

THE FEAST OF THOMAS SUNDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

The feast of Thomas Sunday was celebrated by the Patriarchate according to the Typikon order and the Status Quo of worship on Sunday April 2/15, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

On this Sunday the Church commemorates Thomas' good unfaithfulness, which was changed by his faith when eight days after His Resurrection, he saw the Resurrected Lord, and put his hands on the wounds of the nails and said : "My Lord and my God", according to Gospel narrative (John 20:19-31).

The feast was celebrated:

1. In the evening at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with Vespers, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the participation in prayer of Hagiotaphite Archbishops and co-celebrants at the Service the Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, and Archdeacon Mark. The right choir was led by Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the left by Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos, while the Service was attended by faithful from Jerusalem and pilgrims.

At the end of Vespers the Patriarchal Entourage returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters.

2. On the day of the Feast:

On Sunday morning the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, with co-celebrants an Archbishop of the Patriarchate of Russia and the Most Reverend Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Deacons. The right

choir was led by Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the left by Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos, while the Service was attended by faithful pilgrims who have remained in the city since the Easter Feast.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, the Episcopal entourage returned to the Patriarchate under the sound of the Church bells.

There the officiated Archbishop wished the pilgrims the good faith of Apostle Thomas who put his fingers on the wounds of the nails on the Lord's body.

From Secretariat-General

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EASTER MONDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Easter Monday, March 27/April 2018, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, with the participation in prayer of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. The service was attended by Hagiotaphite Fathers, Archbishops, Priests, Monks

and Nuns, and the representative of the Greek Consulate of Greece in Jerusalem Mrs. Katherine Tzima as well as a large congregation of pilgrims. Archimandrite Eusevios led the choir of singers.

After the dismissal of the D. Liturgy the Entourage went singing to the Patriarchate reception hall still dressed in their liturgical vestments. The Paschal brotherly greetings followed and His Beatitude offered Easter eggs to the large crowd of pilgrims.

From Secretariat-General

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THE SERVICE OF THE SECOND RESURRECTION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On the afternoon of Easter Day, March 26/April 7, 2018, the radiant and jubilant Service of the second Resurrection or Vespers of Love was celebrated at the Church of the Resurrection.

The 9th Hour of Easter was read at the Patriarchate Hall while the Patriarch, the Archbishops and the Priests were putting on their Paschal liturgical vestments. The choir leader of the Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the left choir singer Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos were singing the slow melodic Byzantine version of "Christ is risen".

Then there was the official procession to the Church of the Resurrection with the entourage wearing their Episcopal and Priestly vestments, and the excited faithful on either side of the Christian way gave a warm welcome to the procession.

There was a special prayer at the Courtyard of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The Easter Vespers was held at the Catholicon, where the Gospel of love was read in various languages, indicating the Saviour's love towards all peoples and the conveying of the gospel message to the whole world. This is the gospel narrative according to St. John, with the appearance of the Resurrected Christ to His disciples "when it was evening of that day, the first day of the week" and the "a week later..." when Thomas was with them.

After Vespers the Patriarchal Entourage returned to the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood Headquarters.

From Secretariat-General

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THE FEAST OF PASCHA AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Holy Saturday night, March 25/April 8, 2018, at 23.00 (Church time) the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood under His Beatitude and our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos left the Patriarchate in procession towards the All-holy Church of the Resurrection.

In the Catholicon the Canon of Holy Saturday was sung while the Patriarch, the Archbishops, Priests and Deacons were putting on their Paschal liturgical vestments.

The Litany three times around the Holy Sepulchre followed. This dawned the Easter Sunday, March 26/April 8, 2018, and His Beatitude read the Gospel of the Resurrection before the Holy Sepulchre and started chanting "Christ is Risen", accompanied by cheerful repetitions of the large crowd of faithful in their languages, Greek, Russian, Arabic, Romanian and others.

The Matins of Pascha began, singing the Canon of the Resurrection by St. John Damascene "It is the day of the Resurrection, let us be radiant". The Matins was followed by the Divine Liturgy inside the Sacred Edicule, led by His Beatitude, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishops Thophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia, Demetrios of Lydda, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, other visiting Archbishops from the Orthodox countries of Serbia and Poland, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Hierodeacons and many visiting Priests from other Orthodox countries. The choir was formed by the choir leader of the Church of the Resurrection

Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the left choir singer, Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos, while the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and an extremely large crowd of faithful from many nationalities but under one Orthodox faith.

