

# THE FEAST OF THE ADORATION OF THE HOLY CROSS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> /27<sup>th</sup> March 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Sunday of the Adoration of the Sacred Cross at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

This feast has been ordained by the Church to be celebrated in the middle of the Holy and Great Lent so that the faithful may receive strength from the protection of the Holy Cross in the struggle of the fast.

This feast was celebrated on Saturday afternoon with the Service of Great Vespers, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. The service included the welcoming reception and the veneration of the Holy Deposition slate, the Holy Sepulchre and then the bells, incense offering procedure, Great Entrance and Blessing of bread, with the co-prayer of High Priests and the co-celebration of the Hagiotaphite Hieromonks.

The feast concluded with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning at the Holy Sepulchre, which was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Metropolitan Ivan from the Patriarchate of Serbia, the Archbishops, Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Theodosios of Sebastia, Nectarios of Anthedona, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, and those from the Patriarchates of Moscow and Romania, Priests from other Orthodox Churches, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Gotsopoulos and the service was attended by members of the

Jerusalem Community and some pilgrims, along with a group of Rum-Orthodox Arab-speaking faithful from Ai-Labun under the lead of Fr. Spyridon.

The Divine Liturgy concluded with a litany three times around the Holy Sepulchre and the shrines.

Finally, the congregation went to the Patriarchate Reception Hall where His Beatitude delivered the following address:

“In Paradise of old the tree stripped me bare; for by giving me its fruit to eat the enemy brought in death. But now the Tree of the Cross that clothes men with the garment of life has been set up on earth and the whole world is filled with boundless joy. Beholding it venerated, O ye people, let us with one accord raise in faith our cry to God: His house is full of glory!” the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (Matins, Triodion, Troparion 1).

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Noble Christians,

Our Holy Church celebrates the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent, the day of the adoration of the Sacred Cross, in the middle of the period of the Holy Lent.

The wood which stripped us bare from paradise and brought in death, this very wood became the Cross of our Saviour Christ, bringing to us the garment of life. And this because according to Saint Theodore the Studite, “the Church has been revealed as a second Paradise, having within it, like the first Paradise of old, a tree of life, Thy Cross, O Lord. By touching it we share in immortality” (Triodion, Ode 5, Troparion 4). This immortality is no other than Christ Himself, “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light

which no man can approach unto" (1 Timothy 6:16), according to Saint Paul.

We also become participants of the energy of this light that no man can approach unto, my dear brethren, through the veneration of the Sacred Cross. And this because, as Saint Paul says, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:23-24).

Precisely because the life-giving Cross brings along with It the divine righteousness and power of the One Crucified on It, It has become a weapon against the devil, that is why Saint Paul preaches thus: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). And the hymnographer joyfully exclaims "Today the ranks of angels dance with gladness at the veneration of Thy Cross. For through the Cross, O Christ, Thou hast shattered the hosts of devils and saved mankind" (Triodion Ode 5, Troparion 3). According to Saint John Damascene, the sacred wood of the Cross is "truly sacred, where Christ brought Himself a sacrifice for us...and it has been sanctified by the touch of the Holy Body and Blood". That is why "we venerate the type of the Sacred and Life-giving Cross, even if it is made of a different material, not worshipping the material [let it not be so] but the type of as a symbol of Christ".

Today the Holy Church of Christ projects the Sacred Cross in adoration, which we, who live in the Holy City of Jerusalem "have worshipped at the place of His footstool" (Psalm 132:7), that is the Holy Church of the Resurrection, in order to receive grace and power to complete the struggle of the Holy Lent. Let us then say along with the hymnographer: "What shall we offer Thee, O Christ? For Thou hast given us Thy Precious Cross to venerate, on which Thy Holy Blood was shed, to which Thy flesh was fixed by nails. With love, we kiss it and give

thanks to Thee" (Triodion, Ode 4, Troparion 4).

Amen. Many happy returns and a Happy Easter!"

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **DOXOLOGY ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL FEAST OF 25TH MARCH 1821**

On Thursday 11/24 March 2022 a Doxology was observed at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on the anniversary of the National feast of 25 March 1821.

The Doxology was observed primarily as an entreaty to God for the repose of the souls of the fighters of 1821, who fell fighting for the faith and country, and as thanks to God for His help to our nation, to be free from the Ottoman yoke and the establishment of the freedom in Christ.

The Doxology was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with the Hagiotaphite High Priests, Hieromonks and Deacons. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon on the right and Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos on the left, with the help of the Patriarchate School Students. The service was attended by the members of the Greek Community, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and Consulate members.

