

THE FEAST OF SAINT ANNA'S DORMITION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, 25 July /7 August 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Dormition of the Ancestor of God Saint Anna, at the Holy Monastery dedicated to her inside the Old City wall by the Lion's Gate, or Stephen's Gate.

On this day the Church commemorates that Saint Anna, who was baren, was blessed by God and granted the request of her prayer, that she and her husband Joachim would bear the Most Holy Theotokos, who gave birth to Life, namely to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Saint Anna lived a holy life and slept in the Lord around the age of 68, while Joachim completed his life on earth at the age of 80 according to the Church Fathers.

At this Monastery, in honour of Saint Anna, Vespers was held on Friday afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on Saturday morning was officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, with the co-celebration of the Archimandrites Makarios and Isidoros, Priest George Baramki and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and the Liturgy was attended by many faithful Christians from Jerusalem and pilgrims from Georgia.

After the Divine Liturgy, the good keeper and renovator of the Monastery Archimandrite Meletios offered a reception to the Episcopal Entourage and the congregation.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT MARY MAGDALENE & SAINT MARCELLA OF CHIOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday 22 July /4 August 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy Glorious Mary Magdalene the myrrh-bearer and equal to the Apostles, and the commemoration of Saint Marcella of Chios.

The commemoration of Saint Mary Magdalene, who according to the Gospels was healed from evil spirits by the Lord, and who saw Him and preached His resurrection, was celebrated at the Russian Holy Nunnery bearing her name in Gethsemane, with the Divine Liturgy that was officiated by Metropolitan Mark of Berlin from ROCOR (Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia), which was called "Diaspora" before its union with Moscow Patriarchate.

During the Divine Liturgy His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, accompanied by Hierodeacon Simeon, visited the Monastery. His Eminence read the greeting of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, who is currently in Jordan; the greeting is below:

Greeting to the Community on the feast of Saint Mary Magdalene

Myrrh-bearer and Equal to the Apostles

at the Russian Church of Saint Mary Magdalene in Gethsemane

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

4 August 2021

Dear Archimandrite Roman,

Dear Mother Elizabeth,

Your Eminences,

Dear Fathers,

Beloved Monastics,

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

*Today on this blessed and glorious feast of your patron saint,
we are reminded of these words:*

Praise be to the God of the Christians,

*For he has raised up both men and women to serve His Holy
Church.*

Among the first of them was Mary, born in Magdala,

who walked upon this earth with the blessed Theotokos,

the venerable Apostles, and the pious myrrh-bearing women.

She hath shown us, through her marvellous transformation,

*the life-changing power of Christ's compassion and
deliverance.*

Let us, therefore, hasten to her and declare:

*Rejoice, Mary Magdalene, holy myrrh-bearer and first
proclaimer of the Resurrection.*

(The Akathist)

The Gospels are eloquent testimony to Saint Mary Magdalene as a preacher of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. She was the first to the tomb on that first Easter morning, and the Good News of the resurrection was spread from her.

We who celebrate her festal memory today with such joy are the Church of the resurrection, and our mission is to be a witness to the resurrection in our own day. This mission is all the more urgent in our present time and circumstance when the pandemic has spread both death and the fear of death all around the world. Here in the Holy City of Jerusalem, it is incumbent upon us to whom the Holy Places have been entrusted by Divine Providence, to remain steadfast in our proclamation of the resurrection. We are to be champions of Christ's resurrection, holding high, for all to see, the bright torch of the light and hope that come from the Holy Tomb.

We have experienced in our community the sting of death during this pandemic; today's feast is our consolation, for Saint Magdalene reminds us through her own tears at the empty Tomb, that eternal life triumphs over death. As we read in the Gospel of Saint Mark:

The angel said to them, "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. Look, see the place where they laid him.

(Mark 16:6)

Today, therefore, let us recommit ourselves to the message of the resurrection as we celebrate this joyous feast, and MAY Saint Mary Magdalene pray for us, that we MAY be faithful to our mission of proclaiming the resurrection.

Thank you.

The commemoration of Saint Magdalen was also celebrated at the

Church of the Holy Sepulchre with an All-night Vigil, led by His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, and a procession with the holy relics of the Saint.

