

# **THE MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR THE HAGIOTAPHITE FATHERS AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

The annual Memorial Service of the reposed Hagiotaphite Fathers, memorable Patriarchs, Archbishops, Priests, Hieromonks, Hierodeacons, Monks and Nuns was held at the end of the Divine Liturgy which was officiated by the Most Reverend Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on Sunday of the Forefathers, December 16/29, 2019.

This Memorial Service was led by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with Hagiotaphite Archbishops, Hieromonks and Deacons as co-celebrants.

After the Memorial Service the Patriarchal Entourage returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters for a relevant reception.

**From Secretariat-General**

---

# **THE SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On December 16/29, 2019, the Sunday of the Forefathers was celebrated by the Patriarchate as the commemoration of the Forefathers of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh, who lived before the Law and according to the Law, except Patriarch Abraham, who was the one to receive the promise that in him "all the nations of the earth will be blessed".

This Feast was celebrated in full congregation at the town of Beit Sahour, near Bethlehem, at the beautiful Church which is dedicated to the Forefathers.

The Feast was officiated by the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, with co-celebrants; the Hegoumen of the Shrine of the Shepherds, Archimandrite Ignatios, Archimandrite Demetrios, and Hierodeacon Eulogios, the Deacon and Ministering Priests of the Community, Fr. Savva Her, Fr. Issa Mousleh, and Fr. George Banoura, with the participation in prayer of the Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan, the Ministering Priest of the Church Fr. Ioannis Rasmawi, and the Spiritual Father of the H. Monastery of St. Savvas the Sanctified Archimandrite Eudokimos. The chanting was delivered by the Church choir in Arabic with the participation of the full congregation praying in contrition. Present at the Liturgy was also the Consul of Greece Mrs. Katherine Tzima.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by the Scouts parade and a reception at the reception hall, as well as a meal later, offered by the Community and Mr. Abu Aeta, for the Episcopal entourage and others.

**From Secretariat-General**

---

**THE FEAST OF OUR FATHER AMONG  
THE SAINTS SPYRIDON AT THE**

# PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, December 12/25, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of our Father among the Saints Spyridon, Bishop of Trimythous the wonderworker at the Holy Monastery dedicated to him, which is adjacent to the Old City of Jerusalem wall by Damascus Gate.

Our Holy Father Spyridon is honoured by the Church as a married man and father of a daughter, and a shepherd of sheep, who was called after his wife's death to minister the Church of Christ as the Bishop of Trimythous in Cyprus.

In this advanced Episcopal Office he remained simple, merciful, humble and meek, for which he was graced by God with the gifts of clairvoyance and the working of miracles, and therefore he was called "wonderworker". Some of the miracles he worked are; the coming of rain to end the drought after his prayer, and then the stopping of the rain to prevent a flood; his conversation with his dead daughter, so that the latter would reveal to him where she had hidden the stock of a poor woman; the demolishing of the barns of the grain sellers in order to prevent the famine of the poor and his co-celebration of the Divine Liturgy with the angels, as his apolytikion says: "thou hadst Angels serving with thee, O sacred one"; the transformation of a serpent into gold for the payment of a poor man's debt and then again the changing of gold back into the serpent; the drawing to repentance and confession of a sinful woman who approached him with no good intentions.

Above all, he was proven a defender of the Doctrine of the One Essence of the Son to the Father in the 1<sup>st</sup> Ecumenical Synod with the miracle of the tile.

In his Holy Monastery, St. Spyridon was honoured with Vespers in the afternoon and the Divine Liturgy in the morning on the Feast, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophanes of

Gerassa, with co-celebrants; Archimandrite Ignatios, Fr. Nectaros, Hierodeacon Simeon and Fr. Hader Barakmi and others, at the chanting of Archimandrite Demetrios with the Monks who help him and the Patriarchal School of Zion students.

During the Divine Liturgy H.H.B. visited the H. Monastery for veneration, escorted by Hagiotaphite Fathers.

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

**From Secretariat-General**

---

## **THE FEAST OF ST. ANNA'S CONCEPTION OF THE THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Sunday, December 9/22, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of St. Anna's conception of the Most Holy Theotokos.

