

THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS OF PALESTINE

On Sunday, 21 June/ 4 July 2021, according to the order of the Church of Jerusalem over the last few decades, and according to the Church Service written by the memorable hymnographer Archimandrite Gerasimos Mikrayannitis, the commemoration of all the Saints of Palestine was celebrated by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. They are the Saints who lived in Palestine, of both the Old and the New Testament, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Righteous, Confessors, who pleased God.

Their commemoration was celebrated at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with Vespers on Saturday afternoon, and the Episcopal Divine Liturgy led by His Eminence Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia on Sunday morning. Co-celebrants to His Eminence were; Archimandrite Nicodemus, Archimandrite Dionysios, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios, at the changing of Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos and the attendance of Monks, Nuns and laity.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF PROPHET ELISHA AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, 14/27 June 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of Holy Prophet Elisha in Jericho, the main place of his life and action.

On this feast, the Church commemorates that Prophet Elisha,

son of Safat from the town Avel Meoul in the land of Manasi, was a farmer by profession and was called by Prophet Elijah to follow him. In the Books of the Old Testament and especially in 4 Kings there are many signs of God's gifts to him.

In Jericho, he turned the bitter into drinking waters with his prayer. He saw his teacher Prophet Elijah being lifted up into the heavens in a fiery chariot and this was the sign that he was going to receive double the Prophet's grace. Prophet Elijah threw down on Elisha his fleece and he placed it on the surface of the River Jordan and crossed on the other side.

In honour of this prophet, "who drove away sicknesses and healed the leppers", the Divine Liturgy was officiated at the Church bearing his name in Jericho, by the sycamore tree of Zacchaeus, 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, the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Saint Gerasimos, Archimandrite Chrysostom, the Hegoumen of Beit Jala and Beit Sahour, Archimandrite Ignatios, the Hegoumen of Sarantarion Mount, Hieromonk Onuphrius, Father Gabriel and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by Archimandrite Chrysostom in Greek on the right, and the Jericho Byzantine Choir on the left in Arabic, at the attendance of faithful from Jericho and other towns.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"But the righteous live for evermore; their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the Most High. Therefore, shall they receive a glorious kingdom, and a beautiful crown from the Lord's hand: for with his right hand shall he cover them, and with his arm shall he protect them", we read in the Holy book of the Wisdom of Solomon (Wisdom of Solomon 5:15-16).

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in this biblical place of the ancient city of Jericho today, on this Sunday after Pentecost, to celebrate the feast of All the Saints, and especially honour the commemoration of Prophet Elisha, in his Monastic Church.

“The righteous live for evermore; their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the Most High” the holy writer says (Wisdom of Solomon 5:15). To the question, who are righteous? Our Lord Jesus answers by saying: “Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, he will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, he will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32-33).

In other words, if one confesses God on this earthly life, Christ will confess for him before the Father in the eternal heavenly life, namely in His Kingdom. And if someone denies Jesus Christ as God-man and Saviour before the people in this world, Christ will also deny him before the people and the holy angels in eternal life.

The “Righteous”, in essence, are those who confess Christ as perfect God and perfect man, having received flesh from the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin and Theotokos Mary through the Holy Spirit. These Righteous are, according to Saint Paul, the ones who make “the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven” (Hebrews 12:23), and they are the ones who pleased God of old, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Ascetics, Hierarchs, Teachers, Righteous and the chorea of the Holy Women. That is why the hymnographer says: “They that have borne witness in all the earth and have transferred their dwellings to the Heavens, who have imitated Christ’s Passion and take away our passions, are

assembled here today, showing that the Church of the first-born furnisheth a figure of the Church above as she crieth out to Christ: Thou art my God; preserve me through the pure Theotokos, O Thou Who art greatly merciful" (Pentecostarion, Feast of All Saints, Matins, Oikos).

"Therefore, shall they receive a glorious kingdom, and a beautiful crown from the Lord's hand: for with his right hand shall he cover them, and with his arm shall he protect them" (Wisdom of Solomon 5:15-16). This means that God the Father, Who has undertaken the care of the righteous, will reward them in His Kingdom. All Saints, namely the Righteous, will be crowned with a glorious crown in the Kingdom of Heaven.

