

THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday June 1/14, 2020 the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of All Saints, as it is ordained at the Book of Pentecostarion, at the chapel dedicated to them inside the Holy Church of The Meeting of the Lord in Panagia Sayda Naya, near the Patriarchate at the Christian Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem.

This feast is celebrated by the Church as the last of the Pentecost period to show that All the Saints are the fruit of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Just like the Apostles, all the Saints were strengthened and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and applied the commandments of the Lord and glorified God.

Vespers in the afternoon and the Divine Liturgy in the morning was led by participation by His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, as the Services were officiated by the Archimandrites Kallistos and Isidoros, the Arab-speaking Priests Nectarios and Charalambos, and Hierodeacon Eulogios at the chanting of the Byzantine Choir Leader of the H. Church of Saints Constantine and Helen Archimandrite Eusevios and Monk Chariton. The Services were attended by devout faithful Christians from Jerusalem, Greeks, Palestinians and Russians among others.

After the Divine Liturgy, the good keeper of the Monastery and of the Bakery of the Patriarchate Abbess Seraphima hosted a reception for the Episcopal entourage and the congregation.

From Secretariat-General

ORDINATION OF A PRIEST FOR THE RUSSIAN FLOCK

After the decision of the Holy and Sacred Synod, Chaired by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, on Saturday morning, May 31/June 13, 2020, during the Divine Liturgy at the Horrendous Golgotha, His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba ordained to Priest the Deacon Alexander Yasevich, who has been serving at the Russian-speaking Community in Be'er Sheba, and will continue his ministry there as a Priest from now on.

His Eminence the Archbishop of Madaba addressed the ordained with the following fatherly words;

“Reverend Deacon Alexander,

Two years ago, we gathered in this Holy Place, the horrendous Rock of Golgotha, to participate in your ordination to the first degree of Priesthood and to witness the alteration of the “Right hand of the Most High”. At the same Holy Place we gathered again today to rejoice together, to celebrate the coming of the Comforter, the feast of the Holy Pentecost and at the same time to witness your promotion to the second degree of Priesthood.

Two years ago, you entered the All-holy Church of the Resurrection as a simple pilgrim and after the completion of the ordination you departed as an angel, a minister of the Holy Mysteries. Today, you arrived at the Horrendous Golgotha as an Angel and in a little while, the divine grace of the All-holy and Ceremonial Spirit will make you partake of “the holy and ultimate degree of the Priesthood, of the interior of the veil dividing the sanctuary from the nave, in the Holy of

Holies, where the Holy Angels desire to look down upon and behold with their own eyes the person of the Holy Anafora, and enjoy the Divine and Holy Liturgy". And again we will witness this unique mystery and exclaim: "this change hath been wrought by the right hand of the Most High"(Psalm 76:10).

Your ordination is not just your personal matter. It is a matter for the whole parish, the members of which have come from southern Israel to support you and rejoice with you, because they are finally getting their own Priest, born and raised in a certain area, in which until recently they used to grow up without being able to be baptized, to celebrate the Feasts of the Church, without the joy of the Church, and in the end to die alone and bury their dead without any ceremony.

By the grace of God we are living in historic moments for the Church of Jerusalem. After 70 years of absolute silence, the holy city of Patriarch Abraham, with the famous well of his treaty with Abimelech, regains its Liturgic life. Since 1948, with the evacuation of the area due to the Arab-Israeli war, the Divine Liturgy in Be'er Sheba ceased to take place. The only sign that indicated the existence of an old Christian community in the city was the abandoned cemetery in the centre of the Old City.

The dead waited for decades to hear the sound of an incense burner and see a Priest to hold even a simple memorial service. The old tombs looked like seeds, which were planted in the ground and waited for the right time to take root again and bear fruit. This era came with the fall of Communism and the opening of the borders of the former Soviet Union. Israel was filled with the old Israelites, who spread throughout the land.

However, a portion of these Israelites had one characteristic feature. In addition to the Israelite identity, they brought with them the Christian faith, the Orthodox tradition, the icons, the incense, the fast, the prayer. The Christians

became the salt of the local community. They kept their obligations to the state to the fullest. They “ Rendered to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s”, and now what they should also do was to render “to God the things that are God’s”.