The feast was also celebrated in Magdala, the Saint's hometown by Tiberias Sea, at the chapel of Moscow Patriarchate. The Liturgy was officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, with the co-celebration of the Head of MISSIA, Archimandrite Alexander.

The commemoration of Saint Marcella was likewise celebrated at the chapel inside the Holy Church of Saint Spyridon in the Old City of Jerusalem, with the Divine Liturgy by the Hegoumen of the H. Monastery of Saint Nicodemus and ministering Priest of Megali Panagia, Archimandrite Makarios, with the hospitality of the Hegoumen Archimandrite Sergios.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF PROPHET ELIJAH AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday 20 July / 2 August 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the holy glorious Prophet Elijah (Elias) at the Holy Monastery bearing his name between south Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

On this day the Church commemorates that prophet Elias the Thesbite was full of godly zeal regarding the fact that the God of Israel is the only God. Such was his faith and holiness that God heard his prayer and did not send any rain for three years, and only with his prayer after that the He opened the

heavens and gave rain again. With prophet Elias' prayer, God sent fire from heaven on Carmel mount and burnt the wood in the altar. For the Church, prophet Elias is an angel in the flesh, the summit and boast of the prophets, the second forerunner of Christ's presence, who gave his grace to Elisha..."

Prophet Elias ascended in heaven in a fiery chariot and dropped his fleece down to his disciple Elisha, who used it to cross the River Jordan.

The Divine Liturgy in his Monastery was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Philoumenos of Pella, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Master of Ceremonies Archimandrite Bartholomew, Archimandrites Makarios and Isidoros, the ministering Priest of Saint James' Cathedral Charalambos Bandour, Priest George Baramki, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Archimandrite Eusevios and Hierodeacon Simeon on the right in Greek and Saint James' choir under Mr Kamar on the left in Arabic, as the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and many faithful Christians.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon before the Holy Communion:

"Not in an earthquake, but in a light breeze didst thou behold the presence of the Lord God, which enlightened thee of old; and mounting on a swift four-horsed chariot, thou, o Elias inspirited of God didst strangely ride through the sky, O divinely blessed, being wondrous in the sight of all" (Vespers, sticheron 2) the hymnographer proclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The incarnate Angel and the Prophets' summit and boast, Elias the Thesbite, has gathered us all today in his holy Church to celebrate his sacred commemoration and praise in hymns Christ Who glorified him.

Indeed, Elias was glorified by God the Father, becoming a vessel of the Holy Spirit, Who gave him the gift of prophecy and the power to work miracles "The Lord hath made wondrous His holy one" (Psalm 4:4).

Elias the Thesbite was correctly called "prophet of the highest and summit and boast of the prophets". Like another Moses, he saw God, like another Paul, he "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12:4). Behold what his hymnographer says: "As a seer of God, The Thesbite with Moses beholdeth upon Tabor that which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which the heart of earthborn men hath not considered, even the Almighty Lord incarnate" (Matins, Ode 9, Troparion 3).

Referring to the power and the impact of the righteous man's prayer, Saint James the Brother of God names Elias the zealot as a tangible example, saying: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months" (James 5:16-17).

Through the power of the prayer of those "with an innocent heart and pure hands" (Psalm 23:4), Elias the Thesbite did not only "bind the heavens with his word", but also put to shame the idolatrous priests of Baal (see 3 Kings 18:22), resurrected the son of the woman from Zarephath which belonged to Sidon (see 3 Kings 17), ascended into the heavens in a fiery chariot, threw down to Elisha his mantle and gave his disciple twofold the grace he had (see 4 Kings 2).

It is written in the Book Wisdom of Sirach: "Then Elijah

arose, a prophet like fire, and his word burned like a torch... How glorious you were, Elijah, in your wondrous deeds! Whose glory is equal to yours?" (Wisdom of Sirach 48:1-4). At this point, this book's writer wonders: How much you were glorified O Elias, with your wondrous works! Who can boast of being like you? This refers to the experience of the vision of God Elias had while he found himself in a state of despair and hidden egoism.

"And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice" (3 Kings 19:10-12).

The strong wind, the earthquake and the fire Elias saw, as well as the thunder and lightning of God's vision Moses had, refer to the unbearable of the divine nature. However, the fourth element of "a still small voice" which is unique in Elias' vision of God, distinguishes his experience from that of Moses and strongly denotes "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7), the love and longsuffering of God.

