

THE FEAST OF SAINT THEODOSIOS THE CENOBIARCH AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday 11/24 January 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of Saint Theodosios the Cenobiarch at the Holy Monastery dedicated to him in the Judea desert, between Beit Sahour and the Lavra of Saint Savvas.

On this feast, the Church and especially the Church of Jerusalem commemorates that Saint Theodosios was born in Mogarissos of Cappadocia and came to the Holy Land in AD 451. He initially became a monk in a Monastery of the Jerusalem district, named after Ikelia. He lived in strict ascetic striving, in silence, prayer and fasting in the Judea desert, until the desert monks recognized the virtuous and illumined man and asked him to undertake their spiritual guidance in a Holy Monastery.

Seeking the place to establish the Monastery, God revealed to him the area from which the Magi returned to their homeland, after worshipping the newly-born infant, Christ born in the flesh. The Saint founded a Monastery there, which gradually became a Coenobium, including four Churches and four hundred monks, who lived according to the coenobitic rules; common worship, common work, common meals, obedience to the Hegoumen, until they would be ready to enter a more difficult monastic style, that of the Lavra monks. In this Monastery, work was essential obedience, by which the monks sustained a home for the poor and a home for the elderly and weak. Therefore, the Monastery had a social role, and it also kept a school to educate the monks. This was the Monastery of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, Saints Modestos and Sophrohios and of the Leimonarion writer, John Moschos.

Saint Theodosios was of the same place, co-worker and supporter of Saint Savvas. These two great Fathers worked in unison to establish the Christological Doctrine of the 4th Ecumenical Synod in Chalcedon (AD 451), according to which Christ has one hypostasis and two natures, the divine and the human. This was against the doctrine of the Monophysites who distorted the teaching of the Church.

Under the lead of Saint Theodosios in the Coenobitic life, the Monastery had a significant role along with the Lavra of Saint Savvas for the development of monasticism and the prevailing of the Orthodox Doctrine between the 5th and 7th centuries.

Some years in between there was a decline due to the raids. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Cretan monks Galaktion and Leontios came to live there. Around the middle of the 20th century the blessed Metropolitan Bartholomew of Madaba, who came from Krini of Asia Minor, constructed a new Church above the ruins of the previous one in the centre of the Monastery. He was succeeded by the blessed Archimandrite Yakinthos and around 1965 by the current Hegoumen, Archimandrite Ierotheos, who has been serving there for more than 40 years. Archimandrite Ierotheos has done much work in the renovation of the Monastery, building a new wing and has protected its property with many toils and pains.

At this historic Monastery, His Beatitude officiated a night-vigil with the co-celebration of their Eminences the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia and Philoumenos of Pella, the Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Eudokimos, Ignatios and Yusef, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios, under the chanting of Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Gotsopoulos.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God” (Isaiah 35:1-2), the Prophet Isaiah says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians

The true Light, the Holy Spirit, which was seen in the form of a dove at the river Jordan has gathered us all in this holy place of asceticism of our Holy Father Theodosios the Cenobiarch, the place of the Magi's cave, to celebrate his commemoration.

During these holy and festive days of the Nativity of our Saviour Christ in Bethlehem, of the shepherds who kept the night watch in their fields, the Magi that came here with their gifts and the holy Theophany by the river Jordan, the deserts of Judea and Jordan are rejoicing indeed.

And the Jordan desert rejoices as the hymnographer says: “The true Light hath appeared, and He giveth enlightenment to all. Christ, Who surpasseth all purity is baptized with us; He bringeth sanctification into the water, and it becometh a place of cleansing for our souls. That which is visible is earthly, that which is perceived with the understanding is higher than the Heavens. Through washing cometh salvation and through water, the Spirit. By descending into the water, we ascend to God. Wondrous are Thy works, O Lord; Glory to Thee” (Menaion January 7, Praises, troparion 4). And the desert of Judea rejoices because, the similar to the angels' manner of living of the God-bearing monastics, Euthymius the Great, Savvas the Sanctified, Theoktistos and Saint Theodosios the Cenobiarch, among many others, of whom I cannot say, “for the time would fail me” (Hebrews 11:32) was founded in it.

Our Holy Father Theodosios was a fervent zealot of the angelic city of heaven, and having left his hometown Mogarissos of Cappadocia, came to the Holy Land, to tread in the natural and spiritual footsteps of Christ our God, who came here in the flesh for the universal salvation. Once in Jerusalem and having venerated the life-giving Tomb of the Resurrected Christ, like another thirsty deer, he retreated to the great teachers of Christ and of the desert of Palestine, and at the feet of Saint Symeon the Stylite from Antioch, by whom he was taught his future virtues.