Their desire was to have a Priest enter their house, to sanctify them, to enlighten them and to help them keep the flame of the Faith burning. This wish was fulfilled in 2008, on the feast day of St. Spyridon, when God miraculously led my steps to the Negev Desert to perform the first memorial service and I met the first Christians with the help of the venerable Pilgrim Nina, the name of who reminded me of the sister of St. George the Great Martyr, Saint Apostle Nina, who spread the teaching of the Holy Gospel at the inhospitable territories of Georgia as it was then, in the 4th century AD.

Many visits followed, during which I found for myself the magnitude of the faith, the simplicity and the love of the orphaned Christians of the South. I was happy every time the road brought me close to them. With the passage of time, however, I realized that the harvest is too much for the few workers. I was starting to feel tired because of the long distance from Jerusalem, and I was saddened by my inability to be among the Christians of Be’er Sheba all the time.

Then a new desire was created for me. To find the right Priest, who will come from and live in Be’er Sheba, so that he can immediately meet the Liturgical needs of Christians and be always present, whenever the parish demands it.

When we refer to the parish of Be’er Sheba, we do not simply mean the parish of a district. The area in which we are supposed to serve begins east of Aynn Ghent’s springs on the shores of the Dead Sea to reach west to the coastal Ashkalon and end up as far south as the centre of the city of Eilat

having as its centre the capital of the desert, Beer Sheba, , and thus covering an area of more than 12,000 square kilometres. Consequently, the presence of the local Priest was absolutely necessary for the correct execution of the pastoral work in such a large and sensitive area.

The choice on you was not accidental. You appeared at the first Divine Liturgy in Be'er Sheba and have been present on a daily basis ever since. Your ordination as a deacon coincided with my temporary removal, fortunately not for long. With your help, we have managed to find a new place to house the temporary House of prayer until God deems us worthy to build our own Holy Church, dedicated to Patriarch Abraham, the Holy Patriarch St. Sophronios and the Holy Maccabees.

From now on, your responsibilities will increase. The effort will be great. You must cultivate, above all, patience in temptations. His Beatitude our Patriarch, the Holy and Sacred Synod and all the Fathers of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood have accepted you into the bosom of the Church of Jerusalem and will support you in your mission. Your wife, who has supported you with her love, will stand by you again. Your beloved daughter Maria, who has devoted herself in the treatment of the sick with medicine, is happy and proud of her father. Your little son Paul stands in your shadow and waits for you to teach him from your experience in the Church. We will all stand by you and strengthen you in your new ministry.

We entreat the Holy Spirit to enlighten you, strengthen you and cover you from temptations. And now leave yourself to the will of God and accept the divine gift of Priesthood, in order to sanctify others and to sanctify yourself personally “.

Fr. Alexander returned the address as follows:

“Your Eminence, Dear Fathers, brothers and sisters in Christ!

In this joyful and important day for me, being in the holy place of the Golgotha Rock, where the Cross of the Lord God

and Saviour Jesus Christ was erected, I would like to thank His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch Theophilos III, the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Church of Jerusalem and especially Your Eminence Aristovoulos, for the trust you have shown in me.

The Lord brought me to the city of Be'er Sheva, when you, Your Eminence, began to regularly celebrate the Divine Liturgy there in a small Russian-speaking community, which was located in the Special Homeland of the Patriarch Abraham. After many years, the holy chanting was heard again and the Divine Liturgy began to be celebrated. At that moment, I immediately felt a strong desire to work hard for the Church. I still feel that. In front of me is a large field for action, because the community is developing, and many Russian Christians live in Be'er Sheva and other cities in the south.

I also want to thank our Priest, Father Igor, with whom I had the opportunity to serve as a deacon for almost two years. I want to thank my wife, Xenia, who helps and supports me. I also want to thank our entire community and especially those who have come to my ordination today. I thank God and ask for your prayers! ”

After these words, His Eminence placed his hands on the head of the ordained and invoked the Divine Grace which heals all infirmities and completes all things lacking.

