

DEACON'S ORDINATION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

The ordination of Monk Marcellus to Deacon by His Eminence, Geronda Sacristan and Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis was held during the All-night Vigil at the Holy Sepulchre, on 3/19 December 2020. The ordained Deacon Marcellus is distinguished for his Higher Education, the excellent command of foreign languages and his spiritual education in a long-term preparation by the Reverend Geronda Ephraim of Arizona. He became a Monk there and after a two-year ministry in the Shrine of Bethlehem, has recently been appointed by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the Holy and Sacred Synod as the Hegoumen of the Shrine of Saint George in Lydda.

Just before the ordination, the ordaining Archbishop addressed Fr Marcellus with the following fatherly words:

“Reverend Sub-deacon Marcellus,

The grace of God has deemed us worthy to be here in the Holy Sepulchre and proceed to your ordination to Deacon, after the decision of the Holy and Sacred Synod. It was indeed an unexpected decision for you, a decision you had not even considered, because, when you decided to abandon the worldly life, you had as a prototype a great ascetic, the memorable and blessed Fr Ephraim, who was a disciple of a great Saint, Joseph the Hesychast. You envied his life of Hesychasm and this was your goal, as Peter of Damascus says: “Hesychasm is greater than everything else, and without it, we cannot be cleansed from our passions, nor the cunningness of the devil, as moreover, we are unable to realize God’s power and providence that we find in the divine words that are chanted and read in the Church Services”.

At some point in your life, you were attracted by the Holy Land, as many Saints were in the past. You left your beloved Monastery in the U.S.A. and travelled miles away, to be at the places that were blessed and sanctified by the Incarnate Presence of our Saviour. You had the privilege to serve in Bethlehem, where we are going to celebrate the joyous event of the Incarnation of the Divine Word in a few days.

However, the demand of the time, the needs of the flock, the logical sheep of Christ, forced you to leave your beloved hesychasm and be involved in the turbulence of the world. From now on, you will need to put yourself to a spiritual test.

You will strive to keep the three virtues of hesychasm; temperance, silence and self-condemnation, the queen of virtues, which is humility, as you will have to combine them with the pastoral ministry, the liturgical teaching, and the discretion in the shaping of souls. Too much toil, and too little time. You will lose the precious time you enjoyed when you could retire to your cell and were devoted to your studying and prayer.

Now you will have an open ear to the agony of the parent, the pain of the patient, the complaint of the mistreated, and at the same time, you will fatherly reprimand the one who is led astray, you will re-direct in the right path the one who is misled, and you will make yourself a shield, to protect Christ's flock from the various enemies of the Church, both near and afar.

There will be times when you will be too busy to pray like you used to. But in those times, you should remember Starets Parthenios, who sacrificed himself in the ministry of the faithful, and when the noetic lions came to devour him, then the prayers of the faithful people protected him from the temptation.

The Church of Jerusalem, His Beatitude our Father and

Patriarch Theophilos, and the Holy and Sacred Synod, do not send you alone and defenceless in this fight. On the contrary, they arm you with the greatest weapon, the Priesthood, which is held on earth but has its place in heaven.

The divine grace of the All-holy and Ceremonial Spirit will overshadow and enlighten you to always act according to God's will and strengthen the souls of the Christians who are burdened by the worldly life and cares.

Accept, therefore, this divine gift in humility, and kneel before the greatness of the Thrice-holy God, especially here, in the Holy and Life-giving Sepulchre, where you have the special blessing to stand, and let yourself be altered by the Divine Grace."

Then Fr Marcellus entered the Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre by the Angel's stone.

With the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the placing of the Archbishop's hands, those present honoured the ordained with the exclamation "Axios, Axios".

The ordination was followed by a reception at the Office of Geronda Sacristan.

The next morning, the newly ordained Deacon received His Beatitude's blessing at the Patriarchate Headquarters.

