

THE CONSECRATION OF THE HOLY CHURCH OF THE DORMITION IN MADABA

On Saturday, September 9/22, 2018, day of the commemoration of the parents of Theotokos and Holy Ancestors of God Joachim and Anna, there was the consecration of the Holy Church of the Dormition, which is built in the Hannine area of the historic town of Madaba, where also lies the shrine of the historic mosaic map of the 6th century A.D. that depicts the Holy Land during the time of the New Testament. The Church has been built by the supervision and funding of the former Patriarchal Representative in Madaba, Archimandrite Innokentios. The consecration ceremony and the Divine Liturgy were officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, having arrived to Madaba from Jerusalem and from Amman, after a warm welcoming reception for Him in the morning of the previous day. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Most Reverend Archbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina and Secretary-General, Makarios of Qatar, Christophoros of Kyriakoupolis, with the participation in prayer of the Patriarchal Representative in Madaba Most Reverend Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba. There were also Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, among whom the Spiritual Father of the Lavra of St. Savvas the Sanctified Archimandrite Eudokimos, the Patriarchal Representative in Irbet of North Jordan Archimandrite Raphael, Arab-speaking Priests, among whom the Priest of the Shrine of Madaba Fr. Joseph, Archdeacon Mark, Hierodeacon Eulogios and Deacon George. The cantor from Greece Mr. Balogiorgos and his choir from the Music School of Athens delivered the hymns and the service was attended by a large congregation of the Christian faithful of Madaba. His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation; "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new

creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17) St. Paul preaches. Most Reverend Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, Holy Fathers and Brothers, Your Grace Archimandrite Innokentios, owner of the Holy Church of the Dormition and its surrounding premises,

Today the historic town of Madaba, which is the cultural centre of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, rejoices along with the Mother of all Churches, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, on the consecration of the new beautiful Church and of the spiritual centre in the Hannina area of Madaba.

This project is of great importance for the people of the wider Madaba area and especially for the spiritual and liturgical needs of the local Greek-Orthodox community, because this project depicts the unceasing mission of the ministry of the word of love of Christ to our fellow men on the one hand; on the other, it displays the cultivated harmonious co-existence of the various religious communities that inhabit the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The Venerable Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem in its long term historic course, has never ceased to provide with both words and actions the sacred virtues of love towards the fellow man as well as the enemy, of peace and of the absolute respect towards our fellow man who has been created by God according to His image and likeness.

The historic great national-religious leaders such as Khalif Omar Ibn Khattab and St. Sophronios, Patriarch of Jerusalem have significantly contributed not only to the respect of the co-existence of the religious communities, but also to the free worship of God in His House.

Such a House of God have we consecrated today, in honour of the Dormition of Theotokos and for the glory of the Name of the Almighty God, but also for the praise of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, under the wise governmental expertise of

our most respected King Abdullah II.

Each consecrated Church is in effect a projection of our own temple, namely our body, as St. Paul says; "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19).

And we say this because the House of prayer, namely the Church of God, is the place where the Holy Scriptures are preached. St. Paul says, "All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

For all these, we would like to thank from the depths of our heart the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba and his dear associates, the Vestry-men of the Church and all those who contributed for this work, and those who strove to organize this festal ceremony of the consecration of the Church of the Dormition.

Finally, we consider it our duty to express the deepest gratitude of our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood to our noble congregation in Madaba, and a personal duty of Ours, to the tireless worker of the vineyard of the Lord, Reverend Archimandrite Innokentios, established member of the venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, who has made our Greek-Orthodox Community here an Ecclesiastical, educational and spiritual Centre. Righteously therefore, "there is laid up for him the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to him" (2 Tim. 4:8).

We also express our warm gratitude to all those who honoured this feast of the consecration of the Church with their presence, and especially the local civil, military and police forces of Madaba.

Many happy and peaceful returns.”

Archimandrite Innokentios also addressed those present with the following words;

“This is the day that the Lord made; let us be glad and rejoice in it”.

Your Beatitude, Most Reverend Archbishops, Honourable Governors, Representatives of the Parents’ Association and of the Church,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The consecration of the Holy Church of the Dormition of Theotokos in Madaba, the Holy Altar of God, is being carried out today, after a series of 10 years of continuous efforts and many labours. This project includes the building of the Holy Church of the Dormition, and of classrooms at the Schools of this area and covers in total 8.000 sq.mt. of construction in 11.000 acres, in order to cover the needs of the town of Madaba in general and of the Orthodox Community in particular.

