

PRAYER FOR THE PEACE IN JERUSALEM AND IN THE WHOLE WORLD

On Friday afternoon, March 28/ April 10, 2020, the prayer for the peace in Jerusalem and in the whole world which has been established with the co-operation of the foundation of St. Andrew of Russia, took place at the Patriarchate Reception Hall, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the participation of Hagiotaphite Fathers, and the Head of the Russian MISSIA in Jerusalem Archimandrite Alexander and his companions.

This prayer was held today instead of Good Friday, as it is customary, due to the restriction measures for COVID-19 pandemic. The prayer is as per below;

Patriarch:

Blessed is our God...

Glory to Thee our God, Glory to Thee... Heavenly King...

Choir:

Encircle Sion and surround Her O people...

Those of you who have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ, Alleluia (3').

Deacon:

Have mercy upon us, O God, after Thy great goodness. We pray Thee, hear us and have mercy.

Again we pray for the pious Orthodox Christians.

Again we pray for our Father and Patriarch Theophilos.

Again we pray for our brethren, Archbishops, Priests, Hieromonks, Hierodeacons and Monks, and for all our brethren in Christ.

Again we pray for the mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, visitation, forgiveness and remission of the sins of the servants of God; all the pious Orthodox Christians, pilgrims, parishioners and those who have offered gifts to the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb and all who dwell or visit the Holy City of Jerusalem, for their health and salvation let us say;

Patriarch:

Lord Jesus Christ our God, Thee who suffereth the Cross and death for the salvation of mankind, Who hast gone down into hades and accepteth the three-day burial, who hast trampled down death and abolished the evil one, who hast risen man along with Thy flesh, and granteth life to Thy world, do Thou now bless our descend and entrance to Thy Life-giving Tomb and deem us worthy to have the eyes of our own minds and those of the ones who govern the world enlightened by the radiant Light of Thy Face, for the peace and the safekeeping of the whole world, of our region, for the peace of the Holy City of Jerusalem, the Seat of the Great King, the Holy Zion, the Mother of Churches and of all the Holy Churches of God, for Thou art great and Thou alone workest marvels and Thou art blessed with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Patriarch:

Glory to Thee our God, glory to Thee. Christ our true God, Who is risen from the dead...

By the prayers...

Polychronion

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR MOST BLESSED LADY THEOTOKOS

On Tuesday, March 25/ April 7, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Annunciation of our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.

On this Feast the Church commemorates the event when Archangel Gabriel was sent by God the Father to announce to the Virgin Mary of Nazareth the good news, that she was to conceive and give birth to the Only Begotten Son of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit. When Mary replied, “behold the servant of God, let it be done unto me according to thy word”, instantly “the Son of God, become Son of the Virgin” for the salvation of men.

This Feast was celebrated by the Patriarchate as follows;

1. At the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, with the lead in prayer of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.
2. In Nazareth, the town of the Annunciation, led by His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth. H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos sent the following Sermon to the celebrating flock;

“Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad; for the co-eternal and co-beginningless Son of the Father, Who is of one throne with Him, taking pity and filled with man-befriending mercy, condescended unto the emptying of Himself

according to the good pleasure and Will of the Father, and He dwelt in the Virgin's womb, which was purified before by the Spirit. O wonder! God is among men, the Uncontainable is the womb, the Timeless One is in time; and wondrous it is that the conception is without seed, and the emptying ineffable, and the mystery so great! For God emptieth Himself, and becometh flesh, and is fashioned, the Angel having declared the conception unto the pure Virgin: Rejoice, O Full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee, even He that hath great mercy" St. John Damascene proclaims. (Minaion March 25, sticheron at the end of Matins).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims.

Today the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church rejoices and is glad with the holy feast of the universal event that took place in Nazareth, namely of the Annunciation of our Lady Theotokos, the Most Blessed and Ever-Virgin Mary, by the Archangel Gabriel who greeted her with the words; "'Rejoice Thou who art full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1:28).

The hymn writer says; "Today is revealed the mystery that is from eternity, and the Son of God becometh the Son of man; that in partaking of what is worse, He may impart unto me of what is better. In ancient times Adam was cheated of his hopes, and he became not God as he desired. God becometh man, that He might make Adam God". (Matins praises, Glory both now).

