

THE ANGLICAN BISHOP REV. SOUHEIL DAWANI VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE WITH A GROUP OF BISHOPS & PILGRIMS

On Thursday noon, August 2/15, 2019, the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem Most Reverend Souheil Dawani visited the Patriarchate, escorted by a group of the Anglican Church Bishops from various continents and a group of Anglican pilgrims.

The exquisite group was warmly received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers. His Beatitude welcomed and informed the guests for the mission of the Patriarchate and the cooperation relations it holds with the Anglican Church in England and elsewhere.

His Beatitude also added the role of the Patriarchate for the preservation of the religious and Christian character and Status Quo of the Old City of Jerusalem.

Thanking Him, Bishop Souheil Dawani stressed the good relations of the Patriarchate with his Church, as it is made clear by the meetings of all the Churches at the Patriarchate by the care of H.H.B. and the Mass Services that the Anglicans hold by the permission of the Patriarchate at the chapel of the Monastery of Abraham next to the Horrendous Golgotha and on their Christmas Eve at the chapel of St. George next to the Basilica in Bethlehem.

Finally, His Beatitude offered souvenirs from Jerusalem as blessings to the members of the group.

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM AWARDS THE JOPPA SCHOOL GRADUATES WITH THEIR SCHOOL LEAVING CERTIFICATES

On Saturday evening, June 23/ July 6, 2019, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos awarded the "Archangel Michael" Joppa School Graduates with their School Leaving Certificates. His Beatitude was escorted from Jerusalem by the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos, the Patriarchate Representative for the Arab-speaking M.M. Priest Issa Mousleh, Archdeacon Mark, and from Joppa the Most Reverend Archbishop Damascene of Joppa and the Priest of Joppa Fr. Constantine.

The Graduation Ceremony was well organized and took place at the School building which belongs to the Patriarchate well before 1948. The building was used for a while by the Israeli army but has again been returned to the Patriarchate.

The Graduation ceremony included a parade of the seven School Graduates, each one escorted by their mother, the address of the Manageress of the School Mrs. Natzla Hanhan, who stressed the good education offered to the School students, which enables them to continue their higher education and have a good career, and also mentioned the material and moral support of the Patriarchate to the School. The ceremony also included addresses from the School students, one in Arabic, one in

English and one in Hebrew. In the, the students thanked their teachers and parents for their twelve-year support in their education.

The ceremony also included Arabic dances and traditional Arabic songs, bouquet offering to the students' mothers, honorary distinction to the teachers who showed professional educational consciousness in their work, handing over the baton to the final year high school students of the next school year and raising the flag of the School.

The ceremony came to an end with the address of H.H.B. read by Presbyter Father Issa Mousleh, accompanied by a financial offer to the School and was sealed by the award of the title to each one of the Graduates with the wishes "congratulations," "good luck", "good career".

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM AWARDS THE RAMLEH SCHOOL GRADUATES WITH THEIR SCHOOL LEAVING CERTIFICATES

On Saturday evening, June 16/29, 2019, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos visited the School of the Greek-Orthodox Community of Ramleh, the ancient

Arimathaea of Israel, escorted by the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, the Hegoumen of Ramleh Archimandrite Niphon, the Hegoumen of Fuheis, Archimandrite Ieronymos, Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos and Archdeacon Mark.

This town is currently inhabited approximately by seventy thousand citizens of Israel and Palestinians who did not immigrate in 1948.

The Community of the town founded a School in 1990, during the Patriarchal Office of memorable Patriarch Diodoros, with the moral and financial support of the Patriarchate.

His Beatitude visited the School for the Graduation Ceremony of the 24 male and female graduate students.

The ceremony included entertaining students' acts, the addresses of the Manageress Mrs. Ihlam Mahoul, of the President of Jamaeye Mr. Fayz Mansour, of the Israeli Mayor of the town and of His Beatitude. His Beatitude's address was read in Arabic by the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella and was followed by the awarding of each one of the students with their School Leaving Certificates, expressing the warm wish for their Academic and Professional success.

From Secretariat-General

THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL

AFFAIRS OF HUNGARY VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday evening, May 22/ June 4, 2019, on the eve of the Apodosis of Pascha, the Minister of Social Affairs and vice Minister of Human Resources of Hungary Mr. Zoltán Balog visited the Patriarchate, escorted by the representative of Hungary in Ramallah Dr. Mihail Rada Csaba and his associates.

The representatives of Hungary were received by His Beatitude and Hagiotaphite Fathers.

