

# THE REPATRIATION OF THE RELICS OF SAINT SAVVA THE SANCTIFIED

On Wednesday, October 13/26, 2022, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem celebrated the feast of the repatriation of the relics of our Holy Father Savva the Sanctified.

On this holiday, the Church of Jerusalem celebrates the fact that the holy relic of Saint Savva, preserved incorruptible and intact to this day, was taken by the Crusaders to Venice and was returned under the authority of the Roman Church to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem on October 26, 13 1965. A solemn reception was then held for the holy relic at Jaffa Gate. After this, it was placed for veneration at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for a week and then returned to the place where it belonged, the Lavra, which Saint Savva founded, for the sanctification and help of its monks and pilgrims.

On the eve of the feast, Vespers was officiated by His Eminence, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, and at night there was an all-night vigil, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, along with Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Arab-speaking Priests. The chanting was delivered by Archimandrite Antypas from Mount Athos with Hierodeacon Simeon and his helpers in Greek on the right and Archimandrite Philotheos and his choir in Arabic on the left, at the presence of pilgrims from Greece, Romania and from Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: Sing forth the

honour of his name: make his praise glorious" (Ps 66,1-2) the psalmist proclaims.

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The grace of our Holy Father Savva the Sanctified has gathered us all in his holy Lavra to celebrate the great event of the repatriation of his holy relics.

Our Father Savva became a citizen of the desert and "an angel in flesh" because he applied in both theory and action the urging words of Saint Paul: "ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3, 1-4).

Having as a foundation Paul's healthy words, "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3, 1-2), Saint Savva showed Godly zeal and self-denial on the one hand, and on the other, he excelled among his co-ascetics the monks, because he was "strengthened with might by [God's] Spirit in the inner man" (ref. Ephes. 3,16).

In addition, Saint Savva was called "sanctified" because he sought the sanctification according to the saying "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12,14). "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification (1 Thess. 4,3), Saint Paul preaches again.

Moreover, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself says in His prayer to God the Father about His disciples and those who believe and

follow Him: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17,17). Here the truth is Christ's Spirit, the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit is the truth" according to the voice of John the Evangelist (1 John 5,6), Saint Cyril of Alexandria interprets.

In the reply of the Holy Church Fathers about what the sanctification of those who love God means, Saint Basil the Great says: "Sanctification means to devote ourselves to the Holy God wholeheartedly and without separation at all times, through the care and study of the things pleasing to Him". And Saint Gregory the Theologian says: "Sanctification is living along with God".

In other words, without the sanctification by the power of the Holy Spirit, man is unable to see God, namely the unapproachable light. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8,12), the Lord says. And the Saint's hymnographer says that the God-bearing father was seen from his early infancy to be a sanctified vessel, our Father and a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, my dear brethren, our Father Savva was seen and appeared to be a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Behold the true testimony and the visible proof before our eyes, his incorrupt and fragrant full body of his relics. Behold the light, the true light, the light of life "Thou art near, O Lord; and all thy commandments are truth" (Ps. 119,151), David chants. "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?" the Prophet Jeremiah announces (Jeremiah 23,23).

With today's feast of the repatriation of Saint Savva's relics from Venice of Italy at the place of his monastic striving, all of us are called to draw nigh to God, because He is a God that is near us. The way of our approaching the good God and friend of man is shown to us by Saint Savva the sanctified through the words of Saint Paul "dearly beloved, let us

cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7,1). Many happy returns."

After the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, a monastic meal followed.

Giving thanks to God, His Beatitude received the thanks of the Fathers of Saint Savva's Lavra and returned to Jerusalem.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF SAINT ISAAC THE SYRIAC IN DOHA**

The feast of the Doha Cathedral was celebrated with ecclesiastical splendour. For pastoral reasons, the feast was moved to Friday.

On Thursday, September 30 / October 13, 2022, the Great solemn Vespers with the blessing of bread was held, presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Timotheos of Bostra and Exarch of the Holy Sepulchre in Cyprus, as the representative of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III. The hymns were chanted by the choir of the Holy Church in Greek and Arabic, in the presence of the Ambassador of Bulgaria Stoyan Velev and the Deputy Head of the Embassy of Serbia Mr Slobodan Radeka and the Representative of the Embassy of Brazil. After the end of Vespers, a pre-festal dinner was offered for the clergy and members of the flock.