In other words, the "breeze" – according to Father Joel Gianakopoulos –, is the symbol of God's love. This manner of God's appearance teaches the despondent and discouraged Prophet Elias due to triumph of evil that he should be thinking of the love and longsuffering of God, Who does not wish the death of the sinner until he repents". "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matt. 9:13)

the Lord says. According to Saint Paul, God “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).

Interpreting Elias’ vision of God on Mount Horeb allegorically, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: “everyone who like Elias the great truly seeks God, will behave like a young man and experience and thrive in the toils and struggles of virtues, not only on Mount Horeb but also in the cave of Horeb; and I mean the secrecy of the knowledge that comes along with the habituation of virtues”.

In other words, Saint Cyril considers Prophet Elias a prototype of the true spiritual work and seeking of God, namely of the mystical divine knowledge, being sure that every faithful in a practical struggle imitating Elias will be deemed worthy not only of the acquisition of virtues but also of the vision of God, namely the vision of the glory of God, which results from the cultivation of the virtues.

It is also noteworthy, my dear brethren, that God chooses natural phenomena like “a strong wind, an earthquake and fire” to reveal not only to the Prophets and the righteous but also to His deniers that He is the One who created the universe out of nought, the Creator of the visible and invisible creation. Therefore, referring to man’s fall and consequently to the fall of the creation, Saint Paul says: “For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope” (Romans 8:20).

Honouring his sacred commemoration, let us ask his intercessions to God the Father and say along with the hymnographer: “Beholding the great iniquity of men, and God’s immeasurable love for man, the Prophet Elias was troubled, being wroth; and he uttered uncompassionate words unto Him that is compassionate, and cried out: Be Thou wroth with them that have set Thee as nought, O most righteous Judge. But the bowels of the Good One were in no wise stirred to punish them

that set His at nought. For He ever awaiteth the repentance of all men, since He is the only Friend of man" (Matins, Oikos). To Him belongs all glory and honour and worship unto the ages. Amen.

Many happy returns!"

After the Divine Liturgy, the good caretaker of the Monastery Monk Achillios hosted a reception for all congregation and later on a meal for the Patriarchal Entourage and members of Saint James' parish.

From Secretariat-General

EPISCOPAL LITURGY AT THE RUINS OF A 5TH CENTURY BYZANTINE CHURCH IN THE ISRAELI CITY ASHDOD (ANCIENT COASTAL AZOTOS)

Around 1921, at the beginning of work at a construction site in a neighbourhood of south Azotos (present Ashdod), the digging machine uncovered mosaics of an old Byzantine Holy Church, with the result that the Archaeological Service of Israel intervened and prohibited the continuation of the works.

Ever since the specific plot remained empty and fell under the ownership of the state. In 2009, the Archaeological Service assigned the responsibility of the excavations to the specific

plot to archaeologist Dr Alexander Fantalkin, Lecturer at Tel Aviv University, who specializes in Ancient Greece in the 8th century BC. The excavations were postponed and continued this year.

A building complex with a central temple and chapels of unique spiritual and historical value were discovered during the excavations. There is a possibility that it is associated with the existence of an early form of a Hesychastic Monastery for an Order of Virgin Women with the title Deaconess.

On Thursday morning, 16/29 July 2021, an outdoors Divine Liturgy at the ruins of the ancient Church was officiated by His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, with the participation of the Reverend Archimandrites; Eudokimos, the Spiritual Father of Saint Savvas' Lavra, Ignatios, Hegoume of Beit Sahour and Beit Jala, Constantine, Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Hozeva, Artemios, Hegoumen of Haifa, Leontios, Hegoumen of Rafeidia of Samaria, Marcellus, Hegoumen of Saint George in Lydda, and Farther Alexander Yasevitch, from the Russian-speaking flock in Beer Sheva.

