

# **VISIT OF THE RUSSIAN-SPEAKING PARISH OF BEER SHEVA**

On Saturday, December 4 / 17, 2022, the ministering Priest of the Russian-speaking parish of the city of Beer-Sheva Alexander visited His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, accompanied by the members of the first Ecclesiastical Committee of the parish, Mr Artemios Gerkovich, Mr Alexandros Vilensky and Mr Alexandros Saintov.

Fr Alexandros invited His Beatitude to celebrate the Divine Liturgy on the parish's annual feast in memory of Patriarch Abraham, which is to take place on Saturday, December 18th / 31st 2022.

On this occasion, the matter of finding a suitable place for the construction of the Holy Church, and other issues concerning the Parish were discussed.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **HIS BEATITUDE HONOURS THE BYZANTINE SINGER VASILIOS PAPADIMITRIOU**

On Friday, December 3/16, 2022, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos received the Most Reverend Metropolitan Timotheos of Bostra, , Exarch of the Holy Sepulchre in Cyprus and honoured Mr Vasilios Papadimitriou, as the Byzantine singer of the Holy Church of the Exarchy of the

Holy Sepulchre in Cyprus with the medal of the Order of the Cross-bearers of the Holy Sepulchre.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE VISIT OF HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP ELPIDOPHOROS OF AMERICA AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

At midday on Friday, November 19/December 2, 2022, the Most Reverend Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, leader of a seventy-five-member pilgrimage group of pilgrim clergy and laity and “Archons” of the Ecumenical Patriarchate visited the Patriarchate.

The Most Reverend Archbishop Elpidophoros of America was warmly received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, welcoming him and his companions as coming from the Queen of the Cities and from the “Great Church in captivity”, as the famous historian Steven Runciman characterizes it and coming to the land, which is holy because it was watered with the redemptive blood of our Saviour Christ on the cross and because it housed the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead, in the Life-Giving Tomb, which the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood preserves like the pupil of its eye.

In response, His Eminence the Archbishop of America thanked His Beatitude for this visit and for the Divine Liturgy, for which arrangements had already been made, to be held next Saturday evening to Sunday, November 21/December 4, 2022, on the Feast of the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple and

the visiting of the Holy Shrines, which the Hagiotaphite Fathers have tirelessly and sleeplessly guarded throughout the centuries, underlining that through this visit the way is opened and widened for the arrival of more pilgrims to the Holy Land, even after the past pandemic, and that through this visit the ever-existing bonds of fellowship and cooperation in Christ of the Church of Jerusalem after the Ecumenical Patriarchate are strengthened.

For this visit, His Eminence the Archbishop of America offered His Beatitude a plaque of the 150 years since the foundation of the Archdiocese of America, and the latter offered His Eminence an Episcopal engolpion, an icon of the Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre and the book of the History of the Church of Jerusalem by Chysostomos Papadopoulos. His Beatitude also gave blessings from Jerusalem to the pilgrims of the group.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE LIGHTING OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE IN TERRA SANCTA**

On the evening of Sunday, November 14/27, 2022, the ceremony of lighting the Christmas tree took place at the “Terra Sancta” Franciscan school inside the Old City and in its inner garden next to Damascus Gate.

This ceremony was attended by the Custos of the Holy Land, Fr Francis Paton, his deputy, Fr Ibrahim Faltas, the Director of the Department of Christian Affairs, Mr César Marjeh, the President of the Supreme Palestinian Ecclesiastical Mission,

Mr Ramzi Khouri, along with a crowd of about 2000 people, greeting the lighting of the tree.

At this ceremony, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos delivered the following address:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. In him was life? and life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness? and the darkness comprehended it not” (John 1:1, 4-5).

Dear brothers and friends,

This light of life rose in the city of Bethlehem from the Sun of Righteousness, that is, of Christ, and shone in the holy city of Jerusalem in the monument of hope, namely of the Resurrection.

And we today, as children of the light of the Sun of Righteousness and the hope of the Resurrection of Christ, bless the lighting of this Christmas tree, praying that this light shines in the hearts and minds of those who hold the world and those who govern our region, so that peace, justice and settlement may reign. “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Cor. 5:19), Saint Paul says.

Many happy returns, a peaceful and blessed Christmas.

**From Secretariat-General**

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**CONCERT OF THE CHOIR OF THE**

# **SERBIAN CHURCH AND THE CHOIR OF THE CATHEDRAL OF SAINT JAMES THE BROTHER OF GOD**

On the evening of Saturday, November 13/26, 2022, a concert took place in the ceremony hall of the Notre Dame hotel, next to New Gate, with the performance of religious Christmas and other hymns by the Branco choir, named after the Serbian poet Branko Radichevich. from the city of Nis, the birthplace of Constantine the Great, under the direction of Mrs Jelena Stojakovic in Greek and Serbian and in Arabic, by the choir of Saint James the Brother of God, under the direction of Mr Rimon Kamar.

