

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

A DELEGATION OF BRITISH MUSLIM LEADERS VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III was pleased to welcome a delegation of British Muslim leaders to the Patriarchate on 6 April 2019. The delegation was on a fact finding mission to the Holy Land, exploring opportunities for peace and reconciliation.

The delegation discussed the role of the Churches in the Holy Land, as a force for peace and reconciliation that has been present for nearly 2,000 years. They also discussed the shared heritage of Christians, Jews and Muslims, and how it is venerated together in the holy city of Jerusalem: a city that is made holy not by history, but in the constant prayer that surrounds it.

From Secretariat-General

THE SCHOOL FOR PRIESTS OF THE HOLY ARCHDIOCESE OF CYPRUS VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday, February 23/ March 8, 2019, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers along with some pilgrims, received the School for Priests of the Holy Archdiocese of Cyprus, a group of 15 students with

their Principal, Reverend Archimandrite Benedict Ioannou.

In this meeting His Beatitude referred to the help the Patriarchate receives from the School for Priests of the Church of Cyprus, under the care of Archimandrite Benedict, as the school receives members of the Patriarchate to study there and serve after their graduation as Priests.

The School Principal Archimandrite Benedict thanked His Beatitude for His trusts in the School and for the spiritual help and benefit He bestows to the pilgrims on their pilgrimage and offered Him a disc from Leukara.

From Secretariat-General

HONORARY DISTINCTION TO MEMBERS OF THE JORDAN CONGREGATION BY THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday evening of the Cheese fare week, February 22/March 7, 2019, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos honoured with the medal of the Cross Bearer of the Order of Knights of the Holy Sepulchre the distinguished Orthodox Faithful who are spiritual children of the Patriarchate, for their work in construction of Churches and their activities of charity in the community and in charity centres, which advance the spiritual progress and prosperity of their communities. The ceremony took place in Amman at the Metropolis of the Patriarchate, in the presence of the Patriarchal Commissioner Most Reverend Archbishop

Christophoros of Kyriakoupolis, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Priest Issa, the representative of the Press of the Patriarchate in the Arabic speaking M.M., Archdeacon Mark and many Priests from the flock of Jordan, as well as many other people. His Beatitude honoured the following people;

1 Mr. Faouzi Shnouda

2 Mr. Qaisar Aldaoud

3 Mr. Elias Atallah

4 Mr. Ibrahim Quakish

5 Mr. Iskandar Aldaoud

Likewise His Beatitude offered an honorary plate of the Holy Metropolis of Amman in distinguished members of the congregation.

In this ceremony, His Beatitude announced the donation of 250.000 Jordan Dinars for the beginning of the construction of a Holy Cathedral in the town Fuheis, a suburb of Amman, and also honoured the Theologian Professor and Priest, Fr. Psara Evagelo Dahabra, who is a member of the Ecclesiastical Court, with the distinction of the Cross Bearer Dean Priest.

**A DELEGATION FROM GREECE AND
THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS VISITS**

THE PATRIARCHATE ON EXPATRIATE MATTERS

On Wednesday, February 14/27, 2019, a 10-member Delegation from Greece and the Republic of Cyprus visited the Patriarchate regarding expatriate-related matters. The Greek delegation was under Mr. Kouik, Deputy Foreign Minister for Greeks living Abroad and the Cypriot delegation under Mr. Fotios Fotiou, Presidential Commissioner for Expatriate-related matters, with the escort of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and of the Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus in Israel Mrs. Thessalia Siambou.

This prestigious group was received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers.

In this meeting there was a conversation on the importance of the knowledge and dissemination of the Greek language for the preservation of our national identity and on the significant role of the Church for this mission.

His Beatitude informed the members of the Delegation on the efforts of the Patriarchate for the safekeeping of the Rum-Orthodox identity of its flock and for its help in co-operation with the relevant governmental officials for the renovation of the Holy Monastery of St. John the Baptist by the river Jordan, which has been restored once again as a pilgrimage shrine, especially during the Feast of Epiphany.

The members of the Delegation thanked His Beatitude for this briefing and for His gifts, offered their gifts to Him and asked His prayers for the prosperity and security of our nation and His Blessing to venerate the Holy Sepulchre.

From Secretariat-General

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday afternoon, January 29/ February 11, 2019, the Deputy Minister of the Republic of Cyprus Mr. Savvas Perdiou visited the Patriarchate, escorted by the representatives of the Embassy of the Republic of Cyprus in Tel-Aviv Mrs. Louiza Varakla and Mr. Constantinos Chrysanthos.

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

In this meeting there was an interesting conversation on the close cooperation between the Churches of Jerusalem and Cyprus, and on the current good cooperation between the Republic of Cyprus and Israel in favour of the citizens of these two countries and of their neighbouring countries.

Moreover, the mission of the Church of Cyprus as the bonding link of the people of Cyprus was underlined, as well as the project of the renovation and reconstruction of the Exarchy of the Holy Sepulchre in Nicosia, by the approval and help of the Holy Archdiocese of Cyprus.

His Beatitude also thanked them for the intervention of the President of the Republic of Cyprus Mr. Nikos Anastasiadis in

favour of matters related to the Patriarchate towards the President of Israel Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, and offered Mr. Perdiou a relief of the Holy City of Jerusalem, an icon of Theotokos of Jerusalem and of the renovated Sacred Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre, and expressed His wish for the solving of the issue of Cyprus, while Mr. Pediou offered His Beatitude a plaque with an olive branch.

From Secretariat-General

THE MINISTER OF CULTURE OF GREECE VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday afternoon, January 29/ February 11, 2019, the Minister of Culture and Tourism of Greece Mrs. Elena Kountoura visited the Patriarchate along with associates of her office and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos.

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

In this meeting there was an interesting conversation on the support of the numerous pilgrims who visit the Holy Land from many Orthodox countries, the support of the religious tourism and the cultivation of the good cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism of Israel. Reference was also made on the renovation of the Edicule of the Holy Tomb in the year 2016-2017 with the key partnership of the Prime Minister of

Greece Mr. Alexis Tsipras.

Consequently, after the exchange of gifts Mrs. Kountoura visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for veneration.

From Secretariat-General

THE CHIEF SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GREECE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday morning, January 26/ February 8, 2019, the Chief Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece, Mr. Demetrios Paraskevopoulos visited the Patriarchate, escorted by the Secretary of his office Mr. Kremydas, and by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos.

Mr. Paraskevopoulos was received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers.

In this meeting there was an interesting conversation on the respect the Patriarchate receives, as the first ecclesiastical institution in the Holy Land by the Kingdom of Jordan, the Palestinian Autonomy and by Israel, due to the balance the Patriarchate maintains with its policy of reconciliation.

Likewise, emphasis was made on the fact of the cooperation of the Christian Churches of Jerusalem under the leadership of the Patriarchate for issues concerning the Christians of the Holy Land.

Appreciating the long term good cooperation of Mr. Paraskevopoulos in support of the Patriarchate, and thanking him for this reason, His Beatitude ended the meeting by offering him gifts from Jerusalem and His blessings.

From Secretariat-General