

THE FIRST STASIS OF THE SALUTATIONS TO THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday evening of the First Week of Lent, the First Stasis of the Salutations to the Most Holy Theotokos was read at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, as part of the Service of the Small Compline and the Canon of the Akathist.

This contrite service was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, who entered the Church of the Holy Sepulchre accompanied by Hagiotaphite Fathers. After the Contakion of the Akathist and the incense offering, according to the Typikon order, His Beatitude read the First Stasis of the Salutations to the Most Holy Theotokos and before the end of the service delivered the following sermon to the congregation;

“When the bodiless one learned the secret command, in haste he came and stood before Joseph’s dwelling, and spake unto the Maiden who knew not wedlock: The One Who hath bowed the Heavens by His descent is held and contained unchanging wholly in thee. Seeing Him receiving the form of a servant in thy womb, I stand in awe and cry to thee: Rejoice, thou Bride unwedded”; our Holy Church narrates in melody.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

Behold, “fasting has come, mother of chastity, accuser of sins, advocate of repentance, life of the angels and salvation of men” St. Theodore of the Studion says (Triodion, Monday of first week, Aposticha of Praises).

Indeed, the salvation of us people is inseparable to the

bodily and spiritual fasting. And fasting is inseparable to the great mystery of the Divine Providence, namely God the Word and our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who received the form of a servant in the womb of the Ever-Virgin Mary the Mother of God.

For this reason, our Holy Church keeps the Service of the Akathist Hymn to our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary in a festive manner during the Great Lent. The content of the Akathist refers to the unspeakable mystery of the God's condescension and of His Divine reconciliation (Romans 5:10), which means that it refers to the incarnation of Christ, God the Word, through the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Mary, as St. Andrew of Crete very clearly states: "We celebrate the union of God with men, the deification of the human nature, the reform of our humankind, our change for the better, our lifting up and our ascension to heaven".

This is the purpose of the prayer and repentance during the fasting of the Great Lent, to "the deification of the form which we have received", for which St. Gregory of Nazianzen writes: "For that which has not been received is incurable; but the one who is united with God, that can be saved".

And we are wondering; what is that "which has been received"? It is no other, my dear ones, than our human nature which has fallen through sin and has been wounded, the human nature which "the Son and Word of God, Christ, has transformed in Himself, namely, has healed, rendering to it [our human nature] the first gift of "being according to the image" which was the first honour that man lost by the carelessness of our ancestors, as St. Andrew of Crete says.

The mystery of the salvation of man is owed to the unspeakable and indescribable contribution of the Most Blessed Theotokos Mary and the gratitude of our Holy Church is addressed to her.

Let us hear therefore, the relative to this event interpretation of St. John Chrysostom, regarding the narrative

of St. Luke the Evangelist about Virgin Mary: "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth...and the virgin's name was Mary" (Luke 1:26-27), and he had received such orders from God: "Go to Virgin Mary. Go forth to the living city for which the prophet said: "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God" (Ps. 87:3). Go to my logical paradise, go to the gate which is on the east (Ezekiel 40:6, 22:40), go to the worthy dwelling place of my Word (Ps. 32:14)...., go and greet Mary with the words "Rejoice thou who art full of grace" (Luke 1:28), so that I may have mercy upon Eve who has fallen". Behold therefore, why the hymn writer of the Church exclaims: "Rejoice thou through whom joy shall shine forth; rejoice, thou through whom the curse shall be blotted out" and "Rejoice heavenly Ladder whereby God came down. Rejoice Bridge leading those of earth to Heaven".

Our Holy Church my dear brothers and sisters is the Ark of our salvation, namely of the healing and the freedom in Christ. Christ's Cross and His Passion on the Cross are the heavenly ladder through which God humbled Himself in Jesus Christ, becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). Moreover, Christ's Cross is the bridge through which we are carried from the death of the passions, of the corruption and sin of this world, to the immortal and eternal life, namely to the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Let us therefore entreat the Theotokos that with her intercessions we may be deemed worthy to complete the period of the Great Lent and conclude to the Glorious Resurrection of Christ, in Whom and through Whom we will also be resurrected. Amen."

From Secretariat-General

THE FIRST THREE DAYS OF GREAT LENT AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Ash Monday and Tuesday, the Services of Matins, Hours and Vespers were held in the morning and the Service of the Great Compline in the afternoon, at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen. On Wednesday, of the first week of Lent, the Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified gifts was celebrated in the same Church, with the participation in prayer of His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, and at the Horrendous Golgotha, led by His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis.