The town of Madaba has been a great Orthodox Christian centre in the past, as the most important Diocese of East Jordan; until today, Madaba has been a remarkable Shrine of the Orthodox Church of East Jordan and of the Hashemite Kingdom.

We consecrate today this new Holy Church in honour of the Dormition of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, due to the nearby existence of the Mosque which they have been pleased to name Mosque “Of Jesus Christ, Son of Mary”, as they believe in His historic presence. This belief bridges the contrasts between Christians and Muslims and favours their peaceful co-existence in the town of Madaba.

I am in the pleasant position to count 30 years of Priestly ministry in Jordan, including 25 years in Madaba. I would like to thank the members of the Community of the Christian family

of Madaba for the love and commitment they have shown, as well as all those who contributed for the completion of this project and of all other projects that were completed in the Patriarchal Committee of Madaba.

I would like to pay tribute to the memorable Patriarch of Jerusalem Diodoros I, who supported me in my first footsteps as a Hagiotaphite, and who contributed greatly in the development of Education in Jordan, with the schools of the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, but also for all the other projects he accomplished in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Likewise, I would like to thank His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, for his trust in me; May your days, Your Beatitude, be many, peaceful and blessed”.

Finally, I should not omit to honour and congratulate for his election the new Patriarchal Representative, Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, who is known to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem for his ethos, purity and honesty, but also for his particularly important skills and abilities. I wish the people of Madaba may take the Archbishop as an example and benefit from his virtues and abilities.”

This festive ceremony and the Divine Liturgy were followed by a reception at the reception hall below the Church of the Shrine.

There, His Beatitude delivered the following address;

“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”.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians,

The pre-eternal God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, who has set His Church as a tower of strength, and has founded it on the rock of faith, has gathered us today in this beautiful newly-built Church of the Dormition, in order to perform its consecration in Doxology and Thanksgiving.

“On Sinai long ago Thou didst show the God-seer Moses a tabernacle not made by hands, thereby depicting Thy Church, O Christ”, the hymn writer says, referring to Moses’ ascend on Sinai, where the Glory of God descended upon him, and he received detailed orders on how to make the Tabernacle of the Congregation (Exodus 24: 15-16 / 25: 8-9), which was made by the Lord and not by any man, as St. Paul says in his preaching: “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Hebrews 8:1-2).

As far as this “true tabernacle” is concerned, behold what the hymn writer says: “When the Word dwelt among us in the flesh, the Son of Thunder (St. John the Evangelist) spake thus in his writings: 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 Thou Thyself now establish this house, O Lord”.

This house of prayer is no other than the New Tabernacle of the Congregation, in other words, the Church that our Lord Jesus Christ founded by His own Sacred and Redeeming blood. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2

Cor. 5:17), St. Paul says.

In other words, my dear Brothers and Sisters, today's consecrated Church is a house of prayer, "whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28). And whereby, through our ArchPriest Jesus Christ, "we offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Hebrews 13:15). And in more detail; when I say sacrifice, St. Paul preaches, I do not mean the sacrifice of animals and of blood, but a sacrifice which as the fruit of honest confidence towards God, shall come forth from our lips, which will praise and glorify His Name.

"Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth" (Psalm 26:8), Prophet David chants. "The dwellings of the Lord are beloved unto them that long to see the glory of His countenance unconcealed" the hymn writer of the Church proclaims. "And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power" (Revelation 15:8), St. John the Evangelist says in his book of Revelation.

This means that the Lord used to manifest His Presence and Glory in a special place that was sanctified. And according to the true witness of the Holy Scriptures (Exodus 16:7, 16:10, 3 Kings 8:11), the glory of the Lord, in other words, the Grace of the Holy Spirit, filled the house, meaning His Church, in the form of a cloud during the times of the synaxis of worship, which was the prayer in public. Nevertheless, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24) the Lord says.

It is also noteworthy that this office of the consecration of Holy Church has as its reference point and source the renewed old Adam in the presence of the New Adam, who is the Incarnate Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and of the Ever-Virgin Mary and Theotokos, according to the witness of

the Holy Evangelists and Fathers of the Church. "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), St. John the Evangelist says. "Today hath the second Adam, Christ, shown this new tabernacle to be a spiritual Paradise, which beareth, instead of the tree of knowledge, the life-giving weapon of the Cross" the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

The approved Father of the Church, St. Gregory the Theologian, comments on Jesus' presence at the dedication of the Church of Solomon by saying: "And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter" (John 10:22), the time of unfaithfulness, and Christ was present, the God and temple, God eternal, recent temple, which was demolished in a day and rebuilt in three days and remains for all eternity, so that I may be saved and I may be recalled from the old body to become a new creation, redeemed through such a philanthropy (St. Gregory the Theologian, Speech 44 on the New Sunday).