On this day the Church commemorates that righteous Joachim and Anna, living at the last years of the Old Testament and being childless, were heard of by God, and Anna conceived from her husband Joachim a child, Mary, from Whom Christ was born by the Holy Spirit when the right time came.

This event was celebrated at the Holy Monastery of the

Ancestors of God Joachim and Anna, which lies at Joachim's house, on the interior side of Lion's Gate, where according to St. John Damascene, Theotokos was born.

The Feast was celebrated with a Night Vigil, officiated by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, with co-celebrants; Archimandrite Bartholomew, Fr. Nectarios and Archdeacon Mark, at the chanting of Archimandrite Demetrios, with the help of Monks Nikolaos and Raphael, and the participation of noble pilgrims.

After the Divine Liturgy, Archimandrite Meletios offered a reception at the Hegoumeneion.

**From Secretariat-General**

---

# **THE FEAST OF ST. NICHOLAOS AT THE PATRIARCATE**

## **1. The Feast of St. Nicholas in Beit Jalla**

On Thursday, December 6/19, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of our Father among the Saints Nicholas, Bishop of Myra in Lycia the wonder worker at his magnificent Church of the Rum Orthodox Arab-speaking Community of Beit Jalla, near Bethlehem.

St. Nicholas is the Father of the Church of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Bishop of Myra in Lycia, protector of the poor, those who suffer injustice, the prisoners and needy, "a rule of faith and an icon of meekness, a teacher of temperance", protector of the sailor men, vary popular to the Orthodox people,

defender also of the Orthodox doctrine of the One Essence of the Son to the Father in the 1<sup>st</sup> Ecumenical Synod of Nice in 325 A.D.

This great Hierarch was honoured by the Rum Orthodox Arab-speaking Community of Beit Jalla and all the town as its Patron Saint, with the Divine Liturgy which was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Most Reverend Archbishop Methodios of Tabor and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Ignatios, Archimandrite Alexios, the Ministering Priests of the Church, Steward Fr. George Awad, Fr. Paul, Fr. Yusef and Fr. Elias and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The Liturgy was attended by the full congregation of the Orthodox faithful of the town, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, the representatives of the Palestinian Autonomy, the President of the Ecclesiastical issues Committee Mr. Ramzi Hourri and the Mayor Mr. Nichola Hamis.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this Congregation:

“With what fair songs of sweet melody shall we praise the all-venerable hierarch? That most potent foe of impiety and the defender of piety, distinguished among the Church leaders; the might and great protector and instructor of all, who putteth to shame all holding a false belief; who fought with Arius fiercely, proving his destroyer, and through whom his arrogant pride hath been overthrown by Christ, Who granteth great mercy to the world” the hymn writer proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The fortifying grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in

this Church dedicated to Bishop Nickolas of Myra in Lycia, who was also a pilgrim in the Holy Land, in order to festively celebrate his commemoration.

On Holy Father among the Saints Nicholaos lived during the reign of the Emperor Constantine the Great. He was born in Patara of Asia Minor and participated in the 1st Ecumenical Synod of Nice along with the other Holy Fathers, in the year 325, with which they condemned the heretic Arius and his teaching. St. Nicholaos was a fervent supporter of St. Athanasius the Great, who stated in precision the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. St. Nickolas slept in the Lord around the year 330 A.D.

Paying heed to St. Paul's words; "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21), St. Nicholaos was proven a true healer of Christ and a preacher of the gospel, and for his extreme virtue he received the sacred office of High Priesthood, and became a spiritual shepherd, as the Archbishop of the county of Myra in Lycia.

Describing the distinguished personality of St. Nicholaos, the hymn writer says; "Let us now praise the hierarch in song, that shepherd and teacher in Myra, that by his intercessions we may receive illumination, O ye people. For behold, being undefiled in spirit, he was altogether a source of purification, offering to Christ that sacrifice that is pure and without blemish and acceptable unto God, since he himself, as a priest, was made pure in soul and body. Wherefore, he is truly a protector and a champion of the Church, as a great initiate of the divine grace of God".

Indeed, my dear brothers and sisters, St. Nicholaos is a protector and defender of the Church as well as of its salvific teaching, that is why he is called "rule of the right faith", for which he fought vigorously, both in words and in

actions, according to the advice of St. Jude: "Beloved, ... it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). The "saints" in this case are the Christians who received the healthy faith through the oral preaching once and for all.

