

DEACON'S ORDINATION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday night December 21, 2023 /January 3, 2024, the monk Alexander was ordained a Priest by the Representative of the Jerusalem Patriarchate at the Ecumenical Patriarchate, His Eminence Archbishop Nectarios of Anthedona at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

On Wednesday morning His Beatitude received the newly ordained Deacon and His Eminence to give His blessing, wishes and instructions.

From Secretariat-General

PRIEST'S ORDINATION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday night, December 20, 2023 / January 2, 2024, on the commemoration of the Bishop of Antioch, Saint Ignatius the God-bearer, Hierodeacon Anastasios from the Lavra of Saint Sabbas the Sanctified was ordained as a Priest by the Elder Sacristan, His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Spiritual Father of the Lavra, Archimandrite Eudokimos was present and co-celebrant at the All-night Vigil.

In the morning the newly ordained Priest visited His Beatitude and received His blessing to continue his monastic and Priestly ministry at the Lavra.

From Secretariat-General

THE ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE FATHERS

On Sunday before the Nativity of Christ, December 18/31, 2023 the annual memorial service of the Holy Sepulchre Fathers, Patriarchs, Bishops, Priests, Hieromonks, monks and nuns was held at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Liturgy was officiated by His Eminence Archbishop Dimitrios of Lydda with co-celebrants the Archimandrites Philoumenos, Dionysios, Claudios, Christodoulos, Amphilochios, Stephen and Hierodeacon Eulogios. Hierodeacon Simeon delivered the chanting as members of the Church of Jerusalem attended the service.

H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos presided over the memorial service with co-celebrants the Hagiotaphite High Priests, Hieromonks and Hierodeacon Eulogios.

After the service, the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters and had a reception at the Patriarchate Hall.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM SAINT MODESTOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, December 17/30, 2023, the commemoration of Saint Modestos, Patriarch of Jerusalem was celebrated at the Holy Monastery named after him, at the site on the hill of Abu Tor, separated from the hill of Saint Zion by the valley of Gehenom.

On this day, the whole Church, especially that of Jerusalem, remembers that Saint Modestos was distinguished in the 7th century. He started his monastic striving at the Holy Monastery of Abba Theodosius the Cenobiarch in the Judean Desert.

Successor to Patriarch Zacharias on the Throne of Jerusalem, he renovated Churches and monasteries and proved to be a helper of broken souls, overwhelmed by the fury of the Persian invasion in the year 614. He slept in the Lord as a holy man.

In his honour, in the Holy Monastery named after him, also known as Abou-Tor, Vespers was held in the afternoon by the Archimandrites Christodoulos and Amfilochios and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated on Saturday morning by His Eminence Archbishop Nektarios of Anthedona, under the chanting of Hierodeacon Simeon and the attendance of monks, nuns and faithful Christians from Jerusalem.

During the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos visited the Holy Monastery, accompanied by the Holy Sepulchre Fathers.

The Patriarchal and Episcopal entourages were offered a treat by dedicated monk Antiochos, who is in charge of the Monastery and defends it from the challenges of the ill-behaved people.

From Secretariat-General

MONK'S TONSURE AND NOVICES' CASSOCK BLESSING AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On the 13th/26th of December 2023, in the chapel of the Holy Pentecost in the hall of the Patriarchate, H.H.B our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos held a monk's tonsure for novice Andreas Hatzistabulidis, giving him the name Alexander. The new monk has ministered successfully in Praetorium, Gethsemane and Bethlehem. At the same time, His Beatitude blessed the monastic cassocks for novices Alexander and Christos who have been serving at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

His Beatitude addressed the new monk and the cassock-clad novices with words of encouragement, underlining the honour and the responsibility of a monk's membership in the Order of the "Spoudaioi" (Studios) of the Holy Sepulchre.

In the spirit of these words and in view of the Christmas Feast, His Beatitude wished the monk and the novices for strength from above for a worthy Holy Sepulchre witness to this thirsty world, inspired by the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT SPYRIDON BISHOP OF TRIMYTHUS THE WONDERWORKER AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, December 12/25, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of our holy Father Spyridon, Bishop of Trimythus the Wonderworker, in his holy Monastery, located in the Old City of Jerusalem near the Damascus Gate.