After the Doxology all congregation returned to the Patriarchate Reception Hall where His Beatitude addressed those present as follows:

**“Come in zeal at this time, to make an oath on the Cross...lift up the Cross on the banners and strike the enemy like thunder and lightning”**, Rigas Feraios exclaims at his revolutionary poem “Thurium”.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today’s anniversary of the Greek Revolution of 25<sup>th</sup> March 1821 is a unique and unprecedented event in world history, and this is because the divine good of freedom is inextricably linked after Christ’s conscious awareness of the self-sacrifice of the pious race of the Roman Orthodox Christians and our Blessed Greek Nation.

The Metropolitan of Palaion Patron Germanos raised the Holy Banner of the Resurrection on March 25, 1821, the day of the feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin, listening to your liberating sermon of wise Paul, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1).

The view of the idea of freedom that took shape in Christianity was the one that distinguished the Greek Revolution of '21 from contemporary revolutions of other peoples. This is also denounced by the nationalist slogan of the Elder of Moria Theodoros Kolokotronis: “now our fight is for the faith of Christ and the holy freedom of the country”. This is also testified by the call of Rigas Feraios to his revolutionary play “Thurium”: “Let us take the oath on the Cross”.

The Greeks, whose patriotism and freedom are the special features of their long and varied history, were not possible to be reconciled with the kind of slavery of the Ottoman yoke,

who insulted their cultural, spiritual and ethnoreligious heritage, which contributed decisively to the elevation and decoration of the moral standards and also to the enlightenment of the minds of those people "that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Luke 1:79)

The greatness of the sacrifice of the revolutionary Greeks for freedom and the name of Christ is reflected so much in the slogan "freedom or death" as in the confession of the established new martyrs of the Church, "I was born a Christian and as a Christian shall I die!"

The heroes and new martyrs of the revolution of '21 undoubtedly paid heed to the Gospel words: "fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).

And we say this because the contribution of the Church and the clergy to the national uprising of 1821 was indeed unparalleled and great. The Church as a spiritual institution became the primary leading force of the Roman people under the yoke. The Church is the one that represented the national and religious identity of the Greeks.

The feast of the national uprising of 1821 is not merely an event to historical memory but rather of a sacred consignment sealed with the heroic and martyr's blood "of the freedom which stems from the sacred bones of the Greeks". This sacred consignment we are called to preserve and hand over to the next generations.

The Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood of ours participates in the anniversary festivities of the sacred memory of the National Rebirth of the noble and royal nation of the Rum Orthodox and our Nation, and as it should it renders "tribute to whom tribute is due" (Romans 13:7), so we came down to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to offer thanksgiving praise and

Doxology to our Lord Jesus Christ, who was Crucified and Resurrected from the dead for us. We also prayed for the eternal repose in the land of the living of the blessed souls of those who fell like martyrs while fighting for the faith and the country in the sacred battles of our nation.

For all these, let Us raise Our glass on a toast and as we should, cry out loud:

Long live 25<sup>th</sup> March 1821!

Long live the noble and royal nation of the Rum Orthodox!

Long live Hellas!

Long live our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood!"

After His Beatitude's address, Mr Vlioras also said the following:

"Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences, High Priests,

Reverend Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today, Ecumenical Hellenism proudly celebrates and honours the anniversary of the Revolution of 1821, the most glorious page in modern Greek history, a struggle for altars and hearths, a point of reference and a symbol for the Greek nation, which had as its happy ending the establishment of the modern Greek state and the rebirth of the Democracy in its cradle.

In every historical period, there is a pole, a historical event that marks it, and becomes a point of reference for all of us later. March 25, 1821, is this milestone in the modern history of Hellenism, marking the turning point when the

Greeks made the heroic decision to rise, alone against many, against the Ottoman tyranny and to claim freedom with their blood. It was spring even then, almost two centuries ago, when Hellenism took up arms against the sanctuary to claim its freedom. This ideal that our people adored in the insurmountable greatness of the sacrifice of illiterate, ragged and hungry men, armed men and thieves, priests, women and children.

Our National Uprising is the greatest proof that, above any interests, difficulties and obstacles, the soul and spirit of a people with a high mindset, worthy of its historical mission, excels.

So, in those times, as in any difficult time, there were many who surpassed themselves and showed heroism, beyond what we call a well-meaning duty. Prominent personalities but also ordinary, everyday people, who suddenly found themselves in the forefront of history, responded to one, to the call of the struggle, without hesitating, without bowing, indelibly marking the history and life of Hellenism.

