

THE ROYAL HOURS OF CHRISTMAS AND THE SERVICE OF HOLY UNCTION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

1. The Royal Hours of Christmas

On Friday morning, December 22, 2018/ January 4, 2019, according to the Typikon, after Service of Matins the Royal Hours of Christmas were read at the monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

2. The Holy Unction

On Friday evening, December 22, 2018/ January 4, 2019, at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen after Vespers there was the Sacrament of the Holy Unction, as a way of preparation for the forthcoming Christmas Feast. The service was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants seven of the Archbishops, while Hagiotaphite Fathers and monks participated in prayer, along with a large congregation of nuns and pilgrims, all of whom were blessed with the holy oil by His Beatitude and the Archbishops at the end of the service.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE FOREFATHERS

AT BEIT SAHOUR

On the Sunday of the Feast of the Forefathers, December 17/30, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Forefathers at the Holy Church dedicated to them which is also the patron Church of Beit Sahour, near Bethlehem.

On this feast the Church honours the commemoration of the Forefathers of Christ who lived before the Law and by the Law, of whom He was a descendant, and became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and Virgin Mary as He was born in the flesh by her.

In this beautiful Church which is decorated with a stone-carved ikonostasion and Byzantine hagiography, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the morning, officiated by the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, with co-celebrants the Priests of this parish, Fr. Savva, Fr. Issa, Fr. Ionannis and Fr. George. The parish choir chanted in Arabic with the participation of a full congregation of the inhabitants of the town.

Presbyter Issa read to this congregation the Sermon of His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos as below;

“Being the fulfilment of the Law and of the Prophets, Christ our God, Thou who hast completed the providence of the Father, do Thou fill our hearts with joy and gladness always; now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.” (Liturgy of St. Chrysostom).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Reverend Christians,

The conveyed message through the mouth of the Angel of God to the shepherds who remained in their fields at night in your town of Beit Sahour: “behold, I bring you good tidings of

great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord”(Luke 2:10-11), has gathered all of us today in this Holy Church in order to celebrate in thanksgiving and doxology the commemoration of our Holy Forefathers, namely all those who pleased God from Adam to Joseph the Betrothed to the Most Holy Theotokos; likewise, all the prophets and prophetess, especially Prophet Daniel and the three children.

Those among the prophets who have pleased God throughout the centuries are those who proclaimed the mystery of the Divine Providence, the birth of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who fulfilled every aspect of the Father's Providence.

Today's feast of the Forefathers in this very place where the heavenly hosts, the angels, conversed with the people who stayed in their fields at night, is the preamble of the evangelism of the great joy (Luke 2:3), of the deliverance of man from the bondage of sin and the corruption of death.

And this is so, because the Son of God, Christ, is the new Adam, not the earthly man any more, but the One who has been conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Ever-Virgin Mary and became incarnate through her pure blood, for our salvation.

The sacred history is no other than the history of our Holy Church, and we have been born members of its body, namely of Christ. It is precisely this sacred history that the Holy Forefathers and all the prophets composed and recorded, as they received all the revelations of God. And in the Old Testament the revelations of God the Word, of Christ, were in a bodiless form, while in the New Testament the revelations of God the Word, the Christ were done in the flesh.

The Holy Forefathers, the righteous prophets of the Old Testament, did not only have a communion in the Holy Spirit with the Word of God, the Christ, but also with the vision of

His incarnation. In other words, they saw the Word of God as a man, in the form of a man. Adam, for example, heard the voice of the Lord God walking in paradise in the evening (Gen. 3:8). Jacob saw the face of God “for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” (Genesis 32:30). Moses saw the back of God; “And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen” (Exodus 33:21-23). Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne; “I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple” (Isaiah 6:1). Daniel saw the Lord as the son of man; “And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips” (Daniel 10:16). Prophet Isaiah converses with God; “and behold the word of the Lord came unto him, and he said to him: What dost thou here, Elias? And he answered: With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant” (3 Kings 19:9-10).