In other words, my dear ones, the temple of God as a place of worship is the workshop that operates through the Holy Spirit for the salvation of our souls. And the prayers are the way and the means for our communion with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father. For this reason, St. John of the Ladder says that the prayer in its quality is an intercourse and union of man with God, and when it comes to its effect, prayer is the constitution and the conservation of the world. Prayer is the mother of all virtues (St. John of the Ladder, Speech 28 on Prayer).

Let us therefore thank the Lord, for the festive celebration in this day of the consecration of this Holy Church of the Dormition and say along with the hymn writer: "Sanctification is befitting to Thy House O Lord; for Thy Name O friend of man is glorified therein; therefore, along with the prophet we exclaim to Thee in faith; By Thine Holy Spirit do Thou now renew us all, by the prayers of the Theotokos (and the

Ancestors of God Joachim and Anna), Thou who art the only friend of man". Amen"

The Patriarchal Representative Most Reverend Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba also spoke, underlining the importance of the completed work which has been done by his predecessor Archimandrite Innokentios, a work that he is going to continue. His Eminence also stressed the importance of the presence of the choir that came from Greece for the continuation of the cultivation of the Byzantine Music.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE ANCESTORS OF GOD SAINTS JOACHIM AND ANNA

On Saturday, September 9/22, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Synaxis of the Ancestors of God Saints Joachim and Anna, which refers to the gathering of the faithful after the Feast of the Nativity of Theotokos, in order to honour the commemoration of the parents of the One from whom "the Son of Righteousness, Christ our God didst rise".

In the morning of the Feast, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated

at the Holy Shrine of St. Anna, the place that was the house of the Holy Ancestors of God and where Theotokos was born. The Service was officiated by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, with co-celebrants the Master of Ceremonies Archimandrite Bartholomew, other Priests and Hierodeacon Demetrios, while the chanting was delivered by the Choir Leader of the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen Archimandrite Eusevios, with the participation of many Orthodox faithful from Greece, Russia and Romania.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Meletios offered a reception to the Episcopal entourage and the faithful at the hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE BEHEADING OF ST. JOHN THE FORERUNNER

On Tuesday August 29/September 11, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Beheading of the Glorious Prophet and Forerunner John the Baptist at the Holy Monastery dedicated to his name on the West Bank of the River Jordan near the Dead Sea.

On this Feast the Church celebrates in joyful mourning the event that took place when Herod the tetrarch held St. John imprisoned because the latter had scorned him for keeping his brother Philip's wife as his own mistress. Despite respecting John, Herod submitted to the unreasonable demand of Salome, daughter of Herodias, after her dance, and ordered the beheading of St. John, and his head was brought on a platter

as a gift for his birthday.

For this Feast the Divine Liturgy could not be celebrated at the Holy Church of St. John in the Old City of Jerusalem due to the current renovation works, but it was celebrated instead at the Holy Monastery of the Saint by the bank of the River Jordan. The Monastery has been renovated after the destruction of the 1967 war, under the supervising of the Master of Ceremonies Archimandrite Bartholomew, with the funding of the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Sarantaron Mount Archimandrite Gerasimos.

The Liturgy was led by the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of St. Gerasimos of the Jordan Archimandrite Chrysostom with co-celebrant Archdeacon Mark, while the chanting was delivered by Archimandrite Eusevios, and the Choir Leader and Patriarchal School teacher Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos with the help of the School students. The Service was attended by many faithful who honoured the memory of “the greatest man born of a woman”.

After the Divine Liturgy there was a reception with fasting food by the Care taker of the Monastery Archimandrite Bartholomew.

From Secretariat-General

THE ICON OF THEOTOKOS IS RETURNED AT THE METOCHION

On Wednesday morning, August 23/September 5, 2018, on the Apodosis of the Dormition of Theotokos, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at Theotokos' Tomb in Gethsemane. Then the Hegoumen of the Shrine Most Reverend Archbishop Dorotheos of Avela led

the Procession carrying the icon of the Dormition in front of his chest. The Procession was escorted by Priests in their liturgical vestments, monks, nuns and many pious Orthodox faithful, while the Choir Leader of the Patriarchate Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos and his choir delivered hymns of the Dormition.