In other words, the eternal mystery which was revealed to us men, is no other than the mystery of the divine Providence, which is the incarnation of God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, through the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Mary. This mystery was foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament, especially by Prophet Isaiah by saying; "Therefore the Lord

himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). Regarding this, St. John Damascene says in his praise to the Annunciation; "Rejoice, thou who have been foretold by the prophets of old. Rejoice the conclusion of the Old Testament!" And Prophet-King David chants; "O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day" (Psalm 96:1-2).

The salvation of the Lord refers to the incarnate God the Word, Christ the King of Heaven, as St. John Damascene denotes with the deepest theological meaning of the feast of the Annunciation with his hymn; "The King of Heaven, because of His love for mankind, appeared on earth and dwelt with men. He took flesh from the pure Virgin and after assuming it, He came forth from her. The Son is one, two natures yet one person. Proclaiming Him as perfect God and perfect man, we confess Christ our God! Entreat Him unwedded Mother to have mercy on our souls" (Octoechos, Theotokion tone 8).

On the one hand, it is undeniable that the fall of man which happened by his own free will through the working of the devil, introduced the world into death and corruption, namely into sin. On the other hand, the ineffable love and philanthropy of God the Father, did not forsake His creature, and therefore sent the pure and Virgin Mary and made her womb a paradise with the divine light, where Christ our Saviour dwelt. Christ is the new Adam who was born through the pure flesh of the Virgin without corruption, namely without sin, in contrast to the old Adam, who was made of earth, as the psalmist says; "For he [God] knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14).

Through the Full of Grace Virgin Mary, my dear ones, we have found the way, namely the gate of light, through the eyes of our hearts which have been opened. Through the Annunciation of Theotokos, our unwise and darkened mind has been lit up with

the wondrous light of the Son of God who becomes Son of the Virgin.

Behold therefore why St. John Damascene addresses the Mother of God praising her; Rejoice thou through whom the One who is full of mercy for man was made manifest to us, becoming a man. Rejoice, thou alone blessed among women, who has corrected the fault of our foremother Eve.

The correction of Eve's fault does not have a mere theoretical and moral-logical character, but an essential meaning, referring to the very meaning of the mystery of the divine Providence, namely of the salvation of man through Christ. "I have not come to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32) says the Lord. "He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil" prophet Joel says (Joel 2:13).

The coming of the Holy Spirit and the overshadowing of the power of the Most High (Luke 1:35), have made the Full of Grace Virgin Mary of Nazareth the New Eve, "through whom we were redeemed from the curse" according to St. John Damascene. In other words, the New Eve, the Most Blessed Theotokos Mary, announced to the world of the curse and of sin the joy of repentance and of salvation; and this is so, because through Virgin Mary, the Lord God united Himself with the human nature, as St. Theodore of Studion says: "through thee incorrupt, unwedded Virgin Mother, God assumed my nature, He who created the time and united Himself with the human nature".

Through today's feast of the Annunciation, our Holy Church calls every single man to his own annunciation, namely to the fact that "God gave repentance to life" according to Apostle Peter (Acts 11:18), and "life" is our Lord Jesus Christ who became incarnate through the full of Grace Virgin Mary.

Let us entreat my brothers, the Theotokos Mother of God and

our Mother, along with St. John Damascene and say; Prolong your mercy All-good Lady to those who know you and look down upon your servants and guide us all to the path of peace [and repentance] and deliver us and the whole world from the corona virus pandemic, as our eyes are turned to you in hope, and we have you to intercede to your Son and our God, to Whom belongs the glory and the power, along with the Father without beginning, and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen. Many happy returns, blessed Great Lent and Happy Easter.”

3. At the Holy Church of Theotokos’ Tomb in Gethsemane, led by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba with the participation in prayer of the Hegoumen Most Reverend Archbishop Dorotheos of Avela.

4. At the Holy Church of Rafidia Community, by Jacob’s well, led by Archimandrite Leontios.

From Secretariat-General

THE AKATHIST AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday evening of the 5th week of Great Lent, March 21/April 3, 2020, the Service of the Akathist was held by the Patriarchate at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, without any external congregation, due to the pandemic restrictions.