The ordained received the acclaiming “axios” by the co-praying Hagiotaphite Fathers, his wife, relatives and community members who came to honour him.

After the ordination, the Episcopal entourage and the ordained paid their respects to His Beatitude and thanked Him.

From Secretariat-General

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

On Monday, May 26/ June 8, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Monday of the Holy Spirit as it is ordained by the book of Pentecostarion, a day especially dedicated in honour of the Holy Spirit, Who came from the Father through the Son and enlightened the illiterate Disciples at the Upper Room and made them luminaries and teachers of the whole world.

This feast is celebrated at the Holy Church of the Russian MISSIA of the Moscow Patriarchate in New Jerusalem, which is dedicated to the Holy Trinity.

The Festal Divine Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Arhcbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina and Theodosios of Sebastia, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks among whom the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Head of the Russian MISSIA Archimandrite Alexander and other Priests of the Russian Church, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacons of the Russian MISSIA, as the chanting was delivered by the Nuns of the MISSIA and the service was attended by Russian faithful Christians.

After the Holy Communion, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos delivered the following Sermon;

“Reverend Archimandrite Alexander,

Representative of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow and
all Russia in the Holy City of Jerusalem

“Once when He descended and confounded the tongues, the Most High divided the nations; and when He divided the tongues of fire, He called all men into unity; and with one accord we glorify the All-holy Spirit” (Kontakion of the Feast). The hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

The All-holy Trinity has gathered us all in this Holy Church, in the joyful day of Holy Pentecost, in order to celebrate in Eucharist the All-holy, life-giving and almighty Spirit, the One God of the Holy Trinity, Who is equally honoured, glorified and is of one essence with the Father and the Son.

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”(John 4:24). “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you”(John 14:26). “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you”(John 16:13-14), our Lord Jesus Christ says.

Behold therefore, why the hymnographer also says: “The Holy Spirit provideth all things; He gusheth forth prophecy; He perfecteth the priesthood; He hath taught wisdom to the illiterate. He hath shown forth the firshermen as theologians. He holdeth together the whole institution of the Church. Wherefore, O Comforter, one is essence and throne with the Father and the Son, glory to Thee” (Great Vespers of Pentecost, 3rd sticheron).

The Holy Spirit, Who holds together the whole constitution of

the Church, was foretold by the Prophets; "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke" (Joel 2:28, 30), Joel says, and Ezekiel adds; "Thus says the Lord: Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36-25-27).

This "new spirit", the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, did God the Father send down and gave to His Holy Disciples and Apostles, after the request of the gloriously ascended into heaven Son and Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. To these Disciples and Apostles, – according to St. Paul – , "whom Christ set first in the Church (1 Cor. 12:28) and "is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20), did the Lord "pour out His Spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28), and consequently to their descendants, namely the Shepherds and great initiators to the mysteries of the Church, as St. Cyril of Alexandria teaches by saying: "The initiators to the mysteries of the Church and those who are teaching under the sun, before all other things, should enrich their knowledge with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and those who from the beginning are called through faith into sanctification, should become adorned like gold by the divine and heavenly grace".

Moreover, the hymnographer says: "the All-holy Spirit, Who in truth divideth the gifts to all hath descended upon the earth, not as He had formerly, shining in the Prophets through Law's dark shadow, but now is given in all truth to us through Christ's mediation for our sakes. Thus let us purify our

hearts with virtues and so receive His true visitation and blest descent, being mystically lit in mind" (Thursday after Pentecost, Vespers, troparion 1).

And St. Paul advices the people in Ephesus thus: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"(Acts 20:28). It is made clear that this advice is directly referred to the initiators to the mysteries and Bishops of the whole Church of our time, a piece of advice distinguished by the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. "Christ Who has the Spirit has been given to the Church, acting according to the Spirit as God" St. Maximus says. And according to St. Chrysostom, "the fulness of Christ is the Church, and the fulness of the head is the body, and the fulness of the body is the head". "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" St. John the Evangelist says (John 1:16).

