# HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM AT THE MONASTERY OF THE HOLY CROSS

Around noon on Monday, January 23 / February 5, 2024, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos visited the Holy Monastery of the Holy Cross, the Hegoumen of which is the Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos and inspected the ongoing work under the expert conservator from Cyprus, Mr Stavros Andreou, and gave him the required instructions for housing the Centre for Theological Research, the establishment of which has been decided by the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

From Secretariat-General

#### VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE

The Patriarchal Representative of Acre – Ptolemais Archimandrite Fr Silouanos and the twelve ministering Priests of the jurisdiction of this Metropolis visited His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos on Saturday, 14th / 27th January 2024.

At this meeting, the Priests greeted His Beatitude on the occasion of Christmas and the New Year. They presented the issues of the Metropolis and their parishes, for which His Beatitude gave the appropriate instructions and awarded the office of the Cross-bearer to the Priest of Count Kufr Yassif Farah-Haralambos Farah and the Elder Savva Mahoulis, also Priest of this county and assistant priest of the county of Tarsikha.

In this connection, His Beatitude mentioned to the visiting priests the event that took place yesterday on the East Bank of the Jordan River in the celebration of the silver jubilee of the founding of the Baptism Site in the Jordan River, He referred to its excellent organization by the Jordanian Government and by the Amman Metropolis under the Archbishop Christophoros of Kyriakoupolis and also mentioned the collective participation of the people and representatives of various states.



Subsequently, His Beatitude received a representation of the Corps of Arabic-speaking Scouts living in Israel, numbering around 3,000 members and active in the Kufr Yassif commune, under their President Mr Nader Samaan, with Mr David Mansour, Mrs Esther Abumane, of Mr Jiries Yakub Gadous, Mr Nikolas Limanis and the son of the President of the Council of Acre, Mr Fuad Breck, among others.

The Scouts paid their respects to His Beatitude on Christmas and New Year's Day and thanked Him for the help He had provided them in the past, as they mentioned in detail to Him.

The Scouts specifically referred to their relations with the Scouts of other countries, such as Jordan and Serbia, and asked for His Beatitude's blessing to visit the Greek Scouts next summer.

His Beatitude blessed their efforts to cultivate a climate of coexistence and reconciliation and praised their action for the education of the youth.



From Secretariat-General

INSPECTION OF MAINTENANCE WORKS OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

On the morning of Monday, January 9/22, 2024, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with members of the Pilgrimage Committee and other Holy Sepulchre Fathers, High Priests, Hieromonks and monks.

There His Beatitude blessed the ongoing conservation work of the agreement of the three Major Communities and the technical supervision of the Sapientia University of Rome on the floor around the Deposition, the entrance and the Gate of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and gave the necessary instructions for its better technical success for the structural strengthening of the floor of the Church, along with the preservation of the Status Quo.

From Secretariat-General

#### VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE

On Tuesday, the 3rd / 16th of January 2024, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos received on the occasion of Christmas and New Year's Day:  Bishop Christopher Chessun Bishop of Southwark of the Anglican Church and member of the British House of Lords, accompanied by the Deputy Secretary of the Council of the Heads of the Local Churches of Jerusalem Fr



2. Afterwards, His Beatitude received the Hegoumen of Ramallah, Archimandrite Galaktion and his assistant, Father Isaiah Haddad, to whom His Beatitude conferred the ofikion of Steward. The Hegoumen Archimandrite Galaktion was accompanied by the Holy Priests of the Communities of the surrounding areas, the Jifna Community Fr Georgios Awad, the Taybe Community Fr Daoud, the Birzet Community Fr Stavros Aranki and the Aboud Community, Fr Emmanuel.



- 3. He also accepted the young man from Jifna, Mr Ibrahim Saetz, who applied for a scholarship in Theology in Greece.
- 4. His Beatitude also received the conservators of chandeliers and icons from the team of Mr Stavros Andreou upon their departure, thanked them and blessed them.
- 5. Finally, His Beatitude received the Head of the Jerusalem Foundation Mr Azam Khatib and the Sheikh of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Secretariat-General

From





## THE CEREMONY OF THE CUTTING OF THE NEW YEAR CAKE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

At 5:00 p.m. on December 31, 2023/January 13, 2024, the last day of the year 2023 (Old Calendar), the traditional ceremony of cutting the Vasilopita, the cake which tradition associates with the charitable action of Saint Basil the Great, took place in the hall of the Patriarchate.

Invited to this ceremony were the Consul General of Greece in

Jerusalem, Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos, the Consul, Ms Mantika Anna, and their collaborators, Holy Fathers and members of the Greek Parish and our Arabic-speaking flock.

In the beginning, His Beatitude spoke through His following address:

"And he [the Lord] said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1,7).

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

He who with unspeakable wisdom made all things, God the Word, and from non-being to being produced, brought us all to this holy place of the venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem to thank God the Word for the beginning of the New Year of His goodness, and to honour the commemoration of our Father among the Saints Basil the Great, Bishop of Caesarea of Cappadocia, through the established cutting of the New Year Cake under his name, "Vasilopita".