All the Saints, or the Righteous, include the Holy Prophets of the Law of Moses, among whom Prophet Elisha, who we honour today is distinguished. Blessed Paul refers to the innumerable crowd of the martyrs of truth and projects them to the temporary Christians as an example to imitate, with the words: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2). [And in more detail: therefore, as we are surrounded by such a great cloud of people who suffered a martyr's death for the sake of the truth of faith, let us free ourselves from the weight of any worldly cares, moreover of sin, to which one can be easily drawn, and let us run patiently the race that the enemy puts in front of us. And let us not turn our eyes and attention to no other but Jesus Christ, Who is the Chief and founder of our faith, and makes us perfect in it].

Interpreting these words of Paul, "we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1), Saint Chrysostom denotes that the Apostle is not only referring to

those who preached the truth in the New Testament but also in the Old; "as they also martyred the majesty of God".

And what is God's majesty? It is the mystery of the Divine revelation, the Divine Providence, which was dimly revealed to the Prophets, but in full essence in God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. And we say this, because Christ is the fullness of the Law of Moses and of the Prophets, as the Lord Himself says: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17).

Our Holy Church honours and venerates the commemoration of Holy Prophet Elisha, because he acquired the deepest knowledge of the beyond-our-mind mystery of God, prophesied about the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ and many wonders did God make through Elisha, who was a disciple of prophet Elijah.

As for us, my dear ones, let us entreat the holy prophet Elisha and say along with the hymnographer: "With hymns let us the faithful honour Elias and Elisseus, the pinnacles of the Prophets, those brightly shining luminaries of the whole world; and let us cry out in harmony unto Christ: O compassionate Lord, by the entreaties of Thy Prophets, [the also celebrated today, Saint Methodios, Archbishop of Constantinople, Holy Hieromartyr Cyril, Bishop of Gortyna of Crete, along with the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary] grant Thy people forgiveness of sins and great mercy. Amen. Many happy returns, free from the corona plague!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a small reception and then a meal, hosted by the good keeper of the Monastery Archimandrite Philoumenos and Archimandrite Chrysostom. His Beatitude thanked them for their Hagiotaphite care and later on visited the neighbouring Monastery of the Life-giving Spring and the newly constructed buildings by Archimandrite Chrysostom.

THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, 14/27 June 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Sunday of all Saints, as it is established in the Book of Pentecostarion.

On this feast, we celebrate the commemoration of all the Saints, one week after Pentecost, in order to denote that all the Saints are the fruit of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

If the Comforter had not come, they would not have become Saints, Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors and Righteous. This feast was celebrated by the Patriarchate at the chapel of All Saints inside the Church of the Meeting of the Lord in the Holy Monastery of Sayda Naya, near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Patriarchate Headquarters.

This feast was celebrated with Vespers on Saturday afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning, led by the Typikon Keeper of the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen Archimandrite Alexios, with the co-celebration of Hierodeacon Eulogios. The changing was delivered by Archimandrite Eusevios and Monk Vasilios in Greek on the right, and by Mr Rimon Kamar in Arabic on the left, with the attendance of Nuns and faithful from Jerusalem and the parish members of Saint James Cathedral.

The Fathers and the congregation were offered a reception at

the Hegoumeneion and the courtyard of the Monastery by the good keeper and renovator of the Monastery, Reverend Nun Seraphima.

From Secretariat-General

DIVINE LITURGY IN BEER SHEVA

On Saturday, 13/26 June 2021, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Prayer House of Patriarch Abraham in Beer Sheva, on the anniversary of the first Divine Liturgy that was celebrated on the Apodosis of Pentecost in the year 2017, and for the first anniversary of the ordination to Priest of the ministering Priest of Beer Sheva Father Alexander Yasevich.

The Divine Liturgy was officiated by the Spiritual Father of Saint Savvas' Lavra, Archimandrite Eudokimos, with the co-celebration of the Hegoumen of Rafeidia of Samaria, Archimandrite Leontios.

During the Liturgy, all the congregation of the Russian-speaking parish participated in the chanting, under the lead of the Hegoumen Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba.