This concert was honoured by his presence H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, accompanied by His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina.

The following day, Sunday, November 14/27, 2022, the day of remembrance of the Holy Glorious Apostle Philip, a Divine Liturgy was held in the Cathedral of Saint James the Brother of God, by the Greek-Orthodox Arabic-speaking Community of the Patriarchate, at the chanting of the aforementioned Bronco choir.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE RETURN OF THE ENAMEL PADS**

# **OF THE OVERDOOR OF THE SACRED EDICULE OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE**

On Friday, November 12 / 25, 2022, His Beatitude awarded the medal of the Brigadier General of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre to the Russian pilgrim Mrs Elena Milskaya, for her intense and painstaking efforts, in order to return from Russia the enamel decorations of the door of the Edicule of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, depicting the Risen Lord and the Twelve Apostles.

These decorations are 19th-century art, and they were sent to Russia for conservation twenty years ago. They were removed from the conservationist through the efforts of Mrs Elena Milskaya, whom His Beatitude deservedly praised and honoured with the medal of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, assuring her that her name will forever be remembered in the liturgies at the Holy Sepulchre.

After signing the handover document, these decorations were given to the Elder Sacristan, His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, to place them in their respective positions.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF HUNGARY VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE**

Following the visit of the President of Hungary Her Excellency

Mrs Katalin Novák on November 4/17, 2022 to Jerusalem, the State Secretary of Hungary Mr Tristan Azbej visited the Patriarchate, accompanied by the Hungarian Ambassador to Ramallah Mr Csaba Rada.

The Minister was received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers.

His Beatitude informed Mr Tristan Azbej about the work of the Patriarchate, pastoral, ecclesiastical, about the schools which the Patriarchate selflessly maintains, about the challenges of Christians despite the extreme fanatical elements, those who covet the Christian property.

The Minister expressed his interest in supporting the work of the Patriarchate in the European Union.

His Beatitude thanked Mr Tristan Azbej for his country's financial contribution to the renovation of the Basilica of Bethlehem and the Holy Tomb of the Holy Sepulchre and underlined the need for assistance in the educational work of the Patriarchate for his country and for the European Union and also praised the Ambassador for his work.

The Minister expressed his commitment to the support of the Christians of the Holy Land.

**From Secretariat-General**

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**DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY OF**

# THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, November 10/23, 2022, the Deputy General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (W.C.C.) Reverend Fr Ioannis Saouka, priest of the Romanian Patriarchate visited the Patriarchate, accompanied by his wife, his collaborators, the doctor Mr Odes Kauas, member of the Central Committee of W.C.C. for the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Father Ioannis Saouka was accepted by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos after the Geronda Chief Secretary His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and other Hagiotaphite Fathers.

In the context of this meeting, there was an interesting discussion about the representation of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in the W.C.C. from its foundation and about the role of the Patriarchate in the peace of the churches in general and in the peace of Russia and Ukraine and about the W.C.C.'s support for the Palestinian people and about the W.C.C.'s efforts for the reconciliation of Israel and Palestine and for the elected new General Secretary of the W.C.C. who will fully assume his role from the beginning of the New Year 2023.

Afterwards, Fr Ioannis visited the Library and Archives of the Patriarchate, intending to have a meeting with the President of the State of Israel and the President of the Palestinian Authority for the presentation of the work of the W.C.C.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# MEETING OF REPRESENTATIVES OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AT THE PATRIARCHATE

At 11.00 a.m. on Friday, November 5th/18th 2022, a delegation of diplomatic representatives of about fifty European countries visited the Patriarchate and met with representatives of the local Christian Churches of Jerusalem on matters concerning the Christians of the Holy Land.

These distinguished diplomats, including the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Vlioras, the Consul of Sweden, the Consul of France, the Consul of England and others, were addressed by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos through the following address in English:

“ Your Excellences, Respected Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

We welcome you to this gathering at the Patriarchate, and we wish once again to express our deep appreciation to you for the unfailing attention you give to our concerns and challenges here.

As you are fully aware, essential to our mission as the Churches and Christian Communities of the Holy Land is to ensure the Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The responsibility of serving and stewarding our properties and the Holy Places has been laid on our shoulders, and we take this responsibility most seriously. As we are more and more the target of radical groups in our society, we rely on the help and support of diplomatic, government, and Church agencies to help us in this mission.

