

THE FEAST OF EPIPHANY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday morning, January 6/19, 2019, the celebration of the Feast of Epiphany started with the cathode of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood from the Patriarchate to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, under the lead of our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

After the welcoming at the Holy Deposition, the Service of Matins was held and then the Service of the Great Sanctification of the Water, while the troparia of Epiphany were being chanted.

Once the faithful had been blessed with the sanctified water, and had taken the sanctified water for their houses, the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom was celebrated at the All-holy Tomb, officiated by His Beatitude, with co-celebrants the Archbishops of the Patriarchate; Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Most Reverend Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Theodosios of Sebastia, Demetrios of Lydda, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis and the visiting from the Church of Greece Most Reverend Metropolitan Nectatrios of Corfu, Paxoi and transiting islands, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, first of whom in rank the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Priests from Orthodox Churches, Archdeacon Mark and five more Deacons. The chanting was delivered by the choir leader of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos and the services were attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and a large crowd of pilgrims from various countries.

After the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy and the receiving of the Sanctified Water by all present who had kept the fast for one day, the Patriarchal Entourage returned to the

Patriarchate Headquarters under the sound of the bells.

They were followed by the pilgrims, clergy and laity, who paid their respect to His Beatitude and received His blessing.

From Secretariat-General

THE FOREFEAST OF EPIPHANY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday, January 5/18, 2019, the Forefeast of Epiphany was celebrated by the Patriarchate, according to the Typikon order of the Church.

In the morning, at the monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, the Royal Hours were read at the end of Matins, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

These were followed by Vespers and the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great and at the end of the services there was the service of the blessing of water.

Then, bells tolling, and while the choir was singing “When Thou were baptized in the Jordan” there was the return at the Patriarchate Headquarters.

In a short while the Entourage of the Most Reverend Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia arrived, having finished the Blessing of the Water at St. James Cathedral, there was a prayer and a prayer for His Beatitude and His Eminence blessed with the Holy Water His Beatitude, those present and the reception hall.

Consequently His Beatitude left for Jericho with His Entourage, passed by the Monastery of the Holy Prophet Elisha, the Prefecture of Jericho and reached the Monastery of St. John the Baptist in the Jordan.

There, after His Beatitude's welcome and the Dismissal from the Divine Liturgy, the procession marched down to the river Jordan under the hymns of the feast.

The Blessing of the Water was held at the set for that reason platform, and His Beatitude baptized the cross in the river Jordan, at the presence of a large crowd of faithful who were all chanting the Apolytikion "When Thou was baptized in the Jordan".

Finally there was a fasting meal at the Holy Monastery of St. John the Baptist, offered by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Barhtolomew.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF EPIPHANY IN QATAR

The Feast of Epiphany was celebrated at the Holy Church of St. Isaac the Syriac and St. George in Doha on Friday 5/18 January, 2019. For pastoral reasons the feast was transferred to Friday for the convenience of the participation of the faithful, as Friday is a day off work in Qatar.

The Royal Hours of Epiphany and the Service of Vespers were

held on Thursday January 4/17, 2019.

The following day the Service of Matins and the Episcopal Divine Liturgy were celebrated, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Makarios of Qatar, with co-celebrants the ministering Priests of the Church Fr. Demetrios and Fr. Stylianos, and the visiting Deacon Demetrios, with the participation of a large crowd of faithful.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy there was the Service of the Sanctification of Water at the presence of the Ambassador of Greece in Doha Mr. Constantinos Orfanides, the Consul Mr. Ioannis Zelomosidis and the Military *attaché* Mr. *Panayiotis Krikis*.

From the Holy Archdiocese of Qatar

THE FEASTS OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE LORD AND OF ST. BASIL AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, January 1/14, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Circumcision of our Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh, and the commemoration of St. Basil the Great at the all-night Vigil at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and at the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb.

For this Feast, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos came down to the Temple along with the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood at midnight.

The Festivity began there with the Service of Matins at the Catholicon and with the Divine Liturgy afterward at the All-holy Tomb, officiated in Parresia by H.H. Beatitude with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, and the Most Reverend Archbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina, Demetrios of Lydda and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hieromonks and Priests, among whom the first in rank was Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios. The chanting was delivered by the choir leader of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos and the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and a large congregation of local faithful and pilgrims from various countries.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by the litany three times around the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb and the Shrines with the sacred relic of the right hand of St. Basil.