Archimandrite Eukokimos delivered a Sermon, giving spiritual advice to the faithful.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a meal for all present.

Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba

THE FEAST OF SAINT ONUPHRIUS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday 12/25 June 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of our Holy Father Onuphrius the Egyptian. The Church commemorates Saint Onuphrius from Egypt, who left the Coenobitic life, retreated in the desert for sixty years in strict asceticism and solitude, and became known to the Fathers when Saint Paphnutius found him.

The commemoration of the Saint was observed at the Holy Monastery dedicated to him, near the pool of Siloam, at the Potter's field, which the Sanhedrin bought to bury the foreigners with the thirty pieces of silver that Judas returned to them (Matt. 27:1-11).

Among the many carved tombs in the Monastery lies the tomb of Saint Iouvenalios, the first Patriarch of Jerusalem (AD 451).

At the Holy Church of this Monastery, which is inside a carved rock, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitans Kyriakos of Nazareth and Isychios of Kapitolias and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, Archimandrite Makarios, Priest Yusef, Priest Elias and Priest Simeon, Archimandrite Isidoros, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Mr Gotsopoulos and Archimandrite Eusevios, as the Service was attended by Monks, Nuns, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and many faithful Christians.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to

the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:"16-17), Saint Paul says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The strengthening grace of the Holy Spirit, Who came in the form of tongues of fire upon the Holy Apostles and Disciples of the Lord, has gathered us in this place of "the potter's field", which is also called "the field of blood" (Matt. 27:7-8), to celebrate the holy commemoration of our Righteous Father Onuphrius the Egyptian, at the Monastery dedicated to him, which was founded by the reverend Hagiotaphite Fathers.

Our Holy Father Onuphrius envied the manner of living of Saint John the Baptist and of Prophet Elijah, and of his fellow countryman Saint Anthony and retreated in the desert "where he lived for sixty years having seen no man" according to his synaxarist.

His truly ascetic and angelic life made Saint Onuphrius worthy of the crown of righteousness, which the Lord prepared for him, as the hymnographer says. And what is the crown of righteousness that our Holy Father Onuphrius received by the Lord?

We hear Saint Paul saying: "And if a man also strives for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strives lawfully" (2 Tim 2:5). Again, referring to himself, Saint Paul says: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim 4:7-8).

Interpreting this word of Paul, Saint Chrysostom says: "the

one who loves [the righteous Judge, the Lord's] presence, does all things so that before the Second Coming, it will be done unto him to live within him the personal coming, according to Saint John the Evangelist: "if a man loves me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23).

Interpreting these words, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "Those whose mind is excessively enlightened by every kind of virtue, and thus they have become able to comprehend the divine and hidden mysteries, they will carry the torch of the Holy Spirit and behold the Lord with their mind's eyes, as He has dwelled within them. Therefore, the knowledge of the Saints is not common to all, but it is something special and marvellous and differs greatly from the knowledge of the rest of the faithful".

It is made clear, that the crown of righteousness that our Holy Father Onuphrius received is "the special and marvellous and very different knowledge". And this knowledge is the one that enlightens the mind through the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit. Christ, Saint Cyril says, is the One who helps us in every word and manner. Firstly, Christ is the One who determines precisely who is the one that loves Him, and who is worthy to receive the power of the gift, namely the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit. The one who can "boast" (Romans 4:2) on the genuine relationship with Christ, through the keeping of His commandments.

Behold, therefore, my dear brethren, why our Holy Church of Christ honours and projects the commemoration of the Saints on the one hand, and calls every one of us through the Chief of the Apostles Peter's mouth on the other, with the words: "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" (A Peter 1:15-16).

God the Father Who has called us, is undefiled, so He is Holy

and no one can come near Him, because he will be burnt, "For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29), "God cannot be tempted with evil" (James 1:13) and is "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6:16).

Through his strict ascetic life, our Holy Father Onuphrius managed to cleanse his heart according to the Lord's command: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8), and ascend the ladder of righteousness, sanctification and deification, becoming thus "partaker of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).