The light-bearing Theodosios did this according to the psalmist's words: "It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places. He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip" (Psalm 18:32-36).

Indeed, my dear ones, the education in Christ and the learning through an educational system, fatherly councils and trials from the traps and the cunning manners of the devil (cf. Eph. 6:11), strengthened Saint Theodosios and made him communicant of the unspeakable mysteries of God, an imitator of Saint Paul, "caught up to the third heaven...and heard unspeakable words" (2 Cor. 12:2,4). This is also confirmed by his hymnographer who says: "Thou didst secretly enter into the noetic darkness of the Divine Light, O all-blessed Theodosios; and having the doctrines of piety written on the tablets of thy heart by the finger of God, thou gavest them to thy disciples as a book of life" (Menaion Jan. 11, Matins, Ode 8, Troparion 4).

According to the established historian Cyril of Skythopolis, the blessed Theodosios was a defender of the healthy Orthodox faith, of the "doctrines of reverence" which were twisted by

“men corrupt in mind and deprived of the truth” (1 Tim. 6:5), according to Saint Paul.

These were the “schismatic monks of the desert who did not have communion with the Catholic Church, but were under the quarrel and fallacy of Eutychus and Dioscorus”.

It is noteworthy that when the blessed Theodosios came to Jerusalem, during the reign of the God-pleasing Emperor Marcianus (AD 396-457), “he received the hospitality of some Logginos and old man of Cappadocia, of the Order of the Studios of the Holy Resurrection of Christ God”, which is the current Hagiotaphite Brotherhood. This old man, Logginos, received Theodosios and put him under the care of blessed Ikelia, who was building at the time the Church of the Old Kathisma of Theotokos...Ikelia took this young man Theodosios, as he was an intelligent singer and accepted him in the Order of the Studios [monks], who were very reverend; when the blessed Ikelia died, Theodosios undertook the leadership of the place.

Our Holy Father Theodosios was named Cenobiarch because, in this Monastery, which bears his name, he established a Coenobium, and “ever since, many retreated to him, asking to live with him and having accepted them [as monks], he guided them to the perfect will of God and God was always with him” and he was “a successful man” like Joseph (Gen. 39:2). In other words, Theodosios knew that God was with him and that all the things he does are blessed by God.

Let us entreat this great citizen of the desert and luminary of the world that by his prayers and those of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, he may guide our mind and heart to the perfect will of God and our Saviour Christ. And along with the hymnographer, let us say: “Do not forsake your flock, most blessed Theodosios, but by your intercessions to the Lord [Who was baptized in the Jordan by John], pray that we may be saved”. Many happy and blessed returns. Amen”.

After dismissal, the elderly Hegoumen Archimandrite Ierotheos offered a monastic reception.

From Secretariat-General

THE FORTIETH-DAY MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR BLESSED METROPOLITAN CHRISTODOYLOS OF ELEFTHEROUPOLIS

The fortieth-day memorial service for the Hagiotaphite Metropolitan Christodoulos of Eleftheroupolis was observed at the Horrendous Golgotha on Saturday, 9/22 January 2022.

The service was preceded by the Divine Liturgy which was officiated by His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina with the co-celebration of Archimandrite Makarios, Priest Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Simeon. The chanting was delivered by Mr Gotsopoulos.

The memorial service began immediately after the end of the Liturgy and was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with Hierarchs and Hieromoks of the Patriarchate.

The memorial service concluded with the relevant reception at the Patriarchate Hall.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY MONASTERY OF HOZEVA AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday 8/21 January 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy Monastery of Hozeva, which is the commemoration of its founders, Saints John and George the Hozevites.

Saint John was a pillar and beacon of the Monastery, having come from Caesarea of Palestine, while Saint George came from Cyprus and rebuilt the Monastery after the total destruction by the Persian raid in AD 614, thus drawing to it a great number of monks and a multitude of Christians.

For their commemoration, the current Hegoumen and renovator of the Monastery, who has also restored its function as a Coenobium, Archimandrite Constantine, received His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the following address:

“Your Beatitude, Father and Master,

With Your reverend Entourage

The holy founders of the Hozeva Lavra, John and George lived in asceticism here, not at the same time but each according to his Fathers, in honesty, integrity, love and peace. To speak plainly, they lived in union and oneness. These are virtues for which Saint Makarios of Egypt notes:

“In this manner, a lot of unanimity and peace and concord in the bond of peace can sustain each other, and live with one

another in integrity and simplicity and prosperity of God” (Saint Makarios of Egypt Vol.41, Hom. 3, 21,31, p.156).