In this meeting His Beatitude and the Minister recalled the days of His Beatitude's visit in Hungary and the financial aid of Hungary for the renovation of the roof of the Basilica of Bethlehem and of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre and underlined the need to support the principles of the Christian Civilization and the persecuted Christians especially in the Middle East.

This initiative has been undertaken and promoted by the country of Hungary and wishes to continue it with the cooperation of the Churches.

In remembrance of this visit and the expression of the support of Hungary for the flock of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, His Beatitude offered the Minister an icon of the city of Jerusalem.

From Secretariat-General

THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM PARTICIPATES AT THE SEMINAR OF THE IMPERIAL ORTHODOX PALESTINIAN SOCIETY

On Thursday afternoon, May 3/16, 2019, a Seminar under S.V. Stepashin, Chairman of the district and foreign departments of the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society, took place at Sergei Hotel which is adjacent to the Russian MISSIA of the Moscow Patriarchate, on the occasion of the two-hundred-year anniversary of the diplomatic support of the Russian presence in the Middle East. Sergei hotel was seized in 1948 by the State of Israel and has been recently restored to the jurisdiction of the Russian Church.

In this Seminar the Patriarchate was represented by the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Secretary-General, who read the following address of our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos;

“Mr. Chairman,

Respected Members of the Council,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Christ is risen!

We greet you with the joy of this Paschal season with the greeting that is also the triumph of our Orthodox faith. From this Holy City of Jerusalem, the light of the resurrection has spread to the whole world.

We welcome this seminar as you meet in Jerusalem. You meet at a time when our Christian witness is so important in support of the Christian presence in the Holy Land and the Middle East, and when the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate is playing a leading role in promoting deeper relationships among the Christian communities here. Such deepening relationships are crucial for the well-being of a vital, vibrant Christian presence.

The Patriarchate is also promoting important interfaith dialogue, and above all we are maintaining the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious character of Jerusalem and the Middle East.

The Church of Jerusalem, which is the Mother of all the Churches, is the guarantor of the unity of the Orthodox Church. We acknowledge especially the role that the Russian Orthodox Church has played down the centuries, and especially during the Ottoman period, in supporting the Church of Jerusalem politically, diplomatically, and of course, financially. But we need to acknowledge that there were also difficult times that tested our relationship; we must learn from them and work towards strengthening our Orthodox unity.

In the spirit of our Orthodox unity, we must learn from the past. We must always speak and act in ways that support the life and mission of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in this region. We are the one, holy catholic and apostolic Church, and we are under a moral as well as a spiritual obligation to ensure that the identity and witness of the Orthodox Church in the Holy Land and the Middle East rests on the unshakable foundation of our Orthodox unity.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to His Excellency the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, for his material support for the restoration of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, and for his unwavering support for the mission of

the Patriarchate.

We wish you, Mr. Chairman, and this seminar, every success in your deliberations, and we look forward to hearing about the fruits of your deliberations.

Christ is risen!"

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM RECEIVES A GROUP OF GREEK SUPERIOR MILITARY OFFICIALS

On Saturday morning, April 28/ May 11, 2019, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos received a 50-member group of Greek Superior Military Officials, with their pilgrimage guide Army-Priest George Apostolakidis.

On behalf of the group, former Minister of Public order and citizen protection and Chief of National Defense General Staff Mr. Xinofotis expressed his feelings for the pilgrimage experience they had with Fr. George and his thanks for His Beatitude's welcoming reception.

In reply, His Beatitude blessed the members of the group and stressed the importance of the Holiness of Jerusalem as it has been washed by the blood of our crucified Lord Jesus Christ and the importance of the Patriarchate as the guardian of such a holy land.

Paying their respects, the retired Military Officials received His Beatitude's blessing along with an icon of Theotokos and of the Holy Sepulchre.

From Secretariat-General

THE CEREMONY OF THE SCHOOL LEAVING CERTIFICATES FOR ST. DEMETRIOS' SCHOOL GRADUATES

The ceremony of the school leaving certificates for the graduates of the Patriarchate School of St. Demetrios, took place on Friday afternoon of the Bright Week, April 20/ May 3, 2019.

The Patriarchate kept the Priest's School under that name too, until the year 1970, when it was moved to the building of the Holy Zion at the Monastery of the Holy Trinity.

In the year 1988, the memorable Patriarch of Jerusalem Diodoros founded in the same building of the School for Priests a Nursery School, a Primary School, a High School and Lyceum, with the name St. Demetrios, for the children of the Arab-speaking flock. Since then, the School has been operating successfully, offering a high standard education. This year, with the aforementioned ceremony the Patriarchate honoured the 15 Lyceum graduates.