Let us entreat our Lord Jesus Christ, who crowned our Holy Father Onuphrius with the crown of glory and righteousness and say along with the hymnographer: "We the multitudes of the monastics, honour thee, our teacher, Onuphrius; for through thee have we learned to walk the truly straight path. Blessed art thou, who hast laboured for Christ, and hast triumphed over the might of the enemy, O companion of the angels, and co-dweller of the righteous and the just. Together with them, [and the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary] intercede with the Lord that He may have mercy on our souls" (Minaion, June 12, Vespers, Glory, tone plagal of fourth). Amen."

After the dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, there was a memorial service at the owner's grave and at that of Nun Seraphima and the prayer for the figs and grapes was read.

The Patriarchal Entourage was offered a reception by the good keeper and renovator of the Monastery Reverend Nun Paissia.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE MONDAY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AT THE RUSSIAN MISSIA

On Monday 8/21 June 2021, the feast of the Monday of the Holy Spirit was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Trinity of the Russian MISSIA of the Russian Patriarchate, which is located in new Jerusalem, not very far from the northwest side of New Gate.

The Divine Liturgy 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 Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis and Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the Head of the Russian MISSIA Archimandrite Alexander and other Priests and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by the choir of the MISSIA and the Service was attended by many faithful Christians, the Russian Ambassador in Israel and Palestine and the representative of the Latin Patriarchate and the Custody of the Holy Land.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“O Holy Sion, thou Mother of all the Churches of God, in thee in fiery likeness did the Comforter Spirit come down on the Apostles with awesome descent. So rejoice now and celebrate this day of Pentecost longed-for by all the world, and keep festival with us in joy” (Pentecostarion, Friday of Pentecost, Matins, Praises, Troparion 3).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians,

The grace of the Holy and Life-giving Spirit has gathered us all in this Holy Church of the Holy Trinity, to co-celebrate in Doxology and Eucharist the life-giving and all-mighty Spirit, the One Person of the God of Trinity, Who is of the same honour, essence and glory with the Father and the Son.

The Mother of all the Churches, the Holy Zion, rejoices today because it was here that the Comforter Spirit came down to the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire, as the hymnographer says: "On this day the working of Thy Holy Spirit the Comforter came upon Thine Apostles' choir, O Lord; and He showed them forth wise in divine knowledge. For, behold, He filled them completely and abundantly with that most blessed of doctrines taught by Thee. We, therefore, glorify Thy saving dispensation, O Friend of man, O my Jesus, Al-mighty Lord, Thou divine Saviour of our souls" (Tuesday of Pentecost, Vespers, Aposticha 1).

The power of the All-holy Spirit, which is common in all three Persons of the Holy Trinity, is no other than the grace, which the Apostles received, from the fulness of God the Word, our Saviour Jesus Christ, as Saint John the Evangelist says: "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:16-17).

Christ set the Apostles first in His Church (1 Cor. 12:28). And having become the vessels of the shedding of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles became the foundation stone of the structure of the Church, while Christ is its cornerstone. And the Church is the dwelling place of God in the Holy Spirit, as Saint Paul preaches: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:20-22).

It is noteworthy that the Lord promised to the Apostles the sending of the Holy Spirit, both before His Passion on the Cross and after His Resurrection. According to the testimony of Saint John the Evangelist, Jesus told His Disciples right after the Last Supper: "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever" (John 14:16). And after His Resurrection, the Lord said to the Apostles: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

The Promise of God the Father is no other than the Comforter, namely the Holy Spirit, Whose divine power was going to be given as armour to the Apostles.

Precisely this divine power from on high, namely the power of the Comforter Spirit is the one Who "holdeth together the whole institution of the Church", as the hymnographer says. "The Holy Spirit provideth all things; He gusheth forth prophesy; He perfecteth the priesthood; He hath taught wisdom to the illiterate. He hath shown forth the fishermen as theologians. He holdeth together the whole institution of the Church. Wherefore, O Comforter, one in essence and throne with the Father and the Son, glory be to Thee" (Saturday Vespers of Pentecost, Troparion 3).

And according to Saint John Damascene, the Holy Spirit makes "luminous the children of the Church". And this is so, because, as Saint Gregory, the Theologian says, "the enlightenment, is the brightness of the souls...denaturation of light, and abolishment of darkness". "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12) the Lord says.