From Secretariat-General

DIVINE LITURGY AT ABRAHAM'S

HOUSE OF PRAYER IN BEER-SHEVA

On the occasion of the Sunday of the Forefathers, an Episcopal Divine Liturgy was celebrated for the Russian-speaking Parish of South Israel, in Beer-Sheva, as a commemoration of the Righteous Patriarch Abraham, at the temporary House of Prayer dedicated to him, on Saturday 13/26 December 2020. The city of Beer-Sheva is at the place of the well of the oath, which was created by Patriarch Abraham, and where he concluded a peace-treaty with Abimelech, the first peace treaty in the history of men.

The Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, with the co-celebration of the Hegoumen of Haifa, Archimandrite Artemios, the Hegoumen of Rafidia and Nablus of Samaria, Archimandrite Leontios, the Ministering Priest of the Russians living in Nazareth, Archimandrite Seraphim, the Ministering Priest of Rhene Community, Fr Simeon Bejali, the Ministering Priest of the Russians and Romanians living in northern Israel, Fr Mihail Bercovich and the Ministering Priest of Beer-Sheva, Fr Alexander Yasevich.

The chanting was delivered by the whole congregation in Russian, Greek and Arabic, under the lead of the Head of the Russian-speaking Communities and Hegoumen of Beer-Sheva, His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba. His Eminence also delivered a Sermon before the Holy Communion, and expressed his warmest thanks to His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, for His tireless care and support for the Russian-speaking flock. He concluded with the wish that our Lord, Who was born in a Cave, may open the way for the construction of a Holy Monastery in Beer-Sheva, dedicated to the Patriarch Abraham, through the intercessions of the Righteous Patriarch Abraham, of Saint Sophronios, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and of the Holy Martyrs Maccabees, for the spiritual strengthening of the Christian congregation in South Israel.

After the dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, His Eminence and Hegoumen, Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba hosted a meal for the officiating Metropolitan and the co-celebrant Priests and invited them to re-join the Community in Beer-Sheva in order to honour the commemoration of our Father among the Saints Sophronios, Patriarch of Jerusalem, on 11/24 March of the forthcoming year.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT SPYRIDON AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday, December 12/25, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of our Father among the Saints Spyridon the wonderworker, Bishop of Trimythus of Cyprus.

On this feast, the Church commemorates Saint Spyridon, who was a shepherd from Cyprus, a married man and a father of a daughter. After his wife's death, he was called to become a shepherd of logical sheep. He was offered the Episcopal Office of the city Trimythus of Cyprus. In this prestigious position, he was also proven to be great in virtue. He was extremely charitable and a philanthropist. He was deemed worthy of the gifts of clairvoyance and of working miracles. Through his prayer, he stopped the draught and brought rain to the land again, and when the rain became a flood, he prayed and stopped it. He spoke to his dead daughter and received her answer regarding a woman's will; he turned a snake into gold to save a poor man and afterwards he turned the gold back into the snake; he destroyed the sheds of those who stored wheat in times of famine, changed the route of river waters and had

angels co-celebrating the Divine Liturgy with him.

Saint Spyridon participated in the 1st Ecumenical Synod in A.D. 325 and strongly supported the Doctrine of the One Essence of the Son with the Father. His sacred relics are kept incorrupt in Corfu.

His commemoration at the Patriarchate of Jerusalem was celebrated at the Holy Monastery dedicated to him, which is located near Damascus Gate inside the Wall of the Old City of Jerusalem.

Vespers in the afternoon and the Divine Liturgy in the morning of the Feast were officiated by His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, with the co-celebration of Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, among who was Archimandrite Makarios, Arab-speaking Priests, Fr Nectarios and Fr Hader, and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine choir leader of the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, Archimandrite Eusevios and Nuns of the Patriarchate, as the services were attended by members of the Greek Consulate in Jerusalem and Orthodox Greeks, Palestinians, Russians, and Romanians.

Before the Holy Communion, the officiating Archbishop delivered a Sermon on Saint Spyridon.

His Beatitude and Hagiotaphite Fathers visited the Monastery for veneration during the Divine Liturgy.

The Patriarchal and Episcopal entourages were offered a reception by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Sergios.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE CONCEPTION OF ST ANNA AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, December 9/22, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of Saint Anna's conception.