This healthy faith is the one which calls us to fight the good fight for the salvation of our souls as St. Paul writes to his disciple Timothy, saying: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (1 Tim. 6:12). Our Father among the Saints Nicholaos also laid hold of the "eternal life", whose fame spread out to the whole world, remaining vivid up to the present, according to the words of the psalmist: "Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Psalm 19:4).

The sacred commemoration of St. Nicholaos the wonder worker has gathered us in this Eucharistic meeting so that we may honour him on the one hand, and thank our "Holy Lord God" on the other, who has given us the holy worker of His vineyard, namely of the Church of Christ. The good and faithful worker of Christ's vineyard was glorified by God the Father in the heavenly life, where he intercedes for our souls in boldness.

Our Holy Father Nicholaos who was proven a man of God and a chosen vessel, urges us through the mouth of the Chief Apostle Peter to a life worthy of God's benefits by saying; "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:14-16).

In other words, my dear brothers and sisters, St. Nicholaos is a visible and living example of the genuine Christian, within whom Christ's character was formed. Precisely this forming of



Christ within us is what St. Paul in agony urges us to accomplish by saying; "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19).

The "metropolis of the feasts" the great feast of Christmas is about to grant us this forming of Christ in us, namely the spiritual regeneration, in the neighbouring city of Bethlehem, as the hymn writer of the Church says; "Make ready, O Bethlehem; let the manger be prepared, let the cave show its welcome. The Truth is come, the shadow is passed away; God hath appeared from a Virgin unto men, formed as we are, and deifying that which He hath assumed. Wherefore, Adam is renewed with Eve, as they cry out: Thy good will hath appeared on earth to save our race".

The revelation through Mary the Theotokos of God to the people, Who took our form and deified our human nature, is being preached and evangelized by the Holy Church of Christ, through its honoured Bishop Nicholas the wonder worker. This great mystery of the gospel (Eph. 6:19) are we called to celebrate, not in a worldly, social and material manner, but spiritually and worshipfully, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all (Christian) saints" (Eph. 6:18) as St. Paul preaches.

And along with the hymn writer let us say; "As thou standest before the throne of God, cease not to intercede earnestly for us all, thy faithful servants, O wise and wondrous Nicholas, that we be delivered from the eternal fire and from the wicked counsel and ill-dealing of our enemies". Amen! Blessed Christmas!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a meal at lunch time, offered by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Ignatios and the Community Council at the Orient Palace Hotel.

## 2. The Feast of St. Nicholas at St. Savvas' Lavra

St. Nicholas was honoured also at his Church in the Lavra of St. Savvas, the first Church built in the Lavra, with the Divine Liturgy in an All-night Vigil, which was led by the Archbishop in turn, Most Reverend Philoumenos of Pella, with the participation of St. Savvas' and the Hagiotaphite Fathers and pilgrims.

### 3. The Feast of St. Nicholas in Jerusalem

The Feast of St. Nicholas was also celebrated in his Holy Monastery in the Old City of Jerusalem. Vespers in the afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on the morning of the feast were led by the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod Most Reverend Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, with co-celebrants the Archimandrites Mattheos and Demetrios, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Sophronios, with the participation in prayer of a congregation from Jerusalem and Monks and Nuns of the Patriarchate.

After the Divine Liturgy the Caretaker of the Holy Monastery Archdeacon Mark offered a rich reception to the Episcopal Entourage and all present at the Hegoumeneion and the courtyard of the Monastery.

**From Secretariat-General**

---

# THE FEAST OF ST. SAVVAS THE

# SANCTIFIED AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, December 5/18, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of our Holy Father Savvas the Sanctified, at the Lavra founded by him in the Judea desert, further beyond Bethlehem and Beit Sahour, on the right bank of Brook Kedron, which flows towards the Dead Sea.

This Monastery was founded by St. Savvas, after his arrival from his hometown Moutalaski of Cappadocia in the Holy Land in 456 A.D. and having first been taught the monastic life by St. Euthymius the Great and St. Theoktistos.