After the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos led a Trisagion for the repose of the souls of the departed Fathers of old, whose names are commemorated in the various inscriptions of the mosaic floor as:

Herakleios Bishop

Procopios Bishop

Karos Bishop

Gaianos Presbyter

Stephanos Presbyter

Maximos Deacon

Sophronia or Euphrosyni Mother

Severa Deaconess

Theodosia Deaconess

Gregoria Deaconess

Then, at the presence of the local authorities, namely the Vice Mayor of Ashdod, the team from the Archaeological Service of Tel Aviv University, His Beatitude was guided at the excavation site by Dr Alexander Fantalkin, and addressed those present underlining the importance of the excavation findings as a link between the Old and the New Testament and as a meeting place for researchers, pilgrims and tourists, inspiring to a life of creation, peace and civilization. His Beatitude's address follows below:

"Mr Mayor,

Dr Fantalkin,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for us to be here today at this significant site. This church, established by Bishop Procopios in the 6th century, is important evidence of the fact that Ashdod, known then as Azotos, was among the principal cities on the coast during the Byzantine period.

Ashdod has a long and noteworthy history, and we read about it in both the Old and the New Testaments. According to the Book of Joshua, it was given to the Tribe of Judah as their home (Joshua 15:46), and in the Acts of the Apostles, we read that Saint Philip found himself hereafter baptizing the officer of the court of the Ethiopian queen (Acts 8:40).

These are only two examples from its long history. But they speak to the fact that the Bible is a record of our shared sacred history. And the discovery of this Byzantine church,

which is for us Christians a significant holy site, is a testimony to the witness that the Patriarchate of Jerusalem has given down the centuries to our sacred history. As the oldest religious institution in the region, the Patriarchate has embodied this sacred history and given it legitimacy.

We appreciate very much that the State of Israel and the Antiquities Authority are sensitive to the diverse civilizations that have existed in this region. This has always been a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious landscape where different peoples have flourished down the ages. And we wish to recognise the hard work and commitment of Dr Fantalkin and the Faculty of Humanities of Tel Aviv University, to which the Department of Archaeology belongs, since the discovery of this site in 2017. They have borne the major burden of the work of this excavation and brought to light this invaluable heritage.

This site is both a holy site as well as a site of supreme historical and academic value. There is an existence of the Christian presence here even before this Church. We know that one of the bishops of this region, Bishop Silouanos, attended the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in the year 325. There are inscriptions at this church mentioning the name of Bishop Hierakleios, who participated in both the Third Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431 and the Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon in 451.

But we have here a site that, like Madaba and Megiddo, has the power to draw not only scholars but also tourists and pilgrims in large numbers. We have a treasure here that we must preserve and make accessible to the many hundreds of thousands of pilgrims who come to the Holy Land every year. As a site of such significant scientific and religious consequence, this site is of immense value to the City of Ashdod, and it is part of the common heritage of all humanity in the Holy Land.

At this site, many tombs have been discovered, including the

graves of several women who bore the title *deaconess*. This confirms for us the existence of this office in the early Church. In addition to this, tombs of holy martyrs have been uncovered, which is proof that this place served as a liturgical gathering place before the 4th century. This is evidence that this place was a place of worship during the time of persecution. According to the writings of Saint John Chrysostom, the tombs of the martyrs were used as the altars where the divine Eucharist was celebrated. This discovery alone will draw the presence of pilgrims, both from the East and the West, who will want to venerate this holy site and who hold the martyrs from the age of persecution in high honour.

We thank you, Mr Mayor, for your care and concern for the preservation of this site that is a witness to our shared sacred history in this region. And we congratulate you, Dr Fantalkin, on your remarkable achievement in bringing this site to the attention of the world community. The conservation and development of this site by the local authorities would strengthen the existing good relations between the State of Israel and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and, by extension, with the Christian world in general and with the Orthodox world in particular, such as the nations of Greece, Cyprus, Russia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Georgia and others.

In the preservation of this site, today's residents of Ashdod will take pride in the further evidence of the historical and spiritual significance of their beloved city, and if we pay special attention to those who have preceded us and left an indelible stamp of their presence, we would expect future generations to preserve the evidence of our own lives and witness here. As we read in the Book of Psalms:

Then we your people, the flock of your pasture,

will give thanks to you forever;

from generation to generation, we will recount your praise.

(Ps 78 [79]: 13)

It is our fervent hope and desire that this site be preserved intact, and ultimately be made accessible both to scholars and to pilgrims, like all other holy places in our region. This would be a living testimony of the history of this ancient city and would promote peaceful coexistence, tolerance, and mutual respect. This would be a tangible symbol of the words we read in the Bible, that we are to pursue *righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness* (1 Tim. 6:11).