The Procession went past the Holy Shrines of St. Stephen, St. Anne, the Praetorion, At. Charalambos, Sayda Naya and the forefront of the Patriarchate Headquarters. There, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the Hagiotaphite Fathers venerated the icon. The Procession then marched towards the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and concluded at the Metochion of Gethsemane opposite the Holy Sepulchre. The sacred icon was placed there in thanksgiving hymns to the Theotokos and her Son, and will remain at the Metochion until the Feast of the Dormition next year.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday August 15/28, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Dormition of Theotokos at her Tomb in Gethsemane.

For this Feast the Church teaches that the Theotokos slept in the Lord in a natural death, but she was taken up in heaven both in soul and body, and was placed at the right hand side of her Son, where she has become the first human of the triumphant Church and intercedes unceasingly for those who ask for her help in reverence and piety.

The Divine Liturgy for the Feast was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitans Isychios of

Kapitolias and Timotheos of Bostra and Exarch of the Holy Sepulchre in Nicosia, the Most Reverend Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, and Demetrios of Lydda, the visiting Most Reverend Bishop Cyril of Erythra from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Deacons, and visiting Priests. The choir was led by the choir leader of the Patriarchate Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos with the help of Archimandrite Demetrios, while the service was attended by a large congregation and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"On Thine honoured Dormition now, all the Heavens are jubilant, and the hosts of Angels exceedingly rejoice, as all the earth maketh mercy, singing dirges to thee in joy, Mother of the Lord of all, O thou all-holy Virgin Maid, who hast not known man, who hast truly delivered all the race of fallen mankind from the sentence passed on our forefathers long ago"; the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims,

Today "the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven," (Hebrews 12:23) is jubilant along with the earthly Church, on the festal commemoration of the sacred Metastasis of our Lady the Most Glorious Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary; therefore together with Archangel Gabriel exclaims in joy "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1:28); "rejoice O vessel of the divinity; rejoice thou who alone hast delivered the earthly things unto heaven; rejoice O thou who after childbirth art virgin, and who after death art living, do thou, O Theotokos ever save thine inheritance". And the hymn writer says: "He that strangely dwelt in thine immaculate

womb when He became incarnate, the Same received thine all-sacred spirit and gave it rest in Himself as a Son beholden to His Mother. Wherefore, we praise thee, the Virgin, and supremely exalt thee unto all the ages”.

Indeed the Theotokos is the one who is living after death. And this is because her natural death was a death that actually brought life, a death that introduced her to the glory of the true life of her Only Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Interpreting this paradox event, St. Cosmas the hymn writer says: “the bounds of nature are overcome in thee, O immaculate Virgin”.

In other words, the natural biological death of the Ever-Virgin Mary could not cause any corruption of her God-receiving body, but on the contrary, it became – according to St. Cosmas – , “a passage to an everlasting and better life”.

And according to St. John Damascene, it had to be so, for the One who hosted in her womb God the Word, to dwell in the divine dwelling places of her Son...it had to be so, for the One who preserved her virginity during labour, to preserve her body incorruptible after her death (Speech 2 on the Dormition).

During this time of thanksgiving the sacred Tomb of the Theotokos calls all of us who have indiscriminate faith, to draw nigh and partake of the divine gifts from the “spring of gleefulness”, namely the Theotokos, according to St. John Damascene.

“ Every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isaiah 55:1).

Once again my dear brothers and sisters, the Tomb of the Theotokos in Gethsemane calls us through the words of St. John Damascene which say: “I called upon all, through the gospel;

the one that thirsts for the healing of his illness, for freedom from the passions of his soul, for the redemption of his sins, for deliverance from all kinds of calamities, for the repose in the kingdom of heaven, let him draw nigh unto me in faith, and take upon himself the path of grace which has great power and many uses” (Speech 2 on the Dormition).

Come therefore, all ye faithful, who are gathered here from near and afar, let us entreat the Most Blessed Theotokos, the immaculate Ever-Virgin and say along with the hymn writer: “Graciously receive from us this funeral hymn, O Mother of the Living God, and overshadow us with thy divine and light-bringing grace; grant victory to our hierarchs, peace to the people that loveth Christ, and forgiveness unto us that sing, and the salvation of our souls”. Amen.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen Most Reverend Archbishop Dorotheos of Avela offered a reception to the clergy and many of the congregation at the hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General

THE LAMENTATIONS OF THE THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, August 14/27, 2018, the Service of the Lamentations of the Theotokos was held at the Tomb of the Theotokos in Gethsemane.

