

THE GENERAL DIRECTOR OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE OF CYPRUS VISITED THE PATRIARCHATE

At noon on Thursday, March 11th / 24th, March 2022, the General Director of the Ministry of Defense of Cyprus, Mr Andreas Loukas visited the Patriarchate, accompanied by his associates among whom his Deputy Colonel, Mr Ioannis Xanthos

Mr Loukas and his entourage were warmly welcomed by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers.

Joy was expressed from both sides on this visit, which strengthens relations, which have always existed between the Patriarchate and the Cypriot Church and State.

His Beatitude wished the power of God and the protection of the Mother of God for the defence of the island of Cyprus by the military forces.

On this visit, His Beatitude gave an image of the Sacred Edicule and the Theotokos to Mr Lukas, and Mr Lukas offered His Beatitude a silver ship of "Kyrenia", which symbolizes the relationship between Cyprus and Greece and which reminds the illegal Turkish occupation in Cyprus.

Asking His Beatitude's blessings, Mr Lukas left to venerate the Holy Sepulchre.

From Secretariat-General

THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday morning 9/22 March 2022, the Minister of Interior of the Republic of SRPSKA which belonged to Yugoslavia Mr Dragan LuKač, visited the Patriarchate accompanied by his associates Tatjana Telic, Ambassador Duško Kovačević, Mr Eyal Goren and the Manager of the Embassy of SRPSKA in Israel Mr Hana Yona.

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

The Minister expressed his thanks for his welcoming by His Beatitude and described the contemporary situation in his country where a large number of the population is Serbian Orthodox Christians for whose Jerusalem was always in their hearts and dreams.

His Beatitude thanked the Minister for his words, explaining that Jerusalem is the spiritual capital of the whole world, which the Lord sanctified by His own blood and that is why the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood safeguards it like the pupil of the eye. "As guards of Jerusalem, we participate in the struggle of the after-the-war situations. Despite the ongoing territory divisions in your country, it is important to preserve your Orthodox Christian identity".

For this visit, Mr Dragan LuKač offered His Beatitude a hand made embroidery of SRPSKA and thanked Him for His words, while His Beatitude offered him in return a silver painting of

Jerusalem and a cross for his daughter, Miss Helena LuKač and wished him governmental power from above for the completion of his mission, the prosperity of his country in righteousness and truth.

Asking for His Beatitude's blessing, the Minister went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for veneration.

From Secretariat-General

LIEUTENANT GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS MR DIMOKRITOS ZERVAKIS VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Ash Tuesday afternoon, 23 February /8 March 2022, the Lieutenant-General of the National Guard of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr Dimokritos Zervakis visited the Patriarchate, accompanied by his collaborators, Lieutenant Colonel Foukkaris Lukas, Lieutenant Colonel Nikolaos Georgiou, Captain Mr Christos Matsentidis and Lieutenant Commander Mr Andreas Markos.

His Excellency the Lieutenant General and his collaborators were warmly received by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers.

In this meeting, the participants expressed their joy for their return after their last visit in 2016, when His Beatitude told Mr Zervakis "you will return as a leader", which actually happened. The joy of this visit was enhanced by the visit to Jerusalem which has been watered with Christ's blood. Continuous prayers are offered from the Life-giving Tomb for the cessation of war and the comfort and strengthening of the needy, the refugees and all those who suffer in any way.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem incarnates the sacred history and when humanity does not accept the sacred history, it suffers calamities. The Patriarchate has a pastoral and reconciliatory mission. It testifies to the sacred history, the Old and the New Testament. Due to its bond with Cyprus, it prays especially for its liberation.

The Lieutenant-General asked His Beatitude's prayer for strength to successfully complete his mission and departed for his pious visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where he was received by Geronda Sacristan, His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis.

On this visit, the Lieutenant General offered His Beatitude an icon of the Holy Trinity and the Theotokos and a plaque of the Ministry of Defence and fasting Turkish delights.

His Beatitude offered the visitor a silver painting of the Holy City of Jerusalem, an icon of the Theotokos of Jerusalem and of the Sacred Edicule and blessings for his collaborators.

From Secretariat-General

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE OF GREECE VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday morning 7/20 January 2022, the Minister of Defence of Greece Mr Nikolaos Panagiotopoulos visited the Patriarchate while on a visit in the State of Israel. The Minister was accompanied by his associates, Mr Athanasios Valaris, Mr Eleftherios Agelopoulos, the Ambassador of Greece in Tel Aviv Mr Kyriakos Loukakis and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

The visitors were received by His Beatitude and Hagiotaphite Fathers, saying: "Your visit coincides with a period of political tension and developments, and therefore we welcome you with great joy. The guardian of the Holy Shrines in the Holy Land welcomes you. It welcomes you to a region governed by political forces, whose interests are in many respects contradictory. The Patriarchate is called upon to play an important conciliatory role in this political space. This it does, when pressed by extreme radical elements, from which we are called to liberate the ownership of the Patriarchate in the area of □□the Gate of David. For this reason, we have come to cooperate with the other churches to undertake a campaign for its liberation. If these elements prevail, the status of the Old City will change. All Christians are deprived of their entry into the Temple of the Resurrection. Greece is called to fulfil its duty in this matter and advocate with the Patriarchate in its favour.

