

THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION AT THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

The feast of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead was celebrated at midnight of Holy Saturday/ Easter Sunday, April 5/18, 2020.

On this feast the Church is glorifying in gratitude the divine and wondrous event that the crucified Son and Word of God, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, having been buried, conquered the power of the devil and the authority of Hades and was resurrected from the dead, raising also Adam and his descendants by His mighty Hand.

The Church of Jerusalem celebrated this feast at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, at the blessed and empty Holy Tomb, with the Service of Matins, the Canon of Holy Saturday and the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, with the sermon of the Saint. The Service was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba and only a few Archimandrites, less than ten in total, due to the safety precautions imposed by the Israeli Police due to the corona virus.

Before the Holy Communion, Geronda Secretary-General read the Patriarchal Easter message which follows below;

THEOPHILOS III

By the mercy of God Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem

and all Palestine

for all the congregation of the Church, grace, mercy and peace

from the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb

of the Resurrected Christ.

“We celebrate the death of death, the destruction of Hades, the beginning of an everlasting life. And with leaps of joy we praise the Cause thereof, the only blest and most glorious God of our Fathers”. (Troparion Ode Seven of the Canon of the Resurrection by St. John Damascene)

In unspeakable and absolute joy, with pure hearts and undefiled lips, with unceasing merry voices and pious cheering, the Church proclaims during the night of the Resurrection, and during the whole Easter period, echoing the “Christ is risen from the dead, by death hath he trampled down death, and to those in the graves hath He bestowed life”. In firmness of faith in the Crucified and Resurrected from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the hope of the Resurrection unto eternal life, the Church chants “It is the day of Resurrection; let us be radiant for the festival, and let us embrace one another. Let us say O brethren, even to those that hate us; let us forgive all things on the Resurrection”.

This wondrous and joyful message of the victory of death is the fruit of Christ’s crucifixion, for, “behold, through the cross, joy has come unto the whole world”. Christ’s victory over death came through His sacrifice on the Cross. Christ, the Only-begotten Son and Word of God, came down to earth from the bosom of the Father, became incarnate through the Holy Spirit and Virgin-Mary, willingly brought Himself on the Cross as an immaculate sacrifice for the remission of our sins. As Prophet Isaiah had foretold, “he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7), and just as St. John the Baptist pointed at Him in recognition, He became on the Cross “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). The most wondrous of all in this mystery, which

signifies the excessive love of God for us, is what the Apostle of nations also says: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8). Being without sin, Christ "being in the form of God...made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant: (Phil. 2:6-7), He humbled Himself, willingly came to the Cross and through His immaculate blood "He that forgiveth the ancient debts, rent asunder the handwriting against them and wished to bestow His grace"(Akathist Hymn to the Theotokos, 4th Part).

Having suffered in the flesh for us and buried, Christ went down into Hades. In his greed, Hades was waiting to devour the Son of God. But because of the humility of His sacrifice, Hades was not able to have power over Him. Hades was deceived and embittered. Thinking that he had received a mortal being, he met God, God and man, the God-man Jesus Christ, Who by both the power of God the Father and His own, was risen from the dead, becoming the first-fruits of the dead, and led the way for all humans in flesh to the resurrection from the dead. He sought the lost sheep in Hades, just as He did on earth, , preached the Gospel of repentance and salvation to Adam and Eve and their descendants and as it is depicted on the Orthodox icon of the Resurrection, He drew them into Paradise along with Him. Since then, by the power and faith in the Resurrection, we humans die only in flesh, we dispose our earthly body, for, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15:50), and live with Him in soul and spirit, "awaiting for the resurrection from the dead and life of the age to come" (The Creed).

Christ had foretold this mystery of the resurrection from the dead to His friends and disciples, while He still lived with them on earth, and after His Resurrection "he shewed himself

alive after his passion by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3), appearing to them in His crucified body with the nail signs, but radiant and glorified. Through His Disciples who were His eye-witnesses, He passed on this mystery to His body the Church, which He established with the Comforter Spirit, that He sent down to us from the Father, after His Ascension in Heaven on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after His Resurrection.

