

THE BOILED WHEAT MIRACLE OF ST. THEODORE THE TYRO

On Saturday morning of the First Week of Lent, March 3/16, 2019, the commemoration of the boiled wheat miracle of the Holy Great Martyr Theodore the Tyro was celebrated at the Holy Monastery of Saints Theodoroi by the New Gate. On this feast the Church reminds the faithful that St. Theodore the Tyro appeared to the Archbishop Eudoxios of Consantinople in a dream and advised him to tell the faithful to eat boiled wheat in order to avoid the food that was offered as sacrifice to idols, which Julian the Offender had distribute in the market of Constantinople.

Both Vespers and the Divine Liturgy were led by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, with co-celebrants the Archimandrites Mattheos, Stephen, Meletios and Priest George, while the chanting was delivered by Archimandrite Demetrios. The service was attended by faithful from Jerusalem and pilgrims.

H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers came for veneration during the Divine Liturgy.

The Episcopal Entourage and the congregation were offered a reception by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Alexios.

From Secretariat-General

THE FIRST STASIS OF THE SALUTATIONS OF THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday evening, March 2/15, 2019, the Service of the Akathist and the First Stasis of the Salutations were held at the Catholicon of the All-holy Church of the Resurrection.

This contrite service of the Canon and the Salutations in the Small Compline were officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, under the chanting of the Choir Leader of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos and Archimandrite Demetrios. Present at the service were local faithful from Jerusalem and pilgrims, and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos. His Beatitude addressed this congregation as follows;

“An Angel, and the chiefest among them, was sent from Heaven to cry: Rejoice! To the Mother of God. Land beholding Thee, O Lord, taking bodily form, he stood in awe, and with his bodiless voice cried aloud to her such things as these: Rejoice, thou through whom joy shall shine forth. Rejoice, though through whom the curse shall be blotted out” , is exclaimed by the composer of this theological hymn which refers to the Annunciation of Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, as well as the unspeakable mystery of the incarnation by the Holy Spirit of God the Logos our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and Pilgrims

The sacred service of the Akathist Hymn or, the Salutations of the Theotokos, is a characteristic feature of the Holy and Great Lent before the feast of Pascha, the feast of the luminous resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And Christ's three-day burial and resurrection from the dead refers to the human nature that He undertook, 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).

The great and unspeakable mystery of the incarnation of God the Word is not some philosophical theory or making, but a specific historic and indisputable action, which took place in a specific time and place, through the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary as St. Luke the Evangelist says: "And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus" (Luke 1:28, 31). "Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:34-35).

Archangel Gabriel's words "rejoice thou who art full of grace" refers to two things; first, to the fact that though the voice of this bodiless host, the Angel, namely through the voice of the Holy Spirit, Virgin Mary became a vessel of the divine grace. And this divine grace delivered her from every human sin and this way God the Word, Christ, became incorporated in her in a hypostatic way. Secondly, this "rejoice" from the Angel refers to the fact that the joy of salvation illumined the world. And this is so because the curse was banished, the curse which had bound the first-created couple, Adam and Eve, with the bonds of corruption and death, as Joseph the hymn writer depicts in his writing by saying: "Rejoice, O vessel of

rejoicing, through whom our first mother's curse utterly is dispelled" and "thou art Adam's recovery, rejoice, Virgin Bride of God, though art the death-knell of Hades".

St. John of Damascus calls all nations and all peoples to honour the nativity of the Theotokos Mary because "she gave birth to a treasure of goods that cannot be taken away from the world. Through her the Creator transformed all nature towards its best form amidst the human race. And if man is a combination of mind and matter, and stands between all visible and invisible creation, by His incarnation and union with the human nature, the Creator Word of God became united with the whole creation".

In other words, thanks to the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, the Creator, namely, God the Father transformed all creation to its best form, through the human nature of Christ, which He received through the pure blood of the Theotokos. If therefore, being between the mind and matter, man is the linking bond between all visible and invisible creation, then the Word of God, has become united with all creation since He undertook the human nature.