This service is perhaps unique in the Orthodox Church, and preserved by the Typikon of the Church of Jerusalem and Mother

of Churches.

For this Service, the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood marched down Via Dolorosa, headed by its Hegoumen, His Beatitude and our Father the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

After arriving at the Hegoumeneion, His Beatitude's welcome reception took place at the courtyard of the Church of the Dormition of the Theotokos, as the Priests who were dressed in their liturgical vestments chanted the hymns of the Dormition under the lead of the Choir Leader of the Patriarchate Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos.

After the veneration of the Theotokos' Tomb and the icon of the Theotokos on the south side of the Tomb, His Beatitude put on His Patriarchal vestments, the Archbishops and the Priests did likewise, and having taken the Epitaph of the Theotokos in the middle of the Church the Service of the Lamentations with the 3 stases began.

At the end of the Lamentations, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Theologos of Serres delivered a Sermon, then the Eulogitaria, the Praises and the Doxology were chanted and His Beatitude with the Archbishops venerated the Epitaph. The procession of the Epitaph at the entrance of the Church followed, and a special prayer was read. Finally the procession of the Epitaph returned at the south side of the Church, to be followed by veneration and dismissal. The Service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos.

Once the Service was over, the Hegoumen Most Reverend Archbishop Dorotheos of Avela offered a reception for the Patriarchal entourage and many faithful at the Hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General

THE CATHODE OF THE ICON OF THE THEOTOKOS TO GETHSEMANE

On Saturday morning, August 12/25, 2018, there was the procession of the cathode of the icon of the Theotokos to Gethsemane.

As known, this icon of the Dormition of the Theotokos is kept throughout the year at the Metochion of Gethsemane, opposite the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

After the All-night Vigil, the procession of the cathode of the icon began at 5.00 in the morning. The icon was carried by the Hegoumen of Gethsemane Most Reverend Archbishop Dorotheos, as the procession headed down Via Dolorosa, with the participation of Archbishops, Priests, monks, nuns and a large crowd of pilgrims, under the hymns by the choir leader Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos, with the help of monks. The procession stopped for special prayers before the Holy Monasteries of Praetorion, St. Anna and St. Stephen while the choir was singing the hymns of the Dormition.

When the Procession reached Gethsemane and after a special prayer at the Tomb of the Theotokos, the icon was placed behind the Tomb for veneration and the Divine Liturgy, led by Archiandrite Paissios followed the Great Canon of the Theotokos.

After the Divine Liturgy the Hegoumen Most Reverend Archbishop

Dorotheos offered a reception to the Priests and the pilgrims at the Hegoumeneion above the Church.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday August 6/19, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Holy Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ. With this Feast the Church celebrates the commemoration of the narrative by the Evangelists according to which, forty days before the Lord's Passion, He went up Mount Tabor and was transfigured in front of His chosen disciples, Peter, James and John. This means that He appeared to them in His divine glory and His face was brighter than the sun, while a bright cloud overshadowed Him and Moses with Elijah appeared next to Him, conversing with Him, and the voice of God the Father was heard saying: "this is my beloved Son, hear ye him" (Matt. 17:1-9, Mark 9:1-9, Luke 9: 28-36).

The Feast was celebrated;

1. On Mount Tabor, where this incident occurred.

There, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated Vespers and the All-night Vigil outside.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Archbishops of the Throne, Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Methodios of Tabor, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, while participants in prayer were the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and visiting Priests from other Churches. The right choir was led by Mr. George and the Most Reverend Archbishop Methodios and Metropolitan Joachim, while the left choir in Arabic was led by Archimandrite Philotheos. The service was attended by a great crowd of pilgrims from many Orthodox countries.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation;

“Christ took Peter, James, and John, into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And there appeared Moses and Elias talking with Him. And a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said: This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him” the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Pilgrims,

Our Lord Jesus Christ “Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment” (Psalm 104:2), has gathered all of us from the ends of the world to this sacred Mount Tabor, in order to celebrate His luminous Transfiguration and become participants of the light of Tabor.

“O changeless Light of the Light of Thine unbegotten Begetter, today, O Word have we now seen in Thy Light’s manifestation, the Father and the Holy Spirit as Light on Tabor, guiding with light all creation” the hymn writer says. This very changeless Light shone upon Christ’s face during His Transfiguration on this sanctified place, according to the witness of Apostle

Matthew: "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him" (Matthew 17:1-3).