In cruciform temples and poor chapels, the desire for freedom ignited in the souls of enslaved Greeks. With meagre or non-existent means, with the courage to make up for the lack of armaments, they pushed for good the course of our historical course towards justice and freedom. In this struggle, everyone served the idea of freedom, with unique patriotism, self-sacrifice and self-denial. "And if we are few in the crowd of Braimis", observes General Makrygiannis, "we are comforted in a way, that our luck always has the Greeks few. That beginning and end, past and present, all the beasts fight to eat us and cannot. They eat from us and yeast remains. And when the few decide to die, a few times they lose and many win."

National anniversaries are useful for all of us when they are an opportunity to renew, with openness and determination, our commitment to the ideals for which the founders of our freedom



fought and the realization that our justice, progress and prosperity are the result of our own effort and our own struggle, individual and collective. Let us listen to the words of General Makrygiannis, that "we all have this homeland together, and the wise and the ignorant, and the rich and the poor, and the politicians and the military, and the smallest people."

The completion of 201 years of our National Rebirth, invites us to reflect on the successes and challenges of our National Life, but also the continuation of our collective course, since it is characteristic of our national identity to celebrate not the destination but the journey, full of discoveries, full of adventure, as Constantine Cavafy wrote, to try, to seek, to discover and not to give up as Tennyson wrote about Odysseus.

So let us stand with respect before the sacrifice of our ancestors, the heroes of '21, and let us be exemplified by their patriotism and self-denial so that we can vigorously respond to the challenges of our troubled times.

Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences, High Priests,

Reverend Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For the Holy Land and our presence in it, the venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, with its long and multifaceted offer and the highest pastoral work, is the guardian of the moral and spiritual values of our Orthodox faith.

Our patriarchate of Jerusalem testifies to the time of the dynamic presence of the Greek and Orthodox tradition in the Middle East. Its high mindset and struggles, under adverse

conditions, until today, are for all of us an invaluable national capital and a source of inspiration and empowerment.

For all of us, March 25, 1821, is an exceptional occasion to reflect on our responsibilities and to renew our commitment to the ideals that constitute the quintessence of our Greek and Orthodox tradition and for which the protagonists of our freedom fought, “...never out of debt do not move”. Ideals that nowadays we cannot take for granted and that we must preserve with our own struggle.

With these thoughts, I call on all of us to exclaim

Long live the 25th of March 1821!

Long live Greece!”

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE NAME DAY OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III**

On Sunday 9/20 March 2022, on the commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs of the lake of Sebastia in Pontus during the reign of Licinius in AD 320, the Name Day of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos was celebrated, as one of these Holy Martyrs was named Theophilos.

This feast was celebrated as a ‘Parresia’. On Saturday afternoon the Great Vespers was observed at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, presided by His Beatitude

our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

On Sunday morning the bloodless sacrifice was observed at the Catholicon, led by His Beatitude again, with the co-celebration of their Eminences the Metropolitans Kyriakos of Nazareth and Isychios of Kapitolias, the Archbishops Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Theodosios of Sebastia, Isidoros of Hierapolis, Nectarios of Anthedon, Philoumenos of Pella and Aristovoulos of Madaba, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks with first in rank the Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, at the chanting of Hierodeacon Simeon, Mr Gotsopoulos and the Patriarchal School students. The services were attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and the Consulate members, Monks, Nuns and local members of Jerusalem along with pilgrims.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a Doxology and finally, the Patriarchal entourage and all congregation returned to the Patriarchate Reception Hall, where Geronda Secretary-General addressed His Beatitude as follows:

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

As we ascend on the spiritual ladder of the Holy and Great Lent, awaiting the Holy Pascha, it is like the dew of Hermon that we receive from the Holy Church the comforting commemoration of the well-fought and crowned Holy Forty Martyrs of the lake of Sebastia of Pontus during the reign of Licinius in AD 320.

Their fervent faith in Christ, their patience and endurance that defied and overcame the freezing cold, strengthen and encourage us greatly for the continuation of the fasting struggle, not only as the abstinence from food but mainly as the alienation from the passions and the conquering of Christ's virtues, so that we may be glorified along with Him.

The Church of Jerusalem attributes special honour to those

victorious Martyrs who beautify the feasts of March because its Primate, Your Holy Beatitude bears the name of one of those, the Holy Martyr Theophilos. In honour of this martyr and Your Beatitude, we offered the bloodless sacrifice and the Doxology at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre according to the order of 'Parresia', with the attendance of the full body of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and the pious flock.

Having liturgically prayed for the health, stability and longevity of Your Beatitude, now at this Hall of the Patriarchate we add those things that need to be remembered as worthy of praise and thanksgiving.