Ever since, the Church, which according to the true words of the Lord "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18), continues His mission on earth. It preaches Christ Incarnate , Crucified and Resurrected, and baptizes in His Name those who believe in Him, sanctifies them with its sacraments and prays for the reconciliation of humanity and for the whole world. It supports the suffering man with all its strength, prays to our Lord Jesus Christ, the healer of souls and bodies , for the cessation of the ongoing pandemic of the current virus, for the healing of those affected by it and for His mercy for those who died by the virus so mercilessly, in the certainty that "though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you" (2 Cor. 13:4).

On the bright day of the Resurrection, our Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of Churches, also prays from the Life-giving Tomb where Christ was buried and resurrected, for the unity of the Church and for peace in the Middle East, and wishes to its flock in the Holy Land and all over the world, the power and the blessing of the Resurrected Jesus Christ.

Christ is Risen!

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, PASCHA 2020

With Fatherly and Patriarchal blessings,

Fervent supplicant for all before God,

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem”

From Secretariat-General

THE SERVICE OF THE HOLY LIGHT AT THE PATRIARCHATE

At noon on Holy Saturday, April 5/18, 2020, the Service of the Holy Light was held by the Patriarchate, according to the established typikon order of the Status Quo.

H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem went down to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre through St. James' Cathedral staircase at 12.00 noon /13.00 p.m. summer time, and entered the Holy Altar to give His blessing to the Armenians, Copts and Syrians in order to receive the Holy Light.

A procession three times around the Sacred Edicule followed and His Beatitude then entered the Holy Sepulchre, while the Armenian representative stood at the entrance by the Angel's stone.

After praying, the Patriarch received the Holy Light from the Holy Sepulchre and initially gave it through the south opening and then from the entrance of the Edicule to the Fathers. There were no pilgrims due to the plague.

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda took the Holy Light to the representatives of the Embassies of the Orthodox

Countries and Churches, – to the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos to convey It to the Church of Greece – . The Holy Light was transferred to the airport and handed in to the representatives of the countries who remained inside the airplanes.

The Holy Light was transferred to the Arab-speaking Communities of the Patriarchate in Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian Autonomy and Gaza by individual appointed representatives.

From Secretariat-General

THE EPITAPH SERVICE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Good Friday evening, April 4/17, 2020, around 9.00 p.m., the modest, contrite but nevertheless magnificent Epitaph Service was held at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre by the Patriarchate. On this Service the Church commemorates the burial and descent in Hades of our Lord Jesus Christ after His crucifixion. There, the Lord preached the message of salvation and release from the darkness and the torments of hell to the departed ones by saying; “come back again into Paradise”. This Service, which is actually the Matins of Holy Saturday, included the Six Psalms, the Canon of Holy Saturday, the procession around the shrines in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, concluding in Horrendous Golgotha.

There, after the reading of the Gospel narrative and the veneration, the Archbishops took the silk corporal of the Epitaph from the Holy Altar of Golgotha and placed it on the

Deposition slate, where the Gospel of the deposition was read.

A procession three times around the Sacred Edicule followed and then the silk corporal was placed on the Holy Tomb. The Lamentations were chanted afterward, and the rest of the Service continued with the blessings, praises, Doxology and the Sermon of His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina as follows;

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

Your Excellency Mr. Consul General of Greece,

Reverend chorea of High Priests,

Reverend Fathers,

Noble pilgrims,

This evening of Holy Friday, the Church experiences the crucifixion of the Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth. – “Today hangs upon the wood the One who has hung the earth upon the waters – the bridegroom of the Church has been pierced with nails” -, and with the dawn of Holy Saturday the Church experiences His burial in the flesh – “Thou who art the life hast gone down into the grave O Christ, and the orders of angels marveled – removing Thee from the wood, Joseph of Arimathea buries Thee in a grave”.