And how much coveted such unity and solidarity and sympathy in our Holy Orthodox Church is becoming nowadays, Your Beatitude, Father and Master!

We wish that by the prayers of the Saints John and George and Your Beatitude’s this unity will prevail in the end. Amen!

As Your sons, we welcome Your Beatitude wishing you a Happy Feast!”

An All-night Vigil followed, officiated by His Beatitude, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Hieromonk of the Monastery Fr Chrysogonos, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios, as the chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Monks Clement and Daniel. The service was attended only by a few monks due to covid restrictions.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the Lord, and he answered them. He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them” (Psalm 99:6-7) the Psalmist says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Holy Fathers and brothers

The Holy Spirit who came down in the form of the dove in the river Jordan at the baptism of Jesus Christ and Son of God has gathered us in this holy Monastery of Hozeva to honour the sacred memory of our Holy Father George the Hozevite.

Joyful was the previous feast of Theophany of our Lord Jesus

Christ, glorious is the present day of the Saints of God, and this because "God is marvellous in His saints" (Psalm 68:36) according to the psalmist.

Blessed George paid heed to the psalmist words: "I awaited Thy salvation, O Lord, and Thy commandments have I loved. My soul hath kept Thy testimonies and hath loved them exceedingly. I have kept Thy commandments and Thy testimonies, for all my ways are before Thee, O Lord" (Psalm 118: 166-168), and "I have longed for Thy salvation, O Lord, and Thy law is my meditation" (Psalm 118:174). He abandoned the place of his birth, Cyprus, and came to the place of the redeeming mystery of the divine providence; the place of the nativity, crucifixion and three-day burial and resurrection of our Saviour Christ, as his hymnographer says: "Sore didst thou desire to see and to worship the Tomb of Him Whoever is, O wise George; and coming thereto, thou didst deem it a holy thing to die through asceticism with Him that was slain for His compassion's sake" (Matins, Ode 7 Troparion 3).

In other words, blessed George sought the "immaculate and painless" life of Christ's friends, namely the continuing city of the Kingdom of Heaven (Hebrews 13:14). He sought to put on Christ, "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6:16), that is why he came to the Jordan desert, to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, according to Saint Paul's preaching: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

In interpreting these words of Paul, Saint Photios says: "We put on Christ and the Holy Spirit, not as a garment that surrounds us exteriorly, but in a manner that we fill our heart and mind with light and grace". The one who has filled his heart with the light and grace becomes a saint, according to the Holy One who has called us, and you have been born into holiness, because it is written: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter

1:15-16), Saint Peter preaches, referencing the book of Leviticus (Lev. 11:44) and the urging of our Lord Jesus Christ "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

It is noteworthy though, that the words "be ye holy and perfect" do not refer to the essence of God but to the good works and actions and to all virtues in general. "For we are not able to become similar to the essence of God, but we can only imitate God by improving in virtues", Saint Athanasios the Great says. "To become strangers to every malice as much as it can be possible, in both words and actions and in thought, cleansing yourselves from the impurity of malice, this is a true imitation of the divine perfection", Saint Gregory of Nyssa says.

Of this divine perfection and holiness did Saint George become an imitator through his ascetic striving, like another John the Baptist in the Jordan desert, in Hozeva, preaching by his own example the utmost humility of Christ and His perfect love. This is also testified by his hymnographer: "The Monastery of Hozeva hath found in thee a rule and most exact example for the pursuit of every form of virtuous works, O wise George, boast of the righteous. Therefore, those who have passed their lives in godliness leap for joy with thee unto the ages" (Matins, Ode 8, Troparion 3).

Indeed, my dear brethren, Saint George became the modest ornament of the monastics and his Monastery of Hozeva a place of sanctification and confession of his commemoration (Psalm 30:4) according to the psalmist, where the light and truth of Christ, Who was baptised in the Jordan led a multitude of righteous and saints, among whom is Saint John from Caesarea, who also lived in asceticism here, and Saint John the New from Romania, whose incorrupt and fragrant relic confesses the faith of the fishermen Apostles and testifies the luminous Resurrection of Christ; the victory of Christ's death over the death of corruption and sin.

Let us pray to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, so that we who celebrate the commemoration of Saint George, may gain the redeeming light of Christ's glory. And let us say along with the hymnographer: "With one accord, let us faithful laud with hymns God the Word, Who came forth from God, and Who ineffably took on flesh from a pure Virgin for us and in wisdom past telling descended to make Adam new again, who by eating fell grievously down into corruption's pits" (Matins, Ode9, Heirmos). Amen. Many happy returns!"