First of all, that Your Beatitude was willing to hear the petitions of the Rum-Orthodox Arab-speaking flock either for the financial support of its projects, especially through the support of the educational system operating in its schools, or for the Theological education of the youth, in order to serve as Priests, spiritual guides of the parishes of their Communities. At the same time, the Sunday journal "Nour Il Masih" that was founded by You, and its accompanying Ecclesiastical newspaper have been distributed free of charge, to serve in the educational spiritual training, to cultivate the preservation of the Rum Orthodox identity in the souls of the flock in their bond with the Patriarchate. An indication also of Your Beatitude's vivid interest in the preservation, projection and utilization of the educational and cultural inheritance of the Patriarchate is the over two-year-long preservation of the old prints and journals of the Central Library, the Library of the Theological School of the Cross and the reorganization of the precious material of the Archives by the special preserver Mr Stavros Andreou from Cyprus.

As far as the pilgrimage is concerned, Your Beatitude has shown special sensitivity in the defence and preservation of the rights of our nation on the one hand, and on the other, for the leader's role of the Patriarchate in its cooperation

with the other Communities. Fruit of this spirit was the four years ago project of the National Technical University of Athens of the preservation and renovation of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre, and a continuation of this work is the project that began a few days ago by the University Sapienza of Rome, for the preservation of the tiles in the area of the north part of the rotunda floor, that of the seven arches, in front of the Sacred Edicule and the excavation of the floor beneath those to secure the building. These works that beautify the house of God project a message of conciliation, cooperation and peace from the Holy Sepulchre to humanity all over the world, which is tested in divisions and wars. The Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem has likewise not been bereft from Your Beatitude's interest and care, as it is obvious from the completion of the preservation of the iconostasion by the ARTIS company and the forthcoming renovation of the God-receiving Cave solely by us and the Franciscans according to the Status Quo.

Out of these, the most memorable is Your Beatitude's initiative for the protection of the Christian presence in the Holy Land. Within this initiative, at the ceremony of the lighting of the Christmas tree at the Imperial Hotel, which is endangered by the illegal contracts, there was a condemnation of the Christians' oppression by the radical elements. Should these elements prevail, as we surely not wish so, the centuries-long entrance of the Heads of the Christian Churches through Jaffa Gate is at risk, as well as the entrance of the pilgrims and their route toward the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In this initiative, Your Beatitude summoned and received as cooperatives the Heads of the Christian Churches in the Holy Land. Through Your interview at the newspaper 'The Times' of London, You have enticed the interest of the Archbishop of Canterbury Mr John Welby and of His Beatitude the Patriarch Cyril of Moscow, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel showed interest in the dialogue of this matter, and the solution of this problem by the Government and not by

Court.

With these successful and problem-solving actions of Your Beatitude, we the Hagiotaphite Fathers receive an example and are encouraged to carry out our Hagiotaphite ministry in zeal, each one separately and in group work, and add our part in the completion of the structure of the Patriarchate's body for its better projection to the world and richer contribution to the community.

In the spirit of joy of Your Name Day, Your Beatitude, and of the hope that stems from Your works, I raise my glass on a toast, on behalf of the Holy and Sacred Synod, and all the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and I wish You many happy returns, peaceful, joyful, stable, creative and fruitful, for the praise of our venerable Patriarchate and our blessed nation and for the glory of our Trinitarian God. So be it."

Mr Vlioras as follows:

"Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences,

Reverend Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen

The participation in today's celebration is a special honour and joy for all of us, as the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and the pious Flock, among them those who serve at the Consulate General of Greece in Jerusalem, honour the Name Day of the Primate of the Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of Churches, His Holy Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III.

On this occasion, Your Beatitude, we express on behalf of the Greek State, the respect and gratitude to You for your pastoral work, for the important work of preserving and promoting the Holy Places of our Faith in the Holy Land, for the defence of the righteous and the rights of our

Patriarchate and for the preservation of the Greek and Rum-Orthodox presence in the Holy Land.

With your own initiatives, the restoration and elevation of the Holy Places are promoted, while you take care of the maintenance of the Status Quo in the Holy Land and for the spiritual guidance and prosperity of a flock that faces important and multifaceted challenges.

In an age plagued by conflict, reshuffle and the search for new balances, where fanaticism and intolerance grow stronger, your sincere disposition for communication, appeasement and reconciliation, both in relation to the other Doctrines and other religions in the particular environment of Jerusalem and of the Holy Land, as well as in the context of the wider effort for peace in this long-suffering area, highlights the prestige of the Holy See, making it a factor of moderation and stability.