It is noteworthy that the Holy Forefathers and prophets did not see the unintelligible and unreachable nature of God, but the form and the image of Him, which image was going to be materialized in the future, as St. Paul says, in Christ Jesus, “who being in the form of God... was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:5-7). And elsewhere St. Paul says; Satan “hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor. 4:4).

Our Holy Church honours and venerates the memory of the Holy Forefathers because they foretell the great mystery of the divine providence, the mystery of the salvation of man. “We honour the pinnacles among the Fathers, even Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; for from their seed, Christ shone forth incarnate of a Virgin, since He is almighty” the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Christ is the Saviour of the world and this is also proven by the fact that apart from Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and

Joseph, the first people who venerated the divine infant were the shepherds who stayed in their fields at night. And this is so because they were characterized by their simplicity and purity of heart. Moreover, the shepherds imitated the lives and virtues of the Patriarchs and of the prophets of the Old Testament. The Church Fathers underline the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ chose the simplest people in the heart and mind to reveal the unspeakable mystery of the incarnation of God the Word. Christ did not choose the proud and cunning Scribes and Pharisees who knew and taught the scriptures and the Law of Moses.

The Church my beloved, is not of this world, of this time, which "lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19) as the Evangelist John says. The Church abides and exists in the world in order to save the world and deliver it from the darkness, the unrighteousness and the oppression of the devil. In other words, the purpose of the Church is to evangelize the "on earth peace" which was introduced to the world by the incarnation of the Divine Word and praised by the angels.

And we say this, because by His incarnation, Christ made peace between God and man, between man with his fellow men, and between man with himself. And this happened because in our Lord Jesus Christ there was the union of the divine with the human nature impartially, with no alteration, with no division and inseparably.

Behold therefore, why the angel of the Lord said to the shepherds in the fields: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

Let us then my dear ones, prepare ourselves and cleanse our hearts so that the great joy and peace of the Sun of Righteousness, of the born Saviour Jesus Christ may enter in them. Amen.

Have a blessed and peaceful Christmas.”

After the Divine Liturgy there was a meal for the Episcopal entourage and many others, offered by the Community.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF OUR FATHER AMONG THE SAINTS MODESTOS PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

On Monday, December 18/31, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of our Father among the Saints Modestos Patriarch of Jerusalem at his Holy Chapel on Abu Tor hill, opposite the hill of Holy Sion, in New South Jerusalem.

On this feast the Church commemorates St. Modestos, as the

father who comforted the Church of Jerusalem with many renovations and charity works, initially as an Archimandrite of the Holy Monastery of St. Theodosios the Cenobiarch and later on as a Patriarch succeeding the Patriarch of Jerusalem Zacharias, after the destructions of the Persian raid in 614 A.D.

The feast in both the evening and in the morning was led by the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod Most Reverend Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, with co-celebrants Archimandrite Makarios, Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of St. Nikodemus and Hierodeacon Demetrios. The choir was led by the choir leader Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos while the service was attended by monks nuns and pious pilgrims.

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

After the Divine Liturgy the good keeper of the Monastery reverend Monk Antiohos offered a reception to all at the courtyard of the Church.

From Secretariat-General

THE MEMORIAL SERVICE OF THE HAGIOTAPHITE FATHERS

On Sunday, December 17/30, 2018, Sunday of the commemoration of the Forefathers, there was the established annual memorial service for the repose of the souls of the departed Hagiotaphite Fathers, memorable Patriarchs, Bishops, Priests,

Hieromonks, monks and nuns.

The memorial service took place at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre after the Divine Liturgy which was officiated by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa.

The memorial service was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants Hagiotaphite Archbishops, Hieromonks and Deacons.