And being the body of Christ (Col. 1:24), the Church has the light of life, while its members are called by Saint Paul, in order to walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8). And this, because the members of the Church, namely of the body of

Christ, are according to Apostle Peter “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

This “marvellous light” is the Grace of the Spirit of our Saviour Christ, which was foretold by the Prophets and shone forth through the Apostles. “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17), Saint Paul preaches. This liberty, which we have “in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 2:4) is the mindset of the Church.

And this mindset is the power of the Holy Spirit, which gathers together and sustains the unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of ours, namely the brotherly Orthodox Churches of the same doctrines.

This witness of unity we testify along with the brotherly Orthodox Churches through this festive Holy Eucharistic gathering, on this joyful day of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit at the Upper Room of Jerusalem, hearkening to Saint Paul’s advice:

“I beseech you...with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1-3).

The All-holy Spirit – according to the hymnographer – “Filleth with tranquillity man’s heart and spirit” (Matins, Ode 1, Iambic Canon, Troparion 3). Therefore, in David’s words, we chant: “take not thy Holy Spirit from me” (Psalm 51:11), we beseech Thee, Lord, Friend of man.

And along with the hymnographer, let us say: “Of old, the tongues were confounded because of the audacity in the building of the tower, but now the tongues are made wise for the sake of the glory of the Divine knowledge. There, God condemned the impious because of their offence; and here,

Christ hath enlightened the fishermen by the Spirit. At that time the confusion of tongues was wrought for punishment, but now the concord of tongues hath been inaugurated for the salvation of our souls” (Saturday Vespers of Pentecost, Aposticha Glory; both now).

By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, through the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and of Your Apostles, Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen. Many Happy returns!”

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a small reception at the MISSIA office, which was followed by a meal, at the presence of the Russian Ambassador in Ramallah and other officials. During the meal His Beatitude delivered the following address:

“Dear Father Alexander,

Respected Members of the Russian Diplomatic Service,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers,

Beloved Monastics,

Sisters and Brothers,

As we join you today for this blessed feast, we recall the words that we sing at this time:

When the Most High came down
and confounded tongues of men at Babel,
he divided the nations.

When He dispensed the tongues of fire,
He called all to unity,

and with one voice we glorify the Most Holy Spirit.

(Kontakion of the Feast of Pentecost)

We have just demonstrated in a tangible way the oneness of our Orthodox Church in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. This oneness that finds its expression in the sharing of the common Chalice is the gift of the Holy Spirit, who is the Comforter, and who governs the whole life of the Church. In this way, we live in our own day the same unbroken unity that was given to the Church at Pentecost.

We see in our world the phenomenon of economic, technological, and entrepreneurial globalization. So much activity on which our life depends is exercised at an international level. But we Christians cannot forget that we live our own universal life. We too occupy the oikumene. We are truly global. This is because the Church lives the life of the Holy Spirit, and this life is the universal gift to humankind. It is available to all, open to all, a free gift to all.

We know this because as Christians generally and as Orthodox, in particular, we have a mission to the whole world – a global mission if you like – to be living martyria to the truth of God and the light of the Holy Spirit which we have received from the Apostles. This truth is the wellspring of eternal life and salvation for all humankind, and this truth is of ultimate importance for all peoples.

This is why our unity – the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost – is crucial, for our unity is itself both a fruit and a witness to the truth of God. In all things, we must endeavour to overcome our human weaknesses and temptations that threaten our unity, and allow the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and dwell in our hearts. Before we can show this to anyone else, we must live this in the life of the Church, and we are called to do everything in our power to

overcome any anomalies of Church life that our human weakness and sinfulness can so easily cause.

It is incumbent upon us all, the Orthodox faithful, as well as the leaders of our Orthodox Churches, to place ourselves under the obedience of the unity of the Holy Spirit. In a world that is torn apart by human divisions, fear, prejudice, and selfishness, the Church must live a different life if we are to be able to carry out our mission.