The determination of the concept of historical time and its alternation in past and future, in outgoing and incoming, old and new, on the part of the human intellect of national pagans and philosophers in general, remains incomplete if not completely impossible.

On the contrary, the determination of historical time is made possible through the presence in the world of the incarnate God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, from the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Mary, during the reign of Caesar Augustus and the Governor of Cyrene of Syria, in the city of David called Bethlehem according to the testimony of the Evangelist Luke (cf. Luke 2, 1-5).

The established Father of the Church, Saint Cyril of Alexandria, commenting on the Lord's words to His disciples: "And he [the Lord] said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1,7), says, "it is not necessary to be curious about the classified and hidden in God, which the Lord was teaching".

Indeed, the consideration of time as past, present and future is an uninterpretable and incomprehensible fact, undisclosed and hidden in God. And this is because according to John of Damascus, "God from non-being into being produces and creates everything, invisible and visible, and man from the visible and invisible." And according to Saint Paul, "God, …Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Hebrews 1,1-2).

Commenting on these words of Saint Paul, Theodoritos Kyrou says: "Aeon is not a substance but an inherent thing, which accompanies the beings that have a created nature...Aeon is the space, which is connected with the created nature. The Scripture says the Son (of God) is the creator of the ages. He is eternal, teaching us that He has always been above all temporal systems.

According to Saint Basil the Great, time is interconnected with the world's creation. "And when now the time came to introduce this world into the beings...then the foundation of the world was built, inherent in the world...a stream that constantly hastens and runs sideways towards them, and nowhere ends its course. Or is not time something of which the past has disappeared, and the future has not yet appeared, and the present, before it is well perceived, immediately escapes the grasp of sense?" Following Saint Basil the Great, Saint John of Damascus says that aion is that which was extended along with the eternal beings like a movement of time or like a space in time; and for this reason eternal, as God is called eternal, but also pre-eternal...I say, God, that is, the Father and His only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, His Holy Spirit, our one God.

This God of our Lord Jesus Christ put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of all things in all things completed (c.f. Eph. 1,22-23), Saint Paul preaches. This means that the Church, being the body of Christ is not from this world (John 8,23), but since it exists in this historical time, it celebrates the change of the year, not in a worldly manner, but spiritually, showing that it exists in the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Therefore, in the Church and through the Church of Christ, time is interpreted as a new creation by the Apostle Paul. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5,17-18). We become communicants of this newness in Christ when we participate in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, where Christ dwells in our hearts (c.f. Eph. 3,17). "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him" (John 6,56).

Moreover, time becomes the time of life eternal during baptism, where we receive the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and put on Christ. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3,27), Saint Paul preaches. This time of the gift of the seal of the Holy Spirit was granted to us by God the Father, so that we may cleanse ourselves from any defilement and become pleasant to God, just like the Apostle Barnabas says, "we should avoid the present situations and examine the times, flee completely from all the works of iniquity, lest the works of iniquity overtake us; and let us hate the deceit of the present time, that in the future we may be loved."

It becomes clear that the alternation of the Ecclesiastical year, i.e. the time, does not concern the distinction of hours, day and night, but to the "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20,21) according to the Evangelist Luke. About this, Saint Paul says, "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6,2).

At the time of the change of the year, where apostasy and iniquity abound, and humanity is tested by wars, strife and "every evil thing" (cf. James 3:16), we too should reflect on our transgressions, and in fear and terror work out our salvation (cf. Philippians 2:12).

As we celebrate the dawn of the new year, in Christ, God the Word, the Incarnate by the pure flesh of the most blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, let us entreat Saint Basil the Great Hierarch of Cappadocia, to intercede for our souls, the peace of the whole world, especially for the tested Gaza strip and the wider region of the Middle East, as well as for every kind of schism and the healing of the torn unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church.

And let us say along with the Hymnographer: "Thou Who hast framed all things by Thine ineffable wisdom, O Christ God the Word, and hast established times and seasons for our sakes: bless the works of Thy hands." (Minaion Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>, Matins, praises, both now). Thou Who art full of goodness, bless this year and protect in peace and unity Thine Church, our Venerable Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, our reverend Christian flock, the Holy City of Jerusalem, and our pious nation of the Rum Orthodox. Amen. Blessed and peaceful New Year, 2024. Many Happy Returns!"

Afterwards, the apolytykion of the Circumcision was chanted and of Basil the Great. Then His Beatitude cut the cake, wishing a happy, blessed and peaceful New Year 2024 and distributed it to those present.

Finally, the students of the Patriarchal School of Zion sang the carols, "we are the New Generation of the Holy Sepulchre" in the Patriarchate, in the homes of the Holy Sepulchre Fathers and the homes of members of the Greek Parish.