On Friday, October 1/14, 2022, Matins and the Episcopal Divine Liturgy were officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Timotheos

of Bostra with concelebrants His Eminence the Archbishop Makarios of Qatar and Elder Georgios with the participation of the flock, in the presence of the Ambassador of Greece in Doha, Mrs Helen Michalopoulou, the new Ambassador of Cyprus, Mr Nikolaos Manolis, the Counsellor of the Greek Embassy, ☐☐Mr Georgios Zafeiris, and the Deputy Chief of Defence, Mr Kyriakos Dimitrakoulas.

After the Divine Liturgy, the procession of the Holy Icon of Saint Isaac the Syriac took place and a reception followed in the event hall.

**From the Holy Archdiocese of Qatar**

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

On Friday, September 24/October 7, 2022, the commemoration of the Holy First Martyr and Apostle Thecla was celebrated by the Patriarchate in her chapel, located within the Central Monastery of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, west of the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen.

During this holiday, the Church remembers that the Saint came from the city of Iconium in Asia Minor and fleeing from her fiancé Thamyrid followed the Apostle Paul in his sermons and preached Christ in Antioch of Pisidia.

She confessed Christ and surrendered herself to torture for

Him, from which she escaped and lived to a long age until she slept in the Lord in her birthplace.

In honour of her, Vespers was celebrated in the evening in her chapel, presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos under the priest of the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen Archimandrite Nicodemus, with the participation in prayer of the Hagiotaphite Archbishops. Participants at the Entrance and the blessing of bread were the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios and the Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos.

After Vespers, according to the custom, wine was served in the courtyard after dry bread.

In the morning, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated again in the presence of the H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the participation in prayer of the Hagiotaphite Fathers, in the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Symeon, Hierodeacon Eulogios, Mr Vassilios Gotsopoulos and the students of the Patriarchal School of Sion in the joint prayer of monks, nuns and pilgrims at the narthex of the Church.

At the Epitropikon Office, while a festive treat was served, His Beatitude wished for the intercessions of Saint Thecla to the Brotherhood.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS AT THE MONASTERY OF THE HOLY CROSS

On Sunday, September 19/October 2, 2022, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was celebrated in the Holy Cross Monastery, located in West Jerusalem near the Jewish Parliament.

This holiday was celebrated there in memory and honour of the tradition that in the area of this Monastery, under Lot, the three-composite wood of cedar, pine and cypress was planted, from which the Cross was made, on which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified for our salvation.

Great Vespers on Saturday afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning were officiated by the Exarch of the Holy Sepulchre in Constantinople, His Eminence Archbishop Nektarios of Anthidona, along with Archimandrite Claudius, the Hierodeacons Simeon and Eulogios, the Priests Nectarios and Elias, the Russian-speaking Fr Nikolai Kulinski and the Romanian-speaking Fr Ioannis. The chanting was delivered by Byzantine singer Angelos Ahtinoudis, visiting from London, assisted by Mr Gabriel and Fanti and the students of the Patriarchal School of Sion, in the presence of the Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras, the Consul Mrs Christina Zacharioudakis, the Ambassador of Georgia Mr Lasias and members of the Greek Consulate General and many monks, nuns, locals and pilgrims.

During the Divine Liturgy, the Monastery was visited by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Holy Sepulchre Fathers.

The famous Theological School of the Patriarchate operated in this Monastery from 1845 to 1909. In order to revive the work

of this School, intensive work on the establishment of a centre for Postgraduate Studies and conservation of icons and manuscripts was recently undertaken at the initiative of H.H.B. with the cooperation of the Hegoumen Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Matthaïos and the conservator of icons and manuscripts from Cyprus, Mr Stavros Andreou. The Inauguration of this work was performed by His Beatitude.

A sample of the work of conservation of icons and books was presented in the prepared space of the Monastery, in the presence of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos of the Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras and his staff, and of the Holy Sepulchre Fathers and the staff of the Monastery.

