as the services were attended by the nuns of the Monastery and of other Monasteries and many pilgrims.

The Fathers and the congregation were offered a reception by the renovator of the Church reverend Nun Melani.

From Secretariat-General

DEACON'S ORDINATION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On the morning of Friday, December 31, 2022 / January 13, 2023, Mr Stavros Jihad Aranki, from the town of Taibe, who studied in Greece and is distinguished for his reverence and excellent command of the Greek language, was ordained a deacon by the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella during the Divine Liturgy at the Horrendous Golgotha. The ordination was in accordance with the decision of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the Holy and Sacred Synod so that Mr Aranki will serve at the Arab Orthodox Community of Birzet.

The ordained was accompanied by his wife and relatives, who, after the Hagiotaphite Fathers, prayed for him.

The ordained was addressed by the ordaining Archpriest, His Eminence Archbishop Filoumenos of Pella, and he also counter-addressed His Eminence in Greek and in Arabic.

After the ordination, the newly-ordained Deacon paid his respects to His Beatitude in the Patriarchate.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT STEPHEN THE FIRST MARTYR AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, December 27, 2022/January 9, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy First Martyr and Archdeacon Stephen in the Holy Monastery named after him, at the place of his stoning in Gethsemane, at the beginning of the Brook of Cedars.

During this holiday, the Church remembers the narrative of the Acts (Acts 7, 54-60), that Stephen was one of the Seven Deacons, who were chosen by the first Church of Jerusalem for the ministry of the meals.

Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit and preached Jesus as the Christ to the Jews. For this reason the Lords of the Jews arrested him and invited him to their Sanhedrin.

Then Stephen confessed his vision of Jesus sitting at the right hand of the Father's power. Hearing this, the Lords of the Jews condemned him to death by stoning, in which he prayed for them and in which a young man named Saul kept their clothes.

In this place of the stoning of Saint Stephen, a Divine Liturgy was held in the morning of the same day, presided over by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theodosios of Sebasteia, with the co-celebration of the Archimandrites, Makarios and Meletios, at the chanting of a choir led by Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos and attended by pilgrims and faithful in the church.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Epiphanius received the Episcopal entourage and the congregation in the hegoumeneion.

CHRISTMAS AT THE HOLY ARCHDIOCESE OF QATAR

Christmas was celebrated in Doha, Qatar, with ecclesiastical splendour and solemnity.

On Saturday, December 11th/24th, 2022, in the evening, the Vespers and Matins began and then the Divine Liturgy were held in Arabic and English.

On the morning of Sunday, December 12/25, 2022, Matins and the Divine Liturgy were held in the Greek, Arabic and Romanian languages, in the presence of the Counselor of the Greek Embassy, Mr Georgios Zafeiris, the Defense Attaché Commander Mr Argyrios Kostouros and the participation of the Christian congregation of the local Church. After the end of the Divine Liturgy, a solemn banquet was held in a hotel hall of the city, which was attended by the clergy and members of the flock.

On Friday, 24th of December 2022/ 6th of January 2023, Vespers, Matins and the Divine Liturgy were held in the Slavonic, Serbian and Arabic languages, with the participation of many believers, in the presence of the Deputy Manager of the Embassy of Serbia, Mr Slobodan Rad and members of the staff of the Russian Embassy. After the Divine Liturgy, a reception followed in the event hall of the Holy Church.

His Eminence the Archbishop Makarios of Qatar officiated the services with co-officiant the Priest Georgios. Instead of a

sermon, the Christmas Message of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theofilos III was read, in the languages in which the Liturgy was performed each time, and the Byzantine choirs also chanted in the corresponding languages.

From the Holy Archdiocese of Qatar

THE FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On the day after Christmas, Sunday 26th December 2022/8th January 2023, the feast of the Synaxis of the Theotokos was celebrated with a Divine Liturgy with the participation in prayer of His Beatitude in the monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen. This was followed by a reception at the Patriarchate, with the festive treat and the blessing of His Beatitude.

At the Village of the Shepherds, this feast was celebrated with Vespers in the afternoon of Christmas day by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Hellenoupolis. His Eminence was welcomed by the marching Scout Troops, the Church workers and the faithful of the Village of the Shepherds and the neighbouring areas. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated on Sunday morning again at the Holy Church of the Synaxis of the Theotokos, which was built by the Blessed Spiritual Father of the Lavra of Saint Savvas, Archimandrite Seraphim, by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, with the co-celebration of the current Spiritual Father of Saint Savvas,

Archimandrite Eudokimos, the Priests of the area, Fr Georgios and Fr Ioannis and others. The chanting was delivered by the local Byzantine choir, at the services were attended by the members of this Community and the neighbouring areas of Bethlehem.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen of the Monastery, Archimandrite Ignatios, hosted a reception in the Hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General

CHRISTMAS DAY

On Christmas day, Saturday, December 25th, 2022/7 January 2023, the celebration began with the service of Matins, as the Patriarchal Commissioner His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias entered the Basilica through the Baptismal Gate, and read the Six Psalms and the choir chanted the rest of the Matins.

