

THE FIRST STASIS OF THE AKATHIST AT THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

On Friday evening of the first week of Lent, 6/19 March 2021, the Service of the Salutations of our Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary was held at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

This included the Small Compline and then the Canon of the Akathist was chanted by Hierodeacon Simeon on the right and Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos on the left. His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos recited the first stasis of the Salutations and at the end of the Service addressed the faithful as follows:

“All creatures were sore amazed at thy divine and great glory, Maid, O pure Virgin, who hast not known wedlock; for thou didst hold in thy womb the God of all, and gavest birth to the timeless Son, Who doth grant salvation unto all them that acclaim thy name” (Heirmos of the Akathist, Ode five). (And in simple words; the whole creation remained in ecstasy because of your divine glory. Because, You, Virgin, who did not have the experience of marriage, conceived God in Your womb, Who dominates over all things, and bore the timeless Son, Who gives salvation as a present to all those who praise You). These are the words of the hymnographer of Theotokos, Saint John Damascene.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The God-bearing Church Fathers established that every week of the Great Lent we would exclaim the “Rejoice” of Archangel Gabriel, namely the Salutations to the Theotokos and Mother of God the Word, the Most Blessed and Ever-Virgin Mary.

In Theotokos Mary of Nazareth, we praise, bless and glorify the message of the unspeakable mystery of the divine providence, namely the incarnation of God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. This mystery of the "reconciliation of men to God" (Romans 5:10), as Saint Andrew of Crete says, is what we celebrate, the union of God with man, the deification of the human nature that He took upon Himself, the ascension into the heavens."

Behold why the hymnographer through Archangel Gabriel's mouth exclaims to the Theotokos: "Rejoice, thou through whom joy shall shine forth. Rejoice, thou through whom the curse shall be blotted out. Rejoice, thou the Restoration of fallen Adam. Rejoice, thou the redemption of the tears of Eve"(Beginning of the Salutations). And again why "all creatures were sore amazed at they divine and great glory, Maid, O pure Virgin".

The Most Holy and Ever-Virgin Mary is the One who through Her obedience to the Will of God, "behold the maid of the Lord, let it be done unto me according to Thy will" (Luke 1:38), liberated the fallen Adam from the curse, through his recall, and Eve from her tears.

In other words, the curse and the consequence of the fall and disobedience of Adam introduced humankind to the death of sin, as Saint Paul says: "as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). "By his [Adam's] fall", Saint Chrysostom says, "even those who did not eat from the wood [of life] became mortals, just like him".

The Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, by the birth of God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ through Her pure flesh, became the Mother of Life, and Christ is the Life. "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26) the Lord says. Behold therefore why the hymnographer exclaims "O pure

Virgin, who hast not known wedlock; for thou didst hold in thy womb the God of all, and gavest birth to the timeless Son, Who doth grant salvation unto all them that acclaim thy name”.

Because the timeless Son and Word of God received our human nature from the Virgin Mary and reshaped it in Himself, Christ grants salvation as a gift to all those who praise in honour the Theotokos, His Mother. “Thy womb bore God for us, fashioned in our shape. O Theotokos, pray to Him as the Creator of all, that we may be justified through thine intercessions” (Triodion, Wednesday of the first week, Great Compline, Ode 6, Theotokion) Saint Andrew of Crete says in his hymn.

Indeed my dear brethren, the whole creation, the logical and illogical nature is sore amazed before the majesty and incomprehensible mystery of the Ever-Virgin Mary. That is why the hymnographer cries out loud: “Rejoice, thou Initiate of the ineffable counsel. Rejoice, thou Faith in that which demandeth silence” (Salutations).

In other words, the Theotokos became a communicant of the “ineffable counsel of God” on the one hand and a prototype of obedience in faith on the other. “Faith is sustained only by obedience. And when God orders [us] to obey, there is no need for explanations” Saint John of Damascene says.

We are also called to this, to the obedience of our Orthodox faith, and to our participation in the Holy Pascha through fasting and repentance. Along with the hymnographer, let us entreat the Most Blessed Theotokos and Mother of God and say: “I have lost the beauty and glory with which I was first created; and now I lie naked and ashamed” (Triodion, Wednesday of the first week, Great Compline, Ode B: 4). O Theotokos the hope and protection of those who sing thy praises, take from me the heavy yoke of sin, and pure Lady, accept me in repentance” (Triodion, Wednesday of the first week, Great Compline, Ode 1, Theotokion). Amen! Have a blessed period of

the Great Lent.”