After the litany His Beatitude cut the New Year Cake at the Office of Geronda Sacristan Most Reverend Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis.

In the morning, He cut the New Year Cake at the Epitropikon for the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, and at noon at the common meal of the Hagiotaphite Fathers where the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos was an invited guest.

From Secretariat-General

THE COMMEMORATION OF ST. BASIL AT THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

On Monday morning, January 1/14, 2019, the commemoration of our Father among the Saint Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea of Cappadocia was celebrated at the chapel dedicated to him on the west side of the Patriarchate on the way to the New Gate of the Old City of Jerusalem. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Archimandrite Demetrios under the chanting of visiting Monks from Mount Athos and nuns, with the participation in prayer of a congregation of monks, nuns and members of the Greek Community of Jerusalem.

During the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos visited the celebrating Holy Monastery with an entourage of Hagiotaphite Fathers, after the cutting of the New Year Cake at the Epitropikon earlier that morning, and were offered a reception by the reverend Nun Thecla who takes a good care of the Monastery.

After the Divine Liturgy, the blessed bread and the veneration of the Holy Relic of St. Basil, there was a reception for the first day of the New Year for all present.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT MELANI AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday December 31, 2018, last day of the Civil Year/January 13, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of Saint Melani the Roman, at her chapel inside the Holy Monastery of Megali Panagia, which is adjacent to the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood.

Saint Melani is witnessed at the Synaxarion of the Church as a noble rich Roman woman who after the death of her husband and children went to Egypt and fed thousands of starving monks and Christians who were persecuted by the Areans, and then, she came to Jerusalem, founded a Virgin's house and a Nunnery and having lived there in asceticism and charity he died in the Lord in the year 410 A.D.

At this chapel, Vespers was held in the evening and the Divine Liturgy in the morning of the Feast, by the ministering Priest of the Monastery of Megali Panagia Archimandrite Makarios, Archimandrite Ieronymos and Hierodeacon Demetrios. The chanting was delivered by Monks of Mount Athos and the services were attended by the nuns of the monastery and a congregation from Jerusalem.

After the Divine Liturgy the Abbess reverend Nun Melani, who has renovated the Church which is dedicated to the Entrance of the Theotokos in the Temple and has worked for the preservation of the icons in it, offered a reception to the congregation at the hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FIRST MARTYR AND ARCHDEACON STEPHEN

On Wednesday, December 27, 2018/ January 9, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy First Martyr and Archdeacon Stephen at the Holy Church bearing his name, which lies on the place of his tending to death, at the valley of Gethsemane near the Tomb of the Mother of God.

On this feast the Church honours St. Stephen, who is mentioned in the book of the Acts of the Apostles (ch. 6-7) as a member of the First Christian Community of Jerusalem, being the first out of seven deacons, who had been elected to minister at the common meals. St. Stephen was full of divine zeal and confessed Christ before the Jewish Sanhedrin, for which reason he was stoned to death, while he was praying for those who stoned him. Saul, the later Apostle Paul was present at the stoning and kept the garments of those who stoned St. Stephen.

In the evening there was Vespers in this place and the Divine Liturgy was celebrated on the day of the feast, which was led by the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod Most Reverend Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, with co-celebrants Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and ministering Priests of the Shrine of Gethsemane, the Archimandrites Makarios and Dionysios and Hierodeacon Synesios. The service was attended by monks, nuns and pilgrims.

After the Divine Liturgy there was a litany of the holy icon and a special prayer at the place of the stoning of the Holy First Martyr Stephen, and afterward, the Hegoumen of the Shrine Archimandrite Epiphaneios offered a reception to all present at the hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, the next Christmas December 26, 2018 / January 8, 2019 the Patriarchate celebrated the Synaxis of the Theotokos, namely the gathering of us faithful in order to honour as we should the Theotokos, as the par excellence responsible person for the mystery of the Incarnation by the Holy Spirit and the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This feast was celebrated:

1. At the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, with the participation of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos on the Patriarchal Throne, while the service was attended by Hagiotaphite Fathers and many pilgrims. The chanting was done by the Choir Leader of the Church Archimandrite Eusevios and the Choir "Tropos" under the lead of Mr. Constantinos Aggelidis. After the Service the Patriarchal Entourage and the faithful returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters under the chanting of the choir, where there was the brotherly osculation.
2. At the Holy Church of the Synaxis of the Theotokos in Beit Sahour, which has been built by the memorable Spiritual Father of the Monastery of St. Savvas, blessed Archimandrite Seraphim.