**From Secretariat-General**

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

On Tuesday, September 14/27, 2022, the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

On this holiday, the Church has primarily the commemoration of the Lord Jesus Christ raised on the Cross for our salvation, but also the memory of the elevation of the wood of the cross, when it was found under Saint Helen and raised by the Archbishop of Jerusalem Makarios in sight and worship of the pilgrims and thousands of pilgrims for the Consecration ceremony of the Church of the Resurrection.



This world-historical event was celebrated with Vespers in the evening and with a Divine Liturgy on the morning of the feast in the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection.

Great Vespers and the Divine Liturgy were officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude for the Divine Liturgy were their Eminences; the Metropolitans Isychios of Kapitolias and Timotheos of Bosra, Panteleimon of Xanthi and Peritheorion – visiting from Greece –, Panteleimon of Maronia and Komotini, the Archbishops, Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Theodosios of Sebasteia, Demetrios of Lydda, Nectarios of Anthedona, Bishop Parthenios from the Church of Achrida, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the ministering Priest of the Russian speaking Community of the Patriarchate in Ein Karem Archimandrite Nikolai and Ioannis from the Church of Romania and other priests from many Orthodox countries.

The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Gotsopoulos with the Patriarchal School students. Both services were attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and a very large congregation of pilgrims.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by the exaltation of the Holy Cross according to the following formality:

From the Holy Gate of the Catholicon of the Church, His Beatitude blessed the Holy Entrance and the procession was led by H.H.B., with the participation of Archpriests, Priests and deacons, the people following in front of the Sacred Edicule on the right and through the Seven Arches it went to the chapel of Saint Helen. From there it went down to the Cave after the incense offering at the Altar of the Armenians and the Throne of Saint Helen. At the Cave of the Finding of the Sacred Wood, the exaltation of the Cross was held according to the Typikon of the Church and the apolytikion “God save thy

people” was chanted three times before the placement of the Cross at the point of its finding and it was exalted at the four parts of the horizon. The Troparia of the feast were chanted and from there, the litany went out, passing through the Seven Arches, marching three times around the Holy Sepulchre, the Sacred Wood bearing on the heads of the High Priests, and concluded to the Horrendous Golgotha.

There, the Holy Cross was once again raised by His Beatitude to the four points of the horizon for the sanctification of the faithful and of the whole creation.

After the Exaltation ceremony was completed, the Holy Cross was placed on the Holy Table of Golgotha and the Bishops and the Consul General of Greece venerated it and the faithful received the flowers of the Holy Cross for their sanctification in thanksgiving and praise to God.

After the ceremony was over, the full congregation went to the Patriarchate Reception Hall, where a fasting feast was served, and His Beatitude spoke with the following address:

“The cross is a trophy for Christ; it was set on the ground once and for all and the devils are always driven away by its force. Where are the killings of idols and animals in vain? Where are the temples and the fire of unbelief? Everything was extinguished by holy blood and fell. And the cross is a powerful force, an invisible arrow, an immaterial medicine, a luscious wound, a dazzling glory” Saint John of Damascus says.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece, Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Dear Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

Today the new tabernacle, the holy Church, which our Lord Jesus Christ made “paradise intelligible” celebrates the

universal exaltation of the Holy and Life-Giving Cross, through which the extinguishing and falling of the tree of knowledge were accomplished.

The truly universal and blessed event was celebrated by the holy Church of Jerusalem, the participation of High Priests and priests of the brother Orthodox Churches and the presence of pious pilgrims, in a thanksgiving gathering at this place, where Saint Helen found the Cross, as well as at the place where the wood of the Cross was solidified, that is, on the Horrendous Golgotha, where He was crucified.

“A trophy for Christ, the cross ... was always extinguished by a holy blood and fell,” Saint John of Damascus preaches. And this, because the Son and Word of God, Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name (Philip 2,6-9), according to Saint Paul.

Through His humiliation unto death, death and the cross, “Christ freed us from the law of sin and the death of corruption” (Cf. Rom. 8:2). So here is the omnipotent power, the weapon against the devil, the immaterial medicine and the astonishing glory but also the beauty of the Church, which is founded on the sacrificial and crucified blood of Christ. Because of this, the Cross of Christ is the inexhaustible source of the power of the Church.