On this feast the Church commemorates that the noble couple Joachim and Anna, being childless, entreated God to give them a child, and God granted their request, by giving them Mary. Keeping their promise to God, they offered Mary to the Temple of Solomon at her third year of age, and our Lord Jesus Christ was born from her, through the Holy Spirit.

This event was celebrated by the Patriarchate at Joachim and Anna's house, next to the Sheep's pool, before Saint Stephen's Gate, inside the wall of Jerusalem.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated by the Master of Ceremonies Archimandrite Bartholomew, and the chanting was delivered by His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis.

H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos came at the end of the Liturgy, accompanied by Hagiotaphite Fathers, to venerate the Church and hold the Service of the Blessing of Water for the inauguration of the new floor tiles in the Church. The Hegoumen Archimandrite Meletios has completed the new renovations with the donation of a pious pilgrim.

Archimandrite Meletios offered a reception to the Patriarchal Entourage and the congregation after the Service.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT NIKOLAOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, December 6/19, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of our Father among the Saints Nikolaos Archbishop of Myra in Lycia.

On this feast the Church commemorates that Saint Nikolaos was the Archbishop of Lycia, “as a rule of faith, an icon of meekness” who “achieved the heights of humility, riches by poverty”, who helped the poor, the needy, the prisoners, the sea travellers, the orphans, and supported the doctrine of the One Essence of the Son with the Father in the 1st Ecumenical Synod of Nice in A.D. 325.

This feast was celebrated by the Patriarchate:

1. At the Holy Monastery dedicated to the Saint, near the Patriarchate, with Vespers in the afternoon and the Divine Liturgy in the morning, officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, with co-celebrants, Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archimandrite Makarios and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by the Nuns of the Patriarchate, and the services were attended by Nuns, Monks and laity of the Greek Community and from the Arab-speaking flock.

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

The Episcopal Entourage and the Congregation were offered a reception by the Caretaker of the Monastery, Archdeacon Mark.

2. At the Holy Church of Saint Nickolaos in Beit Jala

The feast was celebrated at the grand Holy Church of Beit Jala, only by the Parish Priests, without any Fathers from the Patriarchate Headquarters due to covid-19. Despite the restrictive measures, many faithful Christians attended the Liturgy as this is the feast of the Patron Saint of the city. His Beatitude sent the following Sermon to the faithful in Beit Jala:

“A fervent protector art thou of the whole Church of Christ, most boldly destroying the ungodly teachings of all the impious heresies; and a rule of Orthodoxy wast thou to all men, interceding for all them that follow thy teachings and godly admonitions, O most merciful Nikolaos”, the hymnographer proclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians,

The sacred commemoration of our Father among the Saints Nikolaos, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia, the wonderworker, has gathered us all in the Holy Church dedicated to him, in order to thank our Lord God in eucharist, and honour the Holy Hierarch who has glorified Him.

Saint Nikolaos was born in Patara of Lycia and was distinguished for the clarity of his life, his great pastoral work and especially for the defence of the correct doctrines of the Orthodox faith, by his active participation in the 1st Ecumenical Synod in Nice in A.D. 325, where he put to shame the false teachings of heretic Arios.

Harkening to David’s words, “Seek the Lord, and his strength: seek his face evermore” (Psalm 105: 4), our Holy Father Nikolaos entreated God in fervent desire, and He strengthened him with the Holy Spirit so that Christ would dwell in his heart through his faith (Eph. 3:16-17). This means that the

chosen Nikolaos made himself a Temple, "for a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22), according to Saint Paul.

Standing firm on the foundation set by the Apostles and the prophets (Eph. 2:20), through the teaching of the Holy Scriptures and the sacred tradition of the Church, Saint Nikolaos opposed strongly the religion of the idols, boldly teaching the truth of the Gospel of Christ. Because of this, he was arrested by the idolaters, "and having suffered physical violence by them he was thrown into jail along with other Christians. And when Constantine the Great assumed the Kingdom of the Greeks, the prisoners were set free; with them, Saint Nikolaos was released, and "accepted the Episcopal Office for his great virtue" in Myra, as his Synaxarist states.