On the occasion of your current Nomenclatures, I would like to assure once again both you and the members of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood that the support and assistance of the Greek State and our compatriots to our Patriarchate, to the Brotherhood and to You is and also remains steadfast and substantial, and to express to you our recognition and admiration for the multifaceted work you perform with unparalleled dedication, zeal and self-sacrifice.

On this occasion, allow us to express, from the bottom of our hearts, our gratitude for the unparalleled hospitality we have enjoyed, both myself and the staff of our Authority during our visits to the Holy Shrines, where we have the opportunity to see the particularly emotional toil of concern and caring for the Holy Places, especially in the conditions created by the current pandemic.

Your Beatitude,

The defence of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, of its rights,

is a very important priority for our Homeland, as it is said at every opportunity, given the offer of the Church of Jerusalem to Orthodoxy and Hellenism, as a long-standing witness and custodian of a precious religious and historic consignment.

Allow me, on this festive day, to express our most sincere and heartfelt wishes for health, longevity, and support from the Lord, so that you can continue to accomplish Your high mission, for the benefit of the Patriarchate, the Brotherhood, the Rum-Orthodox flock of Yours and the continuous Orthodox witness in the Holy Land.”

The Representatives of the Patriarchates of Moscow and Romania and the Hagiotaphite Fathers.

His Beatitude thanked them all with the following address:

“How exceedingly radiant and majestic is the power of the Cross, O Christ, which placeth crowns for the Forty Martyrs by means of their adversaries! For having passed through fire and water, they cry out in incorruption: Blessed art Thou, the God of our Fathers”, the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (Matins, Ode 7, Troparion 5).

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

“O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles” (Psalm 43:3) the reverend chorea of the Forty Martyrs in Sebastia cries out, whose annual commemoration we observe today.

These holy Forty Martyrs, “struggled on earth, were patient in the wind, were given over to the fire, the water welcomed



them. Theirs is the voice "we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place" (Psalm 66:12), Saint Basil the Great says. The holy Martyrs managed this, paying heed to Saint Paul's words: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Philippians 3:8).

According to Saint Gregory of Nice, "to those great fighters, not even the sun seemed to be sweet; but they distanced themselves even from the sun, not to be drifted away from the true light...for them, everything was of the enemy, everything was foreign. Only one thing was good, Christ. They refused everything, to gain Him".

This is proven by the indeed great love of the Martyrs towards our God and Saviour Christ, "who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). These God-called Martyrs dared to die for the only "good", namely the righteous Christ of God, as Saint Paul preaches: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die" (Romans 5:7).

The Holy chorea, who were equal in the fight, equal in their mind and they equally received the crowns, the full of God Forty Martyrs, just like other three children in the fiery furnace, in one mouth praised and glorified and blessed God (ref. Daniel 3:23, Prayer 27), saying: "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection... Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him" (Romans 6:5,8,9).

Having their faith steadfast, that "if we be dead with Christ, we shall also live in Him", the Holy Martyrs did not lose heart, nor were they afraid, but on the contrary, moved by the

Holy Spirit, they sought the “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7).

The annual feast of the Holy Forty Martyrs, and especially of their co-martyr Theophilus, whose the Holy Name Our Mediocrity bears, is “a memorial before God” (Acts 10:4). And this because the Holy Forty Martyrs who “made the earth a heaven and illumined everything” became the true witnesses and preachers all over the world about Christ’s passions and His resurrection, but also, according to Saint Gregory of Nice, – satellites of Christ and builders of His Churches. According to Saint Paul, “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20).

The Holy Forty Martyrs became builders of the Church because according to Saint Basil the Great, they were “made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men” (1 Cor. 4:9), “they raised up the fallen ones, secured those in doubt, increased twofold the desire of the pious”. And according to their hymnographer, “in the splendid firmament of the august Church, ye at all times brightly shine like unto great and lustrous stars and ye illuminate faithful men, O Forty Martyrs of Christ, sacred and divine” (Matins, Troparion1).

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem honours the commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs who struggled for the love of Christ in gleefulness and joy, as well as of their co-martyr Theophilus, by celebrating the Great Sacrament of the Eucharist at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, officiated by Our Mediocrity and surrounded by the reverend members of our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, the High Priests, Priests and Hierodeacons, with the participation in prayer of the noble Christians from our flock, glorifying thus the “One who is wondrous in His saints”.

Moreover, we have rendered a thanksgiving Doxology to the Holy

Trinitarian God on our Holy Name Day, owed to the Holy Martyr Theophilos. And we blessed, according to Saint Polykarpos of Smyrna, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of our souls and governor of our bodies and Shepherd of the Ecumenical Church around the world”.

