### THE EPITAPH SERVICE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Good Friday night, March 24/April 6, 2018, the Epitaph Service took place at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and all Monasteries of the Patriarchate.

This contrite and modest service was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrant Hagiotaphite Archbishops of the Throne and the Most Reverend Mark of Serbia, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and visiting Priests from other Churches.

The canon of Holy Saturday was sung at the beginning of the service.

Then the Patriarchal Entourage came out of the Catholicon and went up to the Horrendous Golgotha via all the Shrines outside the Catholicon at each of whom there was a stop with a special prayer.

Then the 7<sup>th</sup> Gospel of the Holy Passion was read, which narrates the Lord's Cross (Mat. 27:33-54), and there was a special prayer followed by veneration.

After the narrative, four Archbishops took the silk corporal which symbolizes the body of Christ, and placed it on the slab of the Holy Deposition, having completed three circles around it, and the Patriarch read the Gospel of Deposition, according to St. John.

This was followed by the procession three times around the Holy Sepulchre, with the Archbishops holding the silk corporal, and after the procession the silk corporal representing the Body of the Lord was placed on the slab of the Holy Sepulchre.

At the end of the procession, the three stases of the Epitaph Lamentations began;

- 1. "Thou who art the Life wast laid in a tomb o Christ..."
- 2. "It is right to magnify Thee, Giver of Life..."
- 3. "Every generation, 0 my Christ, offers praises at Thy burial..." with the Patriarch offering incense while at the previous two stases the incense was offered by the Archbishops according to their ranking place.

Before the evlogitaria the sermon of the day was delivered by Geronda Secretary-General, Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina as follows;

Sermon of Geronda Secretary-General

Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina

At the Epitaph Service on Holy and Great Friday

(24 March/6 April 2018)

Your Beatitude Father and Master,

Reverend chorea of Hierarchs.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece,

Devout clergy,

Noble pilgrims,

God in His philanthropy honoured man, when in the beginning He brought him into "being", created him according to His image and likeness and placed him to live in the world "considering it to be quite good". When man embezzled his gift of free will, and was led to his fall and corruption, then

God, by His ineffable philanthropy honoured man again. He offered man "prosperity" through His Only Begotten Son, in Whom He was well pleased. At the end of times He sent Him in the world and He became man, incarnate, by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, taking upon Himself our human nature with its irreproachable characteristics; hunger, thirst, toil and death, namely the separation of the soul from the body.

The One Who was born in Bethlehem during the reign of Caesar Octavius Augustus, Who lived in Nazareth and was called Jesus of Nazareth, was associated with the people, taught them love as a manner of living, even love for the enemies, fed the hungry, cured the incurably sick, resurrected the dead, called "the least ones", the homeless and the prisoners His brothers — "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Mat. 25:40) — had compassion on man, healing the sick even on the day of Sabbath, for as He said, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). Those wounded by sin and despised by society were to Him worthy of healing, restitution and salvation. He taught that He did all these deeds according to the Will of His Father, from Whom He came forth. At the High Priest's question "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" (Mark 14:61), He boldly answered "I am" (Mark 14:62). The people considered these words a blasphemy (Mark 14:64). They did not see the God-man in Jesus the Nazarene, but a person who "being a man, made Himself God" (John 10:33), therefore, they bound Him with ropes and sent Him to Pontius Pilate the Governor, who in a trial-parody delivered Him to them, in order to be crucified. Having derided and smitten Him down, they crucified Him in Golgotha, the place of skull, while the whole creation was lamenting and trembling with fear.

At the good will of the Father, Christ willingly accepted this death, again revealing the fullness of His love for man "to give his life a ransom for many" (Mat. 20:28),

"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2), "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). According to the Apostle of Nations, Paul the Great, "with the blood of His cross, Christ reconciled the two worlds, God's Israel and us the nations (Gentiles), the sons of the Covenant and us, who at that time were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, and made us all one new man" (Eph. 2:11-17). "That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. 3:6).

Having suffered dispassionately as God, and died as man on the cross, Christ descended into Hades and looked there also for the sheep that was astray. As the Orthodox hymnology chants, "When Thou didst descend unto death, O Life immortal, then didst Thou slay Hades with the lightning of Thy Divinity...and Thou didst raise the dead out of the nethermost depths". "Thou didst abolish death by Thy Cross; Thou didst open Paradise to the thief". "Thou stood before those in Hades, calling aloud to them, enter again into Paradise". "Thou hast despoiled Hades, and wast not tried thereby, and Thou hast opened for us the Paradise of old". As the Godbearer Father of the Church St. John Damascene says, "He descended into Hades, with a deified soul, and having released those who had forever been bound there, He was instantly revived from the dead, leading the way to our resurrection" (Publ. Orthodox Faith, 73).