In the Service of the Small Compline and the Canon of the

Akathist which was chanted by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba and Hierodeacon Simeon on the right, and by Archimandrite Demetrios and Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos on the left, the four Stasis of the Akathist were recited in sequence by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, by His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, by Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios and by Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos.

At the end of the service the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters.

From Secretariat-General

THE SERVICE OF THE GREAT CANON AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday afternoon, March 19/April 1, 2020, on the 5th week of Great Lent, the Great Canon was chanted during the service of the Small Compline. The Great Canon is a poem written by St. Andrew of Jerusalem, Archbishop of Crete. The service was held at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, led by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the participation in prayer of Hagiotaphite Fathers, and at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, led by Geronda Sacristan Most Reverend Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE ADORATION OF THE PRECIOUS AND LIFE-GIVING CROSS AT THE MONASTERY OF THE CROSS

On Sunday, March 16/29, 2020, 4th Sunday of Lent, the feast of the Precious and Life-giving Cross was celebrated by transference at the Monastery of the Holy Cross, which is located on West Jerusalem, near the Knesset.

This feast, according to the Typikon of the Church of Jerusalem is based on the tradition that Lot planted there the three-composed wood of pine, cedar and cypress, from which the Holy Cross was made and our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified on it for our salvation.

In honour and adoration of the Precious Cross, the Hegoumen Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella celebrated the Divine Liturgy, at the presence of the representative of the Greek Consulate Mrs. Katherine Tzima and only a few faithful, due to the restrictions against COVID-19 pandemic, from which may our Merciful God protect us and the whole humanity.

After the Divine Liturgy, His Eminence the Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, who manages the Monastery praiseworthy, offered a meal to those who honoured the feast of the Monastery.

From Secretariat-General

THE NAME DAY OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS

On Saturday, March 15/28, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated in transference the Name Day of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the Feast of the Holy Forty Martyrs who martyred at the lake of Sebastia of Pontus during the reign of Licinius in 320 A.D., as the Holy Martyr Theophilos was one of them.

1. In the afternoon.

On the eve of the Feast, after the reading of the 9th Hour at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, the Patriarchal entourage went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre through the staircase of St. James Cathedral, and held the Service of Great Vespers as "Parresia". The Service with the Great Entrance and the Blessing of Bread was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and only a few clergy, Geronda Sacristan Most Reverend Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos and Deacons. Their entrance was allowed by the Israeli Police in cooperation with the Patriarchate, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, from whose consequences may the Lord our God protect us.

After the Service of Vespers the Canon of the Akathist followed, with the 4th Stasis of the Salutations to the Most Holy Theotokos, led by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda.

2. On the Feast Day

An All-night Vigil was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as the entrance was through St. James Cathedral and the Monastery of Abraham. The Service was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishops Isidoros of Hierapolis and Aristovoulos of Madaba, Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Patrikios, and the participation of the Temple Fathers.

At 11.00 am the following morning, the Doxology was chanted at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen with the participation of the Fathers of the Central Monastery.

Afterward, at the Reception Hall of the Patriarchate, Geronda Secretary-General Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina addressed His Beatitude as follows;

“Your Beatitude, Father and Master,

The commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs, who fought the good fight and were crowned at the lake of Sebastia of Pontus during the reign of Licinius in 320, is a feast we celebrate at the beginning of March and a stronghold of power and hope for the continuation of the spiritual fight of fasting, which concludes at the fair harbour of the bright day of the Resurrection.

If this feast is celebrated thus by the Church as a whole, it is especially celebrated by the Mother of Churches as it is also related to the fact that Your Beatitude bears the name of one of these martyrs.

Therefore, especially honouring the holy martyr Theophilos and Your Beatitude, this feast was celebrated as Parresia at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with an All-night Vigil and the

Doxology in the morning at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, with the participation of Hagiotaphite Fathers, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and the Representative of the Moscow Patriarchate in MISSIA, Reverend Archimandrite Alexander, withing the limits of our ability to gather due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Having thanked the Lord in the Church and prayed for the health and stability of Your Beatitude, and now at the Reception Hall of the Patriarchate, we congratulate You for Your Name day, and offer You the righteous praise for all the good works You have accomplished for the benefit of the unity of Church of Christ in the bond of peace, of the Pilgrimage and territorial rights of our Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and of the instruction of our reverend flock.