This is the mission of the Patriarchate, and we pledge ourselves to support and assist in this work. MAY this place be a source of both knowledge and spiritual refreshment for generations to come.

Thank you.”

This important event was organized by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, who is responsible for the Russian-speaking flock of the Patriarchate. In the end, His Eminence offered the Patriarchal Entourage and all present, boiled wheat, refreshments and fruit.

From Secretariat-General

**THE FEAST OF SAINT PROCOPIUS
THE GREAT MARTYR AT THE**

PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday 8/21 July 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the holy glorious Procopius the great martyr.

On this day the Church commemorates that Saint Procopius was from Caesarea of Palestine and lived during the reign of Diocletian around AD 303. He served as a Duke in Alexandria, a former persecutor of Christians, who was called to Christ by a vision of a crystal Cross and a voice saying: "I am the crucified Jesus, the Son of God".

Accepting the calling, he began preaching Christ and was denounced by his own mother Theodosia. Through his preaching though, his mother and many others believed in Christ. He was imprisoned and tortured, confessed Christ until the end and for Him, he was beheaded.

The Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of Saint Procopius at the place with a chapel and his tomb in the Holy Monastery of Saint Modestos the Patriarch of Jerusalem, in Abu Tor hill, opposite the Holy Zion hill in south new Jerusalem.

Therein, on Tuesday afternoon, Vespers was led by the Master of Ceremonies Archimandrite Bartholomew and the Divine Liturgy in the morning was officiated by the Hegoumen of Beit Jala and Beit Sahour Archimandrite Ignatios. The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine choir leader of the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen Archimandrite Eusevios with the help of Monks of the Patriarchate.

During the Divine Liturgy, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers visited the Holy Monastery for veneration.

His Beatitude and the congregation of monks and nuns and laity were offered a reception at the courtyard of the Church by the good cared and renovator of the Monastery Monk Antiochos.

From Secretariat-General

BLESSING OF MONASTIC CASSOCKS FOR NEW NOVICES

On Monday morning 6/19 July 2021, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos blessed the monastic cassocks of two young novices, Christians Toumbelekis and James Dipaola, wishing them patience and obedience in the arena of their testing, so that they may join the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood.

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS BLESSES THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday morning, 3/16 July 2021, the Divine Liturgy on the commemoration of Saint Yakinthos and Saint Anatolios Patriarch of Constantinople was celebrated at the Patriarchate's Holy Church of the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Lord in Ramallah. The Liturgy was officiated by the Priest of

Beit Jala Fr Pavlos Alem and the Priest of Bethlehem Fr George Zakaman, and was attended mainly by the young people of the parishes of the Patriarchate from Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Taybe, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour.

The Liturgy was also attended by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, Who came from Jerusalem along with their Eminences, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Father Issa Mousleh and Archdeacon Mark. His Beatitude blessed the approximately 140 young boys and girls, who received the Holy Communion, as the chanting was delivered by the Byzantine Choir of the young people of Ramallah.

After the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude addressed the young ones through Fr Issa in Arabic and gave each of them an icon as a blessing. His Beatitude's address is as per below:

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1) the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved children in Christ, young boys and girls.

Our presence with you in this brotherly gathering of the youths of the Rum-Orthodox communities urges us to cry aloud with the hymnographer: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity”, and especially in the name of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20), the Lord says.

Indeed, my dear ones, this blessed gathering is in the name of our Saviour Christ and the Church, which is His body and He [Christ] is the head of this body, namely of the Church (Col. 1:18,24), as Saint Paul preaches. And the Church as another “hen gathereth her chickens under her wings” (Matt. 23:37).

Our gathering has special importance for the faithful members

of the Church. And this, because the challenges, the signs of the times, are multiple; climatic, environmental, socio-political, economic and especially health issues.

The Prophets and the Holy Apostles also had this experience of this disorder in the world. That is why Christ would say to them: "Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven" (Luke 21:10-11).