Referring to the meaning of the honour we attribute to the Saints, Saint John Damascene calls upon the witness of Saint John the Evangelist and Theologian and of the wise Saint Paul, according to whom, the Saints in general, and the Martyrs in particular, are friends of Christ, children and heirs of God; “But as many as received him, to them gave He the power to become the sons of God” (John 1:12). “Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ” (Gal. 4:7).

And we say this because the feast of the Holy Forty Martyrs and especially of their co-martyr Theophilos does not refer to our mediocrity only, but primarily to the Apostolic and Patriarchal institution of the Church, through which “we become able to participate in the lot of the Saints in the light...of the Son of His [God’s] love (cf. Col. 1:12-13). “And he is before all things, and by him, all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:17-18), “which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). The Holy Forty Martyrs became communicants of this blood of Christ.

Hearkening to Saint Paul’s preaching, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12), the Holy Martyrs who loved Christ, ignored the things of the temporary life in order to glorify God in their body parts”, Saint Basil the Great says. Therefore, their commemoration, of those Martyrs and friends of God projects like the lightning of the noetic illumination of Christ to a divine ray that

guides all of us.

According to Clement of Alexandria: "completion of the martyrdom we call not the end of the life any man received like the others, but that he completed the work of love". Precisely this "perfect, complete work of love", which is the unity of the various Orthodox Churches is what the Holy Forty Martyrs call us to show, as Saint Basil the Great phrased the example of the Martyrs that we need to imitate with the words: "There was not one country for the saints, each of them came from a different part of the world...the human nation of each of them was different, but the spiritual was one for all. For their common Father was God, and they were all brethren, not born of a man and a woman, but from the adoption of the Spirit, becoming one in the unity of the love for each other". In other words, Saint Paul's words, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3) has found its practice in these Martyrs.

We are also called to obey this order, namely the unity, peace, conciliation and love of the Gospel of God and our Saviour Christ, my dear brethren, especially during this blessed period of the fasting of the Holy and Great Lent, "that we might be fellow helpers to the truth" (3 John 8). And this because as Saint Paul says, this very God in Christ committed unto us the preaching of conciliation. "...and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:19)

Having, therefore, companions and helpers the holy Forty Martyrs and their co-martyr and our protector Theophilos and the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, let us entreat them to reach the luminous Resurrection of our God and Saviour of our souls in peace, humility and repentance.

For all these, we call upon all those who prayed with Us and honoured the festal commemoration of the Holy Martyrs, wishing them strength from on high, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Grace of the Holy Sepulchre and every blessing

coming from God, expressing our warmest thanks also to those who addressed Us.”

There was a monastic meal at noon.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF ABBA GERASIMOS OF THE JORDAN AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Thursday 4/17 March 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of our Father among the Saints Gerasimos of the Jordan.

On this day the Church commemorates that Saint Gerasimos came to the Holy Land from his hometown Myra of Lycia in AD 451. He strove in asceticism in various Monasteries of the Jordan desert and was distinguished for his utmost asceticism, fasting, humility and silence in spiritual cooperation with Saint Euthymius the Great.

For this reason, the desert monks asked him to become their spiritual Father and the Saint founded a Monastery of Kalamonos for them, where he received and guided a multitude of monks in the monastic life and many Christians in their life in Christ.

His commemoration was celebrated at the Monastery he founded with the Divine Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts, which was officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, with the co-celebration of the Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, Archimandrite Klaudios, Hieromonk

Kyriakos, Archimandrite Demetrios and Hierodeacons Eulogios and Dositheos. The service was attended by monks, nuns and pilgrims from Greece and Cyprus.

The Episcopal entourage and the large congregation were offered a meal by the Hegoumen and renovator of the Monastery Archimandrite Chrysostom.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Sunday 28 February/13 March 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the Sunday of Orthodoxy as the triumph of the truth of Orthodox Faith through the restoration of the holy icons by the pious Empress Theodora and the Patriarch Methodios of Constantinople; the holy icons testify to the incarnate presence of the Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

This feast was celebrated with Great Vespers on Saturday afternoon as ordained by the Typikon and the Status Quo of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, and with the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Services were officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Archbishops, Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia and Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Deacons and Archdeacon Mark. The Liturgy was attended by the Consul General of Greece in

Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, members of the Greek Consulate and many faithful, Greeks, Palestinians, Russians living locally, without pilgrims as there are still some covid-19 restrictions.

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a litany three times around the Sacred Edicule and around the shrines, which concluded in front of the Holy Sepulchre.

There His Beatitude read the "Synodicon of Orthodoxy" as it is written in the Book of Triodion, blessing the reverend Patriarchs, High Priests, Emperors and Priests who fought in favour of the holy icons and anathematizing, or delivering to God those who refused the holy icons and preached other heretic teachings.