The Episcopal office of our Father Nikolaos in Myra of Lycia and his pastoral and philanthropic activities made him "a burning and a shining light" (John 5:35), according to the Lord's advice: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning" (Luke 12:35). This is precisely what his hymnographer sates with the words: "Rejoice, sacred and venerable head, thou undefiled abode of virtue and sanctity; divine canon of the priesthood, that most divine gift of God; and the great and famous shepherd known to all; thou beacon that worthily art the namesake of victory; thou who dost answer with compassion those asking thee and who doest incline to the prayers of the suffering. Rescuer ever ready and the guardian saving all who with right faith keep thy glorious and resplendent memorial. Implore Christ the Saviour O blest Nikolae to send down great mercy on us all" (Great Vespers, Aposticha 1).

Indeed, my dear brethren, Bishop Nikolaos was "the divine canon of the priesthood and the great and famous shepherd known to all" (Vespers Aposticha 1).

And he accomplished this by paying heed to Saint Paul's advice

to his disciple Timothy: "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy, 1:8-10).

This truth, that the grace and truth were revealed through the incarnation and appearance of our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who abolished death and brought into light the life and incorruptibility with the Gospel teaching, is what our Father Nikolaos used to teach, as he became an imitator of Saint Paul, according to the latter's command: "Be ye, followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1).

The Holy Church of Christ calls us today through its hymnographer, to "gather with songs of praise and extol in comeliness" the annual feast of our God-bearing Father Nikolaos. And as Saint Athanasius the Great says: "the present feast is a place of the heavenly joy for those who join it in psalms and spiritual songs".

In other words, the annual feast of the Saints of the Church, and now of our Holy Father Nikolaos, reminds us of Saint Paul's words: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). Which means "that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death. Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so, we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4), displaying a life that is fully committed to the Lord's commandments, as the psalmist says: "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness

unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Psalm 103:17-18).

Let us, therefore, my dear brethren, entreat the minister of the Lord, Saint Nikolaos, to never cease praying to Christ our God, who became Incarnate through the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin, Most Blessed Theotokos Mary, for those who honour his commemoration in faith. And along with the hymnographer, let us say: "Make ready, O Bethlehem, let the manger be prepared, let the cave show its welcome. The Truth is come, the shadow is passed away; God hath appeared from a Virgin unto men, formed as we are, and deifying that which He hath assumed. Wherefore, Adam is renewed with Eve, as they cry out: Thy goodwill hath appeared on earth to save our race" (The Royal Hours of Christmas, 1st hour, Troparion 1).

Many happy returns and blessed Christmas, without the Covid plague. Amen."

From Secretariat-General

**THE FEASTS OF THE HOLY GREAT
MARTYR BARBARA AND OF SAINT
JOHN DAMASCENE AT THE**

PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday, December 4/17, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feasts of the Holy Great Martyr Barbara and of Saint John Damascene.

On the commemoration of the Holy Great Martyr Barbara, the Church recalls that the Saint lived in Nicomedia during the reign of Maximian, where she was tortured and beheaded by her own father Dioscorus for her faith in Christ in A.D. 290.

The Church of Jerusalem held Saint Barbara's commemoration at her chapel in the Church of Saint Nickolaos near the Patriarchate.

Vespers and the Divine Liturgy were held by the Vice Representative of the Patriarchate of Romania in Jerusalem, Archimandrite John, with the Caretaker of the Monastery, Archdeacon Mark.

On the commemoration of our Father among the Saints Damascene, the Church recalls that he is a great Church Father from Syria, who came to Saint Savvas' Lavra and lived in strict asceticism and every virtue. Saint John wrote mostly speeches defending the Holy Icons and the Doctrines of the Orthodox Faith, as well as the Octoechos. With his writings the Saint established theological doctrines and he therefore rightly deserves the titles of melodist and hymnographer of the Church.

At the chapel dedicated to him where his tomb also lies, in Saint Savvas' Monastery, Vespers in the afternoon and the All-night Vigil were held by the Archbishop in turn this year, His Eminence Aristovoulos of Madaba, with co-celebrants Hieromonks and Deacon Athanasios from the Basilica of the Nativity. The chanting was delivered by the Fathers of the Monastery as the Services were attended by Arab-speaking faithful from Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour.