After dismissal, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Constantine hosted a monastic meal.

On Saturday 9/22 January 2022 the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Monastery of the recently discovered Cemetery of the Hozevite holy martyrs. The church was built in their memory by the current Hegoumen Archimandrite Constantine. The icon of the holy martyrs is posted below with the chapel on the background.

From Secretariat-General

THE SYNAXIS OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday 4/20 January 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Synaxis of the Holy Forerunner and Baptist John.

By Synaxis of Saint John the Baptist, we mean the gathering of the faithful of the Church to honour the Saint as the main person for the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For this feast, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Holy

Monastery of Saint John the Baptist on the West Bank of the River Jordan, near the Lord's baptism site.

The Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias with the co-celebration of the Hegoumens and Hieromonks of the neighbouring Holy Monasteries of Jericho, under the care of the Hegoumen Archimandrite Bartholomew, who has greatly contributed to the rebuilding of the Monastery through the collection of donations from pious pilgrims and a significant financial contribution by the former Hegoumen of Sarantarion Mount, blessed Archimandrite Gerasimos.

The Liturgy was attended by Hagiotaphite Monks, Nuns and laity from Jerusalem and Jericho, who were offered a reception by the Hegoumen at the end of the service.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THEOPHANY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday 6/19 January 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the Despotic feast of Theophany according to the Status Quo.

On the morning of the feast, the Service of the Sanctification of the water was observed at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia, Philoumenos of Pella and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis and Hagiotaphite Hieromonks with first

in rank the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios. The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine singers, Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos.

After the Sanctification of the water, the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom was officiated by His Beatitude at the Holy Sepulchre, with the co-celebration of the Hierarchs and Hieromonks written above. The service was attended by local faithful Christians and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, without any pilgrims due to covid-19 restrictions.

The Liturgy concluded with the sanctification of the congregation and the veneration of the Holy Cross with the Precious Wood, before returning to the Patriarchate Headquarters, under the sounds of the great bells.

At the Patriarchate main hall, His Beatitude wished the enlightenment of the Father of Lights of our Lord who was baptised in the Jordan.

Finally, the ministering Priests visited the houses of the faithful to sanctify them with the sanctified water.

From Secretariat-General

THE FOREFEAST OF THEOPHANY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, 5/18 January 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the Forefeast of Theophany.

This is feast was celebrated as the commemoration of the

baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ by Saint John the Baptist, when "the worship of the Trinity was revealed", namely the voice of the Father at the Lord's baptism and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove.

For this Despotic feast, the Royal Hours of Theophany were read before the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great and the Service of the Sanctification of the water at the Patriarchal Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen presiding by His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

After the service, the Patriarchal Entourage went to the Reception Hall where the ministering Priest sanctified the Hall and His Beatitude waited to receive the Episcopal Entourage of His Eminence Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia, who had held the same service at Saint James Cathedral.

After this, His Beatitude departed for the River Jordan, through the Monastery of Prophet Elisha in Jericho and the Prefecture of Jericho and arrived at the Monastery of Saint John the Baptist. There, His Beatitude was warmly received by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Bartholomew, the Authorities, the Scouts, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and the faithful.

At the Monastery of Saint John the Baptist the 9th Hour of Theophany was read, to be followed by the procession down to the river Jordan. Vespers and the Service of the Sanctification of the waters were observed on the platform by the river and the service concluded with the diving of the Cross in the river under the chanting of the "When Thou wast baptised in the Jordan". The same service was simultaneously held at the East Bank on the opposite side of the river.

The Patriarchal Entourage and many others were offered a reception with fasting food by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Bartholomew.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEASTS OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE LORD AND OF SAINT BASIL

On Thursday, 1/14 January 2022 the Patriarchate celebrated the Despotic feast of the circumcision according to the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and the commemoration of Saint Basil the Great, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia.

This feast was celebrated with an All-night vigil at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with Matins in the Catholicon and of the Church of the Resurrection and the Divine Liturgy at the All-holy Tomb.

The Liturgy celebrated as a “small parresia”, was 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, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hieromonks and Hierodeacons. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and the Patriarchal School Students, at the presence of Monks, Nuns, and laity from Jerusalem and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem.

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a procession three times around the Sacred Edicule and around the shrines, carrying the sacred relic of the right arm of Saint Basil the Great, which

is kept all year round at the Sacristy of the Holy Sepulchre.

At the end of the Services, His Beatitude cut the New Year Cake at the Office of Geronda Sacristan, His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis.