During this feast, the Church commemorates Saint Spyridon as the Father who defended the same essence of the Son to the Father in the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, in 325. He is also commemorated as a helper of the poor and weak. He was gifted with clairvoyance and working miracles, he “spoke to the dead and turned the rosary into gold and during the Divine Liturgy he would concelebrate with angels”.

The Divine Liturgy was presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis with the Archimandrites Christodoulos, Claudius, Amfilochios, Priest Nectarios and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon with the School of Zion students, as the service was attended by faithful people, praying with warmth of heart.

During the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Holy Sepulchre Fathers visited the Monastery for veneration.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Father Philoumenos presented a treat to the Episcopal entourage and

the congregation.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE FOREFATHERS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, December 11/24, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy Forefathers.

On this feast before Christmas, the Church commemorates the Forefathers of Christ in the flesh before and during the Law of Moses, especially the Patriarch Abraham, to whom God gave the good tidings that “all nations of the earth shall be blessed in Thee”.

This feast was celebrated at the marvellous Church of the Holy Forefathers in Beit Sahour, presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, with the co-celebration of the Hegoumen of the shrine Archimandrite Ignatios, and the Priests of the parish, Sabbas Her, Issa Mousleh, Ioannis Rishmawi and George Banoura. The parish Byzantine choir delivered the chanting, as the service was attended by a large congregation and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos.

H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos sent the following Sermon to this congregation:

“He that is full is emptied out in the flesh for our sakes, and a beginning doth He receive Who from before eternity is without beginning; He that is rich becometh poor, and though

He is the Word of God, he reclineth in a manger of dumb beasts as an infant, working the refashioning of all men from the beginning of time" (Matins Dec. 11, Canon of the Forefathers, Ode 5, Theotokion).

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

Dear Christians,

The grace of the Holy Spirit brought us all together today in the so-called holy Church of the Holy Forefathers, in the blessed place of the "shepherds who kept watch at night praising God", to celebrate their holy memory by singing and changing the angelic hymn and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill among men" (Luke 2:14).

The loud-voiced Isaiah, prophesying the incarnation of the Word of God, says: " And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isaiah 11:1). The root of Jesse referred to here, is the root of the abandoned trunk of the tree, of the Jewish people. And this is because Jesse was the father of David, from whom the Davidic dynasty sprang, from which Christ was born.

And Christ is the fulfilment of the Law of Moses and the Prophets, of the sacred history, of the beginning from the Patriarch Abraham as it is written: "Bible of the birth of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham", (Matthew 1,1). This second Bible of the birth of Jesus Christ, since Jesus Christ is the story of the holy revelation, through which God "made known his ways to Moses, His will to the children of Israel" (Ps. 103, 7); on the other hand, " The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen" (Ps. 98,2).

In other words, the Holy Forefathers are those to whom God revealed His will and through them revealed His justice to the nations, i.e. to the pagans: He showed this to the nations", says the interpreter Theodoritos Kyrou. According to the

Evangelist Luke, the prophets are those who foretold the coming of the righteous (Acts 7, 52) as well as the passion of Christ (Acts 3,18). Let us listen to the testimony of the Apostle Peter preaching: " For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3, 22-26).

These words of Saint Peter demonstrate that the prophets, as well as many other personalities of the Old Testament, spoke and announced the child of God, that is, our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Behold, the Virgin has given birth and is giving birth to a son, and you shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14), the Prophet Isaiah exclaims. The prophet David says: " The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Ps. 110,1).

The above prophecies refer to the Messiah Christ, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all the ages and incarnated by the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin. The hymnographer of the Church also proclaims this fact, saying: "Abraham's descendants became divine and most wise Prophets, fervently heralding in the Spirit Him that was to be born of Abraham and of Judah, event eh Word of God" (Matins, Ode 9, Troparion 3). "O ye who love the Father's choirs, let us all leap for joy

today, with songs and hymns let us honour Abraham, Isaac and Jacob...from whom came Christ the Lord...in His exceeding compassion" (Exaposteilarion 1).