Behold therefore, why the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is recognized as the most glorious creation of God both in earth and in heaven. And behold why the Most Blessed Theotokos is considered to be the "more honourable than the Cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim".

This hymn of doxology and intercession has been appointed by the Church Fathers to be chanted during the full duration of the Holy and Great Lent because the Theotokos is the par excellence intercessor towards God.

In other words, the Theotokos is the one who intercedes for all people who call upon her in faith. And this is owed to the fact that the Theotokos became a participant and communicant of the divine glory of her Son and God, our Lord Jesus Christ,

through the unidentifiable mystery of the divine providence, namely the incarnation of God the Word. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" St. Paul says (Romans, 11:33).

God's love, His infinite mercy and philanthropy call us through St. Paul's preaching, and especially during the period of Great Lent, "to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2: 2-3). And the hidden treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of our God and Saviour are no others than the uncreated light of God's truth, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:3) according to St. Paul.

Let us also entreat our God and Saviour Jesus Christ my dear brothers and sisters, so that by the intercessions of our Lady, the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary we may be deemed worthy to go through the period of the Great Lent in repentance and conclude with the luminous resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, hearkening to the words of the hymn writer of the Church; "The fast has come, mother of chastity, accuser of sins, advocate of repentance, life of the angels and salvation of men. Let us cry out ye faithful: O God have mercy upon us". Amen.

From Secretariat-General

THE FIRST PRE-SANCTIFIED

LITURGY OF THE GREAT LENT

On Ash Wednesday morning of the First Week of the Holy and Great Lent, Matins with the Hours and the Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts were officiated with the participation in prayer of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Participants in the prayer were the Hagiotaphite Archbishops, Priests and Monks, under the chanting of the Choir Leader Archimandrite Eusevios, Archimandrite Alexios, who is the Typikon Keeper, the Patriarchal School Students and Archimandrite Demetrios. The Services were attended by a congregation of Nuns, local faithful and pilgrims.

The Divine Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts was also celebrated at the Horrendous Golgotha on the morning of the same day, at 8 a.m., led by Geronda Sacristan, Most Reverend Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, with co-celebrants the Ministering Priests of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and Hierodeacon Patrikios. The Fathers of the Holy Sepulchre held the chanting with the participation in prayer of the Most Reverend Archbishop Makarios of Qatar, and the attendance of a noble congregation.

From Secretariat-General

THE PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS ON THE OCCASION OF THE BEGINNING

OF THE GREAT LENT

On Cheese fare Sunday, February 25/ March 10, 2019, at 5.00 p.m. and at the Service of the Small Compline, at the Holy Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos read the prayer of forgiveness on the occasion of the beginning of the Great Lent.

The reading of the prayer was followed by the brotherly osculation of forgiveness among the Hagiotaphite Archbishops with His Beatitude and the exchange of forgiveness wishes among the other Fathers, the Nuns and the pilgrims. At the end of the service, everybody returned to their cells for personal prayer, while the Patriarchate Headquarters remains closed until Wednesday of the First Week of Lent.

From Secretariat-General

CONTRITE VESPERS AT THE CHURCH OF ST. JAMES THE BROTHER OF GOD

On Cheese Fare Sunday, February 25/ March 10 2019, at 2.30 p.m., the Contrite Vespers was held at the Cathedral of St. James the Brother of God, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella who read the prayer of forgiveness to the faithful on the occasion of the beginning of the Great Lent.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF ST. PORPHYRIOS OF GAZA IN GAZA

On Cheese Fare Sunday morning, February 25/March 10, 2019, the Feast of St. Porphyrios of Gaza was celebrated by transference in festivities in Gaza, led by the local Patriarchal Representative Most Reverend Archbishop Alexios of Tiberias, with the participation of a large crowd of faithful Christians, who honoured the Saint who denounced paganism in the 4th century A.D., and established Christianity in the city of Gaza.

From Secretariat-General

PRIEST'S ORDINATION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday night towards Saturday, February 23 to 24/March 8, to 9, 2019, Hierodeacon Haralambos Farah was ordained a Priest during the Divine Liturgy at the Life-giving Tomb of the Lord by the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella.