Before the end of the Divine Liturgy, Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina read His Beatitude's Paschal Message (see link: <http://www.jp-newsgate.net/en/2018/03/30/38747>)

and the Paschal Sermon by St. John Chrysostom.

Once the faithful had received the Holy Communion in Paschal joy, there was the dismissal of the service and the entourage of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood returned to the Patriarchate, where at the Epitropikon His Beatitude offered them cheese and Easter eggs along with His wishes.

From Secretariat-General

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THE HOLY WEEK AND EASTER AT

DOHA, QATAR

The Holy Services of the Holy Week and the Radiant Resurrection were held according to the ecclesiastical order and in full participation of the reverend congregation in the Holy Archdiocese of Qatar.

The Services were officiated by the Most Reverend Archbishop Makarios of Qatar, with co-celebrants the clergy of the Archdiocese. A large crowd of faithful from various towns of the Emirate participated in the Holy Communion as well as in the Service of the Holy Unction, in reverence and contrition.

The Services were held in the Greek, Arabic, Slavonic, Serbian, Romanian and English languages for the greater participation of the multi-lingual congregation. The choir singers delivered excellently the hymns and the Lamentations of Good Friday were sung in Greek and Arabic. On Good Friday night and on Holy Saturday night the services were attended by the Consul of Greece in Doha Mr. Ioannis Zelomosidis and his wife.

On Good Friday night the Service of the Epitaph was held in an emotional atmosphere of deep contrition around the courtyard of the Archdiocese Headquarters.

On Holy Saturday night the Holy Cathedral along with its courtyard were tightly crowded with a very large crowd of Christians, who remained until the end of the Divine Liturgy and almost all of them received the Holy Communion.

The Easter Message of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III was read, and then the blessing of the Easter eggs and delicacies concluded the Service.

From the Holy Archdiocese of Qatar

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THE SERVICE OF THE HOLY LIGHT AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Holy Saturday noon, March 25/April 7, 2018, the Service of the Holy Light took place, according to the Typikon order and the Status Quo of worship of the Jerusalem Patriarchate.

His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos left the Patriarchate at 12.00 o' clock/ 13.00 o' clock (summer time) and went down through St. James Cathedral staircase to the Holy Altar of the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Church was tightly filled with pilgrims from the Orthodox countries of Greece, Russia, Serbia, Romania, Cyprus, Ukraine and Poland, and a large crowd of faithful from the other doctrines' delegations, Armenians, Copts, Ethiopians and Syrians, under the extremely strict supervision of the Israeli police.

When His Beatitude entered the Holy Altar, the representatives of the Armenians, Syrians and Copts came to receive His blessing to receive the Holy Light. When His Beatitude and the Priests were dressed in their liturgical vestments, they began the procession three times around the Sacred Edicule, holding candles and chanting "Joyous Light" and "Thy Resurrection O

Christ Saviour”.

At the completion of the third round, His Beatitude removed His Patriarchal vestments and entered the Holy Tomb wearing only the sticharion, where after praying, He gave the Holy Light of Christ’s Resurrection to the thousands of faithful, who received it in great joy, jubilation and exultation, placing it on their faces and hands for their sanctification and glorifying God.

At the end of the Service His Beatitude returned to the Patriarchate, where He gave the Holy Light to the representatives of the Church of Greece, under the Most Reverend Metropolitan John of Liti and Retini and the country of Greece under the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mr. John Amanatidis, along with the Exarch of the Holy Sepulchre in Greece, Reverend Archimandrite Damianos.

From Secretariat-General

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THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION

AT THE PATRIARCHATE

The Jerusalem Patriarchate co-celebrated the Feast of the Annunciation with the Feast of Pascha as it coincided with it on Holy Saturday at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos was also celebrated in Nazareth, in all radiance and with the full participation not only of the Orthodox but of all Christian residents of the city. The feast was officiated by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth.

From Secretariat-General

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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 7th 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, O 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 God-bearer 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 life-giving 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.

From Secretariat-General

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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.

From Secretariat-General

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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.

From Secretariat-General

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