The Service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras with the Consulate staff and his family.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT GERASIMUS OF THE JORDAN AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday of the 1st Week of Lent, 5/18 March 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated by transference the commemoration of our Holy Father Gerasimus of the Jordan at his Holy Monastery, in the desert of the river Jordan, at a short distance from the river's estuaries towards the Dead Sea, on the West Bank.

This Monastery was founded by Saint Gerasimus when he came to the Holy Land from his hometown Lycia of Asia Minor, at the time of the Monophysites' turbulences in AD 451.

For a short while Saint Gerasimus was influenced by the Monophysites' groups, but Saint Euthymius the Great returned him to the Orthodox faith and since then they co-operated and Saint Gerasimus became an enlightened spiritual guide in this Monastery. The Monastery was a Coenobium and a Lavra at the same time with thousands of Monks and laity, and the Saint was granted by God the gifts of healing, wonder-working and clairvoyance, as well as the grace to tame wild animals, a fact that is depicted in his icon with the lion.

In this Monastery the Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts was celebrated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with co-celebrants their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba and Hierodeacon Simeon. The service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and only a few faithful due to covid-19 restrictions.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“The righteous man shall flourish like a palm tree, and like a cedar in Lebanon shall he be multiplied” (Psalm 91:11), the Psalmist says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The Jordan desert is rejoicing because the holy commemoration of the Righteous man of God, our God-bearing Father Gerasimus the anchorite, who came from Lycia, has flourished today. The Monastery bearing his name is also rejoicing, the Lavra of old, where the Grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all, in order to glorify God in Eucharist, the One who has glorified those who glorify Him.

Paying heed to the Lord’s words: “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35); “And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37); Saint Gerasimus retreated to the deeper desert of Thebes and then to the blessed desert of the Jordan, where “he shone like a luminary and sowed the seeds of reverence” Saint Cyril of Scythopolis says.

Having become an imitator “of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises [of the Kingdom]” (Hebrews 6:12), Saint Gerasimus was established as a famous habitant of the Jordan and co-citizen of the Great ascetics, Euthymius the Great, Savvas the Sanctified, Saints Martyrios and Theoktistos and many other anchorites of the Judea desert, who followed the advice of King-Prophet David: “Seek the Lord, and his strength: seek his face evermore. Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth” (Psalm 105:4-5).

Contemporary to him writers, who were also eye-witnesses to his manner of living, present God-bearing Gerasimus not only as “a lover of the things beyond this world”, but also as “a charity treasury” and “a temple of meekness”. In addition to other mortifications of the human passions, the Saint would pass the whole Great Lent without any food but the Holy Communion, for which reason he attained to the height of the vision of the divine glory, as his hymnographer says: “The ladder of divine virtue, thou didst scale with ardour, and thou didst attain to the height of divine noetic vision, receiving reflections pure and clear revealing the divine mysteries of Christ. Hence we honour thee with piety, as we cry, Gerasimus, thou God-bearer: Glory to Christ, Who hath given thee strength. Glory to Him Who hath crowned thee. Glory to Him Who worketh healings for all through thee” (Minaion, March 4, Matins, Sessional Hymn, tone 1).

The noetic vision our Holy Father Gerasimus attained, is no other than the vision of the glory of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who asked His Father not only for those who believed in Him but also for those who would believe in Him through their words [the Disciples’ preaching] “... [24] that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:20-24).

Interpreting these words of the Lord, Saint Cyril of

Alexandria says: "the vision of Christ's glory will neither be granted to the profane and the sinners, nor to those who defile the divine Law, but only to the holy and the benign. And we know this because Prophet Isaiah says: "Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord" (Isaiah 26:10). And in His Gospel preaching, Christ says: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). And who are those who are able to have a pure heart? Without doubt, those who through their union with God, which is made through the Son by the Holy Spirit, have refrained from any kind of love of the flesh, and abhorred worldly desires to the highest level possible. They have refused their lives and submitted them to the will of the Holy Spirit, following Christ's manner of living in purity and in all other manners. Saint Paul was one of them, who in his utmost purity did not hesitate to say: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20).