The "grace for grace" (John 1:16) which we have received, as well as the way it is manifested, is clearly described by the hymnographer of the Church by saying: "Thou didst wholly take me upon Thee past all telling, and with Thine divine nature full wast blended with me, though suff'ring no confusion, no division, no change, O Christ,. Glory to Thy terrible Descent, and Passion, and holy Resurrection, and Ascent on high, whereby our nature, cast to earth, is raised to the heights again"(Thursday of the 7th week, Matins, praises, troparion 1).

In other words, taking upon Himself the whole man, Christ "was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"(John 1:9). Interpreting this verse, the established God-bearing Fathers say: St. Cyril of Alexandria; "[Christ] is light in essence, He does not partake of it". St. Gregory the Theologian says: "He was the true light..."the Father. "He was the true light..."the Son. "He was the true light..."the Comforter; He was and He was and He was; but they were one.

Light and light and light, but one light, one God.

This very light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world (John 1:9) is being evangelized and preached by the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of the Orthodox Christians, hearkening to the Lord's words: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"(Matthew 28:19-20).

This enlightening and redeeming teaching of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ we owe to keep, and that is why St. Paul urges us all in agony, to prove worthy of our vocation wherewith we are called, "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. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling"(Eph. 4:1-4).

This very unity of faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit do we the Brotherly Churches of the Orthodox Christians declare, through our participation in the Eucharistic gathering of the body and blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; where there is His glory and might unto the ages of ages. Amen."

After the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy the Head of the MISSIA Archimandrite Alexander offered a monastic meal. At the meal His Beatitude read the following address, at the presence of the Ambassador of Russia and the Ambassador of Bella Russe:

"Dear Archimandrite Alexander,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Monastics,

Sisters and Brothers in Christ

“If we walk in the light as He Himself is the light,

we have fellowship with one another,

and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 6).

Our Eucharistic celebration this morning is a manifestation that we walk together in the light, and so we share in this koinonia – this fellowship – that demonstrates our unity and oneness in the Name of the Holy Trinity.

In this time of crisis and confusion for the world, our shared Orthodox martyria, which flows from our union in Christ, is of the utmost importance not just to the Orthodox world, but to the whole of Christianity, and indeed to all the nations. From this martyria countless people are sustained in hope, and draw strength to live their lives in the face of many dangers and temptation. We cannot ever underestimate the power of our unity in a divided and conflicted world.

It is not for nothing that the great Church Fathers regarded schism as the most serious of sins. For schism, by fracturing the visible unity of the Church, weakens the Church’s martyria, and diminishes the Church’s mission to be the true light and leaven. At this holy season of Pentecost we celebrate that, in the words of the Gospel of Saint John, “from His fulness we have received grace upon grace” (John 1:16), and this grace is divinely-appointed to us to share with all who come to us seeking the truth of the Gospel.

The unity of the Church has been under threat from the very beginning, as we read in the Second Epistle of Saint John, “many deceivers have gone out into the world”(2 John 7). And yet, the Orthodox Church has maintained the apostolic unity that was the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This unity we must strive to maintain at all costs, for if schism is the

greatest sin against the Church, the guarding and deepening of her unity is the greatest good.

The Orthodox Churches are those on whom Divine Providence has placed the mantle of our Lord Jesus Christ, His seamless tunic, the tunic that He bore on His passion (cf. John 19:23). We must, in the words of the Epistle to Jude, “build ourselves up on our most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit”(cf. Jude 20), lest we trade the seamless tunic of our Lord Jesus Christ for the defiled tunic of those who are causing divisions (cf. Jude 23:19).

We pray and humbly ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten our hearts and minds, that we MAY remain firm with joy in our blessed unity in Christ, despite our human frailty, and labour without ceasing to restore the damage to the mantle of our Lord.

Please allow us no to propose a toast, first to our brother and co-celebrant in Christ, His Holiness Patriarch Cyril of Moscow and All Russia, and also to His Excellency Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, the President of the Russian Republic.

Chronia polla.

Thank you.”