Before the ordination the Archbishop addressed the ordained with words related to the importance of the sacrament of

Priesthood, while the ordained replied in thanksgiving, and promised obedience to the call of God in order to minister the Community of Kufr Yasif, to which he has been appointed.

Hagiotaphite Fathers, the Patriarchal Commissioner in Acre, Archimandrite Philotheos and Priests of that region, honoured the ordained with their co-celebration of the Divine Liturgy and called out "Axios" at his ordination along with the present congregation.

The ordained Priest's wife, parents and parents-in-law honoured him with their presence.

The Archbishop, the ordained Priest and the congregation were offered a reception after the ordination by Geronda Sacristan, Most Reverend Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis at his Office.

The following morning, the ordained Priest received His Beatitude's blessing.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF ST. HARALAMBOS THE HIEROMARTYR AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, February 10/23, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy glorious Hieromartyr Haralambos at his Holy Monastery which is located on the north east side of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at the Christian Quarter.

On this feast the Church commemorates and praises St. Haralambos who confessed Christ and suffered a martyr's death in 198 A.D., at Magnesia of Greece during the time of Lukianus. The Saint is also considered to be the protector of the sick.

For the commemoration of the Saint there was Vespers in the evening and the Divine Liturgy in the morning of the Feast at the aforementioned Monastery, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, with co-celebrants Hagiotaphite Hieromonks. The chanting was delivered by the choir leader of the Holy Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, Monk Nikolaos and the Patriarchal School of Zion students, while the services were attended by a noble congregation who prayed to the Saint.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Kallistos offered a reception to the Episcopal entourage and the congregation at the hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General

THE CONSECRATION SERVICE OF THE H. CHURCH OF ST. ISAAC THE SYRIAC & ST. GEORGE THE TROPHY-BEARER IN DOHA

On Friday, February 9/22, 2019, the consecration service of the Holy Church of St. Isaac the Syriac and the Holy Glorious George the Great Martyr and Trophy-bearer, along with St.

Makarios the Patriarch of Jerusalem was held as described below.

It is befitting to refer to a few things related to the history of this Church, before the consecration details are mentioned.

The memorable Patriarch Diodoros I was the first to visit Qatar in 1990, as it belonged to the border of the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem Patriarchate in the Arabic peninsula. The Patriarch was then received by the Emir of that time, Prince of Qatar Hamed Bin Khalifa Al Thani.

This visit was followed by a delegation under the command of Patriarch Diodoros, with the current Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, who was then Archimandrite Theophilos, after the petition of the Ambassador of the U.S.A. at that time, Mr. Patrich Theros, in order to officiate the Services of Easter for the small Greek community, at a hall of the American Embassy, as there was no Holy Church for the Christians in Qatar.

Following this, there were subsequent petitions to the Government of Qatar to provide the construction permit of a Holy Church in Doha, the capital of Qatar, by the Patriarchate.

The Government of Qatar granted this request and offered a piece of land to the Patriarchate in Doha, not as its own property, but only for the use of the land. The construction of this consecrated Holy Church began in this piece of land. This action of the Patriarchate was set as an example to other Christian denominations who asked and were given land areas in this particular district which was offered to the Patriarchate, and they also built Holy Churches. In this manner, the Patriarchate became the cause for the return of Christianity in Qatar. In the year 2010, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos visited Qatar,

and was received by the Emir Prince of Qatar Mamed Bin Khalifa Al Thani.

The construction project of the Holy Church was being continued with the addition of the Bishop's residence on the opposite side of the Church, by the hard toiling efforts of the Patriarchal Commissioner in Qatar Archimandrite Makarios the Hagiographite, who was ordained Archbishop of Qatar in 2014. With the funding by the Patriarchate and by noble donors, the project reached its completed current form, being in the need of its sanctification with the consecration service. So that the Church will be established in the ages for the worship and the sanctification of the congregation belonging to it, which numbers ten thousand Greek Orthodox faithful Christians from various countries.