First of all, regarding the unity of the Church, Your Beatitude has made many efforts and actions, continuously underlining the need of the beginning of cultivating a dialogue, in order to achieve reconciliation and peace. Recognizing this contribution for the year 2018, the Moscow Patriarchate and His Holiness Patriarch Alexei II, has awarded You with the price for "outstanding activities in strengthening the unity of the Orthodox Christian nations" and "for upholding and promoting Christian values in the life of society", at Your visit to Moscow last November after the personal invitation from the President of Russia Mr. Vladimir Putin.

As far as the works of spiritual enhancement and benefit of our flock are concerned, worth mentioning is the cooperation with the Palestinian Authorities for the renovation of the historic Church of St. Moses the Ethiopian in the Rafidia Community near Jacob's well, the construction of the ikonostasion with the icons of the Sahnin Community in Ptolemaida-Acre district, and the activities of Your Beatitude, the founding of an Athletic Academy in Karak of

Jordan and Your Beatitude's local and international activities for the protection of the property of the Patriarchate in Jaffa Gate and the preservation of the long-term Biblical and internationally established Status Quo of the Old City of Jerusalem, for the benefit of our Brotherhood, of the flock and all the Christians and pilgrims of the Holy Land.

In order to succeed in these goals, You Beatitude has cultivated good co-operation relations with the Political Authorities. Regarding the relationship with Greece, this was made obvious with the recent President of the Greek Republic Mr. Prokopis Pavlopoulos at the Patriarchate and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, as well as that of the Minister of Tourism of Greece Mr. Haris Theoharous of the Secretary-General of the Public Diplomacy of Consulate and Religious Matters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Alexandris.

As far as the Patriarchate's relations with the State of Israel are concerned, according to the Gospel's words "give Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God", Your Beatitude received at the Patriarchate the New Mayor of Jerusalem, and before the Heads of the local Christian Churches, mentioned the issue of the prominent unjust taxes on the Church properties, and at the ceremony of the Ministry of Tourism of Israel, You stressed the problem of the lack of water in the Christian Monasteries in Mount Tabor. Moreover, at the annual New Year meeting at the Presidential Residence, You asked the President Mr. Rouven Rivlin for the righteous solution of the unsolved issued of the properties of the Patriarchate at Jaffa Gate, with the cancellation of the illegal agreements signed a few years ago.

Regarding the relations of the Patriarchate with Jordan, they were good, taking into consideration the bonds of the Royal family with the Patriarchate, the Jordanian law of the Patriarchate in 1957 and the custody Jordan exercises over the Christian and Muslim shrines in Jerusalem.

Within these relations, Your Beatitude was warmly welcomed in New Year's by the whole Mayoralty of Fhes town and His Royal Highness the King of Jordan Abdullah Ibn-Housein Althani hosted a special ceremony for our Christmas Feast, at the Baptism Site of the river Jordan, and received the Heads of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, who were guests of our Patriarchate in the brotherly meeting in Amman, for the beginning of the dialogue for the unity in the Orthodox Church, in respect of the "Primate's honour" of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and all its privileges under our Orthodox tradition.

Your Beatitude has also protected and safeguarded like "the pupil of the eye" the rights of our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and our nation, every time they were questioned, as was the case at the recent event at the Feast of Epiphany, when the Armenians unsuccessfully tried to prevent the placement of the Orthodox icon at the God-receiving Cave in Bethlehem, a right that has been established with the Status Quo for many years.

Encouraged by these, the Hagiotaphite Fathers stand by Your Beatitude's side in a common honest fight for the continuing protection of the heritage of our venerable Patriarchate and of our nation in the Holy Land, and the support of our Rum-Orthodox Arab-speaking flock, for the preservation of its identity and its development and increase towards works of common good.

Raising my glass in a toast, Your Beatitude, on behalf of the members of our Holy and Sacred Synod, and all the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, I wish You health and unshakable stability for many more years, in fruition and abundance of good works, for the praise of our blessed nation and the glory of our Trinitarian God."