There, in the evening of the feast there was a procession from the Holy Church of the Forefathers of the Community of Beit Sahour to the Shrine of the Shepherds of the Patriarchate. After the procession there was festal Vespers, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, with the

participation of the Hegoumen of the Shrine Archimandrite Ignatios and the Priests of the Community. The service was attended by the faithful of the town who were offered a generous reception by the Hegoumen and renovator of the Shrine Archimandrite Ignatios at the end of the service.

On Wednesday morning, December 27, 2018 / January 9, 2019, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in this Holy Monastery, led by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, with the full participation of the local congregation.

3. At the Holy Church of Theotokos in the town of Beit Jalla near Bethlehem, with the Divine Liturgy on the day of the feast, which was led by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis. The Community choir chanted in Arabic and the service was attended by the Orthodox faithful of the town.

After the Divine Liturgy the Community offered a reception to the Episcopal Entourage at the adjacent to the Church reception hall.

From Secretariat-General

THE CHRISTMAS FEAST AT THE BASILICA OF THE NATIVITY IN BETHLEHEM

The celebration of Christmas Day at the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem began on the night of Christmas Eve, Sunday December 24, 2018 /January 6, 2019 from 10.30 p.m. onward.

At that hour there was the entrance from the Baptism Gate at the Catholicon of the Basilica at the ikonostasion area. Matins began there, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, from the Six Psalms until the Kathismata.

When the Kathisma "Let us all faithful see where Christ was born" then the formal descend to the Cave of the Nativity began, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, who had the representative of the President of the Palestinian Autonomy on His right hand side, and the representative of the King of Jordan on His left hand side, along with the Greek Consul General Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and official Governmental representatives.

In the Cave, there was the reading of the Gospel narrative of the Nativity according to St. Luke, in Greek and in Arabic.

Afterward there was the reading of the Christmas message of H.H. Beatitude in Greek, by Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and in Arabic by Priest Issa Mousleh, the representative of the Arabic M.M. and the veneration of the Star and the Manger followed.

Then there procession went up by the north gate of the Cave and there was a litany three times around the pillars of the five-aisled Basilica and at its centre.

A special prayer followed, and after that the Service of Matins and the Divine Liturgy in the Basilica, officiated by His Beatitude, with co-celebrants the Archbishops of the Throne and many Priests, Hieromonks and Deacons. The visiting from Greece choir "Tropos" chanted under the lead of Mr. Constantinos Aggelidis in Greek, and the choir of the Basilica of the Nativity under Mr. Lawrence Samour in Arabic, until 3.30 a.m. At the same time there was the Divine Liturgy was being celebrated at the God-receiving Cave, led by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, at the singing of the Choir Leader of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Mr.

Constantinos Spyropoulos in Greek, and some members of the choir of the Basilica of the Nativity in Arabic.

Finally, the Patriarchal Entourage went up to the Monastery from the Basilica through the Baptism Gate, where at the Hegoumeneion there was a festal meal offered by the renovator of the Monastery, the Patriarchal Representative Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan.

From Secretariat-General

CHRISTMAS EVE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, December 25, 2018/ January 7, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ by the Virgin, during the reign of the Roman Emperor Caesar Octavian Augustus, at the place where this event actually happened, in Bethlehem.

1. On Christmas Eve

According to the order of the Church of Jerusalem, the feast began on Christmas Eve, on Sunday 24th December 2018/ 6th January 2019.

At 11:15 a.m. of this day, according to the program of the Status Quo, the Entourage of the Orthodox Hagiotaphite Fathers under H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos departed from the Patriarchate towards Jaffa Gate, and from there to the Holy Monastery of Prophet Elias. After a small

stopover there, the Patriarchal Entourage headed towards Bethlehem through the gate of Rachel's tomb, while Israeli horsemen marched ahead of the procession.

Upon arrival at Bethlehem Square, H.H.B. and His Entourage were welcomed by the Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem, Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan, many Priests dressed in their liturgical vestments and a large crowd of faithful, under the chanting of the troparia of the Nativity in Greek by Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos and the Choir "Tropos", who came from Greece escorted by the Exarch of Athens Archimandrite Damianos, and in Arabic by Mr. Lawrence Samour. The Patriarchal Entourage entered the Basilica of the Nativity and went to the Cave for veneration through the wood carved ikonostasion and St. Nikolaos' chapel.