After the service the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters for a reception.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF OUR RIGHTEOUS FATHER SPYRIDON OF TRIMYTHUS THE WONDERWORKER

On Tuesday, December 12/25, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of our Righteous Father Spyridon Bishop of Trimythus the Wonderworker. St. Spyridon participated at the First Ecumenical Synod in the 4th century A.D. as the Bishop of Trimythus, and defended the One Essence of the Son with the Father, being a humble and pious Father, full of virtues, through which he received by God the grace of the gift of working miracles such as the resurrection of his daughter Eirini, the turning of a snake into gold and then the gold again back to snake, many healings and rescuing of faithful from dangers, and also working many miracles after his death.

As known, his sacred relics are kept in the island of Corfu.

At the Holy Monastery of St. Spyridon of the Patriarchate, there was Vespers in the evening and the Divine Liturgy was celebrated on the day of the feast, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, with co-celebrants; the Hegoumen of the H. Monastery of St. Nicodemus Archimandrite Makarios, the Arab-speaking Priest Haralambos Farah Bandour, ministering Priest of St. James Cathedral, deacons Demetrios and Hader. The choir was formed by the choir leader of the Holy Church of Saints Constantine and Helen Archimandrite Eusevios and the Patriarchal School students, while the services were attended by a pious congregation of monks, nuns, and pilgrims.

During the Divine Liturgy the Patriarchal entourage arrived with H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and venerated at the Holy Church.

After the Divine Liturgy the Hegoumen Archimandrite Sergios offered a generous reception to the Episcopal entourage and the congregation at the hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF ST. ANNA'S CONCEPTION OF THE MOST HOLY

THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, December 9/22, 2018, the Feast of St. Anna was celebrated at her Monastery which is adjacent to the Old City of Jerusalem Wall, at St. Stephen's Gate which leads to Gethsemane.

On this Feast the Church commemorates the fact that God granted to the righteous Ancestors of God Joachim and Anna, who were barren, the fruit of their conjugal affinity, namely Theotokos Maria, from whom Christ our Saviour became incarnate by the power of the Holy Spirit.

For this Feast the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the morning, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, with co-celebrants the Archimandrites Makarios and Stephen, while the chanting was delivered by the Choir Leader of the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, Archimandrite Eusevios, with the attendance of a congregation of monks, nuns and pilgrims.

After the Divine Liturgy the Hegoumen Archimandrite Meletios offered a reception to the congregation at the Hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF ST. NIKOLAOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, December 6/19, 2018, there was the celebration of the commemoration of our Father among the Saints Nikolaos, Bishop of Myra of Lycia, the Wonder worker, at his great and beautiful Church which is adjacent to the Patriarchate Headquarters on the North-west side, with Vespers in the evening and the Divine Liturgy on the Feast day. The Services were officiated by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, with co-celebrants the Archimandrites; Nectarios, who is first in rank, Stephen, Mattheos, Makarios, Demetrios, Priest Nikitas and Archdeacon Mark. Archimandrite Eusevios delivered the hymns and there was a great attendance of faithful Christians who honoured the Saint as a supporter of the Orthodox Faith and a protector of the poor.

The congregation was offered a reception at the Hegoumeneion by the hardworking Care taker of the Monastery Archdeacon Mark.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF ST. NIKOLAOS AT THE TOWN OF BEIT JALLA

On Wednesday December 6/19, 2018, the commemoration of St. Nikolaos, Bishop of Myra of Lycia the Wonderworker was celebrated at his beautiful Church in the town of Beit Jalla, near Bethelhem.

St. Nikolaos was celebrated in a Pan-Orthodox way worldwide, as the patron Saint of this town, being honoured as the Ecumenical teacher of the Son of the Father having One Substance with Him, at the First Ecumenical Synod of Nicea in 325 A.D., and as a “canon of faith and an image of piety”, with Vespers in the evening and the Divine Liturgy in the morning of the feast, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, with co-celebrants the Hegoumen Archimandrite Ignatios, Archimandrite Ananias and the ministering Priests of the Community, Priests; Paul, George, Joseph and Elias. The choir of the Church sang in Arabic and the service was attended by the full congregation of the Christians of the town.