The Archbishop's address was followed by addresses from the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, and the Representative of the Moscow

Patriarchate, Head of the Russian MISSIA, Archimandrite Alexander.

His Beatitude thanked those present with the following address:

“Nobly enduring things present, and rejoicing in things hoped for, the holy Martyrs said one to another: Shall we not indeed strip off this garment? Yea rather, let us cast off the old man. Bitter is winter, but sweet is Paradise; painful is this freezing, but pleasant shall be that enjoyment. Let us not waver, O fellow soldiers. Let us endure for a little while, that we may put on the crowns of victory given by Christ God, the Saviour of our souls”, Basil the Great says on his sermon on the Forty Martyrs through the mouth of the hymn writer of the Church. (Minaion March 9, Vespers, first idiomelon).

Your Excellency, Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“God is life, and light and those in the hands of God exist is life and light” St. John Damascene says about the souls of the saints, of the righteous ones, according to the Biblical words: “But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them” (Wisdom of Solomon 3:1) and “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His people” (Psalm 115:5).

Indeed, precious in the sight of the Lord was the death of today’s honoured Holy Forty Martyrs and their co-martyr Theophilos, who martyred at the lake of Sebastia. These saints were not afraid of the threats of the tyrants, nor did they flinch by the insults of the torments, as they had the Cross of Christ their divine weapon, as the hymn writer of the Church says; we stand in awe before the struggles of the Holy

Martyrs, as being in a mortal body they defeated the bodiless enemies; they were not afraid of the threats of the tyrants, nor were they intimidated by the insults of the torments; they were indeed worthy to be glorified by Christ, and that our souls may receive the great mercy.

The holy forty Martyrs were righteously glorified by Christ, because they sought the glory of God the Father rather than that of the people, as St. John the Evangelist says: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). For His sake, the Forty soldiers left every army of the world and entered the martyrdom of their blood, preaching not themselves, but the redeeming truth of Christ, Who shone into their hearts the light of knowledge of the glory of God the Father in Him (Christ), (2 Cor. 4:6).

The martyrdom of the glory of God the Father in His Only Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, Whom all martyrs along with those honoured today imitated, is witnessed and proclaimed continuously at the place of His Passion on the Cross and the three-day burial of our Lord, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where we celebrated the sacrament of the Eucharist, of the bloodless sacrifice and praised in Doxology our All-merciful God.

The God-bearing Father of the Church Basil, praising the undefeated mind of the forty martyrs, who gladly rejected their last garments, urges us to hear their unity of faith: "We are not being undressed from our clothes, they said, but we denounce the old man in us, the corrupt by the desires of treachery. We thank Thee Lord, that we expel sin along with this garment. Because of the snake we got dressed, but for Christ's sake we get undressed".

The sacred commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs is calling us, my dear Brothers and Sisters, in the middle of the Great

Lent, in order to become imitators of their Christ-like mind, as St. Basil the Great says: "For God is their common Father and everybody is their brother, as they were not born by a man and a woman, but by the adoption of the Spirit, adjusting in the unity through love with each other".

Our Mediocrity, bearing the name of Theophilos, the co-martyr of the Holy Forty Martyrs, rend glory and thanksgiving to the Holy Trinitarian God on this Holy Feast, in which "we celebrate our salvation" but also our calling in this institutional mission, namely of the Shepherd of the Most Holy Church of Jerusalem, and of the Hegoumen of the Monastic Order of our Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood.

Every virtue and praise is owed to the Saints! They shed their blood, for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Who emptied Himself, taking upon Himself the form of a servant; these holy Martyrs of Christ, fighting on earth stepped upon the enemy and banished the falsehood of the idols, therefore they received the grace to heal the illnesses of the sick and while still in life and after death they work miracles, according to the hymn writer of the Church who speaks about the Lord's words: "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease" (Matt. 10:1).

Let us therefore pray to the Holy Forty Martyrs and their co-martyr Theophilos, who have boldness in heaven, so that by their intercessions and those of the Ever-Virgin Mary we may preach Christ Crucified, healer of our souls and bodies, and being free from the the Coronavirus epidemic, we may celebrate the bright Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For all these, we wish to all who prayed with us, those present and the absent ones (due to the COVID-19 lockdown), strength from on high, the grace of the All-Holy and Life-giving Tomb, patience, and every blessing from God, expressing

warm thanks to those who addressed US, Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, who spoke on behalf of our Hagiographite Brotherhood, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, Reverend Archimandrite Alexander, Head of the Russian MISSIA and representative of the brotherly Holy Church of Russia, who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril and all others who joined Us in this celebration.