It is of vital importance to maintain the historic Status Quo. The Status Quo is the principal historic guarantee, acknowledged by all, that ensures the well-being of the Churches and the Christian communities of the Holy Land. The Status Quo also guarantees the protection of the Holy Places that are the common heritage of the three Abrahamic faiths.

So, we are grateful for your presence here, and we welcome this conversation.

We would now like to invite our colleagues among the bishops to say a few words.”

Each Head of the Church or representative of the Head of a Church expressed thanks for the meeting and informed about the problems faced by Christians.

Mr Austin Tiffany of the ICHOS Foundation also spoke about these problems.

Subsequently, these diplomatic representatives were offered a meal by the Patriarch and the Local Churches at the Imperial Hotel, next to Jaffa Gate, and after this meal they toured the hill of Holy Zion, where the Last Supper and Pentecost took place. The representatives also visited the Patriarchal School and the Cemeteries of the Christian Communities which have been constructed on the hill of Zion since the 13th century, and they were informed about the attacks of radical elements on these Holy Places.

His Beatitude sealed the meeting, saying that we Christians are not discouraged by the challenges of radical elements, as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the surest and most stable guarantee of the stability of maintaining the Status Quo of Jerusalem.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE RECEPTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF HUNGARY BY THE LEADERS OF THE LOCAL CHURCHES OF JERUSALEM

At noon on Thursday, November 4/17, 2022, the Leaders of the Local Churches of Jerusalem welcomed to a reception and a meal Her Excellency the President of Hungary Mrs Katalin Novák in the guest house of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem, which is led by the Most Reverend Hassam Naum. Mrs Katalin Novák was accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defense and the Ambassador of Hungary in Ramallah, Mr Csaba Rada.

At this reception, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos spoke on behalf of the Heads of the Churches through the following address in English:

*Madame President,*

*Mr Ambassador,*

*Your Eminences,*

*Your Graces,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*We welcome you warmly to the Holy City of Jerusalem and to our Patriarchate, and we wish to express our appreciation for your visit. Your presence here is a powerful and important sign of your recognition of and interest in the challenges that the Christian presence and the Churches are facing here.*

*We are thankful for the long-standing and good relationship between the Government of Hungary and our Patriarchate. We are especially grateful for the significant contribution that the Government of Hungary made to the restoration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and we are also aware of the further help that the Government has made to another project under the sponsorship of the Franciscans in Cana of Galilee.*

*We are also appreciative of the ongoing concern that the Government of Hungary has for the well-being of the Christian presence in the Holy Land and in the broader region of the Middle East. All this practical and moral support means so much to the Christian community and to the leaders of the Churches, and we cannot emphasise too much the value that we place on this relationship between the Government and the people of Hungary and the Holy Land.*

*Our role as the Churches and Christian communities of the Holy Land is to serve and protect the Holy Places, among them the principal sites of the Church of the Nativity, which contains within it the site of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Church of the Resurrection, where the sites of the crucifixion and the resurrection are venerated. Our mission in the service of the Holy Places is to ensure the integrity of the religious character of the Holy Land in general, and the Christian character of this region in particular.*

*Recent years and recent events have seen a new and deeper unity of purpose as the Heads of the Churches have worked together. We are united in this common mission. In this regard, it is significant that we are meeting today here at Saint George's, the home of the Anglican Archbishop, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank our brother, Archbishop Hosam, both for his hospitality and for his leadership.*

*As Heads of the Churches, we are doing our best at every level to help Christians remain in the Holy Land, and we are also*

*making every effort to welcome pilgrims, who are once again flocking to the Holy Land in increasing numbers as we move into a post-pandemic world. Both those who live here as well as those who come here on pilgrimage, are close to our hearts, and as Church leaders we never forget the importance of this pastoral and spiritual mission.*

*We wish you success in your mission here, and we welcome you as a pilgrim. MAY God bless you as you move about the Holy Land, and as you carry out the duties of your high office on behalf of the people of Hungary.*

*As a token of our deep appreciation for the commitment of the Government of Hungary to the Holy Land and for all that you are doing here, on behalf of our colleagues and brothers, we wish to invest you with the Cross of the Holy Sepulchre.*

*Thank you.*

On this visit, His Beatitude presented the President with a cross and the other Leaders also offered their gifts.

Her Excellency the President thanked for this honour and promised that her country's interest in the Christians of the Holy Land will continue to be manifested.

The President will visit Holy Sepulchre on Saturday 6th/19th November 2022 in a private visit.

**From Secretariat-General**