Bells tolling, the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters, where His Beatitude addressed all present as follows:

"We also depict in icons and reverently venerate the shape of our human form that He has taken, which we have felt and seen, and the One who bore Him whilst keeping her virginity, and those who have utterly pleased Him. The symbols of His passions and especially the Cross we honour and venerate as divine trophies against the enemy", the God-bearing Father of the Church Saint Gregory Palamas preaches and confesses.

Your Excellency, Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

Today, the first Sunday of the Great Lent, we commemorate the historical event of the restoration of the sacred icons, which was done by the blessed Sovereigns of Constantinople, Mihail and his mother Theodora, during the Patriarchal Office of

Saint Methodios the Confessor.

The victorious power of the Church against the iconoclasts was recognized as the triumph of the healthy faith of the Orthodox Christians against their enemies. We say this because the established doctrines by the Ecumenical Synods and the great Fathers of the Church about the precision of our Orthodox Faith has preserved and safeguarded the sacred consignment which we have received by the Disciples and Apostles of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem, being fortified and founded by the divine power of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb of our Lord Jesus pays heed to the Lord's words: "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28); it has been the safe harbour of the unity of our Orthodox Faith, not only on the doctrines' side but also on the part of the bestowed grace, as Saint Cyril of Jerusalem teaches.

Behold, therefore, why the Holy Church of Jerusalem calls upon all those who want to venerate the Holy Sepulchre and the other sacred shrines of our Saviour Jesus Christ and His Most Holy Mother, to receive their grace. "The honour to the icon is attributed to the prototype", Saint Basil the Great says. In the same manner, the veneration of the holy shrines is attributed to Christ, the Theotokos and the Saints. "By kneeling down we venerate not the material but the image depicted," Saint John Damascene says (just as we do not venerate the material of the Gospel, nor of the cross, but the image of the Lord).

We, both clergy and the people, who are gathered here at the place of the passion on the Cross, of the burial and the resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ, namely at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, have celebrated the great sacrament of the Divine Liturgy, rendering thus thanksgiving praise and doxology to the Trinitarian God.



Let us say along with the hymnographer, celebrate, feast, the people of God bearing His name, seeing the Church again shining forth the beauty of the divine image, which God received as a man to save us. Many happy returns and a blessed Lent. Amen”.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF THE REVELATION OF THE MIRACLE OF THE BOILED WHEAT BY SAINT THEODORE THE TYRO**

On Saturday of the first week of Lent, 27 February / 12 March 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the miracle of the boiled wheat by the Holy Great Martyr Theodore the Tyro.

On this feast, the Church commemorates that Saint Theodore the Tyro appeared in a dream to the Archbishop of Constantinople Eudoxius and advised the people to eat boiled wheat during the fasting period, just as they used to do in his hometown Euhaita, so that they would not be contaminated by the offerings to the idols. This was secretly done by Julian the Transgressor who hated the Christians.

In remembrance of this event, Great Vespers was observed on Friday afternoon and the Divine Liturgy was celebrated on Saturday morning at the Holy Monastery of Saints Theodoroi, which is located between the Patriarchate and the New Gate. The Services were officiated by His Eminence Archbishop

Theophanes of Gerassa, with the co-celebration of Hieromonks, Hierodeacons and the attendance of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and faithful from Jerusalem.

His Eminence delivered a Sermon regarding the miracle of the boiled wheat.

During the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude visited the Monastery for veneration, accompanied by Hagiotaphite Fathers.

The Patriarchal and Episcopal entourages along with the congregation were offered a reception by the good keeper of the Monastery, the Hegoumen and Typikon Keeper Archimandrite Alexios.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FIRST STASIS OF THE AKATHIST AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Friday evening, 26 February / 11 March 2022, the Service of the First Stasis of the Akathist was observed at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. At this service, as the Typikon orders, the First Stasis of the Akathist was read within the Service of the Small Compline.

Before ending the service, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos who presided in the prayer delivered the following beneficial words to the faithful:

“An Angel and the chiefest among them was sent from Heaven to cry: Rejoice! To the Mother of God. And beholding Thee, O Lord, taking bodily form, he stood in awe, and with his

bodiless voice he cried aloud to her such things as these: Rejoice, though through whom joy shall shine forth. Rejoice, thou through whom the curse shall be blotted out”.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians,

Behold, the fasting has arrived, the mother of chastity, the accuser of sin and the advocate of repentance, the Angels' manner of living and the salvation of the people, the hymnographer of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church announces.