Today's celebrated memory of the Holy Forefathers is due precisely to this fact that "Christ the Lord seen in the flesh". Jesus Christ, my beloved brothers, is without genealogy according to the divinity. The generation of Christ according to the divinity is unexplained, Saint Gregory Palamas teaches, saying: "Unexplained, then, is the generation of Christ according to the divinity; it is genealogical according to man, the offspring of man and the son of man suffers to be born as man to save man".

How is it possible to beget the incomprehensible God, Who is without beginning and eternal? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was to God and God was the Word" (John 1:1), Saint John the Theologian says. The Word of God did not have predecessors, and together with His Father, He has the name "above every name and every word", (Cf. Philippians 2:9), Saint Gregory says again when asked: "How is He genealogized?" the one in the beginning "I am", and existing to God and being God, and being God's Word and Son? and having not a Father before Himself, and a name after the Father, who is above every name and every word?"

It is noteworthy that the Holy Forefathers, those enlightened by the Holy Spirit, testify and preach that Christ, as Saint Chrysostom also says, is the fulfilment of the Law and the prophets, the one who fulfils all the Patristic Providence. In this fullness of God's Fatherly Providence, we the faithful participate as members of the body of Christ and His Church. For even Saint Paul commands, saying: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2, 8-10).

Interpreting this word of Paul, Saint Theophilaktos says: "There our (human) nature was united to God and we in Him received communion by nature." Therefore, let us beseech the Holy Forefathers, so that their prayers and the intercessions of the most blessed Theotokos may be honoured to celebrate the metropolis of holidays, the divine nativity of the God of the Word and our Savior Christ in the cave of Bethlehem. Amen. Many happy returns and blessed Christmas."

At noon, a meal was offered.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT NIKOLAOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, December 6/19, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of Saint Nikolaos, Bishop of Mira of Lycia the wonderworker.

On this feast, the Church commemorates Saint Nikolaos as the Father of the Church in the 4th century, "a rule of faith and an image of piety", who participated in the First Ecumenical Council of Nice and defended the one essence of the Son with the Father.

This feast was celebrated:

1. At the town of Beit Jala, at the marvellous Church of Saint Nikolaos. The Divine Liturgy was presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos,

with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina and Theodosios of Sebasteia, Archimandrite Nectarios, the Hegoumen of the H. Monastery of Saint George Al Khader Archimandrite Porphyrios, the Priests Boulos, Yusef and Elias and other Priests of the area and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The Service was attended by the full congregation of the town, the representative of the Greek Consulate General in Jerusalem Mrs Constantina Gyftou, and the representatives of the Palestinian State, Mr Houloud Dagiebes and Mr Riyad Hananie, and the Hegoumen of Beit Jala Archimandrite Ignatios who was responsible for the organization of the feast.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death” (Ps. 48,14) the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians

Christ's Hierarch, Nikolaos the Bishop of Mira in Lycea has gathered us all in his Church, at the biblical town of Beit Jala to celebrate his sacred commemoration.

The Holy Church of Christ rejoices and is glad on the commemoration of its Saint Nikolaos, because he was a great shepherd who imitated the Arch-shepherd Christ, not only around his spiritual jurisdiction but for all the Catholic and Apostolic Church as Saint John of Damascus says. Thou the great shepherd and imitator of Arch-shepherd Christ in all things we implore thee O Nikolaos, from the sacred heights shepherd thine servants, saving all from the hardships of life.

Indeed, our Father Nikolaos became a great shepherd of the

whole Church because he had our Lord Jesus Christ as a prototype; "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep... I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10,11,14-15).

In interpreting the Lord's words, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "Man distanced himself from God's love and was inclined toward sin. For this reason, he was cast out of the holy and divine courtyard, I mean the courtyard of paradise. And because he fell ill from this attitude of the devil, who cunningly cheated man and led him into sin, from which death sprouted, man became a victim of wolves who were indeed bitter and ruthless. But because Christ is the good shepherd for all men, He lay His life for us...and suffered in the Cross for us, so that by death He may abolish death, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Col. 2,14) as it is written".