The Church lives these two events today, drawing the details from the eye-witnesses of the Holy Scriptures, co-crucified with the One who was crucified for her, and being buried along with Him, who was buried as a mortal man, and went down in Hades.

Commemorating these, the Church believes that Christ’s crucifixion was done by the free will and decision of His crucifiers, foreknown, but not predestined by God. The crucifiers were unable to tolerate that He was the Incarnate Son and Word of God who came on earth, and therefore condemned

Him to death. The Church prays for the remission of their sin, just like He asked from the Cross "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Jesus had the power to avoid this death, either as man or by His divine power, however He came into it willingly. Having been betrayed, arrested, mocked, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth" (Acts 8:32). As the Apostle of the nations says: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8). By the humility and the kenosis on the Cross, Christ conquered the opposing power and even death. For the Church, Christ's Cross is the beginning of existence, of life and its resurrection. For this reason, it sings: "we venerate Thy Cross, O Christ and Thy resurrection we worship and glorify". Therefore St. John Damascene says "His precious Cross is above all the wondrous things Christ worked... and truly the precious and sacred wood, on which Christ placed Himself as a sacrifice for us, is sanctified by the touch of His Holy Body and Blood, it is venerated, [along with] the nails, the lance, the garments, the holy places which are the manger, the cave, Golgotha, the redeeming, life-giving Tomb, Sion, the Acropolis of the Churches, and the like, as Prophet David says, We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool (Psalm 132:7)." (St. John Damascene Edition of the Orthodox Faith).

His feet stood at the place of Horrendous Golgotha. There, during the reign of Pontius Pilate, God "worked salvation in the middle of the earth". By the Cross of His Son, He united Jews and Greeks in one body, one nation, one Church. He called us, the nations which did not know God, which were far away from Him, to the message of His reconciliation, and we, the

gentiles, having accepted this, became friends of God, "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Ephesians 3:6). God grafted us into the body of the Church. Joining the body of the Church we were taught to live with our fellowmen on earth in reconciliation, righteousness, peace and love, even love towards our enemies, remembering that "our conversation is in heaven" (Philippians 3:20).

However, God's love for man, Who "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32), according to St. Paul, has included in the providence of salvation through the cross not only us, the living on earth, introducing us to the path of salvation, but also the dead, those who were captives of Hades, dwelling in the darkness and the shadow of death, awaiting redemption. Through the Cross, the Son of God went down into Hades, as the One Who has power over both the living and the dead and sought the lost sheep in its darkness, as He did on earth; He sought the fallen man, Adam and his descendants, and in the lightning of His Divinity drew them up saying; "come back again into paradise". The first to enter paradise was the thief on the cross, who used repentance as the key to it; "Remember me O Lord, in Thy Kingdom". As St. John Damascene says; "just as the sun of righteousness rose on earth, the deified soul of Christ went down into Hades so that the light might shine upon those who were in the darkness and the shadow of death under the earth...and having released those bound there of old, immediately He departed from the dead, opening the way of resurrection for us" (Publ. of the Orthodox Faith).

The Church of Jerusalem, "which was the first to receive the remission of sins through the resurrection", boasts for Christ crucified, and praises Him as the one who has fallen asleep in the flesh, today with the epitaph hymns, in this contrite

modest Service, officiated by its Primate, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, and prays along with Him, from the empty blessed tomb, that the Lord may look down upon the vineyard of His flock all over the world and guide it and lead it to the glory of the resurrection, and that He may not forsake those who are tested by the deadly virus of the plague, locally and universally, but by His healing power and mercy, He may lead them to refreshment, health, good life and prosperity, and may favorably look down upon the Christians of the Middle East and all who dwell in the Holy Land, wishing to all a joyful, gleeful and blessed Resurrection.”