Greece has a great asset here, and that is the Patriarchate of Jerusalem."

The Minister thanked for the welcoming reception and His Beatitude's words and stated that the Patriarchate should

fulfil its mission, namely its role to remain a vessel of conciliation and peace, and asked the Brotherhood to pray for Greece and that from this visit they received not only the blessing of power but also another impression of the life of the Patriarchate.

For this visit, His Beatitude offered the Minister an icon of the Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre, as it is after the renovation, an icon of the Theotokos, the book of blessed John Tleel "I am Jerusalem" and blessings from Jerusalem for his associates.

The Minister offered His Beatitude a board of the Ministry of Defence as a reminder that 'the Ministry of Defence always supports the Patriarchate'.

After these, the Minister went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where he was welcomed by the Geronda Sacristan, His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis.

From Secretariat-General

CHRISTMAS EVENT IN QATAR

A Christmas event with an artistic programme from various local traditions took place at the Archdiocese of Qatar Headquarters before the Cathedral, on Friday, December 17, 2021.

The artistic programme included Christmas songs by the children of the Orthodox Arab-speaking and Greek-speaking Sunday Schools, the Russian-speaking Choir, Qatar Arabesque and Inmanetica, from the Russian-Ukrainian-speaking International Centre of Music Choir Kamerton and the dance

club of the Greeks of Qatar. Dressed in traditional Greek costumes, the participants danced traditional dances, while the Association of the Arab-speaking Community of the H. Archdiocese, also dressed in traditional costumes, danced and sang traditional dances and songs.

There were various Christmas ornaments, presents and items of worship for sale in this event, for the support of the mission of the H. Archdiocese. There was also a great variety of delicacies from the Arabic, Greek, Serbian, Romanian, Moldavian, Russian and Ukrainian cuisine, an offer by the different companies of the ladies-members of the flock.

The event honoured with their presence the Ambassador of Greece, Mrs Eleni Mihalopoulou, the Ambassador of Moldavia, Mr Victor Tvircun, the Ambassador of Argentina Mr Carlos Hernandez, the charge des affaires of the Romanian Embassy Mr Grekou, the Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of Serbia Mr Slobodan Radeka, and of Georgia, Mr Alexander Jiskaviani, the visiting Metropolitan of Bombay, Mar Kyrillos from the Prechalcedonian Church of Malankara in India, as well as representatives of other doctrines in Doha.

The great number of the visiting Orthodox Christians of Qatar and members of other Christian Communities confirmed the success of this event.

From Secretariat-General

ASSIGNATION OF THE TITLE OF ARCHIMANDRITE

On Wednesday, 2nd/15th December 2021, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos assigned the Hegoumen of Lydda, Reverend Fr Marcellus with the title of the Archimandrite, in recognition of his dutiful ministry at the Shrine, and as an encouragement for its continuation.

From Secretariat-General

VISIT OF THE APOSTOLIC DELEGATE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday morning, 28 November / 11 December 2021, the Apostolic Delegate representative of the Vatican in the Holy Land, His Excellency Archbishop Adolfo Tito Yllana and his secretary Fr. Natali visited the Patriarchate.

This visit of the Apostolic Delegate was within the frame of the Status Quo because of the recent undertaking of his duties.

The Apostolic Delegate was received by His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, as the Bishop of the local Church, and Hagiotaphite Fathers.

On this visit, there was a conversation on the pious people of the Church of Cyprus, where the Patriarchate keeps an Exarchy. Pope Francis has recently visited the Church of Cyprus and the Apostolic Delegate participated in this visit. The Church of

Cyprus hosted many meetings of the Council of Churches of the Middle East and the island receives refugees seeking asylum, while the Cypriots from North Cyprus are refugees themselves.

For this visit, the Delegate offered His Beatitude a souvenir from the Pope's visit in Cyprus, while the latter offered him and his secretary an icon of the Theotokos of Gethsemane to help him in his mission.

From Secretariat-General

MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MR KEFALOGIANNIS VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday morning, 20 October/ 2 November 2021, the Member of the European Parliament Mr Emanuel Kefalogiannis visited the Patriarchate, while on a mission in Israel. Mr Kefalogiannis was accompanied by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and his ex-colleague Mrs Maria Zozonaki.

Mr Kefalogiannis was received by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers.