During St. Savvas' lifetime and after his repose this Lavra became a monastic centre of Orthodoxy and all Christianity, as well as a centre of St. Savvas' ascetic striving in the Holy Land, and of his co-patriot and contemporary and friend, St. Theodosios the Cenobiarch, for the prevailing of the Doctrine of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Synod of Chalcedon regarding the one hypostasis of Christ in two natures.

Since 1965, the sacred relic of St. Savvas has been kept in the Lavra, as a blessing and encouragement of those who venerate it.

In this historic Monastery, St. Savvas was honoured on this day with an All-night Vigil, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the leading Archbishop of the Vespers Vigil, Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Secretary-General, Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Most Reverend Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank the Hegoumen of Beit Jalla Archimandrite Ignatios, Arab-speaking Priests, Archdeacon Mark, and Hierodeacon Simeon. The chanting was delivered by

Mr. Balagiorgos choir on the right in Greek, with the help of His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba and the Patriarchal School of Zion students, and the on the left in Arabic by the choir under the lead of the Patriarchal Representative in Arce-Ptolemais Archimandrite Philotheos. The Vigil was attended by pilgrims and local faithful from Bethlehem, Beit Jalla and Beit Sahour, along with the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation;

“For better is one day in Thy courts than thousands elsewhere. I have chosen rather to be an outcast in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of sinners” (Psalm 83:10).

Beloved Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Noble pilgrims

The grace of the All-holy Spirit has gathered us all in this holy place of the desert in order to festively honour the holy and sacred commemoration of our Holy Godly-minded Father Savvas the Sanctified.

Becoming a citizen of the desert in Palestine, our Holy Father Savvas proved to be “a peer of angelkind, a dweller with the saints in the heights, a companion of the prophets, a joint heir with the apostles and the martyrs”, always paying heed to St. Paul’s advice: “ For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phil. 3:20-21).

Having striven next to great and God-bearing teachers in the monastic Lavrae of the Judea and Jordan deserts, and having been taught the spiritual manner of living, with the power of

our God and Saviour Jesus Christ he accomplished "to change his vile body and fashioned it like unto the Lord's glorious body" the body of the crucified and resurrected Christ.

A true witness of this fact is the herein kept and venerated incorrupt relic of the Saint; the fragrant relic of our Sanctified Father Savvas, who was received by the Lord "unto his heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:18), "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6:16).

The heavenly kingdom of Christ and the unapproachable light is being witnessed and evangelized by the Holy Church of us Orthodox Christians, who make its God-man body in the world, the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because according to St. Paul, He is the head of the body of the Church; "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. 1:18-20).

Behold therefore, why David exclaims; "Bring unto the Lord, ye sons of God, bring unto the Lord glory and honour. Bring unto the Lord the glory due unto His Name, worship the Lord in His holy court" (Psalm 28:1-2). And the crowd of angels began to praise God and say; "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). And in more detail, glory to God in the highest places of heaven by the angels dwelling therein; and may peace reign to the whole of the earth, which is disturbed by sin and its violent passions; because God has manifested brightly His favour and goodwill to men through the incarnation of His Son.

Our Holy Father Savvas became a communicant of this divine peace, as did all the saints of Christ, "for He [Christ] is our peace" (Eph. 2:14). This peace of the incarnate Word of

God, of Christ the Son of God who was born in the cave of Bethlehem from the pure blood of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, is being evangelized today by our honoured Father Savvas, the vessel of the Holy Spirit.

Let us entreat our Holy Father Savvas the Sanctified, and along with the hymn writer say; "Do thou entreat Christ, do thou plead with Christ, O righteous one, that the Church may be granted concord, tranquility, great mercy and lasting unity". And deem us who honour you worthy celebrate in peace and repentance the divine Nativity of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen! Blessed Christmas!

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a reception and a meal, and the Patriarchal Entourage returned to Jerusalem having first stopped by the Monastery of St. Theodosios the Cenobiarch.

In St. Savvas honour the Divine Liturgy was also celebrated at the Holy Chapel dedicated to him in the H. Monastery of the Archangels in the Old City of Jerusalem, by Archimandrite Stephen, with the care of the Hegoumen Most Reverend Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda.