On the Cross and through the Cross our Lord Jesus Christ defeated the devil and provided our souls with His Peace. He is “the God of love and peace” (2 Cor. 13:11). Through His blood on the Cross, Christ made peace on earth and in heaven (cf. Col. 1:20), the wise Paul preaches again.

The exaltation of the Holy and life-giving Cross, that is, of Christ, calls us, my beloved brothers, as faithful members of His body, to fight on the one hand against our personal passions and on the other hand for the restoration of the broken unity of the one Holy Catholic Church and of the Apostolic Orthodox Church, listening to the commandment of blessed Paul, “studying to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”, (Eph. 4,3)

After the hymn, we say: “Today the Cross is lifted up and all the world is sanctified. For Thou, while throned with the Father and with the All-holy Spirit, by stretching out Thy hands thereon, hast drawn the whole world to Thyself, that it might know Thee, O my Christ. Therefore, vouchsafe divine glory to them that trust Thy goodness” and grant peace in our region and in the whole world. (Matins, Exapostelaria). Many and peaceful returns. Amen.”

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF THE CONSECRATION OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE**

On Monday, 13/16 September 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the consecration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

On this day the Church as a whole, especially the Church of Jerusalem commemorates that after the construction of the Church of the Resurrection during the decade of AD 326-336,

the consecration of the Church was held by Saint Helen. The service was officiated by the Archbishop Makarios of Jerusalem in the presence of many Bishops who had received the order by Emperor Constantine the Great, along with many Priests and thousands of laity who were gathered to see the Sacred Cross of the Lord being exalted. The crowds exclaimed in a loud voice "Lord have mercy" as the Cross was exalted at the four parts of the horizon for the sanctification of the people and all creation.

For this historic event which inaugurated the Roman-Byzantine period in Jerusalem, the Divine Liturgy was officiated at the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection by His Eminence Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, with the co-celebration of the Archimandrites, Klaudios, Dionysios, Nectarios, Anastasios and visiting Priests from Greece. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon, Mr Gotsopoulos and the Patriarchal School students.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Episcopal entourage visited His Beatitude at His office.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS IN SAHNEEN**

On Wednesday, September 8/21, 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Nativity of our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.

On this feast, the Church commemorates that the Theotokos is a

gift of God to her childless parents Joachim and Anna and to all humanity, because from her, the Redeemer of the world, Christ, was made flesh by the Holy Spirit.

This feast was celebrated in the Greek Orthodox Community of the city of Sahneen in Northern Israel, in the region of Acre – Ptolemais, in the magnificent and huge Holy Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos, erected by the Community with the significant financial contribution of the Patriarchate.

The feast was celebrated with a Divine Liturgy, the first in the Holy Church after the consecration ceremony, which was held by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Metropolitan Hesychios of Capitoliass, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nektarios, Archimandrites Artemios, Meletios and Marcellus, many Priests from the North Galilee district of the Patriarchate and from other regions, the Head of the Russian MISSIA in the Holy Land, Archimandrite Alexander, Fr Issa Musleh, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by the Acre Byzantine choir under Archimandrite Philotheos as the service was attended by the representatives of the local authorities, the Spiritual Father of Saint Savvas Lavra, Archimandrite Eudokimos, the honorary presence of Mr Samer Khouri, son of Mr Said Khouri, who have been great financial donors of the construction of this Church, the former Mayor of Bethlehem Mrs Baboon, Mr Caesar Marjieh, the religious leader of the Druze Mr Tarif, the Ambassador of Greece to Tel Aviv Mr Kyriakos Loukakis, the Ambassador of Russia, the Ambassador of Bela Russ, the Cypriot Mr Mihail who made the wooden ikonostasion, a group of pilgrims and many faithful Christians from Sahneen and other cities of Israel and Cana of Galilee.

On this very important occasion of the consecration, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos delivered the following Sermon, which was read by Fr Issa Mousleh:

“How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. (Ps. 84, 1-2).

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

We rend glory and thanks to the Holy Triune God, who deemed us worthy today, to celebrate the consecration of this magnificent Church in your beautiful city of Sahneen, in honour and commemoration of the Nativity of the Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, chanting along with Saint Andrew of Jerusalem: “In thee O Immaculate Maiden, is the mystery of the Trinity praised and glorified. For the Father was well pleased and the Word dwelt among us, and the Divine Spirit overshadowed thee” (Matins, Ode 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> canon, glory).