The ceremony was honoured by the presence of H.H. Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, Who was escorted by the Greek Consul Mrs. Katherine Tzima, the Most

Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Dragouman and Chairman of the School Board Archimandrite Mattheos, the Dean Priest Issa Musleh, and Mr. Ode Kawas, the Financial Director of the Arab speaking School of the West Bank.

The ceremony began with the on stage presentation of the 15 graduates, with the prayer "Christ is risen" "Our Father" and the Palestinian and Greek anthems.

Then the School Manager Mr. Samir Zananiri spoke about the School activities during the school year 2018-2019 and about the building renovations at the classrooms. A Greek dance performance by three young pupils followed, and of three nursery school pupils, Palestinian traditional dances, then the addresses of the students' representatives in the Arabic, English and Greek languages, which referred to their education at this School of the Patriarchate in the City of Jerusalem, with thanksgiving to the Patriarch, their teachers and parents.

The ceremony was sealed by His Beatitude's address, which stressed the importance the Patriarchate attributes to the education of the youth in these schools and at the end of the address, the School offered His Beatitude a thank you board.

Finally, His Beatitude and the School Manager gave the School Leaving Certificates to the 15 graduates, wishing them every success and a prosperous career.

From Secretariat-General

CERTIFICATE AWARDS AT THE PATRIARCHATE SCHOOLS IN JORDAN

On Wednesday evening of the Bright Week, April 18/ May 1, 2019, the ceremony of the School leaving certificates of the Patriarchate Schools in Jordan, namely "Patriarch Diodoros" of Madaba, Fuheis and Zarka, took place at the reception hall of the Cultural Centre in Amman.

H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos honoured the ceremony with His presence, as He came from Jerusalem escorted by the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Most Reverend Archbishop Christophoros of Kyriakoupolis and the Dean Priest Issa Mousleh.

The well organized ceremony began with the national anthem of Jordan.

The entrance of the 144 graduates of the four Schools followed, at the presence of the Manageress of the Schools of Jordan Mrs. Souheira Betjali, the School Teachers, the parents and other relatives of the graduates, and then there was the welcoming speech by the Priest Sotirios Halassa.

The Manageress of the Schools Mrs. Suheira Betjali spoke as well, and referred to the contribution of the Patriarchate and the work of the teachers for the creation of a high standard educational work at the Schools of the Patriarchate.

A song by a Zarka School teacher followed, as well as addresses in the Arabic, English and French languages by the students-representatives of the Schools and performances of ethnic dances and songs. Near the end of all the above, His Beatitude's address followed, read by Fr. Issa Musleh.

Having concluded, the ceremony ended with the handing over to each of the students their school leaving certificates by His Beatitude and the Manageress of the Schools, with the wishes to have every success in their lives and a good career.

On this occasion, the Manageress of the Schools Mrs. Suheira Betjali offered His Beatitude a very nice omoforo and epitrahilio and the ceremony ended with the national anthem of Jordan.

From Secretariat-General

PASCHAL VISITS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, April 17/30, 2019, the Heads of the Christian Doctrines visited us at the Patriarchate, first the Franciscan Brotherhood – Custody of the Holy Land, then all other Churches and Communities, the Latin Patriarchate, the Eastern Churches, Syrians, Copts, Ethiopians, Protestants, Lutherans and others.

His Beatitude addressed the Custody of the Franciscan Brotherhood as follows;

*“Your Paternity, dear Father Francesco,
Your Eminences,
Your Graces,
Beloved Members of the our Respective Brotherhoods,
Dear Fathers,*

Christ is risen!

We welcome you, dear Father Francesco, and your Brothers, to our Patriarchate and we thank you for your greetings to us in this joyous season of light and life. This is the time of rejoicing, as we sing;

Rejoice, O peoples, and be glad.

An angel sat upon the stone of the tomb;

He himself proclaimed the glad tidings unto us saying:

Christ is risen from the dead, the Saviour of the world, and he has filled all things with fragrance.

Rejoice, O peoples, and be glad.

(From Matins of Bright Week)

As we keep this Paschal celebration, we do so in a world that has seen, in the last six weeks, the evidence of hatred and violence against a synagogue, churches, and mosques in three different countries. This rash of violence against places of worship at the holiest time of the year for the three Abrahamic traditions is a cause of deep concern, and in the light of the resurrection we are compelled to affirm our condemnation of all violence against religious groups. Attacks on places of worship are particularly grievous, and there can be no justification for such acts of brutality against those who have gathered for worship.

For according to the Gospel of Saint John, we read this warning. "Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think by doing so they are offering worship to God" (John, 16:2).