The holy and divine courtyard is no other than the Church, the earthly paradise, which God granted to us men so that we may have freedom, "which we have in Christ" (Gal. 2,4). "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5,1) Saint Paul urges us. The Son and Word of God became the First Shepherd "For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand" (Ps. 95,7) the psalmist proclaims. God appointed Apostles and teachers to the Church (c.f. 1 Cor. 12,28), the successors of whom are the Bishops, sustained by the Holy Spirit, and they pastor the Church of Christ (c.f. Acts 20,28).

Saint Nikolaos was such a Bishop and shepherd, a successor of the Apostles and shone in the Church. His active participation in the First Ecumenical Council of Nice in AD 325 against the heretic teachings of Areus made Saint Nikolaos a "rule of

faith" and "protector of the Church" as his hymnographer says: "A fervent protector art thou of the whole Church of Christ, most boldly destroying the ungodly teachings of all the impious heresies; and a rule of Orthodoxy wast thou to all men, interceding for all them that follow thy teachings and godly admonitions, O most merciful Nikolaos" (Matins, Kathisma 5).

The blessed Nikolaos, as the hymnographer says, "was sanctified as a great initiate of the divine Grace of God" (Kontakion), because he kept the divine commandments and worked righteousness at all times, just like the psalmist says: "Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times" (Ps. 106,3). Behold, therefore, why Saint Nikolaos was called a wonderworker.

Our Father Nikolaos did not write any writings because the Gospel of Christ was written in his heart, and he kept a clear consciousness of the mystery of faith (c.f. 1 Tim. 3,9). God shone in Nikolaos' heart the light of the knowledge of God's glory in Jesus Christ (c.f. 2 Cor. 4,6) as Saint Paul preaches. Moved by the enlightening power of God's glory, Saint Nikolaos became a shepherd of the Ecumenical Church and a teacher of Orthodoxy, that is, of the doctrines of truth, as the hymnographer says: "Going about amidst the beauties that eye hath never seen, thou didst perceive that glory which is awesome and fearful; wherefore, thou, O holy of holies, dost tell us the heavenly oracles of those eternal and true visions seen on high, O most sacred Hierarch Nikolaos" (Praises, Troparion 3).

In other words, my dear brethren, the Shepherds of the Church are the instruments of the Holy Spirit and they have been appointed with the care of the Churches, while Christ is the First Shepherd, that is why Saint Peter says: "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist

steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1 Peter 5,7-9).

The God-bearing Nikolaos, who had visited the holy land of Palestine, calls us to this cause, to remain steadfast in the faith that we have received from our God and Saviour Jesus Christ through His holy

Apostles and their successors, the holy God-bearing Fathers of our Church. This faith is no other than the great mystery of the Divine Providence, the Incarnation of God the Word, and His condescension toward the humble and feeble humanity, which took place at the Grotto of Bethlehem.

This means that God is close, near us, as the psalmist says, "Thou art near, O Lord; and all thy commandments are truth" (Ps.119,151). And elsewhere, according to the prophet Jeremiah, "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?" (Jeremiah 23,23). This God, Who is near, is the Sun of Righteousness and the God of peace, born of the Father without seed and became incarnate from the Virgin at the end of times.

Yes, my dear brethren, our neighbouring Bethlehem is preparing to receive in its cave the Saviour and Redeemer of the world, from the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Mary and Most Blessed Theotokos. Let us also prepare the "cave" of our hearts to receive the God of love and peace in the Holy Spirit. And along with Saint John of Damascus let us say: "To thy servants' hymns incline O Benefactor, bring low the haughty pride of the adversary; O Blessed One, that lookest down and seest all; Keep us above sin, whoever sing Thy praises, steadfast and unmoved on the foundation of faith" (Christmas Matins, Ode 3, 2nd Rule, Heirmos). [In other words, Lord, the benefactor Who sees everything in our lives and are truly blessed, consent to Your servants' hymns. Humble our pride enemy the devil and lead us who praise You to rise above sin,

keeping us steadfastly on the foundation of faith]. Amen. Many happy returns and a blessed Christmas!”

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a procession inside and around the Church.

A meal was offered at noon, which the Priests and carers of the Church attended.