We begged this divine Spirit Who overshadowed the Virgin Mary, the living temple of God’s Word so that it would also overshadow this house of God.

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), says the Lord. Nevertheless, “the place where thou standest is holy ground” (cf. Acts 7:33), namely the place of worship and gathering, where “I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee” (Hebrews 2:12, Ps. 22:23). And according to God-inspired Ezra: ““And now our God has chosen us to lead us to salvation and give us support in his sanctified place, enlighten our eyes and give life to children in the service of our passions”, (2 Esdr. 9,8). And according to our Lord Jesus Christ: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20).

During His incarnate Divine Providence, the Son and Word of

God "hath filled all things with His light, and by His Holy Spirit, He hath renewed the whole world. For a house is founded to the Lord's praise and glory, wherein Christ our God, for the salvation of mortals, doth consecrate and hallow the hearts of all His faithful flock" (Menaion Sept. 13, Kathisma 1 of Matins).

This glory of the Holy Triune God and the unity of faith in Christ and the communion of the Holy Spirit, let us bless and praise every day in this holy tabernacle of the glory of the Lord, of this newly built Church, established in honour of the Nativity of the Blessed Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, about whom the hymnographer Sergius of Jerusalem says: "Come all ye faithful, let us run to the Virgin. For behold, she is born who was foreordained before her conception to be the Mother of our God: the jewel of virginity, the rod of Aaron, that sprang from Jesse's root, the preaching of the prophets, and the scion of righteous Joachim of Annal. She is born, and with her, the world is made new. She is brought forth, and the Church is arrayed with her proper majesty. She is the holy temple, the vessel of the Godhead, the virginal instrument, the royal bridechamber wherein was accomplished the wondrous mystery of the ineffable union of the natures that come together in Christ. As we worship Him, we praise the all-immaculate birth of the Virgin" (Great Vespers, Aposticha, Glory).

Behold the glory and richness of the God-human body of the Church, but also of its sanctification on earth, as the hymnographer says, "heaven is the Church, shining with many lights, appeared everywhere, illuminating the faithful; in which we cry out; establish this house, Lord."

Indeed, the Church enlightens all believers by the power of the Holy Spirit, because as the Apostle Peter says; "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:10).



Moreover, in the house of God we are called to "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17) the psalmist says. And Saint Paul entreats us, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

And this is so because the Church of God is a place of worship, that is, a place of a mystical converse between God and man, according to what is written in the Holy Bible, "And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle" (Exodus 33:11). In other words, the house of God is a place of prayer, which according to Saint John of the Ladder, is in its quality a communion and union of man with God, and in its power, the conciliation of God, food of the soul, enlightenment of the mind, proof of hope and solution of sorrow.

On this solemn and historic day for the city of Sahneen and its inhabitants, on the occasion of receiving from the truly admirable and now consecrated house of God, erected on the initiative of the pious Rum Orthodox flock of ours, which enjoys a peaceful co-existence with its fellow-religious compatriots, we boast in Christ, and after Saint Paul: "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope" (Romans 5:2-4).

The Godly zeal and the reverence of the people of God for the Theotokos and Mother of God, through whom the earth and the heavens are joined and the natives were regenerated and from decay we were renewed and we became gods, built a temple as a

house of prayer; where we receive invisibly the grace of the Holy Spirit.

We express our warm gratitude to everyone who in various ways cooperated and contributed to the achievement of this important project, especially to the local Council of the city of Sahneen and its honourable Presidents, to the blessed Mr Said Khoury and his beloved son, Samer Khoury, to our sister Church of Moscow and the charitable Russian foundations and finally to the tireless dentist Mr Magid and his family.

Let this work be for the glory of God and the praise of the city of Sahneen and its peace-loving people. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). May it once again be the worshipful house of God, a symbol of faith, love, hope, peace, justice and security "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (1 Cor. 14:33), Saint Paul preaches.