To our question, in what manner do the Holy and the meek, the pure in heart achieve their union with God, or better say, their deification, the established Church Father Cyril replies: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:23). For the Son becomes one with us, in flesh, as a man, joined to us with a mystical blessing; and spiritually, as God with the energy and grace of the Holy Spirit, which regenerates the spirit in us towards a new life and makes us communicants of His divine nature". The link of our unity with God the Father is always the Son, our Holy Father Cyril remarks. "We complete our unity with God the Father through the intercessor Christ".

It is precisely this divine completion in Christ, through the intercessor Christ, that Saint Gerasimus achieved, through his ascetic striving of fasting, abstinence, unceasing prayer and defeating hordes of demons, as his hymnographer says: "with

the assaults of thy prayers, thou didst valiantly pierce the hordes of demons, through with wounds, O Gerasimus, and didst praise Christ the Son of God” (Matins, Ode 5, Troparion 3).

Today’s festive commemoration of our Holy Father Gerasimus in his Monastery, in this first week of Lent, and amidst the pandemic plague of covid-19, urges us, my dear brethren, through Saint Paul’s advice: “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others [who do not know Christ]; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:6-8). And this is so, because as the hymnographer says: “The wealth of the grace of the Holy Spirit is offered unto all who gather it by the labours of abstinence” (Matins, Ode 9, Troparion 2).

Let us entreat our Holy Father Gerasimus and say along with the hymnographer: “He that became flesh of Thine all-holy blood, O immaculate Lady, Himself purgeth us of defilements of the flesh through fasting and labours, giving us strength by Thine unceasing entreaties, O Virgin Theotokos” (Matins, Ode 8, Theotokion). So that in repentance, humility and patience we may reach the luminous Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and be co-resurrected with Him. To Him belongs the glory and the might unto the ages. Amen.”

After the Divine Liturgy, the hardworking and hospitable Hegoumen Archimandrite Chrysostom hosted a fasting meal for the Patriarchal Entourage and the congregation.

From Secretariat-General

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

On Ash Wednesday, 4/17 March 2021, the first Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts on the first week of Lent was celebrated at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, at the Presence of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the participation in prayer of the Hagiotaphite Fathers, Archbishops, Priests, Deacons and Monks.

The Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts was also celebrated at the Horrendous Golgotha, by Geronda Sacristan, His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis. The chanting was delivered by the Fathers of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, at the presence of a few faithful, due to the covid-19 restrictions.

From Secretariat-General

THE PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS BEFORE THE GREAT LENT

1. At the Patriarchate

On Cheese fare Sunday afternoon, 1/14 March 2021, at 5.30 pm, at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, the Service of the Small Compline was read, and before dismissal, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos read

the Prayer of forgiveness to the Fathers, Archbishops, Hieromonks, Deacons and Monks, as they were down on their knees. This is done as an act of forgiveness before the beginning of the Great Lent, which is ordained by the Church as a period of intense prayer for our preparation for Easter.

After the reading of the prayer, Hierodeacon Simeon was chanting "the rivers of Babylon" while the Hagiotaphite Fathers kissed His Beatitude's hand and exchanged forgiveness wishes with each other. There were no pilgrims at the service due to the continuing covid-19 plague.

Having received forgiveness, the Fathers retreated to their cells in the Central Monastery, which will remain closed until Wednesday of the first week of Great Lent.

2. At Saint James' Cathedral

At 2.30 on Cheese fare Sunday, 1/14 March 2021, the Contrite Vespers was officiated at Saint James' Cathedral, by His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina.

Before Vespers dismissal, His Eminence read the Prayer of forgiveness for Priest Haralambos Bandour, the Stewards and the Byzantine singers of the Holy Church with their helpers, as well as for the Arab-speaking faithful from Jerusalem, the Nuns of the Patriarchate, members of the Greek Consulate and of the Greek Community. Not many faithful were present, due to the covid-19 restrictions.