The service was held on the aforementioned day according to the Typikon order of the Orthodox Church regarding the Consecration, with the litany of the holy relics of the Holy Martyrs of St. Savvas' Lavra, three times around the Church, the planting of the relics inside the Holy Altar, the smearing of antiminsia and the Church walls with the Holy Myrrh, and with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, which was officiated by His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were; the Most Reverend Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, Makarios of Qatar, Philoumenos of Pella, Aristovoulos of Madaba, Ioannis from the Church of Serbia, Archimandrite Eudokimos, spiritual Father of the Holy Lavra of St. Savvas the Sanctified, Fr. George, Priest in Madaba, and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by a choir from Thessalonica under the lead of Mr. Ioannis Hasanides in Greek, and by the parish choir in Arabic. The service was attended by the Consul General of Greece, His Excellency Mr. Constantinos Orphanides and the Consul General of the Republic of Cyprus in Qatar, His Excellency Mr. Mihail Zaharioglou, diplomatic representatives of other countries, invited clergy from various Metropolis of

the Church of Greece and the Church of Crete, Reverend Abbess Theoxeni and nuns from the Patriarchal H. Monastery of Chrysopigi, of the H. Metropolis of Kydonia and Apokoronou, the full congregation of the people who prayed and glorified God for this gift of the consecration of the Church in the centre of the Arabic peninsula for their sanctification by the celebration of the Church services in it.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation:

“By means of His coming, Christ hath filled all things with His light; our souls are now consecrated, and by His Holy Spirit He hath renewed the world; for a house is founded to the Lord’s praise and glory, wherein Christ our God, for the salvation of mortals, doth consecrate and hallow the hearts of all His faithful flock” the hymn writer of the church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians,

Rejoice O heavens and the earth be exulted, for by the grace of God we the clergy and the people are gathered here today, at the Emirate of the State of Qatar, which is under the canonical spiritual jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, in order to officiate the consecration of this beautiful Holy Church in thanksgiving and doxology, a Church that has been built in honour of the local Father of ours among the Saints, Isaac the Syriac and of St. George the Great Martyr.

In the sacred history of the Holy Bible we see highlighted the fact that the Lord pointed out the tabernacle of the covenant which Holy Moses placed on earth. The covenant had also ordinances of divine service (Hebrews 9:1), and Solomon built a house for the Lord (Acts 7:47), namely a Temple where there were sacrifice offerings of “beasts, whose blood is brought

into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin" (Hebrews 13:11).

St. John the Evangelist witnesses that "we have radiantly beheld the glory which the Son hath from the Father in the grace of truth. And as many of us as have received Him with faith, to all hath He given the power to become children of God; and we, who were born again not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but have received increase by the Holy Spirit, have raised up this house of prayer and cry out: Do Thy Thyself now establish this house O Lord".

And the House of God, namely the consecrated Church, is inseparable with the worship and veneration of God in spirit and truth; "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24) the Lord says. While prayer is the ascent towards God, or the invocation of God to grant us what is of need, according to St. John of Damascus. And according to St. John of Sinai (of the Ladder), "prayer is, as far as its quantity is concerned, a union between man and God, while as far as its energy is concerned, [prayer is] the food of the soul and enlightenment."

For this reason, we say along with Sophronius the Patriarch of Jerusalem and our predecessor; today the things above co-celebrate with the things below and the things below converse with those above. Today the sacred gathering of the Orthodox faithful rejoices. Great art Thou O Lord, and marvelous are Thy works, and no words befit the hymn of Thy wonders.

Having willingly being raised up on the horrendous place of Golgotha in Jerusalem, the Lord worked out the salvation of us men on the Cross, renewing all creation; while in this established and sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit and the intercessions of our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos, along with the prayers of our Holy Fathers among the Saints Isaac and St. George, this Holy Church, which is in natural and

spiritual communion with the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is being granted the enlightenment and renewal of His resurrection from the dead, to all those who worship Him in faith, spirit and truth, and who pray to Him in repentance.