Answering the question "what is transfiguration, what do we mean when we say that Christ was transfigured?" St. Chrysostom says that Christ allowed His disciples to see only as much from His divinity and glory as they could bear.

St. Gregory Palamas, referring to the teaching of the established God-bearing Fathers says; everybody is able to taste of the joy of the transfiguration's Light. And this is so because the Light of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ's Transfiguration is a foreteller of the future brightness of the chosen ones; "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt.22:14) says the Lord.

St. Gregory Palamas says that this Light was seen "by the first called of the Apostles – as you hear in the hymns of the Church – who saw the very essence of God's ever-unending strength...the brightest illumination of the original beauty, this kind of the divine beauty without form, through which man is deified and becomes worthy of conversing with the divine, this ever-unending heirless kingdom of God, this unapproachable light, a light heavenly and boundless, timeless, ever-unending, a light radiating incorruption, God's light to the deified...one grace of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit, which was made visible even to the physical eyes..."

The Light of Tabor, my dear brothers and sisters, can be known by the pious faithful through humility and the perfect love in Christ. The Saints of Christ's Church became participants of this experience. This was also accomplished by the martyrs of the Church, through the love in Christ and the unceasing pure

prayer. St. John of Damascus says that the mother of prayer is silence, and that prayer is the manifestation of the divine glory. In other words, when we secure our senses and be alone with ourselves and with God, and having become freed from the turbulence of the outside world, we come to ourselves, then we are able to see very clearly the kingdom of God within us. Because "the kingdom of heaven" which is the kingdom of God, "is within us" the Lord says (Luke 17:21).

The indeed paradox and marvelous events that took place during the transfiguration of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, refer to the mystery of the divine providence, whose climax is His Passion on the Cross and His resurrection from the dead.

Let us hear the hymn writer saying; "Before Thy Cross, O Lord, a mountain became like unto Heaven, and a cloud spread out like a tabernacle. When Thou wast transfigured and the Father bear witness to Thee, Peter with James and John were present, for they also were to be with Thee at the time of Thy betrayal; so that having seen Thy wonders, they might not be afraid at Thy sufferings, which may we be counted worthy to worship in peace, for Thy great mercy's sake".

In other words, another purpose of the manifestation of the divine glory, of the power of the Lord, was to reveal the forthcoming illumination of the resurrection. This is what Apostle Peter witnesses at his second epistle by saying; "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Peter 1:16-18).

Through his personal and true witness, Apostle Peter calls all

of us who honour the commemoration of the Holy Transfiguration of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to become heirs of the uncreated light of His glory. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:3) St. Paul says.

Let us therefore say along with the hymn writer: "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36:9). Deem us worthy of Your illumination Christ our God, by the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and those of Your Holy Disciples, Peter, James and John and of the Prophets who saw God, Moses and Elijah and of all the Saints. Amen".

After the Divine Liturgy His Beatitude blessed the grapes and the various seeds according to the custom.

On the day of the Feast the Divine Liturgy at the Monastery was officiated by the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, with many co-celebrant Priests from the neighbouring areas and the participation of a very large congregation.

At noon, the Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Hilarion offered a meal with fish and grapes for the Patriarchal and the Episcopal entourages.

2. In Ramallah

In the morning of the Feast, the Holy Transfiguration was celebrated at the Palestinian city of Ramallah, in the centre of which lies the Patriarchate's Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration.

The Divine Liturgy was led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, with co-celebrant the Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Galaktion and Priest Jacob, with a large congregation attending the service.

After the Divine Liturgy the Hegoumen Archimandrite Galaktion and the Community Council offered a meal to the Episcopal

entourage and others.

3. At Gethsemane

Likewise there was an Episcopal Divine Liturgy at the Sacred Shrine of Gethsemane, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia.

From Secretariat-General

DEACON'S ORDINATION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday night to Tuesday August 1/14, 2018, subdeacon George Hader from the Baramki family was ordained a Deacon, by Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina.

The ordination took place according to the decision of the Holy and Sacred Synod, chaired by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the prospect of the forthcoming ordination of Deacon George to Priest, in order to serve as a ministering Priest at the Cathedral of St. James the Brother of God.