The prayer of forgiveness concluded with the kissing of His Eminence hand and exchanging forgiveness wishes among the faithful.

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS CELEBRATES THE D. LITURGY AT ST ONUPHRIOS' MONASTERY

On Meat fare Sunday, 22 February / 7 March, 2021, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of Saint Onuphrius' Monastery.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated on the Sunday of the commemoration of the Last Judgement of God, according to the Gospel narrative of the Second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Monastery of Saint Onuphrius is located opposite Silouan's pool, at the potter's field, which was bought by the Jews with the thirty pieces of silver that Judas returned to them, when he repented his action of betrayal; this field was bought for the burial of the foreigners.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences the Metropolitans Kyriakos of Nazareth and Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Hagiotaphite Archimandrites Nectarios and Mattheos and Archdeacon Mark.

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

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?... And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:37-40).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The Gospel narrative of this Sunday of the Last Judgement refers to the Second Coming of the Lord and the Last Judgement: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left" (Matt. 25:31-33) the Lord says.

Interpreting these words, Zigavinos says: "Therefore [the Lord] narrates all things regarding His Second coming to invoke fear and correction to those who hear Him". And Saint Chrysostom says: "Now they are not excommunicated ones, but all people are mixed together; however, their division then will be with exact precision". And Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "The sheep denote the chorea of the reverend faithful, who are loaded with the fruits of righteousness, just like the sheep are loaded with their wool".

Referring to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, Saint Peter says: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:10-13).

The Chief of the Apostles Peter urges us to keep ourselves

clean from the world in all our communication in it, as well as to train ourselves in reverence and every virtue. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness" (2 Peter 3:11). And again, Saint Peter advices thus: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Peter 3:14).

In these fatherly words of Saint Peter we distinguish God's righteousness, as well as His judgement, as Saint John the Evangelist also testifies: "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man" (John 5:26-27). And Jesus says: "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30).

Indeed, the judgement of our Lord Jesus Christ is just, because it stems from His righteousness, His holiness, as the Apostle Peter says to his fellow Jews: "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just" (Acts 3:14). In other words, those who denied Christ and His redeeming truth, will be judged by Him, as Saint Paul preaches: "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:12). "All unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17).

Moreover, those who believe in the truth, in the "Sun of righteousness", Christ, should "give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10). And this is because, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" (James 2:14), Saint James the Brother of God says.

Faith in the Living God, my dear brothers and sisters, cannot be confirmed without the divine righteousness, which is the final judgement of the people's actions, as Jesus Christ

Himself said: "Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? ... And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:37-40).

The least of Christ's brethren are Christ Himself, who put upon Himself our human flesh and suffered death on the Cross for our salvation. Saint Paul preaches: "so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death... For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection... Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" (Romans 6:3-6, 8). "and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16) Saint John advices. This means that the genuine Christians are distinguished by sincere manifestations of affection and sympathy through works, toils and sacrifices of selfless love. This way, my brethren, as Saint Gregory the Theologian preaches, "it is Christ we visit, it is Christ we heal, it is Christ we feed, it is Christ we clothe, it is Christ we meet, it is Christ we honour... but because the Master of all wants mercy and not sacrifice, and as compassion is better than myriads of well fed sheep, let us offer Him that, for the poor and the meek today, so that when we are freed from this life, they will receive us in the eternal tabernacles, in Him, Christ our Lord, to Whom belongs the glory unto the ages".

And let us say along with the hymnographer: "As I ponder the fearful day of Thy judgement and ineffable glory, I am altogether full of fear, O Lord, and trembling in terror I cry: Righteous Master, who alone are most merciful, accept me in repentance, by the intercessions of the Theotokos". Amen."

After the Divine Liturgy, the good keeper of the Monastery Reverend Abbess Paissia hosted a modest reception for His Beatitude and entourage.

From Secretariat-General

THE MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR THE HAGIOTAPHITE FATHERS ON SATURDAY OF THE DEAD BEFORE MEATFARE SUNDAY

On Friday afternoon, 21 February/ 6 March 2021, at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen the Memorial Service for the Hagiotaphite Fathers, Patriarchs of Jerusalem, Archbishops, Hieromonks and Monks was held, according to the order of the Triodion. The Service was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the participation of Hieromonks, Deacons and Monks. Ever-lasting remembrance to the departed.