At noon of the feast day, a monastic meal was offered by the Spiritual Father of the Monastery Archimandrite Eudokimos.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY APOSTLE ANDREW THE FIRST-CALLED AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, November 30/ December 13, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the commemoration of the Holy and Glorious Apostle Andrew the First-called, at the Holy Monastery of the Cross in West Jerusalem, where according to the tradition, Lot planted the three-composed wood (from pine, cedar and cypress) which became the Cross that our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified upon.

In this historic Monastery, which hosted the Higher Education Theological School from 1845 to 1909, and Byzantine and Georgian Frescoes are still preserved in its Church, the Divine Liturgy for the feast was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Saint Andrew was born in Bethsaida of Galilee, and was Peter's brother. He was called "First-called" because he was the first Apostle to follow the Lord when he heard Saint John the Baptist saying "behold the lamb of God". Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias and Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite

Nectarios, and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, as the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and a few faithful Christians.

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

“Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus... One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother” (John 1: 35-37, 40).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The power of the Sacred and Life-giving Cross of Christ our Saviour, has gathered us all in this Holy Shrine of the Monastery of the Cross, in order to celebrate the commemoration of the preacher of our faith, and the servant of the Divine Word, the Holy Apostle Andrew who was called ‘the first-called’.

The Holy Apostle Andrew, along with his brother Simon Peter were disciples of Saint John the Baptist, as Saint John the Theologian writes in his Gospel (John 1:35-37). When John the Baptist recognized Jesus after His baptism in the River Jordan, he pointed at Jesus to the two disciples that were with him, Andrew and John the Evangelist, and said: “Behold the Lamb of God!” (John 1:36), and they followed Jesus. “One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, we have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (John 1:40-41).

The result of this event was that after the arrest of Saint John the Baptist by Herod, Peter and Andrew were called by the Lord, while they were by the sea of Galilee "casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him" (Matt. 4:18-20).

Interpreting the impulsive behaviour and the willingness of Andrew the first-called, and of his brother Peter, Saint John Chrysostom says: "Pay attention to their faith and obedience. For while they were in the middle of their work when He called them they neither postponed following Him, nor did they say in hesitation, 'let us go back and talk to our relatives', but leaving everything at once, they followed him."

Of course, this faith in the "Lamb of God" was imprinted in Saint Andrew's heart by the great preacher of the desert, and teacher of repentance, Saint John the Baptist, as his hymnographer says: "Thou who wast formed by the light of the Forerunner: when the hypostatic and divine Effulgence of the Father's Glory appeared on earth, as having counselled with His compassion to save the race of men, then, O Andrew, thou was first to hasten unto Him, being illumined in heart and mind with the most perfect and gleaming splendour of His Divinity; wherefore, O glorious one, thou art become an Apostle and preacher of Christ our God. Do thou, therefore, entreat Him to enlighten and to save our souls" (Minaion, Vespers, sticheron 1).

Moreover, the transformation of the Apostles' minds through John the Baptist's Light, upon their meeting with the Lord, is expressed in Saint Peter's teaching with the words: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass

and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1:22-25).

In other words, my dear brethren, "the word which by the gospel is preached unto us" by Saint Andrew the first-called and Saint Peter, Christ's friend, is the living word of God, namely the incorrupt life in Christ of those who love Christ, as witnessed by the incorrupt relics and the sacred head of our Holy and Glorious Apostle Andrew, that have been preserved since his martyr's death.

This Holy Apostle, who was the first called, sealed the Gospel that was preached in many countries and places of the world, through his martyr's blood, imitating the Passion of Christ until death, as his hymnographer states: "As the first-called of all the disciples' choir, and the servant of the eye-witness of the Word, O Andrew, we honour thee with laudations, as is thy due; for with love and unwavering longing and strong desire, thou didst follow the Lamb that doth take the world's sins away. And thou, O Apostle, didst partake of the Passion of Him that had willingly suffered death in the flesh for us. Wherefore we cry aloud to thee: Intercede with Christ our God that forgiveness of all their transgressions be granted to them that with longing keep thy holy memory" (Matins, Sessional hymns after Ode 3, Troparion 1).