To the health of all of you!”

From Secretariat-General

THE NATIONAL FEAST OF 25TH MARCH 1821 AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, March 12/25, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the national feast of 25th March 1821 at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The feast was celebrated with a Doxology as a thanksgiving to God for His help for the liberation of our nation from the

Ottoman yoke of slavery and as a prayer for the repose of the souls of our Forefathers, national martyrs, clergy and laity who fought gloriously and fell for their country and faith.

The Doxology was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrant Hagiotaphite Archbishops and Hieromonks, the participation of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and members of the Greek community.

At the Patriarchate Reception Hall, after the Doxology the Consul General and His Beatitude addressed those present. His Beatitude's address follows below;

“Rigas Feraios writes in “Thurios” one of his poems; it is better to live for one hour a free life, rather than live for forty years under slavery and imprisonment...come at this time with just one word to place our vow on the cross...

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Today the Rum Orthodox nation, celebrates the anniversary of 21st March 1821, the day of the Annunciation of the rebirth from the Ottoman yoke of slavery.

The historic event of the Greek revelation of 1821 does not only refer to the freedom from the Ottoman yoke, but it primarily refers to the irreversible and God-given right of the national liberty, as St. Paul preaches; “And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:26).

The faith in the living God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who

liberated us from the bondage of the enemy and the strong desire for the freedom of the country were the inexhaustible source of power of the leaders of the revolution as well as of the enslaved Greeks.

The zeal for the divine gift of freedom and of the country justified fully the sacrificial and martyr's fight of the enslaved Greeks, whose vow "was made on the Cross of Christ" as Rigas Feraios said. And according to St. Peter, "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (1 Peter 3:13).

And we say this, because the motives of the 1821 fighters were primary, namely, pure and impulsive, with no external influences. This is also testified by the revolutionary slogan of the Elder of Moria, Theodoros Kolokotronis "now the fight is for the faith of Christ and for the freedom of the country".

The collective national consciousness of the Greeks, forged by the high values of classical cultural heritage and the indefinable lifelong principles of the Patriarchal Orthodox tradition, opposed "the fashion of this world (which) passeth away" (1 Cor. 7:31) to the spiritual freedom of the soul and to the "continuing city" (Hebrews 13:14) or rather, country, of the resurrected Christ.

In other words, the annual celebration of the anniversary of the 1821 national rebirth is not only a fact of historical commemoration, but also of a moral message, for the present and the future of the contemporary so called developed world, which being trapped in its material and financial bliss, whether conscious or unaware, promotes the intellectual and psychosomatic suicide of its citizens.

And the contribution of the Church, through its holy clergy, including members of our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, was decisive. Countless Hierarchs, among whom Palaion Patron

Germanos who raised the banner of the revolution, Priests, like Cosmas Aitolos and simple Monks, all shed their blood and became martyrs of the national-religious freedom, which “is born from the sacred bones of the Greeks” according to our national poet Dionysios Solomos.

Our venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, in accordance to St. Paul’s words; “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1), and rendering as it should “honour to whom honour [is due]” (Romans 13:7), and also participating at the sacred commemoration of the rebirth of the noble nation of the Greeks, went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where we prayed in Doxology and praise for “the blood of His Cross” (Col. 1:20) and the resurrected from the dead, our Lord, Jesus Christ.

We also prayed for the repose of the souls of those who fought heroically for the faith and the country and martyred for the nation of the Rum Orthodox.

On this occasion therefore, let Us make a toast and exclaim as we should;

Long live 25th March 1821!

Long live the noble and royal nation of the Rum Orthodox!

Long live Hellas!

Long live our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood!”

From Secretariat-General

SUNDAY OF THE ADORATION OF THE PRECIOUS AND LIFE-GIVING CROSS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

The 3rd Sunday of Great Lent, March 9/22, 2020 was celebrated by the Patriarchate as Sunday of the Adoration of the Precious and Life-giving Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church has designated for this Sunday the veneration of the Holy Cross with a special service, so that the faithful may be strengthened by its protection for the remaining of the fasting during Great Lent.