The Church of Christ rejoices and is gleeful with our entrance into the fasting period of the Holy Lent. And this, because fasting, which was dictated to us by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who “fasted forty days and forty nights” (Matt. 4:2), is indeed the salvation of the people.

And why is fasting the salvation of the people? Because according to Saint Basil the Great, “we fell from paradise because we did not fast; let us fast, therefore, so that we may return to it”. Our God the Word and Saviour Christ, who became incarnate from the pure flesh of the Virgin, is the new Adam, while the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is the new Eve, through whom “for our sake, the bodiless receives a body, and the One without beginning receives a beginning, and the uncontainable One is contained”, according to Saint John Damascene. While the hymnographer of the Church also says that the Theotokos became “the restoration of the fallen Adam, the redemption of the tears of Eve”.

The Church of Christ which has been revealed to us men on earth, is the visible paradise, while Christ is the “wood of life”. Therefore, Saint John the Theologian says in his Book of Revelation: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the

paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7). And in more detail, to the one who will be victorious over Satan and the struggle against sin, will I give him to eat the wood of life. Meaning, that I will deem him worthy to enjoy the eternal goods in my Father's Paradise, who according to my human nature is also my God.

The Holy God-bearing Fathers of the Church have established the service of the "Salutations to the Theotokos" during the blessed period of the Great Lent, because according to Saint John Damascene, "it is through Her that we have become citizens of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church". This means that through the Holy Baptism and the Seal of the Holy Spirit, we have been enlisted as citizens of the invisible and heavenly Church, namely of the eternal city of God, as Saint Paul says: "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Hebrews 13:14).

Precisely because it is not a continuing city in this world, for it has the fashion of this world (1 Cor. 7:31), "we owe to leave behind this world and run toward the future city, which is the heaven", Saint Theophylaktos says. In other words, fasting is the safe ladder, through which we ascend for the earth to heaven.

True fasting is alienation from evil. Fasting is the beginning of repentance, Saint Basil the Great says. And according to Saint Luke the Evangelist: "God granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" Saint John the Evangelist preaches (1 John 5:11-12).

Behold again why we salute and magnify the Most Blessed Theotokos, because she became the Mother of Life, namely of the Son and Word of God, our Saviour Christ.

Therefore, let us entreat her, my dear brethren, so that by her motherly intercessions we may be deemed worthy to venerate

the luminous Resurrection of the victor over death and corruption and sin, our God and Saviour Christ.

And let us say along with Saint John, the hymnographer of the Mother of God: “prolong your mercy Most-Pure Lady, to those who know you, and look favourably upon your servants and their works, and guide us all to the path of peace, for we have all set our eyes to you in hope, and we have your intercession to your Son and our Saviour and God, to whom belongs all glory, along with His Father without beginning, and the Holy Spirit, who is of One Essence with them, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen”. Have a blessed Great Lent”.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FIRST LITURGY OF THE PRE-SANCTIFIED GIFTS AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

The first Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts was observed at the Holy Patriarchal and Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen on Ash Wednesday, 24 February / 9 March 2022, at the presence of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. His Beatitude arrived at the Church in all formalities and presided at the prayers.

The Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts was also

observed at the Horrendous Golgotha by His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Sunday afternoon, 21 February / 6 March 2022, just before the beginning of the Holy and Great Lent, the Service of Contrite Vespers was observed at Saint James Cathedral by His Eminence Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella. At the end of the Service, His Eminence read the prayer of forgiveness.

Around 5.30 p.m. the Service of the Small Compline was read at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen and at the end, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos read the prayer of forgiveness, which was followed by the brotherly osculation.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE SATURDAY OF THE SOULS AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Friday afternoon, 13/26 February 2022 at the Monastic and Patriarchal Church of Saints Constantine and Helen there was

the memorial service for the repose of the souls of the departed Hagiotaphite Fathers, memorable Patriarchs, High Priests, Hieromonks, Deacons and Monks. The service was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-prayer of Hagiotaphite High Priests, Hieromonks and Deacons, who chanted the Canon for the repose of the souls of the Patriarchs first, followed by the High Priests, Archimandrites, Priests, Deacons, Monks and Nuns.

After the Canon and the dismissal of Vespers, there was a reception with the boiled wheat, along with the wish "May God give them rest".

On Saturday morning the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the chapel of the Holy Zion cemetery by Archimandrite Klaudios and Hierodeacon Simeon, while the memorial service was observed by His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa and the Trisagion was read around the tombs by the Priests for the Hagiotaphite Fathers, the members of the Greek community and the Arab-speaking flock that are buried there.

**From Secretariat-General**