From Secretariat-General

NOVICES OF THE SCHOOL OF ZION RECEIVE THE MONASTIC CASSOCK

On Ash Tuesday morning, February 19/March 3, 2020, after the Service of Matins at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos blessed the monastic cassock for four Novices of the School of Zion, two of the 1st grade and two of the 2nd grade of Lyceum, as the beginning of their lives as novice monks, in order to join the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood after their graduation.

Blessing their cassocks, His Beatitude wished the students a fruitful Hagiotaphite training, and the strength to fight the good fight of the virtues during Great Lent.

From Secretariat-General

CONTRITE VESPERS AND THE PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

At 2.30 pm on Cheese Fare Sunday, February 17/ March 1, 2020, the Contrite Vespers was held at St. James' Cathedral which lies between the Central Monastery of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Service was led by His Eminence Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia with the participation of Rum-Orthodox Arab-speaking members of this parish of the Patriarchate. The Archbishop read for this congregation the prayer of forgiveness at the end of Vespers.

At 5.00 pm of the same day, the Service of the Small Compline was read at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen and at the end the prayer of forgiveness was read by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos for the Archbishops, Priests, Deacons, Monks and Nuns of the Brotherhood and for the pilgrims.

After the prayer, the osculation of forgiveness followed, as a preparation for the entrance of the Great Lent.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT CHARALAMBOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday of the Last Judgement, February 10/23, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy Hieromartyr Charalambos at his Holy Monastery, which is between the end of Via Dolorosa and the north side of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the Old City of Jerusalem.

On this feast the Church honours St. Charalambos as a hieromartyr who lived and ministered in Magnisia of Thessalian and martyred for Christ during the reign of Lucianus in 198. The Saint healed many illnesses among which was the plague.

The feast in the afternoon with Vespers and the Divine Liturgy in the morning were officiated by His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, with co-celebrants the Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos, Archimandrites Ieronymos and Makarios, Fr. Farah and Fr. Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Simeon. The chanting was delivered by Archimandrite Eusevios with the help of the Patriarchal School Students as the services were attended by members of the Greek Consulate and a congregation of monks, nuns and pilgrims.

The officiating Archbishop delivered a sermon to this congregation, stressing the Saint's fervent faith by which he defied death, adding the continuous value of his martyrdom as we also partake of the Holy Eucharist.

During the Divine Liturgy H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers visited the Monastery for veneration and they were offered a reception by

the Hegoumen Archimandrite Kallistos at the Hegoumeneion.

After the Divine Liturgy the Hegoumen also offered a reception to the Episcopal entourage and the congregation at the Hegoumeneion and the courtyard of the Monastery.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT THEODORE THE COMMANDER AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday, February 8/21, 2020 the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy Glorious and Great Martyr Theodore the Commander, at his Holy Monastery, at the north-east side of the Patriarchate, towards the New Gate of the Old City of Jerusalem.

On this day the Church commemorates St. Theodore the Commander, who came from the town Euhaita of Galatia, was a soldier by profession and martyred for Christ during the reign of Licinius in 230 A.D.

For this feast the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the morning, led by Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos with Archdeacon Mark and the chanting was delivered by Monk Raphael and Nuns of the Patriarchate.

After the Divine Liturgy the Hegoumen and renovator of the Church and Monastery the Typikon Keeper Archimandrite Alexios offered a reception to the Fathers and the congregation at the Hegoumeneion and the courtyard of the Church.

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

On Sunday, February 3/16, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of Saint Simeon the God-receiver at the Holy Monastery dedicated to him, which is in New Jerusalem, near the Holy Monastery of the Sacred Cross and of the Hebrew Kneset.

On this feat the Church commemorates Saint Simeon the God-receiver, who received in his arms the forty-days-old Lord and cried out, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32).

In this old Monstery, where St. Simeon's Tomb lies, Vespers for the feast was held in the afternoon, by Archimandrites Mattheos and Ieronymos and the Divine Liturgy in the morning led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences, Archbishop Methodios of Tabor, Metropolitan Panteleimon from Xanthi of the Church of Greece, and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Arab-speaking

Priests. The chanting was delivered by Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos and the service was attended by a congregation of local Orthodox Christians and pilgrims from Greece, Russia and Romania, as well as members of the Greek Consulate in Jerusalem.

His Beatitude read the following Sermon to this Congregation.