Let us thank our Lord God, saying: "Christ the true light, the light that illuminates and sanctifies every man coming into the world, let the light of your face shine upon us, so that in it we may see the unattainable light; and direct our steps to the work of your commandments, by the prayers of our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, whose nativity we celebrate and that of all the Saints". Amen.

The Head of this Community, Archimandrite Fr Andrean Aleme, was awarded an honorary cross by His Beatitude.

At noon, the Community hosted a meal for His Beatitude and His entourage and many others, during which His Beatitude again spoke as follows:

"And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it" (Ps. 90:17).

Beloved brethren in Christ and Fathers,

Honourable Ladies and gentlemen,

Respected members of the Ecclesiastical Council,

Honourable Mayor and distinguished guests,

The city of Sahneen rejoices and is glad because the Lord God has enlightened the work of the hands of our pious Rum Orthodox Community. And we say this, because such works, like today's magnificently consecrated Church, are on the one hand a jewel for the wider area of your city, on the other hand, they highlight the cultural progress of the religious communities living here peacefully and harmoniously. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

This magnificent Church, along with the other houses of prayer are a true testimony that "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). The words emanating from God's mouth are none other than divine love, peace, justice and mutual love and love for those who hate us, "love your enemies, bless those who curse us, do good to those who hate us", (Matthew 5:44), the Lord orders.

The Run Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the mother of the Churches but also the first religious and ecclesiastical institution, has not ceased throughout the centuries to preach and confess and promote the divine values and commands, which elevate the human being, the part that is made up of flesh and soul. The Lord says: "What is a man profited if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?" (Matthew 16,26). For these reasons, we all greet all of you who honoured Us with your presence for this historical event of the Consecration of this house of prayer and from the bottom of our hearts, we thank the respected members of your Community for the Abrahamic hospitality they provided.

In addition, we pray that the Lord God through the prayers of the blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary will overshadow and protect this city, its people and the Christian flock. Many happy returns, spiritual and fruitful. Amen”.

After the banquet, His Beatitude visited the City Hall of Sahneen.

The Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary was also celebrated in an Episcopal Divine Liturgy at the shrine of the Theotokos’ Tomb in Gethsemane, presided over by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba under the chanting of the newly arrived students of the Patriarchal School of Zion, led by Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos.

After the end of the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Hellenoupolis hosted a reception at the hegoumeneion.

**From Secretariat-General**

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

On Sunday, September 5th/18th 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Nativity of our Lady and Immaculate Mary in the Holy Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God in Beit Jala.

During this feast, the Church remembers that the Theotokos is a gift of God to her childless parents, Joachim and Anna, and to all humanity, because from her the Redeemer of the world, Christ, was made flesh by the Holy Spirit.

This feast was celebrated with a warm welcome of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theofilos, under the abbot of Beit Jala Archimandrite Ignatios, the Priests, the Local Authorities and the Bodies of the Scouts of Beit Jala before the Divine Liturgy, which was officiated by His Beatitude. Co-celebrants of His Beatitude were their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias and Archbishop Methodios of Tabor, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Hegoumen of Saint George Al Khader, Archimandrite Porphyrios, the Community Priests, Fr Pavlos, Yusef and Issa. The chanting was delivered by the Community Byzantine Choir in the presence of the entire congregation of Beit Jala and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“May the Lord give you a sign; behold, the Virgin will bear and bear a son, and you shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14), exclaims the prophet Isaiah.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Dear Christians,

The grace of the Holy Spirit brought us all to blessed by the Lord city of yours so that after the holy and righteous Godfathers Joachim and Anne we celebrate the beginning of our salvation, the only Theotokos and Mother of God.

Today we also celebrate the pure Virgin who sprang from the root of Jesse, the source of Life, that is, the Mother of the Son and Word of our Lord God, Jesus Christ, as the hymn of the Church says “Today God, Who resteth upon the noetic thrones, hath made ready for Himself a holy throne upon the earth. He that established the heavens in wisdom, hath prepared a living Heaven in His love for man. For from a barren root He hath made a life-bearing branch to spring froth for us, even His Mother: O God of wonders and hope of the hopeless, O Lord,

glory to Thee" (Great Vespers, Sticheron 1).