From Secretariat-General

PRIEST'S ORDINATION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday, 13/26 February 2021, during the All-night Vigil at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Hegoumen of the Shrine

of Saint George in Lydda, Hierodeacon Marcellus was ordained a Priest. Father Marcellus came from the Monastery of Saint Anthony of Arizona, which was founded by the memorable Father Ephraim Philotheitis and joined the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood two years ago.

Hierodeacon Marcellus was ordained to Priest by His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, after the decision of the Holy and Sacred Synod and the appointment by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

His Eminence addressed Father Marcellus before the ordination as follows:

“Reverend Hierodeacon Marcellus,

At this hour, as we stand before the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb, which received the Creator as being asleep so that He would sanctify and recreate the original beauty of our defiled by sin nature with His resurrection, we are called, by the order, permission and encouragement of His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, and by the approval of the Chaired by Him Holy and Sacred Synod, to entreat the All-Holy and Ceremonial Spirit, in order to ordain you, with the placing of our hands, to the second degree of Priesthood, that of the Priest, and make you a Minister of God’s Sacraments.

A great honour for you; greater is the gift for you; and greatest is the responsibility for you! The Divine Providence of the All-holy Trinitarian God “who trieth the hearts and reins” (Psalm 7:9), has reserved many blessings and unexpected experiences for you. Having been nurtured and brought up spiritually to all matters concerning the angelic-like manner of living at the Holy Monastery of Saint Anthony in Arizona of the USA, under the lead of Geronda Ephraim, you came to the Holy Land and were appointed the duty to serve at the God-receiving Cave in Holy Bethlehem. Then, our most wise Father

and Patriarch Theophilos III, along with the Holy and Sacred Synod, approved your application to join our venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, and having assessed your gifts, suggested that you should undertake the duty of the Hegoumen at the Holy Shrine of the Holy Great Martyr George in Lydda, as well as to receive the high ministry of the Priesthood.

And behold! Today "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee" (Luke 1:35)! From today, you are lifted up in the air, from today you are reshaped, from today you are transformed! You receive the Priesthood and with it a new ministry and mission. Your new mission has three positions from which you can behold God.

First the Priesthood. Know that from henceforth you will be a Priest of the Highest! Your task is to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, during which "thousands of Archangels and myriads of Angels" (prayer of the D. Liturgy) will be standing by you. The Holy Altar will be in front of you, where, you will no longer be a servant, but a Minister, receiving and distributing the Divine Grace! From the Holy Altar, you will receive strength, and you will turn to it at your hardships. Watch out, because the cleaner the Priest's life, the more Grace he receives at the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Keep in your mind the vision of Prophet Isaiah, when he saw "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his glory filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1), and be sure that during the celebration of the Bloodless Sacrifice, this vision will be unfolded before you, even if you won't be able to view it with your human eyes.

The second is the Pastoral mission. From henceforth, you are called "not to give sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids" (Psalm 132:4). From today you become a vessel of the Divine Grace, in order to convey to every man coming to you the water of Eternal Life, that "shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). Your care for the flock of our Patriarchate in Lydda and for the

pilgrims who come from all over the world makes it imperative for you to have unceasing continuous care so that they may be benefited spiritually and carry on to their path to salvation. Keep in your heart the words of Saint John of the Ladder; "the true shepherd is revealed by his love. For it was out of love that the Shepherd was crucified" (Ladder of the Divine Ascent, to the Shepherd, 24).

The third and last position of your mission is that of the Hagiotaphite. As a Hagiotaphite Hieromonk, continuator of the tradition of the Order of the Studious Ones, in addition to the aforementioned advice, you should have a tireless watch over the Holy Shrine which you are called to serve. Be a sleepless guardian, preserving and sustaining the spiritual and material property which has been handed over to us by the older Fathers, as well as all other precious items of our noble Faith. And be aware that our Fathers of old preserved these holy places with blood, tears and sweat. Rest sure, that the Great Martyr and Trophy-bearer George, who "was a soldier of the King of the ages" (Vespers of St George), will be your guardian and companion in this struggle.