In this meeting, there was an interesting conversation on the pacifying role of the Patriarchate in the Holy Land and especially in Jerusalem where there is an ongoing turbulent political situation. The Patriarchate is trying to normalize the severity of this situation, always remaining the oldest religious institution in the Holy Land. In this mission, the Patriarchate has always had the support of Greece, the descendant of the Byzantine Empire.

Mr Kefalogiannis thanked His Beatitude for his welcoming reception and expressed his appreciation for the multi-task, multi-cultural, religious and pacifying mission of the Patriarchate.

On the occasion of this visit Mr Kefalogiannis offered His Beatitude the book of Rea Galanaki, while the latter offered him an icon of the Theotokos, of the Sacred Edicule, and Mr Tlil's book, "I am Jerusalem".

Following this meeting, Mr Kefalogiannis visited the Holy Sepulchre for veneration.

From Secretariat-General

THE FIRST PILGRIMS IN THE HOLY LAND AFTER THE PANDEMIC

On Friday, 16/29 October 2021 H.H.B. welcomed and blessed a twenty-member group of Greek pilgrims, the first to arrive in the All-holy Shrines since the beginning of the covid-19 pandemic. The pilgrims arrived with the care of Marios Travel Agency, under the health measures imposed by the Israeli Government.

From Secretariat-General

THE HEADS OF CHURCHES HOST A DINNER FOR THE CONSULS OF JERUSALEM

On Tuesday evening, 13/26 October 2021, the Heads of the Local Churches of Jerusalem as the Council of Churches hosted a dinner at the Anglican Church Restaurant in New East Jerusalem. The dinner was offered by the proposal and care of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras with the hospitality of the Archbishop of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem Mr Husam Naoum. Honoured guests were the Consuls of the countries that are in cooperation with the Status Quo (CORPS CONSULAIRE DE JERUSALEM), from Greece, France, Great Britain, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Sweden, Turkey and the Vatican.

The honoured guests were welcomed at the dinner by the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem Mr Husam Naoum.

During the meal H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III addressed those present as follows:

“Your Excellencies,

Respected Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are grateful to be with you here in this distinguished gathering, and we wish to express our thanks to His Excellency the Consul General of Greece, Mr Vlioras, for his initiative in bringing us together, and to His Grace Archbishop Husam for his kind hospitality.

The mission of the Churches in the Holy Land is very specific. We have pastoral responsibility for the Christians who live here, and a moral obligation to support and sustain the Christian population so that Christians remain in the Holy Land.

It is also our duty to ensure that the Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land be maintained, for a Holy Land devoid of its Christian population would lose integrity. We have a further responsibility to accommodate and minister to the many thousands of pilgrims who, in normal times, come to the Holy City of Jerusalem and the Holy Land from around the world, many of them from the countries you represent. We are also called to the *diakonia* -the service- of the Holy Places, so that they may remain places of worship open to all without distinction.

As you are well aware, the Christian presence in Jerusalem and the Holy Land faces challenges unprecedented in our lifetime.

We live in a delicate balance that rests on ancient privileges and rights that history has confirmed, and there is now a concerted assault on these privileges and rights by radical groups who exercise a growing and considerable influence. Among these assaults are intrusion attempts on Church properties as well as proposed taxes on Church properties, moves which will diminish and cripple the ability of the Churches to carry out our charitable and educational mission. These matters are grave, and will require the attention of not the Churches alone, but also of the international community for their resolution.

We are appreciative that the Jerusalem diplomatic corps as well as the political leadership of many nations understand that religion plays an indispensable role in the life of our region, and we are pleased that the foreign ministries of so many countries recognise this role. There can be no sure path to a secure and peaceful future for all the people of the Holy

Land and the Middle East unless we take this reality seriously.

The Churches do not wish to intrude into the proper role of diplomatic and political leadership. We are, however, ready and willing to be effective partners with you to do all in our power to find ways forward that ensure that the existing Status is respected. One should not underestimate that interfaith religious leadership has proven to be effective in opposing all forms of violence and in advancing peace. In this regard, we mention especially the countries of the European Union, which because of their long history in our region, and because of their involvement in the shaping of the Middle East, have a moral commitment to assist with this work. We remain committed to being in close contact with the European Union in their efforts to be peacemakers in our region.

Allow me to bring to your attention the establishment by the Churches of the NGO: ICoHS (the International Community of the Holy Sepulchre), which is seeking to be an advocate on behalf of the Christian communities of the Holy Land in global forums. A significant recent achievement of ICoHS is its new report on the positive impact of the Christian community in the coming days.

We wish to express our gratitude to each of you in your respective consular roles for the care and attention that you give to the serious concerns of our Christian communities. May God bless you as you carry out your duties on behalf of your own countries, and on behalf of all the people of our beloved City and Holy Land.

Thank you.”

From Secretariat-General

Photos by: Heba Hrimat.