As far as the correct Christian faith and teaching are concerned, Saint Paul sends his disciple Timothy saying: "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

We, our beloved children, who belong to the local Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of all Churches, boast in the Lord that the Holy Church of Jerusalem is founded upon Christ's blood on the Cross, and has its apostolic beginning by Saint James the Brother of God and First Hierarch of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Moreover, the Lord made all of us, both clergy and the people, who live in the Holy Land, ministers of His true witnesses, the All-holy Shrines, which testify the Nativity, the Passion on the Cross, the three-day burial and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also the redeeming work of the mystery of the Divine Providence.

We rend glory and thanksgiving to our Lord and God because He gave us His Holy Church, which as an oasis of the Holy Spirit, rises amidst a dry and arid land, amidst the worldly powers of this era. In this oasis, light shines upon them "that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Luke 1:79). "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart"

(Psalm 97:11) according to the psalmist.

We do not exaggerate when we say that the Holy Church of Jerusalem, “the habitation of the incarnate God the Word and the Mother of the Churches”, according to Saint John of Damascus, became and is proven to be, throughout the centuries, both the safe harbour of our souls and bodies and the safe harbour of our cultural inheritance and national-religious identity. It is noteworthy, that this identity was kept intact and unadulterated, despite the various adversities and insults of the opponents, as the psalmist says: “They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage” (Psalm 94:5). “Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place” (Psalm 66:12).

Therefore, dearest children in the Lord, we have a sacred obligation to preserve this consignment, the cultural inheritance and our national-religious identity, always paying heed to the words of Saint John of the Ladder who says: “it will be a pitiful spectacle to see those who were saved at sea, to end up shipwrecked in the harbour”.

The present aeon (Gal. 1:4) in which we live, is the aeon of globalization, confusion, and disorientation, while its days are evil (Eph. 5:16). The Church of Christ, and specifically for us, the Rum-Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the primary place of our protection, our salvation: “And 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), the Lord says.

Because of this, Saint Paul exhorts us to a brave fight, saying: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 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. 6:10-12).

Behold the time, my dear brethren and children of the Lord, to know the wealth and the depth of the glory of the mystery of the Church, of which Christ is its body and head (ref. Col. 1:27).

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.”

The hosts of this ceremony, Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery Archimandrite Galaktion and the Priest of the Church Fr Iakovos thanked His Beatitude for His Fatherly interest.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE APOSTLES AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, 30 June /13 July 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the Synaxis of the Holy Apostles.

By the word “Synaxis”, the Church does not mean the Gathering of the Apostles, but that of its faithful, in order to honour the twelve Apostles and Lord’s Disciples, for the mission they offered Christ and the Church, namely of the preaching about Christ and the spreading of the Gospel, through which they “didst draw the world into His net”.

The Church of Jerusalem was gathered for this feast at the Church of the Twelve Apostles in the centre of the city of

Tiberias, on the northwest shore of Lake Gennesaret, the place of the appearance of the Lord after His Resurrection according to the 10th Matins Gospel (John 3:21).

There, on the feast day, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences: Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Archimandrites, Chrysostom, Artemios, Arab-speaking Priests from Nazareth district, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine choir of Acre under the lead of Archimandrite Philotheos, with the participation of Russian and Arab-speaking faithful Christians.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following sermon:

“Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world” (Psalm 19:4), the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The grace of the sacred chorea of the Holy glorious and all-lauded Twelve Apostles has gathered us today in this Holy place of the Tiberias Seashore, where Jesus stood (John 21:4) and where the Apostles' Monastery lies, to celebrate their commemoration.

In his “Revelation”, John calls the twelve Apostles the foundations of the Holy city of Jerusalem, which is the Church; “And I saw a new heaven and new earth...And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband [Jesus Christ] ... And the wall of the city had twelve foundations and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rev.

21: 1-2, 14).

Talking about the mystery of marriage between a man and a woman, Saint Paul says; "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32). It is noteworthy that Paul compares the union of marriage with the mysterious and unbreakable union of Christ with the bride Church. Therefore, he preaches that the Church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:23) and He is the head of the body of the Church (Col. 1:18). Paul also says in his teaching that God the Father united the gentiles and the Jews in one Church through His Only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20).

From the aforementioned Biblical testimonies, we see the unbreakable relationship of Christ with the Church and the fundamental relationship between the Apostles and the Church of Christ, His body. The Apostles received their calling from Jesus, not from the people: "Have not I chosen you twelve?" (John 6:70). "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matt. 10:16). The power given to the Apostles was gushing out from Jesus Christ Himself, Who said: "take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Matt. 10:19-20).