This is important for Churches in traditionally Orthodox countries as it is for Orthodox Churches in multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic societies. We all have the unique and challenging responsibility to follow faithfully in the footsteps of the Apostles by the living truth that has been given to us by God and expressed in our own unity. May God continue to bestow His grace upon us that we may be faithful to this vocation, so that we may make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

We take this opportunity to wish His Excellency Vladimir Putin, the President of the Russian Federation, health, happiness, and strength in his leadership. We acknowledge with deep gratitude his commitment to the support of the Christian presence in the Holy Land.

We would also like to express our fraternal love in Christ for our brother His Holiness Patriarch Kyrill of Moscow and All Russia and wish Him many years in His primatial ministry. The country of Russia and its peoples have had a long and close relationship with the Holy Land for centuries, and we cherish the bond of unity that we enjoy.

Thank you."

The feast of the Holy Spirit was also celebrated at the Church of the Holy Trinity in Toubas of north Samaria, led by His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, with the

participation of many faithful Christians.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE MONDAY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AT THE HOLY ZION

On Monday, 8/21 June 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy Spirit.

On this day the Church honours and worships the third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Comforter, especially because He was sent by the Son through the Father and inspired the Holy Disciples and Apostles, making them from former “fishermen” to “all-wise” through them He made the whole universe marvel.

The honour and worship to the Holy Spirit were observed at the place of His inspiration, at the Upper Room of the Holy Zion.

On Sunday afternoon, Vespers was observed at the chapel in the cemetery and the kneeling prayers were read by His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis.

On Monday morning the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Trinity of the Patriarchal School, led again by His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, with the co-celebration of the Archimandrites Stephen, Dionysios and Makarios, Priest Athanasios, the Minister Priest of Saint James Cathedral George Baramki and Priests from the brotherly Churches of Russia and Romania, and Hierodeacon Patrikios. The chanting was delivered by the School Students under the lead

of Mr Gotsopoulos and Hierodeacon Simeon, as the Service was attended by many faithful and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and the Consulate staff.

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a procession under the chanting of the hymns of the feast, and the Pentecost kneeling prayers were read again while the faithful were kneeling, the first prayer at the Chapel, the second in the Catacomb with the special prayer at David's Tomb, and the third at the Upper Room, above King-Prophet David's Tomb.

When the Procession returned at the School, the Managing School Director Archimandrite Mattheos hosted a reception for the Episcopal Entourage and the congregation.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, 7/20 June 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy Pentecost.

On this feast, the Church commemorates in thanksgiving and doxology to God, that on the fiftieth day after His Resurrection, and ten days after His Ascension to the heavens, our Lord Jesus Christ sent through the Father to His Disciples, who were gathered at the Upper Room of the Holy Zion, the Holy Spirit, like "a violent breath" and in the form of tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit strengthened and enlightened them and made them narrate in tongues the marvels of God to the gathered crowd. Apostle Peter preached to them

and on that day “three thousand souls” were added to the Church (Acts 2:41).

The Patriarchate celebrated this feast with Vespers on Saturday afternoon at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and with the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning at the Holy Tomb, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, and the Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, and Theodosios of Sebastia, along with Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios and Deacons. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon on the right and Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos on the left, as the Service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem and many faithful Christians who received the strength of the All-holy Spirit.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Vespers of the Monday of the Holy Spirit was observed, and the prayers of the kneeling Service of Pentecost were read, while all people were down on their knees.

After the Services, bells tolling, the Patriarchal Entourage returned at the Patriarchate Reception Hall, where His Beatitude wished to all the enlightenment of the Holy and Ceremonial Spirit.

From Secretariat-General

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THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday, 28 May/10 June 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Ascension.

On this feast, the Church in thanksgiving and mixed joy with sadness, commemorates that our Lord Jesus Christ was ascended into the heavens, forty days after His Resurrection, and after many appearances to His Disciples. He was ascended into the heavens in glory and sat at the right side of the Father, deifying the human flesh He had assumed and He is to come again, to judge both the living and the dead.

The Church of Jerusalem celebrated the feast at the very place of the Ascension, on the Mount of Olives, with Great Vespers on Wednesday afternoon, which was led by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, with the co-celebration of Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Deacons, and Arab-speaking Priests, with the attendance of faithful from Jerusalem. The chanting was delivered by Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos and the Patriarchal School Students on the right, and the choir of Saint James Cathedral under Mr Rimon Kamar on the left.