“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psalm 24:1), David chants. In this hospitable oasis of the Arab and open to progress Emirate of Qatar, the gates of this consecrated house of God have been opened by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that all of us, either living here or visiting the State, who seek the rest of our souls, may hear the calling of the King of Glory, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ saying: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. 11:29).

It was precisely this rest of the soul that our Holy Father Isaac sought in the harsh place of the desert, where he became like the tree of righteousness “which bringeth forth his fruit in his season” (Psalm 1:3). This very righteousness is being evangelized by the Rum Orthodox Church of Jerusalem, preaching and witnessing the love without hypocrisy, the philanthropy and the peace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ at all times in all places. “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree... Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing” (Psalm 92:12-14) the psalmist says.

And the “righteous who is planted in the house of the Lord” are no others than the Saints of the Church, who having become imitators of the kenotic sacrifice of the Love of Christ, bring forth their fruit, in which we rejoice today.

And we say this, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, because the mercy of God has offered Our Mediocrity this

blessing, of the consecration of the good work of this Holy House, which has been built from its foundations, it has been decorated and completed by the Most Reverend Archbishop Makarios of Qatar, our Hagiotaphite brother. Therefore, let us say along with St. Chrysostom "Lord sanctify those who love the decency of Thy house and the dwelling place of Thy glory" (Divine Liturgy of St. Chrysostom).

Finally, we find it appropriate and a duty, that not only the Church of Jerusalem, but all brotherly Orthodox Churches may thank from the depths of our hearts his Excellency the Ambassador of the United States of America Mr. Patrick Theros and especially His Majesty the Emir of the State of Qatar Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani and His Highness his heir and current governor Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. We wish them that the Lord God may grant them health and longevity and governmental power for the good of the State with all its peoples.

Along with the hymn writer let us say: "the Church is like a luminous sky, enlightening all faithful; wherein as we stand let us cry out; establish this house O Lord". Amen

During the dismissal of the Divine Liturgy His Beatitude offered the Most Reverend Archbishop Makarios of Qatar, who toiled for the construction of the Holy Church, a set of Bishop's egolpia, wishing him that by the grace of God he may continue the mission of the witness of the love of the incarnate, crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ, for the spreading of the preaching of the Gospel, which began from the Horrendous Golgotha and the Life-giving Tomb. Archbishop Makarios offered His Beatitude an icon of the complex of the Church and the Archdiocese of Qatar, which has been painted by the nuns of the H. Monastery of Chrysopigi.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a rich meal at the reception hall under the consecrated Holy Church.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE HOLY CHURCH OF ST. ISAAC THE SYRIAC AND ST. GEORGE IN DOHA – QATAR

For the consecration of the Holy Church of St. Isaac the Syriac, St. George the Great Martyr and Trophy-bearer and St. Makarios Archbishop of Jerusalem in Doha, Qatar, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos departed from Jerusalem on Thursday morning, February 8/21, 2019 and flew to Qatar from Ben Gurion Airport of Tel-Aviv and via Amman of Jordan. His Beatitude was escorted by the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, Archimandrite Eudokimos, who is the Spiritual Father of the H. Lavra of St. Savvas the Sanctified, and Archdeacon Mark.

His Beatitude arrived in Qatar on Thursday afternoon, February 8/21, 2019. He was welcomed by the Most Reverend Archbishop Makarios of Qatar, the Priests of the Archdiocese of Qatar, Priest Demetrios and Priest Stylianos, the associates of the Holy Archdiocese of Qatar, representatives of the Government, such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and others. His

Beatitude then went to the hotel designated for His time in Doha, as an Executive guest of the State of Qatar.