“The Elder, having seen with his eyes the salvation that was to come to the peoples, cried aloud unto Thee: ‘O Christ that comest from God, Thou art my God”. (Lord, when the Elder Simeon saw with his own eyes the Saviour that had come for all peoples, he cried aloud to you: Christ You are my God, the One Who has been born from God the Father, the melodist of the Church St. Cosmas Bishop of Maiouma exclaims).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit which overshadowed Saint Simeon the God-receiver has gathered us all in this Holy place, where the Tomb and the honoured Saint lies, in order to celebrate in Eucharist the Meeting of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple, when Righteous Simeon received Him in his arms.

This feast of the Meeting of the Lord is a projection of Christmas, and this is so because God the Word who became incarnate from the pure Ever-Virgin Theotokos Maria, and was made a perfect man, was also following the Law of the Old Testament to the letter, according to the custom of the time.

According to the Law of Moses, the Lord said; “Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast” (Exodus 13:2, 12-13). And with their entry to the Temple after the completion of forty days since their labour, the women who bore children had to offer “a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin

offering unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest" (Leviticus 12:6); or in case of being poor, "two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering" (Levit. 12:8).

Joseph and the Mother of Jesus, "when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him [Christ] to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord" in Solomon's Temple, where the righteous Elder Simeon received Jesus as a baby in his arms according to the witness of Luke the Evangelist (Luke 2:22-35).

Today, the Holy Orthodox Church and especially the Church of Jerusalem honours and venerates the synaxis of the Holy and Righteous Simeon the God-receiver and of Anne the Prophetess; because the pious and righteous Simeon recognized the incarnate Son and Word of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. "The same man (Simeon) was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ" Luke the Evangelist narrates (Luke 2:25-26).

According to Saint Basil the Great, Elder Simeon and Prophetess Anna saw the divine power in Christ "like light through light bulbs through the human body". In other words, just as we see the light inside the light bulbs, likewise those who are pure in heart see and distinguish the divine light through Christ's body. And according to Saint Athanasius the Great, while appearing to be a normal man, righteous Simeon was however a man of a higher status in meaning. He had the earthly and visible Jerusalem as a home city, but his metropolis was the heavenly Jerusalem.

This is theologically depicted in the hymn of Saint Cosmas Euhaiton by; "Thy virtue, O Christ, hath covered the heavens, for proceeding forth from the Ark of Thy sanctification, from Thine undefiled Mother, Thou hast appeared in the temple of

Thy glory as an infant in arms, and the whole world hath been filled with Thy praise”.

According to the hymn writer Cosmas, the Theotokos Maria, being a new tabernacle “with a soul and logic”, according to St. John Damascene, held within her as a fetus the “sanctification”, namely “the holy body of the Lord, which was sanctified and deified by the divinity it had before it was conceived”. Therefore, “having come forth” from his immaculate mother, Christ appeared as a baby “in the temple of glory” “being brought into their arms”. “For while being God”, said John Damascene says, “he becomes a man...and is being held in the arms of men as a baby”.

And the “earthly arms” are those of the Elder Simeon. St. Luke the Evangelist says that Simeon “then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:28-32).

The gift of prophecy St. Simeon had enabled him to foresee that this baby, Christ, was to be the Saviour of the whole world, as Prophet Isaiah also said: “And all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (Isaiah 53:1). And according to the psalmist; “The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen” (Psalm 98:2).

The apostolic reading of the main feast is related to the event of today’s feast. “And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better” (Hebrews 7:7), St. Paul preaches, referring to the meeting of Patriarch Abraham with Melchisedek, the King of Salem and priest of God (Genesis 14:18-20). This is precisely what happened with the meeting of the baby Christ by the Elder Simeon. The eternal and Great High Priest Jesus Christ as a forty-day-old child is met with

Elder Simeon in the temple and just like Abraham was blessed by Melchisedek, likewise, Simeon is being blessed by the Lord as he received Him in his arms (Luke 2:28).

In other words, the pious Simeon realized that this divine child is above him, while he is below, and rejoicing he cried out "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace" (Luke 2:29).

If we want, my dear brothers and sisters, to become communicants of the blessing that the righteous Simeon received, we should have as a prototype the faith and the desire, along with the patience he had, when we approach the Lord of glory, namely our Lord Jesus Christ, in the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, where we become of one body and of one blood with our God and Saviour.

And along with the hymn writer let us say: "Come let us as well with songs inspired of God, go together to meet Christ; and receive Him Whose salvation Simeon hath now beheld. This is He Whom David proclaimed; this is He that in the Prophets hath spoken; Who is incarnate for our sakes, and Who speaketh in the Law. Let us worship Him" (Minaion 2 February, Great Vespers, Sticheron 3). Amen."