Indeed, with sacred desire do we celebrate today the commemoration of the Holy Glorious Apostle Andrew, whose immense beauty of soul was foreseen by our Lord Jesus Christ and called him in the Apostolic office, revealing to Andrew that He is the Prophet and Messiah preached in the Law of Moses, the Saviour of the world, who was born by the Virgin in a cave in Bethlehem and was worshipped by the Wise Men.

We, my dear ones, are called by the all-lauded Holy Apostle Andrew today, during this Eucharist, this bloodless sacrifice,

“to worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of his hand” (Psalm 96:6-7). Let us also entreat “the Lord to direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ” (2 Thess. 3:5). Many happy returns and Merry Christmas, without the covid plague! Amen.”

After the Divine Liturgy, the good caretaker of the Monastery, His Eminence Philoumenos of Pella offered a reception for all, and at noon, he hosted a meal for the Patriarchal Entourage and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR CATHERINE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, November 25/ December 8, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Holy Great Martyr Catherine the all-wise.

On this Feast, the Church commemorates Saint Catherine, who lived in Alexandria of Egypt in the 4th century. The Saint was well-educated and “silenced brilliantly the clever among the godless, by the sword of the Spirit”, therefore, she was tortured and suffered a martyr’s death during the reign of Maximinus in A.D. 305.

Her sacred relics are kept in the Holy Monastery of Sinai,

where her commemoration is celebrated with great festivities and a delegation from the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, however this year no delegation was sent, due to the covid-19 pandemic.

Saint Catherine's commemoration was celebrated at the Patriarchate in her Holy Monastery in the Old City of Jerusalem with Vespers in the afternoon and the Divine Liturgy in the morning, officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, with co-celebrants; Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos and Archimandrite Paissios, Priest Farah Bandour and Priest Nectarios Chouri. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon, the Byzantine choir leader of the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, Archimandrite Eusevios, and Mr Gotsopoulos, as the services were attended by Greek, Palestinian, and Russian faithful of the Jerusalem Community.

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

The Patriarchal and Episcopal Entourage, along with the congregation, were offered a reception by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Stephen.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE ENTRY OF THE

MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE

On Thursday, November 21/ December 4, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple. On this Feast of the Mother of God, the Church honours the Theotokos, commemorating that when She was three years old, Her parents offered Her to the Priests of the Temple of Solomon, according to their promise to God, where She remained at the Holy of Holies, being fed by an Angel and preparing to accept the great mystery of the incarnation of the Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

This feast was celebrated at the Patriarchate at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen with the participation in prayer of the Patriarch and the presence of the Hagiotaphite Fathers.

It was also celebrated at the historic Monastery of Megali Panagia, which is adjacent to the Patriarchate.

Vespers in the afternoon and the Divine Liturgy in the morning were officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, with co-celebrants the Ministering Priest of the Monastery, Archimandrite Makarios, Archimandrites Ignatios and Isidoros and Arab-speaking Priests. The chanting was delivered by Mr Gotsopoulos and the Patriarchal School Students, as the services were attended by Nuns of the Monastery and Nuns from the other Monasteries of the Patriarchate, along with the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Vlioras, and faithful Christians from Jerusalem.

During the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos visited the Monastery for veneration, accompanied by Hagiotaphite Fathers. The

Patriarchal Entourage and the congregation were offered a reception at the Hegoumeneion by the good keeper of the preservation of the icons of the Monastery, Reverend Nun Melani.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY HIEROMARTYR PHILOUMENOS THE HAGIOTAPHITE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, November 16/29, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy Hieromartyr Philoumenos at the Nablus shrine of Jacob's well in Samaria.

On this feast, the Church of Jerusalem commemorates the Holy Apostle Matthew along with Saint Philoumenos the Hagiotaphite. Saint Philoumenos came from Cyprus and having served as a Hagiotaphite in various shrines and in Jacob's well, where he suffered a martyr's death by an irreverent man in November 1979, and was canonized a Saint by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 2009 (Meeting 50/11-9-2009).