From Secretariat-General

MONDAY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, May, 26/June 8, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the Disciples and

Apostles who were gathered at the Upper Room of the Holy Zion. This day, the following after Pentecost, is celebrated as a day especially dedicated to the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Holy Trinity, "without beginning, of the same essence, without beginning and never ending", Who came down to the Disciples and Apostles "like tongues of fire and with the sound of a mighty wind and filled the place where they were gathered". "And they all started uttering strange words, doctrines and teachings of the Holy Trinity" the marvels of God in Jesus Christ, Who was crucified and resurrected and sent down the Holy Spirit through the Father; the Holy Spirit Who is proceeding from the Father and rests in the Son.

This marvellous and redeeming event was celebrated by the Patriarchate on Sunday afternoon at the Cemetery Chapel in the Hill of Zion, which was led by His Eminence Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, with the co-celebration of Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, at the chanting of Hierodeacon Simeon, Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos and the Patriarchal School students. Part of Vespers was the reading of the kneeling Service in Greek and Arabic.

On the day of the Feast, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Holy Church of the Holy Trinity inside the School of Zion, led by His Eminence Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, under the chanting of Hierodeacon Simeon, Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos and the Patriarchal School students.

The prayers of the kneeling service were read again, the first in the Church, the second in the Catacomb and the third in the Upper Room, and there was also a prayer at the Prophet-King David's Tomb, with the Archbishop and a limited number of clergy with the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos.

Upon exiting David's Tomb, the procession stood at the south gate of the cemetery where a prayer for the departed was read, and concluded at the Church.

The Episcopal entourage was offered a reception by the Managing Director of the School Archimandrite Mattheos.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE MONDAY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN TOUBAS OF SAMARIA

On Monday of the Holy Spirit, May 26/June 8, 2020, according to Pentecostarion, the Holy Spirit was especially honoured and glorified as the One who inspired the Holy Disciples and Apostles, at the Holy Church of the Holy Trinity in the Arab-speaking Community of the Patriarchate, in the village Toubas, north-east of the Shrine of Jacob's well.

The Festive Divine Liturgy was led by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, with co-celebrants the Dean Priest of the Community Fr. Thomas and the Hegoumen of Rafidia Archimandrite Leontios, at the chanting of the Community choir and the participation of the community members, who number only sixteen families. "Fear not, little flock", the Lord said(Luke 12:32).

After the end of the Divine Liturgy, the Episcopal entourage has offered a meal by the Community.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, May 25/June 7, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as it is recorded in the book of Acts of the Apostles (chapter 2) and it is interpreted by the book of Pentecostarion on Pentecost Sunday.

According to these sources, the fiftieth day (Pentecost) after the Resurrection and the tenth after the Ascension into the heavens, the Lord sent through the Father to His Disciples, who were gathered at the Upper Room in the hill of Zion, the Holy Spirit, “a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them”(Acts 2:2-3). The Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire sat upon the head of each of the Apostles and enlightened their mind and strengthened them and they “began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance”(Acts 2:4).

The crowds that were gathered there, witnessing the mighty force of the Holy Spirit believed in the words of St. Peter and the other Apostles who were preaching and “were baptized, and they were added to the Church that day, three thousand souls”.

This divine event, which was sealed by God’s providence for our salvation, was celebrated by the Patriarchate with the Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and at the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants

their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia, Philoumenos of Pella, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis and Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks with first in rank Elder Archimandrite Nectarios, Arab-speaking Priests and Hieromonks from the brotherly Churches of Russia and Romania. The chanting was delivered by the choir of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre under the lead of Hierodeacon Simeon, and the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, and members of the Greek Consulate, as well as faithful Christians.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by the Vespers of Monday of the Holy Spirit with the kneeling service. Finally, the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters for the festal reception and the receiving of His Beatitude's blessing.

From Secretariat-General

THE SATURDAY OF THE SOULS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, May 24/June 6, 2020, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem held the memorial services for the repose of the souls of all the departed ones of the Church, as they are established at the book of Pentecostarion by the Church.

In particular, on Friday afternoon, during Vespers, there was a Memorial Service with the full Canon, and all the names of the departed Hagiotaphite Patriarchs, Archbishops, Priests,

Hieromonks, Monks and Nuns were read. The service was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of Hagiotaphite Archbishops.