**From Secretariat-General**

---

## **THE FEAST OF THE ST. BARBARA THE GREAT MARTYR AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Tuesday, December 4/17, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy Glorious Barbara the Great Martyr at the chapel dedicated to her, on the south wing of

the Church of St. Nicholas, adjacent to the Patriarchate on the west side.

The Church commemorates St. Barbara from Nicomedia, as she martyred for Christ, after having been tortured and put to death by her own father in the year 290.

Her commemoration was honoured by the Patriarchate in the afternoon and in the morning of the feast by Archimandrite Demetrios under the provision of Archdeacon Mark, who offered a reception to the celebrating congregation at the hegoumeneion after the Divine Liturgy.

**From Secretariat-General**

---

## **THE FEAST OF OUR HOLY FATHER JOHN OF DAMASCUS AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Tuesday, December 4/17, 2019, the commemoration of our Holy Father John of Damascus was celebrated at the chapel inside St. Savvas' Lavra, the place where he lived in asceticism and was buried.

The Church honours St. John of Damascus (675-760) as a great dogmatic Theologian, the author of the book "Precise version of the Orthodox Faith", great musician of the Octoechos and defender of the holy icons.

His commemoration was honoured in his chapel by the Fathers of St. Savvas' Lavra with an all-night vigil, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, with the participation of monks and pilgrims.

# DEACON'S ORDINATION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

The ordination to Deacon of Monk Simeon Spyropoulos who has recently been tonsured and joined the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood was held on Thursday night, November 29/ December 12, 2019, towards Friday November 30/ December 13, day of the commemoration of the Holy Apostle Andrew the First-called at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Hierodeacon Simeon is a graduate of the School of Theology of Athens, the Byzantine Choir Leader at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and a teacher at the Patriarchal School of the Holy Zion.

Monk Simeon was ordained by the Most Reverend Archbishop Methodios of Tabor, who admonished the ordained with fatherly words regarding the significance of the sacrament of Priesthood and of the degree of the Deacon as follows;

“Most devout Sub-Deacon Simeon,

The Holy and Sacred Synod on its last meeting chaired by His Holy Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, after your voluntary wish, has decided to join you in the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and promote you to Deacon.

Therefore , by the will of the Almighty and Omnipotent Great God, with the agreement, care and providence of His Holy Beatitude, along with the decision of the Holy and Sacred Synod, you are called today, to receive the first degree of Priesthood, that of the Deacon, by the placing of the hands of our mediocrity and through the coming down of the All-holy and



Ceremonial Spirit, so that from this position you may serve the Church of Christ and its congregation, from your place as a member of our Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood.

This is a great honour for you, as it is for every member of the Brotherhood, but not only this, even more greater are the responsibilities stemming from this position; you are called to deny the world and all worldly things, so that you may become a servant of the ministers of the Sacraments of the Church of Christ, namely of the Bishops and the Priests, according to the commands of the Apostles.

In the course of his life, man has very few days in which he experiences happiness, and one of these days for sure for you, is today. There is a saying that the position one holds does not highlight the man, but on the contrary, man highlights the position. By saying this, I mean that you will fail in your life if you do not believe and serve properly and consciously the One to Whom you have dedicated your life, and if you serve him frivolously.

On the contrary, you will advance and most of all you will be beloved and respected by all, if you believe and confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God, and if you respect yourself first of all, and the ministry you will take on your shoulders, along with the One you will serve.

Saints Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius say that "you are a Theologian if you pray in truth, and if you pray in truth, you are a Theologian", which means, that we only become right Theologians and in truth, when we pray correctly, so that we may benefit ourselves and the others; of course it is then that we are correct and true Theologians.

You see my dear ones, how great an importance the Holy Fathers attribute to the correct manner of prayer, otherwise we strive in vain, and we do not benefit our listeners in the least, so you should try to be perfect, as much as it can be possible,

irreproachable and holy by Grace, before your God, to walk in the path of His commandments all the days of your life, become a bee in collecting what is best and sweetest and reject whatever is harmful.

St. Paul, the Apostle of the Nations says: "if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (2 Tim. 2:5), consequently our lives, of both clergy and laity, is a struggle enflamed by the flashing arrows of the devil, in order to succeed in the purpose pursued, that of the salvation of our souls.