Then the Patriarchal Entourage exited the Cave from its north gate and marching through the chapel which is being used by the Armenians turned left towards the area before the ikonostasion.

Vespers was held at this place, according to the typicon order and the Status Quo, with the incense procedure and the blessing of bread.

After Dismissal, around 3:30 p.m., there was a meal offered by the Patriarchal Representative Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan, and in the evening there was the welcoming reception of the representative of His Excellency the President of the Palestinian State Mr. Mahmoud Abbas Abu-Mazen, and the representative of the King of Jordan His Majesty Abdullah Ibn Hussein, by His Beatitude, who addressed all present as follows;

"His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas "Abu Mazen", President of the State of Palestine Represented by H.E. Dr. Rami Al-Hamdallah, Palestinian prime minister

His Excellency Samir Mbaidien, Jordanian Minister of Interior

representative of His Majesty King Abdullah bin Al-Hussein.

Dear brothers and sisters,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we have the honour to celebrate the birth of our Lord Christ, in your presence, in the same city, the city of peace, where Jesus was born nearly two thousand years ago. This great event is a witness to the sanctity of this land.

The birth of Christ is not like any other birth, it is an eternal birth. It is the birth of love and peace, and the beginning of the Charter of Reconciliation between Heaven and Earth. To celebrate the birth of Christ is to emphasize the value of humanity, because there is no real worship of the Creator, if we don't respect the Creature, and no sincere faith if we do not respect life.

Honourable present,

With the birth of Christ, humanity began a new journey embodied in happiness, love and respect between all of humanity. With that God set an example and showed us how he loved the world so that everyone loves his or her world and society, as God honoured the person over the rest of the creatures to declare the elevation of humans and the elevation of the humanitarian message.

In the Anthem of the Angels: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace" (Luke 2:14). The peace praised by the angels is not just a social peace, but it is also the embodiment of Christ and His presence. Thus, the angels celebrated the peace that came with the birth of Christ. Christ, by His incarnation, gave humanity peace with God and amongst the people and with oneself. What happened to Adam in Paradise when he sinned is that he and his descendants lost peace with God. When Cain killed his brother Abel, humanity lost peace amongst the people, this peace returned to humanity

by the birth of our Lord Christ.

Honourable present,

Every year as we celebrate the Birth of Christ, people are attracted to the spirit of happiness, children are waiting for the holiday gifts and the world is full of joy, despite the hardships we face caused by instability. This feast comes to embody the happiness, joy and pleasure that the Palestinian people deserve and have been striving to attain to live in peace, dignity, stability, independence and happiness like the rest of the peoples of the world. Christmas is also a national holiday that adds a special joy to its religious holiness. A national holiday the joy of which is lived together by Muslims and Christians. This is because, the mutual flourishing of Muslims and Christians in this Holy Land has been a historical fact that has been experienced by citizens of our various lands ever since the treaty between the Caliph Omar bin Al-Khattab and our predecessor Patriarch Sophronius and until our present day.

We have had a difficult year, with many challenges, many of which are the result of aspirations for political gains by politicians attempting to strengthen their political positions at the expense of our churches, in addition to attempts to undermine our churches and our inherent Christian presence in this holy land to which the birth of Christ is witness to our roots within. H.E. President Abbas and His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al-Husseini, the custodian of the Christian and Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem, stood by us and we all succeeded in confronting the attempts to undermine our rights with the blessing of our Lord Christ and our unity on the basis of truth and justice.

Your Excellency the Prime Minister,

We take the opportunity of Christmas to wish everyone a blessed and prosperous year, full of good and happiness and

crowned with peace, tranquillity, stability and security.

We ask our Lord Christ, to bless everyone with a rich flood of grace, to bless everyone with his heavenly blessings and to cause everyone to enjoy health, well-being and to heal the sick, to comfort the needy, and to protect everyone from all harm.

We also ask our Saviour, Jesus Christ, to provide us the means to enjoy peace and security in the Holy Land and all over the world, and to guard our society from all evil. We also pray to the Lord to protect our leadership under President Mahmoud Abbas, The President of the State of Palestine.

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests”

Merry Christmas and MAY you all enjoy Bliss, Love and Peace”.

From Secretariat-General