2. The feast was also celebrated at the Holy Church of Saint Nikolaos in Jerusalem near the Patriarchate.

Great Vespers on Monday afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on Tuesday Morning were officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolias, with the co-celebration of the Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, Archimandrite Claudius and Priest Nectarios. The chanting was delivered by His Eminence Archbishop Dimitrios of Lydda, Archimandrite Christodoulos and the Patriarchal School of Zion students. The Services were attended by many faithful Christians and representatives of the Greek Consulate General in Jerusalem.

After the Divine Liturgy, the renovator and good keeper of the Church Archdeacon Mark hosted a reception for all at the Hegoumeneion and the courtyard of the Holy Church.

From Secretariat-General

THREE-DAY CELEBRATIONS AT THE HOLY LAVRA OF SAINT SABBAS THE SANCTIFIED

From Sunday, December 4th / 17th 2023 to Tuesday, December 6th / 19th 2023, the celebrations of the Holy Lavra of Saint Sabbas the Sanctified took place. The Lavra is located on the right bank of the Brook Cedron, which leads to the Dead Sea.

This Lavra was founded by Saint Sabba as a Monastery for the hesychast monks. The Saint came to the Holy Land from Mutalaski in Cappadocia in AD 456 and apprenticed for twenty years to the saints Theoktistos and Euthymius the Great.

In this Lavra, the Saint directed thousands of monks to the life and salvation in Christ. He was distinguished as a fosterer of the monastic life, and after his compatriot Saint Theodosius the Cenobiarch, they steadfastly supported the doctrine of the two natures of Christ at the Fourth Ecumenical Synod of Chalcedon in AD 451. In the Monastery, his holy relic, returned from Venice in 1965, is preserved incorruptible. His Lavra was the beginning and prototype of hesychastic ecclesiastical life and the typicon of its Liturgical texts is used in all Orthodox Churches to this day.

For the celebrations, the High Priest of this year, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis went to the Lavra to officiate the Feast of Saint John of Damascus and Saint Barabara the Great Martyr at the chapel dedicated to Saint John of Damascus on Sunday, December 4/7, 2023.

The main feast of Saint Sabba the Sanctified: On Monday December 5/18, 2023, the All-night Vigil was presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Holy

Sepulchre Hieromonks and Priests from the Bethlehem and Galilee districts. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and the Monastery Fathers on the right in Greek and by a Byzantine choir from Bethlehem on the left in Arabic, as the Vigil was attended by local faithful Christians.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon before the Holy Communion:

“I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore, my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Ps. 16,8-10), the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Having become a vessel of the Holy Spirit, our Holy Father Sabbas has gathered us all in his blessed Lavra to celebrate his holy commemoration.

The God-minded Sabbas became a peer of the angels and dweller with the saints in the heights by the power of the Holy Spirit that was given to him. And this is so because like David he would say: “I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved” (Ps. 16, 8). According to Saint Cyril of Skythopolis, our Holy Father Sabbas was predestined by God since the time he was in his mother’s womb, and had been foreknown before his body parts were formed, just like the Prophet Jeremiah: “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jeremiah 1,5).

In his holy calling, Saint Sabbas went through all the steps of the ladder of virtues, joining the holy and the righteous

saints of God of the monastic life, the citizens of the desert and great teachers of Palestine, Theodosius, Euthymius, Theoktistos and others. The striving Sabbas among the distinguished citizens of the desert would always pay heed to the words of the psalmist: "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Ps. 103, 17-18).

Through the keeping of God's commandments, both in words and actions, Saint Sabbas "crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5,24) and gained the virtues through which God received him in the divine heavenly courts according to the saying: "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts" (Ps. 65,4). And the soul of the righteous man of God was not left in hell; neither did he see corruption (c.f. Ps. 16,10).

Behold, therefore, why Saint Sabbas was counted among the holy and the righteous men of God and was called "sanctified". He strove in every kind of asceticism, worked miracles, and surpassed everybody in perseverance. The true witness of this is his incorrupt and fragrant relic before our eyes.

In this relic, of Saint Sabbas the sanctified, we see the new man, who has put on Christ and has become a new creation according to God's will, so that we may live among people in righteousness, devotion, and holiness toward God. These virtues are the fruit of the truth of the Gospel, as Saint Paul urges: "Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4,24).