The cycle of the great feasts here in Jerusalem and the Holy Land are a reminder to the world that everyone is embraced here. The great feast of Easter is not a cultural phenomenon of one group, but a declaration that light and freedom come from the empty tomb, and that life does not stop here: there is an eternal dimension to life and the human person.

Easter is the great inclusive feast par excellence. It is not a private matter, but it has a deeper meaning and a deeper mission to reveal the fundamental unity of the human family in a common destiny.

The feast of Easter, is therefore, the answer of God to the violence and despair of the world. For by raising our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, God the Father has brought to an end the enmity that divides the human family.

This Holy City, and we who live and minister here, along with the countless pilgrims who have been with us for this holy season, are living evidence of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. By our diakonia and our witness, the world may see and know the new life that is born at Easter – a new life that is open to all without distinction. For as we read in the Gospel of Matthew, our Lord Jesus Christ says;

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Matt. 18:20).

May God grant to you dear Father Francesco, the members of your community, and the communities that you serve, the joy of this new life.

Christ is risen!

Thank you”.

His Beatitude addressed the Heads of the other Churches as per below;

“Your Beatitudes,

Your Excellences,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers,

Christ is risen!

We greet you in this joyful season of Easter, and we thank you for your greetings. This is a time of universal celebration, and we sing these words this week at Vespers in the Orthodox Church;

Going down to those in Hades,

Christ proclaimed the glad tidings, saying:

Take courage, I have conquered now;

I am the resurrection;

*Having destroyed the gates of death,
I shall lead you up.*

(From Vespers, Bright Monday)

As those to whom the pastoral leadership of the Churches and Christian Communities of the Holy Land have been entrusted, we must never lose hold of the courage that comes to us through the resurrection. This is especially important as we see an increase in acts of violence against so many religious groups, but especially against Christians. Such acts of violence and persecution are not confined to certain countries only; Christians face real challenges everywhere.

What are the real challenges? The fact that we testify to the truth of the Gospel. As we read in St. John's Gospel, our Lord Jesus Christ says, "Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice". And Pilate asked Him "What is truth" (John 18:37-38). We have evidence of this truth.

Our witness – our martyria – here in the Holy Land is to this courage that our Lord Jesus Christ gives to us by his resurrection. This is the courage to proclaim a message of peace, reconciliation, mutual respect, and the universal embrace of Jerusalem, where all of humanity finds a home. Fear-mongering, violence, and persecution are the tools of the frightened: love is the response of the courageous.

We live in a world in which the true reasons for faith and belief are distorted and used in a negative way. Radical religious groups use faith for their own ends, rather than for the true freedom that comes from God, and our mission here is to remain faithful to the message of the Gospel that guarantees light and freedom to the human family, for our Lord says, "I am the way, and the truth and the life" (John 14:6).

The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is, at its heart, the ultimate act of a compassionate God who fully sympathizes with our human condition. As we read in the Letter to the Hebrews, "we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). This is the true significance both for the incarnation

and the resurrection, which is itself the crown of creation. Let this holy and bright celebration of Pascha renew us in courage, so that we may be steadfast in our mission in Jerusalem and in the Holy Land. And may it renew us in our commitment to speak with a united voice and with mutual respect and harmony.

May God bless you all and the communities you serve, and may the uncreated light of the eternal Logos, that shines from the tomb, always warm our hearts and illumine our minds.

Christ is risen!

Thank you”.

From Secretariat-General

VISITS OF THE PATRIARCHATE FOR THE EASTER OF THE WESTERN CHURCHES

On Holy Tuesday morning, April 10/23, 2019, the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood visited the Franciscan Brotherhood on the occasion of their Easter Feast and then the Latin Patriarchate.

His Beatitude addressed the Franciscans as follows;

“Your Paternity, dear Father Francesco,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhood,

Dear Fathers,

We greet you warmly today as you celebrate the Easter Feast, and we pray that God will give you the joy of the resurrection. Let us recall the words of Saint John Damascene that we sing in our Orthodox tradition:

*Let us purify our senses and we shall behold Christ,
radiant with the unapproachable light of the resurrection,
and we shall clearly hear him say:*

Rejoice! As we sing the triumphant hymn.

(Troparia from the Canon of Pascha)

Our common mission to be guardians and servants of the Holy Places is never more visible than it is during this festal season, when we welcome so many pilgrims to Jerusalem and the Holy Land for our celebrations of the Holy Week and Easter. The hopes of the world are also turned in our direction, even as we have news of the brutal bombing of churches in Sri Lanka last Sunday. We cannot deny that persecution against Christians is rising around the world, and this only increases the longing of Christians to be united in spirit and in prayer with the Holy Places where the history of our salvation has unfolded.