After the Divine Liturgy the renovator of the Holy Monastery and the Church Elder Archimandrite Theodoritos offered a reception to the Patriarchal entourage at the Hegoumeneion and to the congregation at the courtyard of the Monastery.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE MEETING OF THE LORD AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, February 2/15, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Meeting of the Lord;

1. At the monastic Church of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood with Matins and the Divine Liturgy, with the presence of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, and the participation in prayer of the Hagiotaphite Fathers and pilgrims.
2. At the Holy Monastery of Sayda Naya, which is located on the north side of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Patriarchate. On this feast the Church commemorates the event narrated by St. Luke the Evangelist (ch. 2;22-38), when after the completion of forty days since His birth in the flesh, the Lord was brought to the Temple of Solomon by His parents according to the Law of Moses. They brought also the offering of two turtle doves and two young pigeons and Saint Simeon the God-receiver, inspired by the Holy Spirit received the Lord in his arms and cried aloud; "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, For mine eyes have seen thy salvation..."

This event was celebrated with Vespers in the afternoon and the Divine Liturgy in the morning of the feast led by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, with co-celebrants the Hagiotaphite Hieromonks; Archimandrite Ieronymos, Archimandrite Makarios and Dean Priest Nikitias and Arab-speaking Priests. The chanting was delivered by Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos and the Patriarchal School of Zion Students in Greek and Mr. Rimon Kamar in Arabic, as the service was

attended by a very large congregation of many pilgrims from Greece, Russia, Romania and Cyprus and many local Orthodox Christians from the parish of St. James' Cathedral.

Before the Holy Communion the officiating Archbishop preached the Divine Word (see video).

During the Divine Liturgy His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos came to venerate, accompanied by Hagiotaphite Fathers.

After the Divine Liturgy the gook keeper of the Monastery who receives many pilgrims daily, Gerondissa Seraphima offered a reception to the Episcopal Entourage and the congregation at the hegoumeion and the courtyard of the Monastery.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST AT THE TEN LEPERS CHAPEL

On Friday, February 1/14, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the miracle of the ten lepers' healing by the Lord (Luke 17: 12-19) at the place of their healing which has been preserved with the name Burkin in Samaria, at a long distance from Jacob's well.

This place was the lepers' prison, as they were separated from the rest of their society at that time, a place carved within a rock, which was later transformed into a shrine. The Patriarchate has preserved this place with the work and funding of the former Hegoumen of Ramallah Archimandrite Galaction and currently with the work of the present caretaker

Monk Vissarion, and the moral and material support of our Patriarchate.

In this shrine Matins and the Divine Liturgy were officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, with co-celebrants the Hegoumen of Beit Jala and Beit Sahour Archimandrite Ignatios, Arab-speaking Priests and Hierodecon Simeon. The changing was delivered by Archimandrite Leontios and the service was attended by many Arab-speaking Orthodox Christians from Burkin and the wider Samaria district.

After the Divine Liturgy the caretaker of the shrine Monk Vissarion offered a meal to the Episcopal entourage and many of the congregation.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE THREE HIERARCHS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, January 30/ February 12, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Three Hierarchs, namely Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom, as they are considered the patron Saints of education, at the Church of the Holy Trinity inside the building of the Patriarchal School for Priests.

The Church celebrates the commemoration of these Hierarchs and Ecumenical teachers since the 11th century A.D. solving the issue of the faithful Christian's doubt, regarding who of the Hierarchs is greater. With the introduction of Metropolitan Ioannis Mavropodos the Church answered to all who thought each

of the Saints to be in higher status than the others and gave peace to all.

The Church celebrates the commemoration of the three Hierarchs and patron saints of Education as they chose to promote the importance of the classic Education of the ancient Greek, which is adopted by the truth of the Gospel as beneficial to the Christians and the youth.

For this feast the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Trinity on the morning of the Feast day, led by His Eminence Geronda Sacristan Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis who is also the Chairman of the School Board, with co-celebrants the Managing Director of the School Archimandrite Mattheos, Archimandrite Nectarios, the Manager of the Boarding School Hierodeacon Simeon and Deacon Patrikios, while the chanting was delivered by Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos and the School Students.

After the Divine Liturgy the Managing Director of the School offered a reception to the Episcopal entourage and the congregation at his office.

From Secretariat-General