Early in the morning, after the Divine Liturgy at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, His Beatitude came to cut the New Year Cake for the Brotherhood of the Central Monastery at the Epitropikon.

In honour of Saint Basil the Great, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated on Friday morning at the Holy Church of Saint Basil in Jerusalem, by the Master of Ceremonies of the Patriarchate, Archimandrite Bartholomew, by the hospitality of the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios.

There was a meal for the Brotherhood at noon.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT MELANI AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday 31 December 2021/ 13 January 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of Saint Melani.

On this feast, the whole Church and especially the Church of Jerusalem commemorates Saint Melani who was born from a noble family in Rome and when her husband and children died, she retreated to Egypt where she fed thousands of monks and Christians and protected the persecuted by the Arians Christians.

When they left for Palestine, she followed them and established a Nunnery, living in reverence until about the year 410.

The commemoration of Saint Melani was celebrated by the Patriarchate at the underground Chapel dedicated to her within the Holy Monastery of Megali Panagia, which was founded by Saint Elias, Patriarch of Jerusalem in AD 510 for the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and was later given to Saint Melani who became the Abbess of 90 nuns in it.

In honour of Saint Melani there was a night vigil at her chapel on Wednesday 30 December 2021/ 12 January 2022 by the Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos with the co-celebration of the ministering Priest of the Monastery, Archimandrite Makarios and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon with the help of the Nuns of the Monastery.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Abbess of the Monastery and renovator of the main Church, Reverend Nun Melani hosted a reception for the congregation.

From Secretariat-General

CHRISTMAS AT THE HOLY ARCHDIOCESE OF QATAR

On Friday evening, 11/24 December 2021 the Services of Vespers with the blessing of bread for the Feast of Saint Spyridon were observed at the Chapel of the Dormition, in the Arabic, Greek and English languages. On Saturday morning, 12/25

December 2021, Matins and the Divine Liturgy of Christmas were celebrated at the Holy Church of Saint Isaac the Syriac, in Arabic, Greek, English and Romanian languages, in the presence of the Deputy Head of the Greek Embassy in Doha Mr George Zafeiris and the Defence Attaché Colonel Kyriakos Dimitrakoulas. Due to the covid-19 restrictions, only one hundred and fifty faithful are allowed to participate in the Divine Liturgy in Saint Isaac's Cathedral. The rest of the faithful who came that day attended Matins and the Divine Liturgy observed by Priest Demetrios at the Dormition Chapel.

On Thursday morning, 24 December 2021/ 6 January 2022, Matins and the Royal Hours of Christmas were observed. Vespers, Matins and the Divine Liturgy were held in the evening in the Slavonic and Serbian languages, at the presence of the Ambassador of Moldavia in Doha Mr Victor Tvircun, the Deputy Head of the Serbian Embassy in Doha Mr Slobodan Radeka and many faithful from Doha and fewer numbers from Riyadh. After the Divine Liturgy, there was the inauguration of a member of the Serbian community Mr Mijodrag Tepavcevic's exhibition of paintings, which was followed by a reception at the reception hall.

The services were officiated by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Qatar with the co-celebration of Priest Demetrios. Instead of a Sermon, the Christmas message of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III was read in the languages used for each service. The Byzantine choir also chanted in these languages.

From the Holy Archdiocese of Qatar

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FIRST MARTYR AND DEACON STEPHEN AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, 27 December 2021/ 9 January 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy First Martyr and Archdeacon Stephen.

On this feast, the Church commemorates the narrative according to the book of Acts of the Apostles (chapter 7), which reads that Stephen was one of the seven deacons elected by the Apostles, "to wait at the tables" (Acts 6:2), the meals of love. Besides his philanthropic ministry, Saint Stephen preached that Jesus was the Christ. For this reason, the Sanhedrin lords violently brought him to the Sanhedrin where he confessed his faith, concluding that he sees the heavens open the Son of God sitting at the right side of the Creator (Acts 7:56). For this confession, Stephen was led to a place in Gethsemane and was stoned to death.

At the place of his stoning, where he was praying for those who stoned him and a young man named Saul kept watch over the Jews' garments, Vespers was held on Saturday afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning by His Eminence Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella with Archimandrite Makarios and Archdeacon Mark, at the chanting of Mr Vasileios Gotsopoulos with the help of Archimandrite Eusevios, Mr Fadi Abdelnour and the Nuns of Bethany's Monastery of Martha and Maria. The service was attended by nuns and faithful from Jerusalem.

After the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of Saint Stephen, there was a litany at the rock of the stoning and a supplication.

After the Liturgy, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Epiphanius hosted a reception for the clergy and the congregation at the

Hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General