At the Patriarchate of Jerusalem this feast was celebrated as Parresia with Great Vespers at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the afternoon, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

On the day of the Feast, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the All-Holy Tomb, again led by His Beatitude, with the co-celebration of their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Theodosios of Sebastia, Demetrios of Lydda, Aristovoulos of Madaba, and His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and deacons, as the chanting was delivered by the Byzantine choir leader Hierodeacon Simeon on the right and Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos on the left. The service was attended by monks and nuns of the Patriarchate, members of the Greek Consulate in Jerusalem and only a few faithful of the city of Jerusalem, due to the restriction measures for the protection against COVID-19 virus.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by the Litany three times around the Holy Sepulchre and the shrines. After the Litany, His Beatitude read a prayer against infectious disease before

the Holy Tomb.

Concluding the Services, the congregation returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters, where His Beatitude briefly addressed the few Fathers and faithful present, wishing the strength of the Precious and Life-giving Cross may help the tackling and eliminating of every disease and infliction of the evil one.

His Beatitude's address follows below;

"Today the words of the Prophet are fulfilled: for see, we worship at the place on which Thy feet have stood, O Lord; and tasting from the Tree of salvation, we have been delivered from our sinful passions at the intercessions of the Theotokos, o Thou who alone lovest mankind", the hymn writer of the Church proclaims (Triodion, Third Sunday of Lent, Matins, Canon 3, hymns of the Cross).

Today my dear brothers and sisters our Holy Church celebrates the Veneration of the Precious and Life-giving Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is for our comfort and strengthening in order to go through Great Lent in fasting and repentance.

Christ's Cross is not only a symbol of victory and triumph against the devil, it is also the incarnation of the righteousness in Christ and of our redemption from the corruption of death, namely of sin, as St. Paul proclaims by saying: "And you, being dead in your sins... hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Colossians 2:13-15).

Interpreting these words, St. Chrysostom says: "With His death on the Cross, Christ stripped the powers and principalities on the one hand; and on the other, He humiliated the evil powers and put them in shame". In this sense, Christ's Cross is the means "by whom we have now received the atonement" (Romans 5:11) according to Paul.

In other words the Precious Cross is the means of the divine mystery of atonement and reconciliation of us humans with God, as St. Paul preaches: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10).

Behold therefore, why the Cross is the source of the power of the Church, but also its boast, St. Paul confesses, by saying: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). And according to St. Cyril of Alexandria, the Cross of the Saviour stands for the life of the world and its incorruption" (Sofon. 621.20).

This means that through the Cross and by the Cross, life in Christ is made understood, according to the Lord's word: "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34). In other words, the word of the Cross is God's power just as the Gospel of Christ is God's power, leading to the salvation of anyone who believes, according to Paul (1Cor. 1:18, Romans 1:16).

Our Holy Church has called us to the communion of this power of the Cross, through the veneration of the Precious and Life-giving Cross in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre today, the third Sunday of Great Lent, so that we may be deemed worthy to celebrate also the Life-giving Resurrection of our God and Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Whose mercy and the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit may be with all of us. Amen."

THE FEAST OF ST. GERASIMOS OF THE JORDAN AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, March 4/17, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of our Holy Father Gerasimos of the Jordan at the Holy Monastery bearing his name, which is located on the west bank of the river Jordan before its outcrop in the Dead Sea.

On this feast the Church commemorates St. Gerasimos who came to the Holy Land from his hometown Lycia and lived here in asceticism. He was led astray for a while by the followers of Monophysitism in the mid-fifth century (451 A.D.), the year of the 4th Ecumenical Synod, but returned to Orthodoxy by St. Euthymius the Great and founded this Monastery, which is known with the name "Kalamonos". St. Gerasimos led many faithful and monks in the Orthodox faith of Christ our God in one hypostasis with two natures, the divine and the human, and he became a luminary of Orthodoxy, well known for his lion-pet as depicted also in his icon of St. Constantine of the 10th century.