The sign that Isaiah prophesied that the Lord would give you is none other than the holy throne, which God prepared for Himself on earth, the Virgin Mary. This is the sign by which the Lord made His Saviour known before the nations; He revealed His righteousness according to the psalmist. His Saviour is the incarnate One from the pure blood of the Virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit, God the Word our Lord Jesus Christ, whose saving work concerns the whole human race according to the testimony of the Evangelist Luke "And all flesh shall see the salvation of God ", (Luke 3,6/ Is. 40,5).

Through the birth of the Virgin Mary, the renewal of the world came with her. And this is because in this virgin Mary the regeneration of the old Adam and the recalling of Eve were born. This was the source of incorruption and the release of decay, through which we were made gods and redeemed from death according to the hymn. Through the Virgin, in other words, the lifting of the curse of the first-born and the giving of the blessing, as this is expressed by the hymn saying: "Thy Nativity O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy to the whole world; for from thee hath dawned the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, annulling the course and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting" (Apolytikion).

Eternal life was given to us humans through the Theotokos, who, according to Saint John of Damascus, the Theotokos is the one who binds people tightly to God and the one with whom the heavens and the earth were united, returning the things of men to God and the things of God to man.

Today we celebrate a paradox, indeed a miracle, glorifying and praising God the Father, Who revealed to you a hidden mystery of eternal times, (Cf. Rom. 16:25), that is, the predestined Mother of God for our salvation. The paradox of this mystery is not understood "in persuasive words of human wisdom, but in

the evidence of the Spirit and power, so that your faith is not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2, 4-5), Saint Paul preaches. According to Saint John of Damascus: "By faith, we understand that all things have been made from nothing into being by the power of God; and all things divine and human we accomplish by faith. And faith is consent without much examination". This means that the knowledge of God or the knowledge of divine things is not scientific knowledge, which is acquired through research and research methods; it is a gift and at the same time an experience and the fruit of faith. This is why the psalmist begs, saying: " Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me"(Ps. 51:12); interpreting David's word, Hesychius says: "Right spirit is the Spirit of God and not the vital spirit in you. [Prophet David] wants this Spirit of God to be initiated in the most vital parts inside him. For Spirit is the true salvation, namely Christ. " All creation blesses the virgin born of the barren Anne, and especially the holy Church of Christ because she (the virgin) fulfilled the promise given to the prophets (Acts 13:32) "Lord my God, I will praise you; I will praise your name because you have done wonderful things, an ancient true will", (Isaiah 25,1), exclaims the prophet Isaiah.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria says that our Saviour wanted to give those who knew Him extraordinary grace, that is, the grace to be with Him and see His glory because He says " for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (John 17,24), thus showing that the power of the mystery concerning the Saviour is the most ancient, and the way of our salvation, which was accomplished through his mediation, was known in advance, [foreseen by God the Father]. Especially those who know themselves are granted the grace that the Saviour willed from his conscience and they see his glory: "loved He says before the foundation of the world", its antiquity, however, shows the power of the mystery in itself, and that the way, accomplished through Christ's mediation, remains foreknown to

the God and Father of our salvation”.

Of this way, indeed of our salvation, accomplished through the mediation of Christ, a humble subject and accomplice was the Virgin, born of the righteous Joachim and Anna. For we too, after the hymn, cry out and say: “Thou art become a golden censer, for the Fire dwelt in thy womb, even the Word by the Holy Spirit; and He is seen in man’s form, O pure Birth-giver of God” (Ode 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> Canon, Both now). The one and only who introduced Christ into the world for the salvation of our souls”. Amen. Many happy returns”.

This was followed by a litany of the Holy Icon, a treat in the event hall of the Church and a meal for the Patriarchal Entourage under the Community, where once again His Beatitude spoke as follows:

“Thy Nativity O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy to the whole world; for from thee hath dawned the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, annulling the course and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting” (Apolytikion).

Beloved brothers in Christ, Your Excellency Mr President and respected members of the Ecclesiastical Council and other holy institutions,

Today, we enjoyed the sacrament of the divine and bloodless sacrifice, that is, the Holy Eucharist the proclaimed joy to all the world by the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary.

The Theotokos and Mother of God the Word and of our Saviour Christ, but also Mother of the Church of Christ was destined and chosen by God the Father before the foundation of the world to give us this joy in the Holy Spirit.