The event of Christ's Life-giving Cross and His burial in God's body does the Church celebrate this venerable evening of Holy and Great Friday, before the dawn of Holy and Great Saturday; the Church that has been gushed forth from His pierced side. It celebrates not in a spirit of a weeping lamentation for His death, but in a spirit of a modest hopeful

chant of the epitaph, foreshadowing the feast of the Resurrection.

At this Feast, let St. John Damascene from the Lavra of St. Savvas seal the word by saying the following about the Cross; "Every deed and wonder of Christ is great and divine and marvellous, but most wondrous of all is His Cross, through Which death has been abolished, Hades has been despoiled, resurrection has been granted, our nature sat at the right side of God, we have become sons and heirs of God... the Cross has been given to us as a sign on our foreheads, a shield and trophy against the devil, dissuasive of all evils, cause of all good things, refutation of sin, plant of resurrection, wood of life eternal. This sacred wood, on which Christ gave Himself a sacrifice for us, is worshiped as truly venerable since it has been sanctified by the contact of the holy body and blood, and likewise, worshiped are the nails, the spear, the garments and the sacred places where He abided, which are the manger, the cave, the Golgotha of redemption, the lifegiving tomb, Zion, the acropolis of the Churches" (Pub. Orthodox Faith, 84).

The Mother and "acropolis of the Churches", the guardian of the Divine Shrines, under its Head and Officiator of this Feast of the Epitaph, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, wishes to its congregation on all parts of the earth and to the noble pilgrims that honour it, the strength of our Lord, Who was crucified in the flesh and suffered the termination of His life in the flesh as a mortal King, and the delight of the light of His Resurrection. So be it.

The service continued with the "evlogitaria", praises, readings, intercession and dismissal. The return to the Patriarchate was done under the mournful bell tolling.

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## GOOD FRIDAY VESPERS — DEPOSITION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Good Friday evening, March 24/April 6, 2018, the Hagiotaphites went down St. James the Brother of God staircase and venerated the Horrendous Golgotha, without wearing any ornaments, and His Beatitude was wearing only one engolpio.

The Great Vespers of Good Friday followed, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrant Hagiotaphite Hieromonks with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios. The right choir was led by Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the left by Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos, who sang the contrite troparia of the day, inspiring the large crowd of pilgrims who attended the service.

At the end of Vespers the Patriarchal Entourage venerated the Horrendous Golgotha and returned to the Patriarchate, waiting for the night Epitaph Service.

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### THE ROYAL HOURS OF GOOD FRIDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

The Royal Hours of Good Friday were read on Friday March 24/April 6, 2018, at the Patriarchate, according to the Typikon order of the Church and the Status Quo of worship of the Patriarchate.

Early in the morning, the Royal Hours were read at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers.

Then the Greek Orthodox faithful opened the gate of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre under the lead of Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos, according to their right to go there in procession from the Patriarchate.

At the Holy Monastery of Praetorion, the prison of our Lord Jesus Christ, after the reading of the Royal Hours, the Most Reverend Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia lifted the cross and started the procession through Via Dolorosa, followed by a large crowd of pilgrims.

When the procession reached the Holy Courtyard, His Eminence spoke to the pilgrims on the life-giving cross of Christ.

Then the Royal Hours were read again at the Horrendous

Golgotha, where many pilgrims venerated the place where our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified for our salvation.

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## THE SERVICE OF THE HOLY PASSION

In the evening of Holy and Great Thursday, March 23/April 5, 2018, the Service of the Passion took place at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The Service was led by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, reading the first Gospel narrative, while the rest of the Gospel narratives were read by the Most Reverend Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina and Isidoros of Hierapolis, the Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Archimandrites Nectarios, Sergios, Mattheos, Stephen, Bartholomew, Polykarpos, Dionysios and Hierodeacon Eulogios.

The right choir was led by the choir leader of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Archimandrite Aristovoulos and his helpers, and the left choir by Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos, who chanted the Matins of Good Friday. The service was attended by representatives of the Greek Consulate and noble pilgrims from Greece, Cyprus, Russia, Romania and other Orthodox countries.