On Saturday morning the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Cemetery Chapel in the hill of Zion, and the Memorial Service was led by His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa. Prayers were read for the repose of the souls of the Hagiotaphite Fathers, the Nuns and the Orthodox laity members of the Greek Community and of our Arab-speaking congregation who are buried there. The services were held by the care of the relatives of the reposed who brought boiled wheat and look after the graves of their beloved ones.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINTS CONSTANTINE AND HELEN AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, May 21/ June 3, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy glorious God-crowned sovereigns and equal to the Apostles, Constantine and Helen, as a feast of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, since St. Constantine accepted the request of the Archbishop of Jerusalem Makarios at the First Ecumenical Synod in 325 A.D., sent his mother St. Helen to the Holy Land and especially in Jerusalem, and revealed under the idolatrous monuments the

places of the Horrendous Golgotha and the Life-giving Tomb of the Lord. St. Helen built the Church of the Holy Sepulchre around them and the worship of the true God started immediately in that place. The Order of the Studious ones, namely of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, was settled at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and its mission is being continued throughout the ages, which is no other than the witness of the Orthodox faith and the preservation-safeguarding of the Holy Places.

This feast was celebrated in the afternoon with Vespers led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the participation in the prayer of all the Hagiotaphite Fathers.

After Vespers, everybody was offered boiled wheat and dry bread with wine at the courtyard of the Holy Church.

On the Feast Day, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the ministering Priests of the Church, the Typikon keeper of the Church Archimandrite Alexios and others, at the chanting of the Choir Leader of the Church Archimandrite Eusevios and Hierodeacon Simeon, as the service was attended by Archbishops and other Hagiotaphite Fathers, and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Christos Sophianopoulos.

After Dismissal, a procession to the Patriarchate followed, while Abbess Seraphima distributed the small loaves of bread as a blessing at the main gate of the Central Monastery.

At the Patriarchate Reception Hall, His Beatitude addressed those present as follows;

“Not from man did great Constantine with his blest mother Helen receive the royal sovereignty but by God’s grace from Heaven. For he beheld the divine Cross as a bright flashing trophy. With it was he victorious over all who opposed him,

and he destroyed the deceit and error of all the idols while making strong throughout the world Orthodox faith and practice”(Matins, exapostilarion).

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Christos Sophianopoulos,

Reverend Fathers and Brethren,

Noble Christians

Our Holy Orthodox Church, and especially the Church of Jerusalem honours and venerates today the sacred commemoration of the Holy glorious God-crowned and equal to the Apostles Great sovereigns Constantine and Helen.

For this reason, Our Mediocrity, surrounded by the reverend members of the Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, went to the Holy Church of Saints Constantine and Helen at the Central Monastery, and rendered glory and thanksgiving to the Holy Trinitarian God, with the celebration of the Mystery of the bloodless sacrifice, namely the Divine Liturgy.

Just like St. Paul, having been enlightened by the rays of the Holy Spirit, King Constantine became equal to the Apostles and a preacher of the truth of the Gospel of Christ according to his word: “Having kept the holy faith, I partake of the light of truth. Guided by the light of truth, I comprehend the Divine Faith” as Eusebius of Caesarea mentions in his history.

The priceless contribution of blessed Constantine to the Church of Christ is not only confined to the marvellous publication of the Royal Decree, of 13th June 313, through which the Christians enjoy the freedom of exercising their worship, but also to the fact that Constantine summoned the First Ecumenical Synod of the Church in Nicaea, and honoured it with his presence. Moreover, he sent his mother, Augusta Helen to the Holy Land, where she found the Precious and Life-giving Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and erected

the magnificent Church of the Holy Resurrection of Christ in the Holy City of Jerusalem, and that of the Nativity of Christ in Bethlehem.

For this reason, the hymn writer says: "As is due, we celebrate thy memory, O Constantine, thou equal to the Apostles, foundation and boast of all sovereigns. For being enlightened with the rays of the Spirit, thou didst brighten the whole Church of Christ, when thou broughtest the assemblies of the faithful from all parts, gathering them in the illustrious city of Nicaea" (Minaion May 21st, 1st troparion of the Entreaty). "Thou wast the first of all the Christian kings to receive the sceptre from God; for His saving sign, which was hidden in the earth, was shown to thee, O blessed Constantine. By its might thou didst subjugate all nations and peoples underneath the Christians' feet, since thou didst truly have Christ's life-giving Cross as a weapon which no adverse power could conquer, and thereby thou also wast brought to our God" (Vespers, 1st troparion of stichera aposticha).