From Secretariat-General

THE SERVICES OF THE ROYAL HOURS OF GOOD FRIDAY AND OF THE DEPOSITION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Good Friday morning, April 4/17, 2020, the Royal Hours of Good Friday were read at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen and at 3.00 in the afternoon the Deposition Vespers followed. The services were not held at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre due to the safety precautions imposed by the Israeli Police, in co-operation with the Patriarchate.

The Services were led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the participation of the Hagiotaphite Fathers who live in the Central Monastery only.

The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine choir leader Archimandrite Eusevios, the typikon keeper Archimandrite Alexios and Archimandrite Demetrios.

Because of the safety precautions the Royal Hours were not read at Praetorion nor the Via Dolorosa procession with the Cross took place. However, the Royal Hours were read at the Horrendous Golgotha by His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis and the monks of the Holy Sepulchre, at the chanting of His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba.

From Secretariat-General

THE SERVICE OF THE HOLY AND IMMACULATE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Holy Thursday evening, April 3/16, 2020, the Service of the Holy and Immaculate Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ was held, as the commemoration of His dreadful Passion, the derision, spitting, the purple robe, the mocking, and above all the Cross, for our salvation.

The twelve Gospel narratives were read and contrite troparia were chanted, not at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, according to the typikon order, but at the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, due to the safety precautions against COVID-19 virus. The service was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the participation in

prayer of Hagiotaphite Fathers, Archbishops, Hieromonks, Hierodeacons and Monks, without any external congregation because of the virus.

From Secretariat-General

THE SERVICE OF THE SACRED WASHING OF THE DISCIPLES' FEET AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday morning, April 3/16, 2020, the unique at the Orthodox Church Service of the washing of the Disciples' feet took place at the Patriarchate.

According to the long-term tradition, the Patriarch of Jerusalem washes the feet of twelve Archimandrites, in commemoration of the event of the last Supper, when the Lord washed the feet of His Disciples, showing us the perfect way of humility.

The Service was held after the Divine Liturgy of Holy Thursday at St. James Cathedral, which was officiated by His Beatitude. Co-celebrants were their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Archbishops; Theodosios of Sebastia, Aristovoulos of Madaba and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos in Greek and Mr. Rimon Kamar in Arabic. Due to the safety precautions against the plague, the service did not take place at the courtyard of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which is the normal order, but at the courtyard of the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen.

H.H.B. washed the feet of twelve Archimandrites, respectively imitating the Lord and the twelve Apostles, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos.

At the end of the service the Patriarchal entourage went to the Reception Hall of the Patriarchate where His Beatitude wished a Happy Resurrection to all.

From Secretariat-General

THE SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY UNCTION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Holy Wednesday afternoon, April 2/15, 2020, at 5.00 p.m., after the Service of the Small Compline, at the Church of the Saints Constantine and Helen the Holy Sacrament of the Holy Unction was held, as a preparation for the spiritual path toward the Holy Easter, and as an antidote of every illness, especially of that of the COVID-19 plague. The Service was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and six Archbishops co-prayed with Him.

At the end of the sacrament His Beatitude and the Archbishops were anointed with the blessed oil, and the Archbishops anointed the Hagiotaphite Fathers who came for the Sacrament.

Unlike previous years, no pilgrims were present, due to the health safety precautions against the virus.

THE SERVICES OF THE BRIDEGROOM AND THE LITURGIES OF THE PRE-SANCTIFIED GIFTS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Palm Sunday evening, March 30/ April 12, 2020, the Service of the Bridegroom was not held at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre due to the safety precautions for the common health against COVID-19 virus, but at the monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen. H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos came down in procession and only the Fathers living in the Monastery attended the service. The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine choir leader of the Church Archimandrite Eusevios and Archimandrite Demetrios on the right and by the Typikon Keeper Archimandrite Alexios on the left.

The 2nd Service of the Bridegroom was held on Holy Monday evening and the 3rd on Holy Tuesday evening.

On the mornings of these days and at the same Church, the Hours were read, and the Divine Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts followed.