Certainly you will face difficulties; do not startle, do not flinch; with your bodily eyes and the eyes of your soul gaze towards the Horrendous Golgotha and look at the crucified love, our Lord Jesus Christ, and then you will realize for which reason they put a crown of thorns on His head, but through His sacrifice on the Cross, His three-day burial and finally with His Resurrection from the dead He was justified and managed to put to shame His crucifiers and accusers.

Most devout sub-Deacon Simeon,

As a Hagiotaphite and guardian of the Holy Places which have been sanctified by the Nativity in the flesh, teaching, Crucifixion and Resurrection of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, you are called to be a depository of the Sacred Consignment in this citadel of Christianity, of whose rampart you owe to be a sleepless guard and ready for any sacrifice, in order to hand it in to the next generation intact, unscathed and unalterable.

As you stand before the gate of this Holy Altar, before you receive this awesome ministry and the heavenly powers, which according to St. Paul "is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Romans 9:16), kneel in humility and entreat the Almighty God, the only One who can remit sins, that He may look favourably upon your

weaknesses and send down His All-holy Spirit, just like the day of Pentecost, on you, His humble servant.

Always commemorate your parents in the flesh, who stand by your side at this hour and are surely praying for you and rejoice with your happiness and promotion. Commemorate your relatives, teachers, friends, and if you have any, your enemies. Commemorate also our Father and Patriarch Theophilos III, who has benefited you with much love, and of our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood.

And now, the time has come, that you may come forth with a pure heart and a humble spirit, to receive the grace of the All-holy and Ceremonial Spirit through the placing of hands of our mediocrity; therefore enter into the Holy of Holies, into the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, from which the Light of Life gushes out.

Therefore, rejoicing, enter in your Lord's joy.

On 30-11-2019, Feast of the Holy Apostle Andrew the First-called".

The ordination was performed with the invocation of the Divine Grace through the placing of the Archbishop's hands.

At that time and with the exclamation "Axios" by the Archbishop, the Hagiotaphite Fathers, the students of the School of Zion, Monks and Nuns along with his family and friends, who honoured the ordained also exclaimed "Axios, Axios".

After the Divine Liturgy, the ordained offered a reception to the ordaining Archbishop and all who honoured him at the Office of Geronda Sacristan, Most Reverend Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis.

The following morning, the ordained came to the Patriarchate, thanked His Beatitude and received His blessing.

# THE FEAST OF ST. CATHERINE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday November 25/ December 8, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of Saint Catherine the Great Martyr and all-wise.

On this feast the Church commemorates St. Catherine, who was a very wise young lady from Alexandria, and with her faith in Christ and education, “with the Holy Spirit’s sword silenced brilliantly the clever among the godless” and suffered a martyr’s death for Christ performing wonders and miracles during the reign of Maxentius and Maximinus (305 A.D.).

The Patriarchate honoured the Great Martyr Catherine;

1. With the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of the Transfiguration of the Lord in Ramallah, which was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, and the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Archimandrite Kallistos, the Hegoumen of this Monastery Archimandrite Galaction, the ministering Priest of this parish Steward Fr. Jacob, Fr. Simeon and Archimandrite Seraphim from Nazareth, and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by the parish choir in Arabic and the service was attended by a large Rum-Orthodox Arab-

speaking congregation of this town.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation;

“The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility” (Proverbs 15:33). [Reverence to God, the fear of God, turns the practical schooling into noble wisdom for the ones who receive the education. And the divine schooling is followed by reward and glory] the wise Solomon says.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians

The sacred commemoration of the Holy Great Martyr Catherine has gathered us all today in this historic place, in the Church of the Transfiguration of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in order to honour in Eucharist the all-wise martyr of His love.

According to the historian Eusevius of Caesarea, St. Catherine was from Alexandria, the daughter of Konsta, a wonderful virgin, extremely wise in temperament, and glorious in wealth, family and education; with her fixed mindset, she defeated the passionate and evil soul of Maximus the tyrant from Alexandria. And with her eloquence she made speechless the orators and philosophers who initiated a debate with her. And because of her confession of Christ, she received the crown of martyrdom by our Saviour Jesus Christ, in the year 305 A.D. (Eccles. History 8:14).