It is also noteworthy that the Saints Constantine and Helen are those who made us heirs of the spiritual and redeeming chapter of Romiosyni, according to St. Paul's words: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:27-28).

Therefore, being grateful, we also say along with the hymn writer: "Rejoice, O great and all-wise Constantine (along with your mother Helen), thou fount of Orthodox Faith, that dost water continually all the lands beneath the sun with thy sweet and delightful streams. Rejoice, O root from which there sprouted forth the fruit that nourisheth Christ's most holy Church. Rejoice, thou most glorious boast and fame of all the fartherst ends of earth, first of Christian kings. Rejoice,

thou joy of faithful men” (Matins, praises, troparion 1).

At noon there was a festal meal for the Fathers at the Patriarchate.

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY IN BETHANY

On Sunday, May 18/31, 2020, Sunday of the commemoration of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Synod, who condemned Arius and established the doctrine of the one essence of the Son with the Father, and formulated the first eight canons of the Creed, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, in place of the cancelled due to COVID-19 virus festive celebration of Lazarus’ Saturday, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Monastery of Lazarus’ sisters Martha and Mary. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archimandrite Epiphaniios, who is the ministering Priest of the Holy Monastery, Archimandrite Demetrios and Archdeacon Mark, at the chanting of Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos.

On this occasion, His Beatitude read the following Sermon:

“O ye assemblies of the Orthodox, let us celebrate today with faith and piety the annual memorial of the God-bearing Fathers who, in the illustrious city of Nicaea, came together from the

whole inhabited world. For with pious mind, they refuted the godless dogma of the grievous Arius, and by synodical decree banished him from the Catholic Church. And they instructed all to openly confess the consubstantial and co-eternal Son of God, Who existed before the ages. This inexactness and piety did they set forth in the Symbol of Faith. Wherefore, following their divine doctrines and believing with assurance, we worship, in one Godhead, the Father, the Son and All-holy Spirit, the Trinity one in essence” the hymn-writer of the Church proclaims (Vespers of the Holy Fathers, Stichera, Glory).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians

Today, the seventh Sunday since Easter, we celebrate the First Ecumenical Synod in Nicaea of the three hundred and eighteen God-bearing Fathers, who gathered there from all over the earth after the inspired by the Holy Spirit decision of the Emperor St. Constantine the Great, in the twentieth year of his reign. And we offer this bloodless sacrifice in Eucharist to our Trinitarian God in this Holy place of His sanctification.

The Holy Fathers of the Church are the descendants of the Holy Apostles and the guardians of the Holy Apostolic tradition, namely of the redeeming teaching of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle”, St. Paul urges us (2 Thess. 2:15).

And the Fathers, who are called “God-bearing”, namely bearers of the Holy Spirit, are those who on the one hand were ordained by the Church (2 Cor. 8:19), and on the other, through their mission and teaching were established Spiritual Fathers of the faithful members of the body of the Church, as St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: “For though ye have ten

thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel”(1 Cor. 4:15).

In other words, the God-inspired Fathers of the Church are the bearers of the unadulterated and healthy teaching of the faith, which they formulated in the doctrines and entrenched through the holy canons in the various Ecumenical and local Synods. For this reason, they are recognized as ecumenical teachers and luminaries as their hymn writer says: “When the choir of the Holy Fathers flocked from the ends of the inhabited world, they proclaimed the doctrine of the One Essence and One Nature of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thereby delivering plainly to the Church the mystery of theology. As we acclaim them in faith, let us call them blessed, saying: O divine array, ye God-proclaiming hoplites of the Lord’s company, most brilliant stars of the spiritual firmament, impregnable towers of the mystical Sion, ye fragrant flowers of Paradise, ye all-golden mouths of the Word, the boast of Nicaea and adornment of the whole world: Intercede ye fervently in behalf of our souls” (Matins, praises, Glory).