The Archbishop who performed the ordination addressed the ordained as follows;

“Reverend subdeacon Fr. George (Hader),

Following the proposal of the Priests, Vestry men and of the Presidents of the Orthodox Institutions of the Cathedral of St. James the Brother of God and First Hierarch of Jerusalem, and by the blessing and approval of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the Holy and Sacred Synod, the Grace of the Holy Spirit calls you today to accept the first degree of Priesthood, that of the Hierodeacon.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Mother of Churches, has appreciated your morality, character, the Christian upbringing you have received from your parents, your excellent Secondary Education, your Higher education at the University of Bethlehem, your Theological education at the Russian Orthodox University of St. Tychon in the U.S.A., your knowledge of the Greek language after your studies at the University of Thessalonica, your honest love for Christ and the Church and your work as a teacher of Religion at the Russian School of Bethany.

This hour is indeed great and sacred, because the sacrament of the Priesthood is being held simultaneously with the sacrament of the Divine Liturgy, and more especially, as these take place at the Horrendous Golgotha, where Christ shed His blood for the remission of our sins, and at His Life-giving Tomb, where He was buried and risen from the dead.

Accepting this sacrament, you will have the grace to enter the Holy Altar, to minister the Priests and Archbishops until the time for your becoming a Priest comes, and you should minister in a spirit of sacrifice and offering according to the Orthodox teaching, at the historic parish of St. James' Cathedral.

You should thank God for this calling and gift, and consider thoroughly the great responsibility that you undertake; appreciate the trust that the Church puts on you and pray

fervently, so that by the placing of the Archbishop's hands on your head, the Holy Spirit will come down on you and make you a vessel of the Grace of the Holy Trinity, in order to always please both God and the people.

Be sure that at this hour, you are accompanied by the prayers of your parents, your wife, your relatives, of Fr. Farah and the congregation of St. James and of all those who honour you with their presence here."

With the coming of the Holy Spirit and the prayer of the deacon's ordination, the Archbishop dressed the ordained with his liturgical vestments and the people hailed "axios" in great joy.

After the dismissal of the Divine Liturgy the ordained offered a reception at the Office of Geronda Sacristan for those who honoured him, the Archbishop who ordained him, the co-celebrant Priests, his parents, wife and relatives, who wished him to please both God and the people.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF ST. IOANNIS THE NEW HOZEVITE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday July 28/August 10, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of Saint Ioannis the New Hozevite at the Holy Monastery of his repentance and ascesis, ever since his arrival from his country Romania.

Having been distinguished in ascetic striving, writings of spiritual strengthening and having been glorified by God through many signs, and healing of illnesses, Saint Ioannis was canonized a Saint by the Church of Jerusalem in 2015.

On Thursday night there was an all-night vigil in his honour, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis. The choir was formed by Mr. Leonidas Doukas, choir leader of the Holy Metropolis Iliou, Mr. Gregorios Zarkos, choir leader of the Holy Metropolis of Pireaus, Mr. Christos Stavrou, choir leader of the H. Church of St. Paraskevi in Attiki, and Mr. Dionysios Thanasoulis, left choir singer of the H. Church of Faneromeni in Holargos, Attiki, while the service was attended by many faithful who prayed in contrition.

The Hegoumen of the Coenobitic Brotherhood and renovator of the Holy Monastery Archimandrite Constantinos addressed His Beatitude upon His arrival as follows;

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

With Your Reverend Entourage,

Today, for one more time we celebrate the commemoration of St. Ioannis the New Hozevite, one of the myriads of the Holy Ascetics who turned the desert of Judea into a marvelous spiritual paradise.

Today’s honoured Saint of the Lavra of Hozeva, despite having completed his earthly life in solitude, had had full cognition of the problems of his time, and could also foresee things in the future.

He writes in his epistle “The contemporary Babel Tower”; “Today’s Babel Tower is neither a stone-building nor a building made of bricks, but the impetuous pursuit of new

inventions. People say that the invention of new devices and weapons make man's life easier, and provide him with security, in other words, they protect him. How deceitful this opinion is! We see all this time, that since our world became 'modern' and the inventions multiplied, wickedness also multiplied. ...Nowadays, despite the progress of the civilization, the world has become more turbulent and desperate than ever before. As we see, this progress and fashion have taught people to walk naked, in other words it has driven away their sense of shame. It has taught people not to seek God any more. ... Science has become rich, while faith has become poor. The contemporary civilization has shortened men's clothes, and made people cut short their beards and hair. After that, it has made them abolish their Holy Tradition! In short, with this villainous progress in which the world boasts, the tears have multiplied more than ever, the cemeteries have become bigger due to the wars, the horizon has darkened by the smog of the engines, the sky has been filled with huge "fowls" with the iron beak which are ready to kill people".