The great and wondrous day of Pentecost on which the Apostles received the uncreated energy of the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4), made them vessels of the gift of the Holy Spirit and preachers of the Word of the Gospel, and inaugurators of the Churches that were founded all over the world, along with the Bishops who were ordained and

established by the Apostles.

“We are made as the filth of the world” (1 Cor. 4:13) as blessed Paul says about the Apostles, proven to “have this treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4:7), that they were “ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1), and that “this grace is given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ” (Eph. 3:8-9), and moreover, that they are “the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ” (2 Cor. 8:23).

Indeed, the Apostles are the “glory of Christ” and therefore, of His Church, because upon their calling they were given “power against unclean spirits” (Matt. 10:1) and “over all the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19). And before his separation from His disciples, the Lord said to them: “These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:25-26).

Interpreting these words, Cyril of Alexandria says: “the perfect and precise revelation of the mystery is given to us by the Comforter, namely of the Holy Spirit Who was sent by the Father in His Name, I say of the Son, [and our Lord, Jesus Christ]”.

This authority that the Apostles received by Christ upon their calling, as well as the perfect and precise revelation of the mystery of the Divine Providence, through the Comforter, namely the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, proves clearly the magnitude of the apostolic preaching on the one hand, and on the other, the extreme value of the Apostolic succession which brings together the institution of the divine-human body

of the Church through the Holy Spirit.

Behold, therefore, why the Holy Apostles are the foundations of the Church of Christ and behold why the Holy God-bearing Fathers called the Church "Apostolic" in The Creed.

We, my dear brethren, who honour the commemoration of the Holy Apostles, would like to pray to our God and Saviour Jesus Christ and say along with the hymnographer: "Thou Who art Light that existed ere all ages, when Thou didst vouchsafe to come to me, the lowly man, through Thine ineffable love for man... Thine Apostle and disciples didst Thou then reveal as second lights brightly glittering with the resplendence and the dread lightning that flasheth froth from Thee; and being sent forth, they illumined all of creation with Thy light divine, O Lord. And they ever beseech Thee to enlighten and to save our souls" (Matins, praises, Troparion 3). And let us say to the Theotokos: "Thee do we bring forward as an indestructible weapon against our enemies; thee, O Bride of God, do we possess as the anchor and hope of our salvation" (Matins, Ode five, Theotokion). Amen. Many happy returns!"

After the Divine Liturgy, the good carer of the Monastery Archimandrite Parthenios hosted a meal for the Patriarchal entourage.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY

APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, 29 June/12 July 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy glorious and chiefs of the Apostles Peter and Paul.

On this feast, the Church commemorates these two Apostles and their missionary work for Christ. The Church commemorates that Apostle Peter preached Christ Crucified and Resurrected, to the circumcision, namely to the Jews, while Apostle Paul preached to the nations and both of them became pillars of the Church, with the cooperation of the other Apostles.

The Church of Jerusalem celebrated this feast in Capernaum near the sea, on the northwest side of the river Jordan, where it meets the sea of Tiberias and in the Holy Apostles' holy Church, which was built by the Patriarch of Jerusalem Damian in 1935.

The Divine Liturgy on the feast day was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences; Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark, Hierodeacon Eulogios and Arab-speaking Priests from the neighbouring areas of the Holy Metropolis of Nazareth. The chanting was delivered by the children's Byzantine choir of Beer Sheva under the lead of His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba in Greek, and the Byzantine choir of Acre under the lead of Archimandrite Philotheos in Arabic, with the participation of our flock from Galilee and elsewhere.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude delivered the

following sermon:

“The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen” (Psalm 98:2), the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath” (1 Peter 1:3) gathered us in this holy place of Biblical Capernaum to celebrate the commemoration of the Holy Glorious and all-lauded Chiefs of the Apostles, Peter and Paul “who after the body were far apart, yet in the Spirit were bound as one” (Vespers, Troparion 1).

Peter and Paul are called chiefs of the Apostles because they were ear-witnesses of the Lord’s calling, Who said to Peter: “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:17-18), and to Paul: “I am Jesus whom thou persecute...And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision...Arise, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus...for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel...Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God” (Acts 9:5-20).