For this feast a night vigil was held with the Divine Liturgy on Monday night to Tuesday, by the energetic, hardworking and hospitable Hegoumen Archimandrite Chrysostom, with co-celebrant the Hegoumen of the H. Monastery of Prophet Elisha, Archimandrite Philoumenos. Few faithful attended the service due to the protective measures against the transmission of

COVID-19 virus, and they all prayed wholeheartedly to God for the protection of humanity from this outbreak.

From Secretariat-General

THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On the First Sunday of Great Lent, February 24/ March 8, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated as 'Parresia' at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre the commemoration of the restoration of the Holy Icons by the Empress Theodora and her son Michael in 842, during the Patriarchal Office of St. Methodios the Confessor.

Ever since, the Church celebrates the restoration of the icons as a triumph of Orthodoxy, namely of the truth that the holy icons witness the incarnate presence and image of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth.

On this Feast, Great Vespers was held in the afternoon with the welcoming, veneration at the Holy Deposition slate and the Holy Tomb, incense, Great Entrance and the Blessing of Bread, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

In the morning of the Feast, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Catholicon, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants; his Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, their Eminences Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Theodosios of Sebastia, Demetrios of Lydda, Makarios of Qatar and Philoumenos of

Pella, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, visiting Priests from other Churches, and Hierodeacons. The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine Choir Leader Hierodeacon Simeon on the right and Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos with Mr. Skordilis on the left. The service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and members of the Consulate, along with a congregation of local pilgrims.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by the Procession three times around the Holy Tomb and then around the shrines, with all faithful holding icons in their hands.

At the end of the Procession, His Beatitude read the Synodical Decision of Orthodoxy from the Triodion in front of the Holy Tomb.

Finally, bells tolling, the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate Main Reception Hall, where His Beatitude addressed all present as follows;

“As the prophtes saw, as the Apostles taught, as the Church has received...Likewise we believe, likewise we speak, likewise we preach Christ our true God, and honour His Saints by word, venerating in icon God as the Master, and respecting the genuine healers for the common Master, honouring and rendering the relevant veneration” (Synodical decisions of the seventh Ecumenical Synod).

Today our Holy Church celebrates in festivity the triumph of its healthy Orthodox faith, namely the restoration of the holy icons and the rendering of their relative veneration.

This event is a landmark in the history of the Church, which has been tested harshly and arduously by the enemies of the holy icons, who are known as “Iconoclasts”.

The iconoclasts were not against the icons, but against the veneration of the depicted face of the God-man Christ, our

Saviour, as also against the saints of the Church.

In other words, the iconoclasts tried in a violent way to revive the known heresies of Arianism and especially of Nestorianism, which (heresies) distorted, and in essence denied, the great mystery of the incarnation of God the Word, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Needless to say that the foundation of the Orthodox Christian faith is the "unity by hypostasis" of the divine with the human nature, according to Saint Cyril of Alexandria. And according to Saint Gregory the Theologian: "what has not been received is incurable; what however is united in God, this is which is saved". And according to the hymn writer of the Church; "The uncircumscribed Word of the Father became circumscribed, taking flesh from thee, O Theotokos, and He has restored the sullied image to its ancient glory, filling it with the divine beauty. This our salvation we confess in deed and word, and we depict it in the holy icons" (Kontakion of Sunday of Orthodoxy Matins).

Righteously, therefore, the Church of Christ rejoices today and cries out: "The grace of truth has shone forth upon us; the mysteries darkly prefigured in the times of old have now been openly fulfilled. For behold, the Church is clothed in a beauty that surpasses all things earthly, through the icon of the incarnate Christ that was foreshadowed by the ark of testimony. This is the safeguard of the Orthodox faith; for if we hold fast to the icon of the Saviour whom we worship, we shall not go astray" (Glory of Vespers, Sunday of Orthodoxy).

Rendering glory and thanksgiving to our Holy Trinitarian God, let us pray to the unchangeable icon of God the Father of our Saviour Christ, so that by the intercessions of His Immaculate Mother, our Lady Theotokos Mary and of all the Saints, we may be granted the great mercy. Amen. Many happy returns and blessed Great Lent."

On Sunday evening the Contrite Vespers was held at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with the participation of His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, while Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos delivered a Sermon to the congregation.

From Secretariat-General