The aforementioned description records the tenebrous condition of the time we live in with an amazing trueness.

Nevertheless, filled with optimism by the Divine Grace, the Saint writes in November 1952 the bright hope he foresaw in the future of the Jerusalem Church. And foreseeing the future, he wrote in his metaphorical poem "The granite castle of Hozeva";

"Today, however, in the Holy Land, a new tender plant blossoms, stemming from an ancient root, which springs up through the thorns"!

Your Beatitude Father and Master,

Welcome!

Let us begin the Feast!"

His Beatitude addressed the Congregation as follows;

"But the righteous live forever and their reward is with the Lord; the Most High takes care of them. Therefore they will receive a glorious crown and a beautiful diadem from the Hand of the Lord, because with his right hand he will cover them, and with his arm he will shield them"(Wisdom of Solomon 5:15-16). [The righteous live forever and their reward is at the Lord's hands; The Most High takes care of them. For this reason, from His hand will they receive the glorious Kingdom of Heaven and the Royal crown on their heads, because the Lord will overshadow them with His right hand and He will protect them from their enemies] according to wise Solomon.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble pilgrims,

The sacred commemoration of God's luminary, our Father among the Saints Ioannis the New Hozevite, has gathered all of us in this sacred Church, where he had ministered the Lord for several years, so that we glorify the Name of the One Who glorified him, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Since the prime of his youth, our Father among the Saints Ioannis loved Christ with all his soul and mind, hearkening to the Lord's Gospel words; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37).

In order to reach this goal, he followed the ascetic path of monasticism, the path of righteousness that leads to the Kingdom of Heaven. And he chose the desert of the river Jordan to be the place of his striving, as well as the unwelcoming caves of Brook Chorath, the Monastery of Saints George and Ioannis the Hozevites, where a multitude of Saints and righteous men received the divine light, according to the psalmist; "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Psalm 97:11). Commenting on these

words, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "He has dawned [sown] instead of dawns [change of tense]. The divine light dawns on the mind and heart of every single pious and righteous man".

This very divine and noetic light dawned in the mind and heart of our Father among the Saints Ioannis. "Therefore he will receive a glorious crown and a beautiful diadem from the Hand of the Lord" (Wisdom of Solomon 5:15). And this divine and noetic light dawned in the mind and heart of St. Ioannis, not only during his earthly life, but also during his heavenly life, as his incorrupt relics witness before our eyes, giving out the fragrant scent of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Behold therefore, why the wise Solomon says; "the righteous live forever and their reward is with the Lord" (Wisdom of Solomon 5: 15), while Prophet David urges us saying; "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Ps. 55:22). Likewise St. Peter says; "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

In other words, my dear Brothers and Sisters, the righteous in Christ is the one who by his "perfect manner of living" reaches the "likeness of God" according to St. Basil the Great, or "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephes. 4:13) according to St. Paul. Righteous is the one who reaches deification, in other words, his perfection in Christ, not only by his own power, namely his own free will, but also with the cooperation of the Divine Grace.

Referring to the new life in Christ, St. Paul says; "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephes. 4:24). This "new man" did our Father Ioannis put on, "who has been created after God".

Today's commemoration of our Father among the Saints Ioannis calls us to consider our Christian name. To consider the fact

that our faith has been built on righteousness and holiness of truth: "I am the way the truth and the life" (John 14:6) the Lord says.

In other words, putting away the old man of sin is not enough; we should put on the new man of the grace of the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul orders by saying; "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:12-14).

Having applied these God-inspired orders of St. Paul, St. Ioannis became indeed "a light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Luke 1:79), to the people of our contemporary era of confusion, where – according to the foreseeing words of our Holy Father "man himself is preparing again to build the Tower of Babel on earth, seeking to destroy the foundations of the "Divine Law". Almost all of the tongues [languages] have been established and the hour of conflict will not delay much longer".

Therefore let us entreat our Holy Father Ioannis the New Hozevite who dances with the Angels on high, and has become a luminary and friend of Christ, so that he may intercede for us along with our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, for the salvation of our souls and the prevailing of peace in our tested region. Amen."

After the spiritual and sanctifying feast of the Divine Liturgy there was a hospitable monastic meal.

From Secretariat-General