Catherine the Great Martyr was distinguished among the women who martyred for Christ for her rare wisdom and education, which stemmed from the “divine fear”, namely the deep faith in the true God and the keeping of His commandments, as the psalmist says; “But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness

unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Psalm 103:17-18). "While the felt life is not ever-lasting, the mercy of the Lord is ever-lasting" Origen says. Commenting on the words; "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom" (Proverbs 15:33), St. Chrysostom says; "The fear of God perfects life both in its practical and theoretical aspect".

In other words, my dear brothers and sisters, reverence of God, namely the fear of God is the foundation of the correct manner of living and of the human wisdom. For this, St. Paul says; "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:23-24).

This very armor of the divine strength and wisdom of God Word the Christ did the all-lauded Catherine put on, hearkening to St. Paul's advice; "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11).

Behold therefore why God's glory comes along with the wisdom and education of God, as St. Peter preaches; "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:4). The Great Martyr Catherine also received this "crown of glory that fadeth not away" as her hymn writer says; "Thou didst prove a voluntary Martyr, Catherine most glorious, when thou forcibly didst rebuke the tyrant, and didst convict the most grievous madness of polytheism, and by the light of grace divine and godly knowledge didst cast him to the ground. For which cause, Christ the Saviour of our souls, awarded the crown to thee as His witness in martyrdom and a virgin without reproach".

And we wonder, what kind and of what shape is the crown of glory with which St. Catherine was crowned? This crown of the glory of our God and Saviour Christ is no other than the participation of the righteous in the transfiguration of Jesus

Christ, during which His face shone like the sun, and His raiment turned white as the light (Matt. 17:2).

In other words, the all-lauded Catherine, as another disciple of Christ, was deemed worthy to the vision of the glory of God, therefore she “now rejoices with the angelic choirs, with whom thou dost unceasingly cry: Bless Christ, O ye priests; supremely exalt Him, O ye people, unto the ages” the hymn writer says. And in His prayer, Jesus Christ prays to God the Father for Himself, for His disciples the Apostles and for all who believe in Him saying: “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).

Interpreting the Lord’s words; “that they may behold my glory” (John 17:24), St. Cyril of Alexandria says: “it will be not possible neither for the profane and sinners nor for those who dishonor the Law to behold the glory of Christ, but [it will be possible] only for the righteous and the benign ones. And we know this from the prophet who says “Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord” (Isaiah 26:10). And also in the gospel preaching of our Saviour Christ; “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8).

This purity of heart made the Ever-Virgin Mary a chosen vessel of the Holy Spirit, through which she became the Mother of God the Word and our Saviour Christ, Who was born of her pure blood in the cave of Bethlehem.

Our Holy Church is preparing us for this great and inconceivable event, the mystery of the Divine Providence of the incarnation of God the Word, in order to celebrate, paying heed to St. Paul’s preaching; “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27).

Christ, my dear brothers and sisters, is the light of the world and the Sun of righteousness, therefore we, who bear His name, are called to put on the raiment of the light of the Sun of righteousness, which is Christ. Let us then prepare ourselves, so that the Sun of Righteousness and the light of knowledge may enter in the cave of our souls.

We are also called to this by today's celebrated Holy Great Martyr Catherine, along with the Holy Great Martyr Mercurius, that we may imitate them, living a life in Christ in purity in all ways; and that we may say along with St. Paul; "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). Amen! Many happy returns and blessed Christmas!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by the blessing of the water for the new halls of the parish, while the Hegoumen and the Council offered a meal to His Beatitude, who offered in turn a Cross to Archimandrite Galaction.

2. At the Holy Monastery dedicated to St. Catherine in the Old City, a stone's throw away from the Patriarchate, with Vespers in the afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on the morning of the feast, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, with co-celebrants; Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos and other Priests. The chanting was delivered by Monk Raphael and the services were attended by a noble congregation of local faithful and pilgrims.

After the Divine Liturgy the Hegoumen Archimandrite Stephen offered a reception.

3. At the Holy Monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai, where her sacred relic is kept.

For this feast a delegation was sent from the Patriarchate, led by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis. The delegation arrived in the evening of the forefeast,



participated in Vespers and at the Divine Liturgy in the All-night Vigil and returned to Jerusalem on Sunday evening.

**From Secretariat-General**