Here the hymn writer calls the Holy Fathers “all-golden mouths of God the Word”. And this is so because they established the doctrine of the mystery of theology, which refers to the one essence and one nature of the persons of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Moreover, they formed the doctrine of the Divine Providence, which refers to the incarnation of God the Word, Christ, from the pure flesh of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. And according to St. Gregory the Theologian, they accomplished this, thinking “not in the manner of Aristotle, but in that of the fishermen”. And according to the hymn writer: “Since Christ’s heralds had received all of the spiritual brightness of the Holy Spirit’s light and had been inspired of God, they proclaimed to all that divine oracle filled with wondrous

wisdom, which though few in words is great in breadth”(Matins praises, stichera of the Fathers, Troparion 2).

In other words, the formation of the holy doctrines of our faith by the Church Fathers has its source of inspiration in the revealed truth in Jesus Christ, namely this very revelation of God toward men, in the incarnate Son of His and Word, which was made complete and is eternally unchangeable, and for which it is said: “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away”(Mark 13:31).

On the contrary, the heretics’ formation of the faith in Christ has their own mind as its source, namely the “cunningly devised fables”(2 Peter 1:16), and their distorted thoughts, according to what has been foretold by St. Paul: “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them”(Acts 20: 29-30).

Such “men speaking perverse things” were the unrepentant heretics, Arius, who denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, Macedonius, the fighter of the Spirit, and Nestorius, who introduced the division of God-man Christ. And the teachings of the other false teachers, old and new alike, is connected directly or indirectly with the aforementioned heretics.

Behold my brethren why, our Holy Church festively honours its “all-golden mouths”, namely the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Synod in Nicaea in 325 A.D. As direct descendants of the Apostles, “being reviled, buffeted and persecuted, and driven into exile”(1 Cor. 4-11-13), the Holy Fathers became “true servants of Christ and venerable initiates and seers of the divine preaching from on high” according to the hymn writer (Matins, praises, Troparion 3).

Along with the Holy God-bearing Fathers, who proclaimed the Ever-Virgin and Most Blessed Mary as Theotokos and Mother of

God, and the hymn writer, let us say: "Beholding Thine ascents on the holy mountains, O Christ, Thou Effulgence of the Father's glory, we praise the radiant form of Thy countenance. We worship Thy Passion, we honour Thy Resurrection, and we glorify Thy glorious Ascension. Have mercy on us" (Sunday of the Holy Fathers Vespers, both now).

And deliver Your world from the plague of the COVID-19 virus. Amen. Many Happy returns and health in Christ!"

At noon, the elder and devoted Abbess Nun Eupraxia and the nuns under her offered a meal to His Beatitude and His entourage.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday, May 15/28, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the glorious Ascension of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ into heaven.

On this Feast the Church commemorates the event that after His many appearances to His Disciples, the Resurrected Lord was ascended gloriously into heaven on the Mount of Olives, forty days after His Resurrection. He was ascended surrounded by the wings of the Angels who confirmed the Disciples that "this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

This event was celebrated by the Patriarchate with the participation of a limited number of faithful Christians at the place where it happened, on the Mount of Olives, where the footprint of the immaculate feet of the Lord is being preserved.

There, after the sanctification service of the Holy Altar, since it is an outdoor space, Vespers was held under the lead of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, at the chanting of the Byzantine Choir Leader Hierodeacon Simeon and Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod, Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos with the help of the Patriarchal School of Zion students in Greek, and Mr. Rimon Kamar in Arabic. The Service was co-celebrated by Priests of St. James' Cathedral and was attended by members of the Greek Consulate. Finally, the Service of the Compline was read, and a procession followed at the Monastery of Galili Viri, which marked the end of the Compline at the Shrine.

On the day of the Feast, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, while during the Service H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos came to venerate and afterward visited the neighbouring Imam, the Nunnery opposite the Shrine of the Ascension which is led by Monk Achilios and the Monastery of Galili Viri, where He was hosted by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Anthimos.

From Secretariat-General