The Holy Places are also an undeniable testimony to the foundation of our faith, which is the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, as St. Paul says;

“If Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain...But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.”

(1 Cor. 15:14,20)

Our unity of purpose and our close co-operation in this common mission has never been more crucial. It is a source of deep satisfaction to us that our co-operation has born such great fruit in recent years, and has proved to be the guarantee in protecting our rights and safeguarding our mission. The deepening of this unity of purpose and co-operation must always be at the forefront of our attention.

In the great influx of pilgrims every day, we see and hear a profound longing for the deep spiritual springs of life, consolation, and hope. Pilgrims come to the Holy Land not to escape from their everyday reality, but to draw from the Holy Places a fresh inspiration and sense of God's presence, so that they may return home and live more focused and attentive Christian lives.

Such strengthening of the spiritual lives of pilgrims is so important in a world in which we see a disturbing increase in the persecution of Christians. There are two kinds of persecution, of course. There is the obvious persecution, of the kind we see all too often – the persecution of blood, where Christians are killed because of their faith and witness. We join with the world in condemning such acts of violence.

But there are other forms of persecution, and we think especially of the persecution of conscience, where often in countries that boast of freedom and democracy, Christian values are attacked, ridiculed, or held in open contempt, so that Christians are unable to express their views openly in contributing to the building up of a just society.

For all our sisters and brothers around the world who live and worship under pressure, the Holy Places have always been the sweetest inspiration. The Holy Places are also the protection and security of our local Christian communities both in the Holy Land and throughout the Middle East. We have all heard the moving testimonies of pilgrims who come the Holy Land

fearful, exhausted, and in despair, and who leave us filled with new hope because here they have experienced the diving energy that flows from this land of the divine-human encounter.

Máïoç the pilgrims who leave us renewed and strengthened in their Christian lives be our inspiration to be faithful to our own mission. And may our local Christian communities be renewed by the hope that we are given in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May God bless you, dear Father Francesco, and the members of your Brotherhood, as well as the communities that you serve, and may the joy of the Easter Feast be your firm foundation.

Christ is risen!

Thank you”.

At the Latin Patriarchate His Beatitude delivered the following address:

“Your Excellency, dear Archbishop Pizzaballa,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers,

Christos Anesti!

As you celebrate the great Feast of Easter, Your Excellency, along with your clergy and your communities throughout the Holy Land, we greet you with the joy of the Easter Feast. The uncreated Light of life shines from the Holy Tomb, and we sing;

*How life-giving, how much more beautiful than paradise,
and truly more resplendent than any royal palace,
proved your grave,
the source of our resurrection, O Christ.*

(From the Paschal Hours)

In this Paschal season we give thanks to Almighty God for the privilege that we have been given of the pastoral care of the Christian communities that live in the Holy Land, and who call this region our home. It is to those who live here to whom both the blessing and the burden of sustaining the Christian presence in the Holy Land has been entrusted by divine providence, and this is, as we have known through the ages, no easy mission.

Our local communities face many challenges as we work to maintain a vital and prosperous Christian presence here, and our close co-operation is a crucial element in helping our communities to thrive.

But we are sustained, as the First Letter of Saint John says, by "what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life" (1 John 1:1). For the Holy Land is the place of this divine-human encounter, that has given life to the world. Our local communities are living witnesses to this encounter.

We know, too, that the life of the Christian communities of the Holy Land is an inspiration to the rest of the world, and our mission reaches beyond our particular borders. We know that our diakonia here is not for ourselves alone, but for the whole world.

The world comes to the Holy Land to see the physical evidence of our sacred history, and goes away with an inner spiritual renewal. The world comes to us to gaze on stones, and goes

away having glimpsed heaven. The world comes to us to walk on dusty pathways, and goes away having partaken in a heavenly pilgrimage. The world comes to us to venerate the Holy Tomb, and goes away having received from it the divine energy and the light of resurrection.

*As we sing in the Easter service,
Come let us drink a new drink,
not one marvellously brought forth from barren rock,
but the Source of incorruption,
which springs forth from the grave of Christ,
in whom we are established.*

(Heirmos Ode Three from the Canon of Pascha)

Here the thirsty comes, and meets communities of other thirsty souls, and there is a vision of the age that is to come. This is the land of the divine energy that helps us to understand our lives, especially in these challenging times.

May God bless you, Your Excellency, along with your clergy and your communities, and may we, who share a common mission in our beloved Holy Land, share a common joy in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christos Anesti!

Thank you".

From Secretariat-General