Vespers was followed by a Procession to the Monastery of the Men of Galilee, where His Beatitude was waiting to give His blessing according to the custom.

On the morning of the feast day, the bloodless Sacrifice was held at the same place, by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, with the co-celebration of the Hagiotaphite Archimandrites; Kallistos, Dionysios and Stephanos, Arab-speaking Priests, and the Hierodeacons Eulogios and Simeon. The chanting was delivered by the choirs who also chanted at Vespers, and the Service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras

and many faithful Christians.

During the Divine Liturgy, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Fathers-members of the Holy Synod came for veneration and then visited the adjacent to the Mosque Imam for reasons of goodwill. Then the Patriarchal Entourage visited Monk Achilios at the Holy Church of the Ascension opposite the Shrine, the Russian Monastery of the Ascension, where His Beatitude addressed the Head of the Monastery, Archimandrite Romanos as follows:

“Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Father Romanos,

Respected Clergy,

Beloved Monastics,

Sisters and Brothers,

On this glorious Feast of the Ascension, which is the seal of the resurrection, we join in the words of the ancient hymn:

O Christ our God,

upon fulfilling your dispensation for our sake,

you ascended in glory, uniting the earthly with the heavenly.

You were never separate but remained inseparable,

and cried out to those who love you,

“I am with you and no one is against you.”

Here we understand the profound meaning of the Ascension, that, though our Lord Jesus Christ has gone to the Father to prepare a place for us, even so, we are still intimately connected with Him. As the hymn says so clearly, we are

inseparable.

This unbreakable relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, which finds its greatest expression in this life in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, is the assurance of our final deification. This is the goal of every Christian, and this goal of complete union with God must be the daily focus of our spiritual lives. And this assurance is also our strength and consolation in times of suffering and difficulty.

Last year at this feast, we were not able to be with you. But this year our joy is full in our ability to be in this holy place on this day. And so we are reminded forcefully that the Holy Places, which the Divine Providence has placed under the guardianship and protection of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem are not just archaeological curiosities; on the contrary, they are living witnesses to our sacred history and are places of prayer, worship, and most especially places where we celebrate the Divine Eucharist.

It is in this action of the Divine Liturgy that the Mother Church of Jerusalem gathers all Orthodox faithful in the embrace of the true Orthodox ecumenical spirit. We are glad today to have with us the representatives from Orthodox national Churches, so that we may show to the world our united Orthodox faith and witness. This is a powerful visible sign of our unity, which is a precious gift that must be nurtured and sustained by all.

And yet, it is further the case that we have the responsibility to ensure that the Holy Places are open to all people of goodwill without distinction, for the true Orthodox ecumenical spirit welcomes all, so that all may know the spiritual refreshment of those places that are signs of the divine-human encounter. In this way, the Patriarchate guarantees the Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

We rejoice, therefore, on this great feast, and we pray that our crucified, risen, and ascended Lord Jesus may enlighten our hearts and strengthen us in our mission. Amen.”

His Beatitude offered Archimandrite Romanos an icon-painting of Jerusalem and received an icon of the Theotokos in return.

The Patriarchal visits concluded at the Monastery of the Men of Galilee, where the Hegoumen Archimandrite Anthimos offered breakfast, with milk and eggs.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE APODOSIS OF PASCHA AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, 27 May/ 9 June 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Apodosis of Pascha, at the completion of forty days since the day of the feast of the Resurrection from the dead of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

On this day, at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, Matins and the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom were observed exactly as per the day of Pascha with the chanting of all the hymns of the Resurrection.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and venerated the All-holy Tomb, as the Paschal Divine Liturgy was being officiated at the Catholicon by His Eminence Archbishop

Theodosios of Sebastia. Co-celebrants to His Eminence were Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Deacons, at the chanting of Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos and the Patriarchal School Students. The Service was attended by quite a few faithful from Jerusalem and the Nuns of the Patriarchate.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, the Episcopal Entourage went to the Patriarchate Reception Hall to receive His Beatitude's blessing, who did so and wished everybody health and gleefulness on the forthcoming feast of our Lord's Ascension into the heavens.

From Secretariat-General