After the Divine Liturgy there was a procession with the Episcopal entourage, the congregation and the scouts, and afterward there was a meal offered by the Hegoumen and the Community Council.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF OUR FATHER AMONG THE SAINTS SAVVAS THE SANCTIFIED AT THE HISTORIC LAVRA IN THE DESERT OF JUDEA

On Tuesday, December 5/18, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of our Father among the Saints Savvas the Sanctified at the Patriarchate, at the Holy Monastery founded by him and bears his name up to the present, at the desert of

Judea on the right bank of Brook Cedron, which runs towards the Dead Sea.

For this feast, the Most Reverend Archbishop Makarios of Qatar went to the Holy Monastery with an entourage, on Sunday afternoon, 4/16 December 2018, to begin the festivities initially with the commemoration of St. John of Damascus at his chapel on the day of his feast, December 4, which is also the day of the commemoration of the Holy Great Martyr Barbara.

The following day, Tuesday December 5/18, there was the celebration of the commemoration of our Father among the Saints Savvas the Sanctified at the Catholicon of the Monastery which had been constructed by St. Savvas himself. There was an all-night vigil officiated by the Most Reverend Archbishop Makarios of Qatar, with the participation in prayer of the visiting from Greece Hegoumen of the H. Monastery of Hilandarion Archimandrite Methodios and the Hegoumen of the H. Monastery Giromeriou Archimandrite Methodios, as well as the Fathers of the Monastery of St. Savvas, monks from other Holy Monasteries and local Arab-speaking Priests, and pilgrims from Greece. The chanting was delivered on the right in Greek by the Byzantine choir from Greece under the lead of Professor Demetrios Balagiorgos, along with the Fathers of St. Savvas Monastery, Fathers from Mount Athos and the Choir Leader of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos, while the left choir in Arabic was under the lead of the Patriarchal Representative in Acre – Ptolemais, Archimandrite Philotheos.

Having remained at the Monastery for the three-day festivities, on Wednesday December 16/19, Archbishop Makarios of Qatar officiated the Divine Liturgy on the commemoration of St. Nikolaos, Bishop of Myra of Lycia the Wonderworker at his chapel, which is the first Church of the Lavra, built by St. Savvas, who named it “God-built” because half of its construction is within a natural rock in a shape of a cave.

After the Divine Liturgy, there was the established memorial service for the repose of the souls of the Fathers of the Monastery at the courtyard of the Monastery, which is the roof of the cemetery of the Monastery.

Consequently His Eminence and his entourage, the Fathers of the Monastery and all the pilgrims participated in a meal at the refectory of the Monastery.

Having completed the three-day festivities, His Eminence thanked the Fathers, and accepted their thanks in return, and full of blessings he departed via the Holy Monastery of St. Theodosios the Cenobiarch, where he venerated his tomb, glorifying God.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR CATHERINE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, November 25 / December 8, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy Great Martyr Catherine at the Holy Monastery dedicated to her, which lies a stone's throw away opposite the Patriarchate on the North side, at the heart of the Christian Quarter.

The Church celebrates St. Catherine, who came from Alexandria and had a philosophical education, she was baptized a Christian and put into shame the wise men of the Greeks in a dialogue, baldly confessing Christ; because of that she

martyred for the sake of His Name, during the reign of Maximilian in the year 305 A.D.

Both Vespers in the evening and the Divine Liturgy in the morning were led by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, with Hieromonks and deacons as co-celebrants. The chanting was delivered by the Choir Leader of the Church of the Resurrection Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos, and the service was attended by a pious congregation of monks, nuns and laity, local faithful and pilgrims.

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

2. The Feast of the Great Martyr Catherine in Mount Sinai

On the same day, November 25/ December 8, 2018, the Feast of the Holy Great Martyr Catherine was celebrated in Mount Sinai, at the Historic Monastery where the sacred relic of the Saint is kept at the magnificent Church dedicated to her as the patron Saint of the Monastery, and which was built during the reign of Emperor Justin. For this Feast, the delegation of H.H. Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos was led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, who having participated at the festivities returned in Jerusalem in the evening of the feast day.

From Secretariat-General