From Secretariat-General

### VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE 2024-01-12

On Friday, December 30, 2023 / January 12, 2024, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos received a tenmember delegation of the "Churches for the Middle East peace" organization, in the presence of Mr Ode Kawas, and His Beatitude spoke to them about the pastoral, educational, cultural and ecclesiastical work of the Patriarchate.



On the same day, His Beatitude also received a delegation from the Yaffo School, in the presence of the inspector Mr Ode Kawas,



A delegation of the "myrrh-bearing women" association – hamilat dib – of Saint James Cathedral,



and the Hegoumen of the Monastery of Haifa Archimandrite Artemios, the Priest Dimitrios with his wife and the ministering Priest of Haifa, Fr Michael from Moldavia, to whom His Beatitude bestowed the medal of the Cross bearer for the continuation of his fruitful ministry.

From Secretariat-General



## VISIT OF THE RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

Russia's ambassador to Israel, Mr Anatoli Victor, and his collaborates with the representative of the Moscow Patriarchate in Jerusalem Archimandrite Vassianos and Archimandrite Nikon, visited the Patriarchate and exchanged greetings and wishes with His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, for the Christmas Feast and the New Year.

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" (Studious) 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

# PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF CHURCHES URGE GAZA CEASEFIRE IN THE HOLY SEASON DURING A MEETING WITH DIPLOMATS

In a gathering at the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches along with Ambassadors, Consul-Generals and Representatives of diplomatic missions assembled to address the challenges faced in the Holy Land, especially in light of the approaching Christmas season. His Beatitude Theophilos III, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, opened the session with a message of hope and spiritual significance, invoking the words from the Gospel of Saint John. Amid the cordial atmosphere, the Patriarch urged for a ceasefire in Gaza, emphasizing the need to protect community service institutions.

Expressing concerns about the challenges faced by Christians in the Holy Land, including systematic attacks by radical Israeli groups, the Patriarch of Jerusalem called for preserving the multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multireligious fabric of Jerusalem. He emphasized the importance of stability and secure Christian Quarters for the thriving coexistence of all residents. The Patriarch conveyed his wishes for a swift return of peace and a Christmas season marked by hope.

The gathering included discussions on the challenging situations in Gaza and Bethlehem. The Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, shared the dire in Gaza, emphasizing the importance circumstances of supporting those who choose to stay in the besieged Strip. The Custos of the Holy Land, Father Francesco Patton, stressed the effects of Israel's military closures and the subsequent economic challenges in Bethlehem, underlining the significance of connectivity between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Various Christian spiritual leaders conveyed messages of peace and discussed pressing issues, such as the pressure on Christian schools to change their curriculum into an Israeli one, which was expressively articulated by the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, Husam Naom. The issue of the illegitimate Israeli municipal taxes over Church property was also highlighted, and the need for international support to navigate challenges faced by the Holy Land Christians.

In response, diplomatic representatives expressed support, with Jordan, the EU, Egypt, and France affirming their commitment to engagement and assistance. The meeting highlighted the urgent call for a ceasefire to ensure a peaceful Christmas celebration and reiterated the importance of diplomatic collaboration to address ongoing challenges in the Holy Land.

# CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL LEADERS UNITE FOR PEACE IN GAZA AT JERUSALEM MEETING

December 18, 2023

Jerusalem, The Holy Land

In a momentous gathering at the Patriarchate of Jerusalem earlier today, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem convened to address pressing matters relating to the war in Gaza and the holiday season. The meeting commenced with a heartfelt prayer, underscoring the spiritual significance of the assembly. His Beatitude Theophilos III, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, extended gratitude for the esteemed participants, acknowledging the importance of collective wisdom.

One of the focal points of discussion was the crafting and endorsement of a unified Christmas message. The Heads of Churches dedicated time to formulate a message that embodies hope, peace, and spiritual unity, intending to convey a shared voice during the forthcoming Christmas season.

A pivotal decision emerged as the leaders resolved to meet collectively with the President of Israel. Their objective is to earnestly reiterate their plea for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and advocate for the restoration of peace amid the tumultuous situation.

Acknowledging the sombre reality of the escalating civilian casualties in Gaza, the Heads of Churches reached a consensus

to maintain the tradition of seasonal visits in a more subdued manner. This adjustment reflects the churches' stance to temper celebratory activities while mourning the profound losses endured during these challenging times.

The celebration of Christmas in Bethlehem and the revered procession of the Heads of Churches, along with the faithful, to the Church of the Nativity were discussed with great reverence. A notable point raised was the request to the Israeli government to permit the entrance of Heads of Churches, Priests, and laity through the checkpoint at Rachel's Tomb. The leaders reiterated their commitment to celebrating the festive occasion with modesty, demonstrating solidarity with those affected by the ravages of war.

This gathering of spiritual leaders not only emphasized the spiritual significance of the season but also showcased a profound commitment to advocating for peace, underscoring the gravity of the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza.

#### From Secretariat-General