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### THE SERVICE OF THE WASHING OF THE FEET AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Holy and Great Thursday morning, March 23/April 5, 2018, after the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great at St. James Cathedral, the Service of the Washing of the Feet was held, in commemoration of the washing of the disciples feet by our Lord, during the Last Supper, as a perfect example of humility to both them and us.

This Service was held at the Holy Courtyard of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, according to the Status Quo of Worship and the Typikon order of the Jerusalem Patriarchate.

During the service His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiating, washed the feet of twelve Hagiotaphite Archimandrites, symbolizing the twelve apostles. The service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and the Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel Mr. Caesar Martjie among a large congregation of faithful who stood by the Holy Courtyard, on the roof yards of the Metochion of Gethsemane,

the Monastery of Abraham, St. James Cathedral and the Holy Church of Saints Constantine and Helen.

At the end of the Service the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate in hymns and bells tolling.

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## THE SACRAMENT OF THE HOLY UNCTION

On Holy and Great Wednesday evening, March 22/ April 4, 2018, the Sacrament of the Holy Unction was held at the Holy Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, to strengthen the faithful in the face of the Holy Week and Easter. The Service was led by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with co-celebrant Hagiotaphite High Priests.

Before dismissal and as the Choir leader of the Holy Church Archimandrite Eusevios was chanting psalm 137, His Beatitude, the Bishops, the Archimandrites, the monks, the nuns and the pilgrims were being anointed, asking from each other forgiveness and wishing Happy Easter.

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# THE 1ST SERVICE OF THE BRIDEGROOM AT THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

On Palm Sunday evening, March 20/ April 1, 2018, the  $1_{\text{St}}$  Service of the Bridegroom of the Holy Week was held at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The Service was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrant Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Hierodeacons, Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios and others. The choir was formed by the choir leader Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the Patriarchal School of Zion students.

His Beatitude spoke to the noble pilgrims of the Holy Week and Easter on the Bridegroom, being the Saviour of our souls.

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### PALM SUNDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Palm Sunday, March 19/ April 1, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the triumphant entrance of our Lord Jesus Christ in Jerusalem, sitting on a young ass, when the children of the Hebrews welcomed Him holding palm tree branches and crying out loud, "Hosanna to the Son of David".

The commemoration of this event was celebrated:

### 1. In the Evening

According to the Typikon order and the Status Quo, the Festal Vespers of the Parresia was held on the eve of the Feast at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrant Archbishops at the Holy Altar, and co-officiating Hieromonks, with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark and other Deacons. The right choir was led by Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the left by Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos in Greek; the service was attended by a noble congregation of pilgrims.

### 2. In the Morning

On Palm Sunday morning the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at

the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, officiated by H.H.B. the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with cocelebrants the Most Reverend Archbishops Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Demetrios of Lydda and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, and visiting Archbishops from other Orthodox countries, Hieromonks, among whom Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark and other Deacons. The right choir was led by Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the left by Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos; the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and a large noble congregation of pilgrims.

After the Divine Liturgy there was a Procession three times around the Sacred Edicule and around the Shrines, safeguarding our right for the second guard by the Angel's stone.

The Gospel narrative followed, and then the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters. There, His Beatitude spoke to the noble pilgrims of the Holy Week and Pascha, wishing them a Blessed Holy Week and Happy Easter, filled with spiritual blessings from their pilgrimage.

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### THE PALM TREE BRANCHES PROCESSION FROM BET-FAGHE

On Lazarus Saturday afternoon (18.00), March 18/31, 2018, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos blessed the palm tree branches at the Holy Monastery of Bet-Faghe. Then the traditional — since the first Christian years — palm tree branches procession began from this Monastery, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa.

The procession from Bet-Faghe marched through the valley of Gethsemane, with final destination the Holy Monastery of St. Anna, entering the Wall through St. Stephen Gate, also called the Lions' Gate, in commemoration of the triumphant entrance of the Lord in Jerusalem, sitting on a young ass.

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### THE CELEBRATION OF LAZARUS'

### RESURRECTION PATRIARCHATE

AT THE

On Saturday March 18/31, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the rising from the dead of Holy and Righteous Lazarus by the Lord. Lazarus was the Lord's friend according to the narrative of St. John the Evangelist (John 11:1-46), by which the Lord resurrected Lazarus, whom He loved dearly, and He cried before his tomb in Bethany "giving us an assurance of the common Resurrection before His Passion".