For this feast, the Divine Liturgy was officiated on Sunday morning by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences; Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Hagiotpaphite Archimandrites; Elder Kamarasis Nectarios, the Hegoumen of Beit Jala Ignatios, the Hegoumen of Saint Gerasimos Chrysostomos, Arab-speaking

Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine singers of the neighbouring to the shrine Arab-speaking communities, as the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and people from the neighbouring areas, without any pilgrims due to covid-19.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles” (Psalm 43:3) the psalmist says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The Holy New-martyr Philoumenos the Hagiotaphite's martyrdom for the light and the truth of Christ, has gathered us all today in the very place of his martyr's blood, the biblical shrine of Jacob's well, which is also the spring of the natural and spiritual water of the Samaritan Woman; we are here to celebrate the commemoration of the Saint and be found worthy of the grace of our God and Saviour Christ.

Longing for Christ, who sacrificed His life for the life of the world, Hieromartyr Philoumenos arrived in the Holy City Jerusalem from his country Cyprus, according to the prayer of Prophet David: “O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles” (Psalm 43:3).

His joining the Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood made our Father Philoumenos a faithful friend and earnest zealot of Christ's love. His ministry, in both the holy shrines and in the communities of our pious Christian flock of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, was distinguished by his fear of God as well as for the divine zeal of the preservation of the

healthy faith and the unadulterated apostolic tradition, following Saint Paul's words to his disciple Timothy: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so-called" (1 Timothy 6:20). "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us" (2 Timothy 1:13-14).

During his pastoral ministry, our Holy Father Philoumenos never ceased to preach and act according to the redeeming word of the Gospel of our Saviour Christ, for the spiritual development of the Church flock, applying the Lord's words: "Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19). And it was his preaching for Christ the Son of God that provoked the hatred and rage of his murderers, during Vespers inside the chapel of Jacob's well, where the signs of his violent martyr's death are still vivid, witnessing the event.

The martyr's death of Saint Philoumenos was, in essence, a death of confession of Christ's Name, before those who refuse Him, the Son of God, the Messiah of the world "that God hath raised from the dead" (Romans 10:9). Therefore, Philoumenos's spirit, who completed his life in righteousness and faith, is placed in the chœra of the Confessors who have their eternal repose in the Kingdom of Heaven. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (1 John 4:15), Saint John the Theologian preaches.

The fact that righteous Philoumenos became a confessor of faith is made clear since his martyrdom took place while he was chanting in boldness David's psalm: "In God will I praise his word: in the Lord will I praise his word. In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me" (Psalm 56:10-11).

Our faith, my dear brethren, is totally based on the true witness of Saint John the Evangelist, according to which: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him, that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood. And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever" (Revelation 1:5-6).

In other words, Christ is the incarnation of the divine love, which is the reason of our salvation, namely of our liberation from the bonds of sin out of unfaithfulness in Jesus Christ, Who says: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter [the Holy Spirit] will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he has come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" (John 16:7-11).

To our question, 'who is the prince of this world' Saint Paul replies in his letter to the Thessalonians: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. 2:3-4).

We were saved from the 'prince of this world' by the One Who loves us, Jesus Christ, through His sacred redeeming and martyr's blood, according to Saint John's testimony: "Unto him, that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever" (Revelation 1:5-6). Our Holy Father Philoumenos, a Priest of God, became a participant and a communicant of the Kingdom of

God, through his blood. "The Martyr's death is a comfort for the faithful, boldness for the Churches, the composition of Christianity, abolition of death, proof of the resurrection, demon's ridicule, devil's accusation, the teaching of philosophy...and the root of every good work," Saint Chrysostom says.

As for us, who honour the Hieromartyr Philoumenos, who has boldness before Christ our God, let us entreat him along with the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and all his co-martyrs and Saints, that they may pray for our souls, and for the protection of the whole world from the covid-19 plague. Amen. Many happy returns and a blessed Christmas-fasting period."

After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen and owner of the magnificent Church of Saint Foteini the Samaritan Woman, Archimandrite Ioustinos offered a fasting meal.

From Secretariat-General