Our holy Church of Christ, being the Body of Christ is the vine and we are its branches, as the Lord says: “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in



him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned”(John 15,5-6).

Indeed, my beloved brothers, we who are clothed with Christ in holy baptism, those who receive the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, have become branches of the true vine, that is, of Christ. For we are called to abide in Him. The Lord says, ” He that abideth in me, and I in him ” (John 15:5).

We say this in order to emphasize that the Church of Christ, and especially the Church of Jerusalem, is the protection and safe haven of those who praise and magnify the Mother of God, by whom the Sun of righteousness rose, our Saviour Christ, but also the physician of souls and bodies; So along with Saint John of Damascus we say to the Virgin Mary:

“Rejoice thou who are full of grace the most joyous name and thing of all joy, from whom Christ was born into the world, unrepeatable joy, the hospital (=healer) of Adam’s sorrow. Many and blessed returns. Amen.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE COMMEMORATION OF THE BEHEADING OF SAINT JOHN THE**

# BAPTIST

On Sunday, August 29/September 11, 2022, the commemoration of the beheading of the Holy Forerunner and Baptist John was held at the Patriarchate.

During this feast, the Church, especially that of Jerusalem, remembers that Saint John the Baptist, “clothed with a mantle and eating locusts and wild honey”, (Matthew 3:4), calls the multitudes to repentance, “he showed with his finger Jesus as the Son of God, who takes away the sin of the world”, he criticized Herod for living with Herodias, his brother’s wife (Matt. 14:3). Herod was controlled by John, but he also respected him, when, however, “he celebrated his birthday”, (Mat. 14,6) Salome, the daughter of Herodias, danced and Herod liked her, and he promised to give her even half of his kingdom. The insolent girl, brought forward by his mother, asked for “John’s head on a pinnacle” (Matthew 14:7). Herod felt sorry, but because of “the oaths and the witnesses” he ordered the dissection of John’s head and brought it to the girl as an offering, and the girl offered it to her mother.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem honoured “the greatest born among women” with Vespers and the Divine Liturgy, presided over by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theodosios of Sebasteia in the old Church dedicated to the Saint in the Old City, which has been renovated and decorated by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Bartholomew. Co-celebrants to his Eminence were the Archimandrites Klaudios, Meletios and Dionysios, Archdeacon Mark and the visiting priest of the Church of Greece Antonios. The chanting was delivered by Mr Vassilios Gotsopoulos, as the service was attended by monks, nuns, pilgrims and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

During the Divine Liturgy, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos came for veneration, accompanied by

Hagiotaphite Fathers.

The Patriarchal and Episcopal entourages and the congregation were offered a reception by the hardworking Hegoumen Archimandrite Bartholomew.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF THE APODOSIS OF THE DORMITION IN JERUSALEM**

On Monday, August 23/September 5, 2022, the day of the Apodosis of the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos, the ceremony of the procession of the icon of the Dormition was celebrated in the Church of Jerusalem.

The Procession began after the Divine Liturgy at the Tomb of the Theotokos which was presided over by the Master of Ceremonies Archimandrite Bartholomew.

The Procession was presided over by the Hegoumen of Gethsemane, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Hellenoupolis, holding the icon before his chest, surrounded by Priests and Community Representatives, in which dressed priests, monks and nuns marched in line, and in which believers followed on the right and left, reverently venerating the icon of the Mother of God.

The Procession passed through the Monasteries of Saint Stephen, Joachim and Anna, Saint Nikodemos, Praetorium, Saint Charalambos, and Panagia Saydanaya, where prayers were recited

and the Dormition troparia were chanted.

In the Christian Quarter, the people and the youth received the holy icon, singing, drumming and dancing.

At the junction of the Christian Way and the Way of the Patriarchate, the icon was received by the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood under His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos after the Fathers of the Synod and revered it.

Passing below the Monastery of Megali Panagia, the Procession entered the courtyard of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with prayers.

Afterwards, the icon was placed in the chapel of the Metochion of Gethsemane opposite the Church of the Resurrection, where priests and Orthodox believers venerated the icon, honouring the Mother of God.

**From Secretariat-General**