In the evening of the same day there was the formal welcoming reception of His Beatitude at the Holy Church of St. Isaac the Syriac and St. George the Great Martyr, by the Scouts and the full congregation of the Church. There was Great Vespers for the consecration ceremony, with the choir of Thessalonica under the lead of Mr. Ioannis Hasanides in Greek and with the parish choir in Arabic. There was the revelation of the sign of the owners at the forefront of the Holy Church which reads in Greek and in Arabic: "the founding stone of this Church was placed by His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos on 16th April 2010 during the Governmental Office of Father Emir Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, and it was consecrated by Him on 22nd February 2019, with owner the Most Reverend Archbishop Makarios of Qatar and during the Governmental Office of H.H. Sheikh Tamin Bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of Qatar". Present were the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar and other Governmental representatives and a large crowd of people, and His Beatitude address all present as follows;

Your Eminence Archbishop Makarios,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Respected Local Officials,

Dear Fathers,

Beloved Faithful,

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;

His steadfast love endures forever!

This is the day that the Lord has made;

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

(Ps. 118:1,24)

It is an honour for us to be with you today, and we rejoice with great gladness on the occasion of the consecration of the completed Church of Saint Isaac the Syriac and Saint George here in Doha. We wish to express our gratitude to you, Your Eminence, Archbishop Makarios, for the hard work and dedication that you have invested in the building of this Church, and we wish also to acknowledge and thank all those many people who have been benefactors and who have worked themselves to make the dream of an Orthodox Church in Doha a reality.

There have been many years in the construction, and we can at last give thanks to Almighty God for the faith and steadfastness of so many who have brought this project to a happy conclusion.

On this occasion, we must also observe that the State of Qatar boasts not only exceptional economic progress and development, but also promotes a diverse cultural life. Since 2008, Christians have been able to build churches here on land contributed by the government, and there is an important tradition here of interfaith dialogue. Over the years, many important interfaith conferences and gatherings have been held here, and we welcome to this occasion our friends from other religious traditions.

The presence of the Churches in the State of Qatar, which allows freedom of worship within the frame of the civil law, is a testimony to the careful government of the Qatari authorities as well as to the wise rule of the present Emir, His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and his father, His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Father Emir of Qatar. Qatar was the first Gulf State to make history by

opening the door to non-Muslim religions. We wish to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to them for all that they have done to open the way for the building of this church.

The consecration of this church is significant for several important reasons.

First of all, this Church establishes the presence of the Orthodox Church in Qatar on a secure footing. At last the faithful have a permanent Church for worship and for the events of the community. The Rum Orthodox Church and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem have deep roots in this region, and we were witnesses to the emergence of Islamic faith and culture.

In addition to this historical truth, this Orthodox community in Doha is representative of the *oikomene* – the inhabited world – for gathered here are the people from all over the world. Qatar is well known for its international flavor, and this Orthodox community also reflects this international life. Here we see the living out of the vision of the Psalmist, who said;

*The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it,
the world, and those who live in it.*

(Psalm 24:1)

But perhaps most significantly the consecration of this Church that is dedicated to St. Isaac and to Saint George is a testimony that challenges the so-called “clash” of civilizations between Christianity and Islam. Where Christianity and Islam are lived in their true fullness, they have co-existed for centuries in respect and mutual understanding. Indeed, the dedication of this church to Saint George is a sign of this, as both Christians and Muslims share a deep veneration for Saint George.

The Arab peninsula as well as the Arab peoples of the Gulf, like all the regions of the Middle East, share a civilization of common religious and moral values, grounded in the respective Holy Books. These common fundamental religious and moral values have shaped and formed a common human civilization that understands the richness of our multi-ethnic, multi-religious landscape.

All these considerations make the consecration of this Church a historic moment. And if we may be permitted a personal note, it gives us a deep personal satisfaction to preside over this consecration, as we served here in this community 20 years ago, and we came to love and respect the Emirate of Qatar, its leaders, and its people.

On behalf of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre and the Holy Synod, we take this opportunity to convey the blessings of the Holy Tomb to this community, and to thank all those who have contributed to the building up of this Orthodox community and the completion of this church. We take deep pride in all that you have accomplished, dear Archbishop Makarios, on behalf of our Brotherhood.

May God bless you and our congregation, which is under your spiritual and pastoral care, and may God bless all the people of our beloved Qatar.

Thank you.

The service was followed by a festal meal, offered by the Most Reverend Archbishop Makarios of Qatar at the reception hall below the Holy Church.

From Secretariat-General