From 12:00 midnight, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos came in His Patriarchal vestments out of the Altar of the Basilica, which has been renovated by the Patriarchal Representative His Eminence Metropolitan Benedictos of Diocaesarea, accompanied by High Priests and Hieromonks, having on His right the President of the Palestinian state Mr Mahmoud Abbas – Abu Mazen, and on the left the representative of Jordan, Princess Mariam-, wife of the prince of Jordan His Highness Emir Gazi and the Consul General of Greece to Jerusalem, Mr Evangelos Vlioras. As the Troparion “Come all ye faithful let us see where Christ was born” was being chanted they went down into the Grotto of the

Nativity, and then the Gospel of the Nativity was read: " And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed" (Luke 2,1) in Greek and Arabic and then the Christmas Message was read by His Eminence Archbishop Arristarchos Constantina in Greek and by Fr Issa Musleh in Arabic. Consequently, His Beatitude venerated the Star and the Manger, then the High Priests and the Consul General of Greece to Jerusalem and they went up through the north gate and from the steps of the Armenian chapel and started the litany inside the Basilica chanting the Katavasias, "Christ is born, give Him glory" and of the other troparia. The litany concluded at the centre of the Basilica of the Nativity.

Afterwards, the Service of Matins continued with the troparia of the 9th Hour, the Praises and the Doxology, with which the Divine Liturgy began.

The Divine Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina and Nectarios of Anhedona, Hiagiotaphite Hieromonks and Priests from other Orthodox Churches, at the chanting of Hierodeacon Simeon with Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos and the Patriarchal School Students in Greek and by Mr Lawrence Samour in Arabic, in the presence of a large congregation of local Arabic speakers and pilgrims.

At the Grotto of the Nativity, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolas.

A multitude of believers joined the Holy Communion, in great joy, peace and thanksgiving and praise to God for such a joyous celebration of the Nativity of Christ.

After the dismissal, the Patriarchal Representative of Bethlehem Metropolitan Benedictos of Diocaesarea hosted a rich

meal.

In the morning, the Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos went again to the Grotto for veneration and inspection and thus the Christmas celebration in Bethlehem was sealed.

From Secretariat-General

CHRISTMAS EVE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday, December 24, 2022/January 6, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated Christmas Eve.

The celebration started in the morning of that day, at 9.15 a.m. from the Patriarchate, where the Israeli Police and the Boy Scouts came and delivered their wishes on the occasion.

Then the litany began, headed by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, accompanied by the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, towards the Gate of David with the Scouts marching before them.

Then the escort boarded vehicles and headed towards the Monastery of the Prophet Elias via Hevron Street.

At the entrance of the Monastery, His Beatitude was received by the Commissioners of the cities of Beit Jala, Bethlehem and the Village of the Shepherds and the Israeli Civil Military Command, followed by short prayers in the Church and a reception in the hall.

Subsequently, the Patriarchal escort went out to Bethlehem,

led by four Israeli mounted policemen, without the border control of Rachel's tomb.

From there, motorcyclists of the Palestinian Police preceded the Patriarchal Escort to the courtyard of the City Hall of the city of Bethlehem, a crowd of local people and pilgrims greeting from the right and left of the road and the Scouts marching.

In the hall of the City Hall, the Patriarchal Representative of Bethlehem His Eminence Metropolitan of the Diocecaesarea, Benediktos addressed the Beatitude and the Patriarchal Entourage started chanting "Your Birth, Christ our God" and "The Virgin today..." and the procession entered the Basilica of the Nativity through its humble door.

At the entrance, His Beatitude was greeted by the Greek Consul General on the right and on the left by the Sacristan of Bethlehem, Archimandrite Polykarpos.

Afterwards, the Patriarchal entourage through the centre of the Basilica, which is a right only for the Orthodox and from the area in front of the iconostasion and through the chapel of Saint Nikolaos to the south, went to the Grotto of the Nativity for veneration.

The Royal Hours of Christmas 1st, 3rd and 6th followed, after the incense of the High Priests, His Beatitude read the Gospel of the 1st Hour and offered the incense of the 1st Hour in the centre of the Basilica, Vespers after incense and the Blessing of Bread and the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great.

At noon, His Eminence Metropolitan Benediktos of Diocaesarea, hosted a meal.

From Secretariat-General

THE HOLY UNCTION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On the afternoon of Wednesday, December 22, 2022/January 4, 2023, after Vespers in the monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, the Sacrament of the Holy Unction was held in preparation for the reception of the Despotic Christmas feast.

The service was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of six High Priests according to the order, so that there are seven in all. At the end of the service, His Beatitude and the High Priests blessed the Hieromonks, Hierodeacons, monks and nuns and pilgrims, while the Byzantine singers were chanting Psalm 137, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion".

From Secretariat-General

THE ROYAL HOURS OF CHRISTMAS AT THE MONASTIC CHURCH OF THE HAGIOTAPHITE BROTHERHOOD

On Thursday, December 23rd, 2022/January 5th, 2023, the Royal Hours of Christmas were read in the monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood after

the service of Matins, with the participation in prayer of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

The Gospel of the First Hour was read and His Beatitude performed its incense.

Then the Gospel of the 3rd, 6th and 9th Hours were read by the co-celebrating High Priests, as also the incense of the 3rd and 6th Hours, while the 9th Hour had no incense procedure.

After reading the Royal Hours of Christmas, the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom was celebrated.

From Secretariat-General