Interpreting these words of Paul, Zigavinos says: "The corrupt life is built in the devil...while the good and virtuous life is built in God, as God has created and made it legitimate". In other words, losing the image of God in us had as a result the

sin and misery of the fallen man. When we put on the new man, then the divine image which we have lost is restored in us, and this restoration is the Godly beauty of the soul, the glory and the holiness of the new man.

It is noteworthy that the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, which enlightened our Holy Father Sabbas, has been extended to the ends of the world, therefore, he is recognized as an Apostle and preacher of the Gospel of truth: "Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Romans 10,18), Saint Paul preaches, referring to the psalmist.

This is also confirmed by his biographer, Cyril of Skythopolis, who writes: "An angel on earth and a heavenly man, the wise Sabbas became a great teacher, defender of Orthodoxy and accuser of false doctrines, he became a faithful and prudent steward, multiplying the divine gifts, clad in power from on high by the goodwill of God the Father with the help of Christ and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he inhabited the desert with a multitude of monks and founded seven monasteries in it".

The Holy Church of the Orthodox Christians, especially the Church of Jerusalem, honours today the God-bearing Father Sabbas the Sanctified, who has boldness before Christ God. We honour him not only as a citizen of the desert but also as a fighter for the mystery of Providence. Let us entreat him, along with the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, to grant us peace for our souls, our tested region and the whole world. May we also celebrate the blessed Nativity of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ in the holy city of Bethlehem. Many happy returns!"

The Vigil was followed by a monastic meal.

Blessing the Fathers and accepting the thanks from them and their Spiritual Father Archimandrite Eudokimos, His Beatitude

returned to Jerusalem.

The feast of Saint Sabbas was also celebrated at the chapel dedicated to him inside the Holy Monastery of the Archangels in Jerusalem. The Divine Liturgy was officiated by Archimandrite Claudius and Priest Nectarios, in the presence of nuns and faithful Christians.

The feast of Saint Barbara the Great Martyr was also celebrated at the chapel dedicated to her inside the Holy Monastery of Saint Nikolaos in Jerusalem, with Vespers on Saturday afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning, led by Archimandrite Claudius and co-celebrated by Archdeacon Mark, who continues the renovation of the Church. The services were attended by faithful Christians from Jerusalem.

For the feast of Saint Nikolaos, at the Church dedicated to him, the first of the Lavra which is “built by God” according to Cyril of Skythopolis, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated on Tuesday, December 6/19, 2023, led by His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, at the presence of faithful Christians. After the Divine Liturgy, there was a memorial service for the repose of the Lavra’s departed Fathers, before Saint Sabba’s Tomb and above the cemetery.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR CATHERINE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday, November 25/December 8, 2023, the feast of the holy glorious martyr Catherine the All-wise was celebrated by the Patriarchate in her Holy Monastery, located a stone's throw northeast of the Patriarchate.

During this feast, the Church is reminded and strengthened in its faith in Christ, commemorating that Saint Catherine came from Alexandria, the daughter of Constus, "virgin, beautiful, chaste and glorious in wealth and birth and education". Saint Catherine, "constant with her mind, conquered the passionate soul of Maximinus, tyrant of Alexandria, and through her eloquence, she silenced the idolatrous orator and was crowned with the crown of martyrdom around the year 305 AD". For these reasons, after her baptism, she was called the Bride of Christ.

Her memory was celebrated in the above-mentioned Monastery with Vespers on Thursday afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on Friday morning, presided over by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, and Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks, the first of whom was the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nektarios and the Archimandrites Claudius and Amphilochios, Fr Nektarios and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon, Mr Angelos Gianopoulos and the Patriarchal School students, as the service was attended by monks, nuns and laity from Jerusalem, as well as members of the Greek Consulate General in Jerusalem.

After the Divine Liturgy, the good keeper of the Monastery, Hegoumen Archimandrite Stephen hosted a reception for the

Episcopal entourage and the congregation at the Hegoumeneion and the courtyard of the Monastery.

The feast of Saint Catherine was also celebrated at the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem was represented by the Exarch of Athens Archimandrite Raphael unlike previous years when a delegation from the Patriarchate was sent over, due to the ongoing hostilities in Gaza.

From Secretariat-General