Having admonished you with these, as a brother and as a Father, obeying the order of His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch Theophilos III, we invoke for you the Grace of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb, of the God-receiving Cave, the intercessions of the Most Holy and Most-Pure Theotokos who received the Annunciation in Nazareth, and of the Holy Glorious Great Martyr and wonder worker George the Trophy-bearer, and call you, to "enter into His tabernacles...to the place of his footstool" (Psalm 132:7)."

With the invocation of the Divine Grace and the placing of the Metropolitan's hands, the members of the Lydda parish and the Hagiotaphite Fathers exclaimed the words "Axios, Axios!" for the ordained.

After the Divine Liturgy, the ordained Priest hosted a reception for the ordaining Metropolitan and all present at the Office of Geronda Sacristan, His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis.

The next morning, Hieromonk Marcellus came to the Office of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and received His blessing and instructions for the care of our Arab-speaking flock at the Shrine of Lydda.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF HOLY HIEROMARTYR HARALAMPUS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday 10/23 February 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy Hieromartyr Haralampus the wonderworker at the Holy Monastery bearing his name, which is located at the crossing between Via Dolorosa and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, at the ruins of the Gate through which the Lord marched towards Golgotha carrying His Cross.

On this feast the Church commemorates that Saint Haralampus was a Priest who ministered in Magnesia of Thessaly, he confessed Christ and suffered a martyr's death during the reign of Severus and the Sovereign of Magnesia Lucian in the year 198. He was granted by God the gift of healing from sicknesses and from cholera, and by his prayers, may God heal us from the covid-19 pandemic.

In this Monastery Vespers and the Divine Liturgy were

officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis with the co-celebration of Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, Archimandrite Makarios, Priests Haralampus Farah and Nectarios and Hierodeacon Simeon. The changing was delivered by Archimandrite Eusevios, Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos and the Patriarchal School Students, as the services were attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, Nuns and faithful from Jerusalem.

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

His Beatitude, the Episcopal entourage and the congregation were offered a reception by the good caretaker of the Monastery, Archimandrite Kallistos.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT SIMEON THE GOD-RECEIVER AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, 3/16 February 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of Saint Simeon the God-receiver.

On this feast, the Church and especially the Church of

Jerusalem commemorates the co-operation of Saint Simeon in the mission of God's Providence for our salvation. Saint Simeon was a righteous and holy man, who lived on the borderline between the Old and the New Testament and was informed by the Holy Spirit that "he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2:26).

This prophecy of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled when the Lord's parents brought Him for his sanctification when He was forty days old to the Temple of Solomon. Then Simeon rejoiced in recognizing the infant in his arms to be "the salvation" of the Lord and cried out: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32).

This feast was officiated at the Holy Monastery of Saint Simeon by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences the Archbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the representative of MISSIA of the Moscow Patriarchate, Hegoumen Archimandrite Alexander, Archdeacon Mark, the Hierodeacons Simeon, Eulogios, Marcellus and other Fathers.

The chanting was delivered by Mr Vasilios Gostopoulos and the Patriarchal School students, and the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and quite a few faithful.

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. He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel:

all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God" (Psalm 98: 2-3) the psalmist proclaims.

Noble Christians,

The Holy Church of Christ, hearkening to David's words: "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise" (Psalm 98:4), has gathered all of us in this Holy place where the tomb of Saint Simeon the God-receiver is preserved, in order to celebrate both his commemoration and contribution to the historic event of the meeting with the new infant, our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Altar of God, in the Temple of Solomon.

"When the Elder had seen with his eyes the salvation that came from God unto the peoples he cried to Thee: O Christ, Thou art my God" (Katavasia, Ode six); and in simple words: Lord when the Elder Simeon saw with his own eyes the Saviour that had come for all the nations, he cried with a loud voice: "Christ, You are my God, Who was born from God the Father", and Cosmas the melodist says according to the testimony of Saint Luke the Evangelist: "And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord... Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:27-32).