This event was celebrated;

### 1. In Bethany

At the town of Bethany and at the Holy Monastery of Lazarus' sisters Martha and Mary, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and the Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the visiting Bishop Savvas from the Church of Serbia, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark and other Deacons. The choir was formed by choir singers from Cyprus and the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, and a large congregation of pilgrims from all Orthodox countries, Russia, Ukraine, Serbia, Romania, Greece and Cyprus.

His Beatitude preached the Divine Word to this congregation as follows;

"Before Thine own death, O Christ, Thou hast raised from hell Lazarus that was four days dead, and hast taken the dominion of death. Through this one man whom Thou hast loved, Thou hast foretold the deliverance of all men from corruption. We therefore worship Thine almighty power and cry: Blessed art Thou, O Saviour, have mercy on us"; the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

### Noble pilgrims

The joy of all people, Christ the truth, the light, the life and the resurrection of the world, has gathered us from the ends of the world, in this sacred place of Bethany, to celebrate the resurrection of Holy and Righteous, and friend of Christ Lazarus, Martha and Mary's brother, who was dead for four days.

According to St. John the Evangelist, Lazarus' sister Mary, is the one who anointed the Lord's feet with ointment, and wiped them with her hair. Her brother Lazarus was gravely ill. So they sent unto Him (Jesus) "saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (John 11:2-4).

This event of Lazarus' rising from the dead took place in Bethany, a little while before the Passion on the Cross and the Resurrection of our Saviour Christ, at the presence of His disciples. And this happened so that there would be "an assurance of the resurrection" as the hymn writer says: "Giving us before Thy Passion an assurance of the general resurrection, Thou hast raised Lazarus from the dead, O Christ our God. Therefore, like the children, we also carry tokens of victory, and cry to Thee, the Conqueror of death; Hosanna in the highest; blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord"

Christ my beloved brothers is the Lord of life and death, as St. Paul says: "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living" (Romans 14:9).

In other words, the death of God the Word, Jesus Christ, is

the one that interprets precisely and answers on the great mystery of corruption and death of our human nature.

And we say this, because Christ's death on the Cross is relevant to the common regeneration of the human nature, namely the "freedom from corruption" of the human nature. For this reason the hymn writer of the Church says: "And Lazarus became the first-fruits of the regeneration of the world".

However, the specific meaning of freedom is not possible to be comprehended, much more so, it is impossible to be understood in a philosophical manner through human logical criteria. It is only in Christ and by Christ that we can comprehend the width and depth of freedom as St. Paul preaches saying: "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57), and in more detail, let us praise God in thanksgiving, for He gives us the victory over death and corruption through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Only the faith in Christ's resurrection allows us to understand the words of St. John the Evangelist who says: "and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4-5). "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19).

By Lazarus' rising from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ revealed His almighty dominion over the world and its corruption. Moreover, He revealed the light of eternal life, namely His resurrection which referred to our human nature that He took upon Himself from the Ever-Virgin Mary the Theotokos. Let us hear the melodist saying: "O Christ, Thou hast raised up Thy friend that was four days dead, and hast made the lamentation of Martha and Mary to cease, showing to all that Thou art He who fills all things by Thy divine power and Thy sovereign will. To Thee the cherubim without ceasing cry aloud: "Hosanna in the highest: blessed art Thou, God over

all: glory to Thee".

As we celebrate today my dear brothers this great and paradox miracle, namely Lazarus' rising from the dead, let us prepare ourselves that by the prayers of the righteous Lazarus we may be deemed worthy to also celebrate the glorious resurrection or our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. Happy Easter.

#### 2. At the Mount of Olives

In the evening Vespers and the Small Compline were held at the Holy Shrine of the Ascension and the Holy Procession towards the Holy Monastery of the Men of Galilee, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, who was welcomed by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Anthimos in this Monastery.

On Lazarus Saturday morning, the day of the feast, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the place of the Lord's Ascension, near Bethany, also led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, with co-celebrants Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the Dean Priest Charalambos Bandur, Archimandrites Sergios, Stephen and Kallistos, and visiting Priests from other Orthodox Churches. The right choir was formed by the choir singers of the Church of the Resurrection and the Patriarchal School of Zion students, and the left by Mr. Rimon Kamar. The service was attended by a large congregation of local faithful and pilgrims.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Episcopal entourage was offered a reception at the Holy Monastery of the Ascension opposite the Shrine, by the caretaker of the Monastery Monk Achilios.

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