On Holy Wednesday morning, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos led the Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts at the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, while

Geronda Sacristan Most Reverend Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis officiated the Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts at the Horrendous Golgotha.

From Secretariat-General

PALM SUNDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday March 30/April 12, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of Palm Sunday, as it is written in the contrite Triodion, as the commemoration of the triumphant entrance of our Lord Jesus Christ in Jerusalem before His Passion, seated on an ass, while the children of the Jews laid down their garments welcoming Him and crying out loud "Hosanna to the Son of David".

Due to the security measures imposed by the Ministry of Health against the deadly virus, the feast was not celebrated with the usual festivities like the previous years. It was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with an all-night Vigil led by Geronda Sacristan His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis and the Temple Fathers. This year the feast was also celebrated at the monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen with Vespers in the afternoon and the Divine Liturgy in the morning, with the participation in prayer of His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with Hagiotaphite Archbishops, Priests and Monks, and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos.

After the Divine Liturgy, holding palm branches, His Beatitude

and the Fathers went to the Reception Hall of the Patriarchate, where His Beatitude read the following festal address;

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” Prophet Zechariah says (Zechariah 9:9). And David again says about the children “out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast Thou perfected praise” (Psalm 8:3).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians,

The entrance of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy City of Jerusalem, riding upon an ass, and being praised by the children with the words “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest” (Matth. 21:9), proclaims the peak of the redeeming mission of the Divine Providence, namely of the excessive philanthropy of God the Father, which was materialized in the Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was crucified and resurrected from the dead for our sake.

Our Holy Church, being the mystical body of Christ, exists and acts in the world, by preaching the Gospel of the King of righteousness, as St. John the Evangelist witnesses by saying: “And when he is come [the Comforter], 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 16:8-11).

The Comforter, namely the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, will prove to the world that Jesus was “Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1), just like the centurion confessed by saying; “Certainly this was a righteous man” (Luke 23:47). And

according to Apostle Peter, "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18).

The Holy Week, the Week of the Passions and of the Resurrection of Christ refers to nothing more than the projection of the Divine Righteousness, namely to the comprehension of the path of salvation. "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Again, the Lord says; "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12).

Especially during this period of the pandemic that mercilessly plagues all mankind, our Holy Church is calling us precisely to this, to the Light of the world and of life, with the words of the hymn writer who says; "Come forth, ye nations, come forth, ye peoples: look today upon the King of heaven, who enters Jerusalem seated upon a humble colt as though upon a lofty throne" (Palm Sunday Matins, praises troparion 3). "Therefore, we also, with our souls cleans and in spirit carrying branches, with faith let us sing Christ praises like the children, crying with a loud voice to the Master: Blessed art Thou, O Saviour, who hast come into the world to save Adam from the ancient curse" (Palm Sunday Matins 1st Kathisma). Amen. Many happy returns, free from every plague, and Happy Easter!"

From Secretariat-General

LAZARUS SATURDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Lazarus' Saturday March 29/ April 11, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the resurrection from the dead by our Lord Jesus Christ of His friend Lazarus, who was dead for four days, in testimony of the common resurrection as the troparion of the feast says.

This event was celebrated:

1. In Lazarus' hometown Bethany, at the Nunnery dedicated to Lazarus' sisters Martha and Mary, unlike the previous years when there was a Patriarchal Divine Liturgy and a procession to Lazarus' tomb, this year, the Divine Liturgy by the ministering Priest Archimandrite Epiphanius, with the participation of the Abbess Nun Eupraxia, and the nuns of the Monastery only, due to the restriction measures for the current pandemic.
2. At the Holy Nunnery opposite the Shrine of the Ascension, where Monk Ahilios is the Caretaker and renovator. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Archimandrite Ananias, and all health and safety measures were also taken. The celebration this year was different to what has been followed the previous years, namely, Vespers in the afternoon at the place of the Ascension followed by a procession to the Monastery of the Men of Galilee and the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in the morning of the feast.

From Secretariat-General