According to the interpretation of the inspired Church Fathers, "the salvation of God" who Elder Simeon's eyes beheld, is no other than Christ. "Salvation he called the incarnation of the Only Begotten", Saint Theophylaktos says; "born for the salvation of the people", Zigavinos adds. "It is customary for the Bible to call the Christ of God as salvation", Saint Basil the Great notes. And being the salvation means His incarnate presence according to Saint

Athanasios. "He had prepared [the salvation] of Christ from the beginning of the world and it was revealed to us in the last ages" Saint Cyril of Alexandria comments, and quotes Apostle Peter: "ye were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:18-20).

It is made clear thus, that the "salvation of God" is the Word of God "Who for our salvation, in the last days, dwelt in the womb of the Holy Virgin and through her He was born in the flesh without any alteration" according to Saint John Damascene.

The righteous Simeon did not only confess that the infant in his arms is Christ, the Saviour of the world but also became a seer of the unapproachable and uncreated light, of the divinity of Christ, as Saint Basil the Great teaches clearly: "Anna was announcing, Simeon held in his arms a small infant the great God, worshipping Him; they did not despise the vision but glorified the greatness of His divinity. For the Divine Power was visible like light through glass threads through the human body, shining through those who had the eyes of the heart purified".

It is noteworthy that indeed it was said to Simeon that "he should not see death before he would see the Christ of the Lord" (Luke 2:26). But Saint Simeon never ceased keeping the eyes of his heart purified. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"(Matt 5:8) the Lord says. "The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out" (Proverbs 13: 9) the wise Solomon says.

Elder Simeon is distinguished among the great personalities and the Prophets of the Old Testament because he was deemed worthy to worship "the great God as a small infant", namely Christ, while the other Prophets foretold God the Word,

Christ, Who would become incarnate through the Virgin. And the preserved incorrupt relics of Saint Simeon is a great witness of the Grace and the glory he received by God, as the psalmist says: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Psalm 97:11). "The noetic and divine light shines in the mind and heart of everyone who is pure and righteous," Saint Cyril of Alexandria says.

And the divine light that dawns in the righteous ones is no other than the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, through which Simeon the God-receiver prophesized to Mary: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34-35).

Interpreting these words, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "Emanuel is set by God the Father as the foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isaiah 28:16), "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever, it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Matt. 21:44). And referring to the Mother of Christ, Zigavinos says: "He called 'a sword' the honourable and sharp pain that pierced the Theotokos' heart when her Son was crucified. Simeon prophesied about this deep pain." And Saint Cyril clarifies this by saying: "Like by a sword, the Virgin was pierced and wounded when she saw the One who was born from her in the flesh to be crucified".

Let us entreat today's honoured righteous Simeon the God-receiver, so that we who believe in God the Word who was born by the Holy Virgin in the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ, will not be put to shame, but by his prayers, we may be worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven. And let us say along with the hymnographer: "He who is full is emptied out; He who is before eternity receiveth a beginning; the word taketh on the grossness of matter; the Artificer is fashioned; the

Uncontainable, assuming a body, is contained in thy womb, O Virgin, graced of God" (Minaion, Feb.3, Ode 1, Theotokion). Amen".

After the Divine Liturgy, the Elder Hegoumen and renovator of the shrine Archimandrite Theodoritos hosted a reception for the Patriarchal Entourage and the congregation at the Hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE MEETING OF THE LORD IN THE TEMPLE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, 2/15 February 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Meeting of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple.

On this feast, the Church commemorates the event that our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was born in the flesh from the Virgin, at the completion of the forty days after His Nativity, according to the Law of Moses, was brought by His parents to the Temple of Solomon with the offering of a pair of turtledoves and a pair of pigeons. At the Temple the Lord was received by the holy arms of Prophet Simeon, who was named for this reason "God-receiver", and who recognized the infant and exclaimed "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32).

This feast was celebrated at the Holy Monastery of Sayda Naya, near the Patriarchate, with Vespers in the afternoon and the Divine Liturgy in the morning, officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, with the co-celebration of Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, Priests Hader, Nectarios and Farah, and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon, Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos and the Patriarchal School Students. The services were attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, faithful from the parish of Saint James Cathedral and Monks and Nuns.

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

After the Divine Liturgy, the good caretaker and renovator of the Monastery Abbess Nun Seraphima offered a reception to the Patriarchal and Episcopal Entourages and all the congregation, at the Hegoumeneion and the courtyard of the Monastery.

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