The special characteristic of Peter and Paul is the undeniable fact that they both confessed, by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, of course, that “Jesus is the Son of the Living God” (Matt. 16:16, Acts 9:19-20). Moreover, Peter explicitly received the order by the Lord: “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest

thou me more than these?... Feed my lambs... Feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17).

Interpreting these words, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: “with the triple confession of blessed Peter, the offence of the triple denial was abolished; and through the Lord’s words ‘feed my sheep’ there is a renewal of the mission that was already given to him, by which he solved the shame of sins and wiped out the cowardice which stems from the human inability”.

As for Saint Paul, he “knew a man in Christ ...such a one caught up to the third heaven...How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Cor. 12:2-4). Referring to this remarkable experience of Paul, Saint Chrysostom wonders; “for which reason was he caught up? So that he would not think himself inferior to the rest of the apostles. Because they were with Christ, but he was not, for this, he also was caught up in glory”.

Saint Paul was glorified by God because he became the primary Apostle of nations, according to his own witness: “inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office” (Romans 11:13). Moreover, he honoured his apostolic office not only through the redeeming preaching but also through his mission, namely his personal care and sleepless daily concern for all the holy churches, according to his own words: “In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:27-28).

Likewise, blessed Peter was glorified, honoured, by the Lord’s words: “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:19). This gift of the power to bind and loose was equally received by all the Apostles, with,

of course, Peter being the first, as Zigavinos comments: “This gift was given to the other Apostles, but Peter was the first one to receive it; because he was the first to confess Christ as the Son of God”.

Praising the apostolic mission of Peter and Paul, Saint Gregory Palamas says: “You see how brilliant and equals Peter and Paul are and how the church of Christ is supported? For this reason [the church] now gives one and the same honour to both of them, co-celebrating them equally today”.

Calling upon the holy and God-pleasing end of the life and apostolic behaviour of these two Holy Apostles, our Father Gregory urges us to imitate them in their humility and correctness through repentance. Therefore, we say along with the hymnographer: “Rejoice, O Peter, Apostle and true friend of thy Teacher, Christ our God. Rejoice, most dearly beloved Paul, preacher of the Faith and teacher of the whole world. O holy and elect yoke-fellows, since ye have boldness, entreat Christ our God [along with the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos Mary] that our souls be saved” (Vespers, Aposticha Glory). Amen. Many happy and blessed returns!”

After the Divine Liturgy, the good keeper and renovator of the Monastery Monk Eirinarchos hosted a meal for the Patriarchal Entourage and the congregation at the beachfront.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF

SAINT JOHN THE FORERUNNER AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, 24 June/ 7 July 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Nativity of Saint John the Forerunner and Baptist.

On this feast, the Church commemorates the event testified by Saint Luke the Evangelist (ch. 1), that Saint John the Forerunner is the fruit of Elizabeth's womb, who was barren until then, and of Zacharias, as it was revealed to him "while he held the Priest's office in the Temple". John's father Zacharias prophesied about him, when "his mouth was opened" and he said: "For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:15-17).

This event was celebrated by the Patriarchate at the place of Saint John's Nativity, in Ain Karem of Judea, where "Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste"; in this place, there is also a Holy Church of the Nativity of Saint John since the days of the Patriarch of Jerusalem Cyril II (1864).

Vespers was held on Tuesday afternoon, and the Divine Liturgy on Wednesday morning was officiated by His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, with the co-celebration of Archimandrites Ignatios and Isidoros, Priest Yousef, the ministering Priest of the Russian-speaking flock, Fr Nickolai Koulinsky and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by Nuns Danielia and Xenia with the help of Archimandrite Eusevios

and the service was attended by Monks and Nuns from Jerusalem and the Greek-speaking and Russian-speaking flock of the Patriarchate.

Before the Holy Communion, the Archbishop delivered a Sermon, stressing that as the Apolytikion of the feast reads, "the release of the mother's bareness and the father's long silence are the signs of the Forerunner's nativity, with which the Incarnation of the Son of God is preached unto the whole world".

After the Divine Liturgy, the good keeper of the Monastery Monk Chariton hosted a reception for the Episcopal Entourage and the congregation.

From Secretariat-General