

A GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM OUR CONGREGATION EXPRESSES THEIR SUPPORT TO THE PATRIARCH

On Saturday morning, December 31, 2017, January 13, 2018, a group of young people, members of our congregation from areas of the Palestinian Territories and Israel visited the Patriarchate.

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

These young people expressed their Christmas wishes and their respect to His Beatitude and the Patriarchate, as well as their opposition to the episode created by a small group of Palestinians during His Beatitude's visit in Bethlehem on Christmas Eve.

His Beatitude thanked the young people for their support and explained to them some managing issues of the Patriarchate, which are dealt with by the decisions of the Holy and Sacred Synod, according to the very old institution of the Patriarchate. His Beatitude added that all decisions are taken for the benefit and the progress of the congregation, and episodes like that of Bethlehem are detrimental to all the Christians of the Holy Land. However, as Christians, we forgive the people by our Christian love.

The aforementioned young people received blessings from Jerusalem by His Beatitude within a spirit of mutual thanksgiving.

From Secretariat-General

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VISITS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES OF JERUSALEM FOR THE CHRISTMAS FEAST

1. The Franciscan Church

The Franciscan Brotherhood visited the Patriarchate on the occasion of Christmas under its Hegoumen Fr. Francesco Patton at 9.15 a.m. on Tuesday December 27, 2017/ January 9, 2018.

The Hegoumen addressed His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos on behalf of the Brotherhood, underlining the words of St. Maximus the Confessor, that the Son of God "became incarnate once, so that we may have the ability to spiritually incarnate Him in our souls". Fr. Francesco thanked His Beatitude for His co-operation at the All-holy Shrines and the support of the Christians' rights, and expressed his support in His Beatitude's mission, by raising his voice in boldness for the sustaining of the Status Quo of Jerusalem and condemning every action against His Beatitude and the Patriarchate.

In reply to the Franciscan Hegoumen His Beatitude addressed the Brotherhood as per the link below:

<http://www.jp-newsgate.net/en/2018/01/09/37064>

2. All Churches

At 10.00 a.m. our Patriarchate was visited by; the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem, under the Latin Patriarch Mr. Pierre Battista Pizzaballa, the Syrian Church in Jerusalem under its Archbishop Mourad Swerios, the Coptic Church under its Archbishop Antonios, the Anglican Church under the Most Reverend Suheil Dawani, the Lutheran Church under its Bishop Munib Younan and the Propst Fr. Worfgang Smidt and their entourage.

The Latin Patriarch addressed His Beatitude and the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood on the Churches' behalf, stressing the humility and kenosis of Christ's incarnation, as an example for our humility and care for our neighbour.

Likewise, the Syrian and the Anglican Bishops in Jerusalem addressed His Beatitude, condemning every attack against His Beatitude. The Lutheran Bishop and the representative of the Ethiopian Church also expressed their support.

His Beatitude addressed the Heads of Churches in return as per the link below:

<http://www.jp-newsgate.net/en/2018/01/09/37062>

3. The Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem

At 11.00 a.m., the Armenian Brotherhood under its Patriarch in Jerusalem His Beatitude Nourhan Manukian visited the Patriarchate. In his address to His Beatitude, the Armenian Patriarch stressed the need of co-operation and unity of the Churches under the light of the recent adverse conditions in the Holy Land.

His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed him in return as per the link below:

<http://www.jp-newsgate.net/en/2018/01/09/37066>

4. The Apostolic Delegate

On the same day, the Apostolic Delegate visited the Patriarchate on the occasion of Christmas. The Apostolic Delegate is the Vatican's representative in the Holy Land, his Excellency Leopoldo Girelli with his associate Fr. Marco Fromica. They were received by His Beatitude and Hagiotaphite Fathers. Mr. Girelli conveyed Pope Frances' message on the occasion of Christmas and the New Year to His Beatitude.

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VISITS OF THE HAGIOTAPHITE BROTHERHOOD ON THE OCCASION OF CHRISTMAS

On Friday December 16/29 2017, the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood under its Hegoumen His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos paid the established visits on the occasion of Christmas for the Western Churches according to the Gregorian calendar. The visits were;

1. The Franciscan Brotherhood in Jerusalem. On this visit His Beatitude addressed the Brotherhood as per the link below;

<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2017/12/29/36848>

2. The Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem where Patriarchal duties are held by His Beatitude Pierre Battista Pizzaballa. The address of His Beatitude on this visit can be seen in the link below;

<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2017/12/29/36846>

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THE ELECTED BISHOP OF THE LUTHERANS IN JERUSALEM VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

The Propst of the Lutheran Church in Jerusalem Fr. Wolfgang Smidt visited the Patriarchate on Thursday December 15/28 2017, with Fr. Sany Ibrahim Azhar, the elected Bishop of the

Lutherans in Jerusalem.

The two representatives of the Lutheran Church were received by H.H.B., the Patriarchal Commissioner Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias and Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina.

The purpose of Propst's visit was to present Fr. Sany Ibrahim Azhar to His Beatitude as he is going to be ordained a Bishop and succeed the current Bishop Munib Yunan in this position.

His Beatitude congratulated Fr. Sany Ibrahim Azhar on his election and wished him strength from on high for the fulfilment of his ministry with the support of our Patriarchate.

On the occasion of this visit, His Beatitude offered Fr. Sany a pectoral cross. Fr. Sany thanked His Beatitude and invited Him to his forthcoming ordination as Bishop.

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THE NEW APOSTOLIC DELEGATE VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday December 15/28 2017, the new Apostolic Delegate-Representative of the Pope in Jerusalem H.E. Msgn Leopoldo Girelli visited the Patriarchate on the occasion of the

undertaking of his duties, escorted by his associate Fr. Fernando Tumuya.

Msgn Leopoldo Girelli was received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers. His Beatitude congratulated him on the undertaking of his duties and expressed His intention to continue the long-lasting good co-operation of the Patriarchate with each Apostolic Delegate.

The new Apostolic Delegate thanked His Beatitude for his reception and reassured Him on the intention of the Roman-Catholic Church to continue the co-operation for the interest of the Christians of the Holy Land and the peace of the Churches.

On the occasion of this visit, His Beatitude offered the Delegate an icon of the Sacred Edicule and to his associate an icon of the Theotokos.

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NEW WATER TANK IN UBEIDIYA DISTRICT AROUND THE H. MONASTERY OF ST. THEODOSIOS

On Wednesday December 14/27 2017, the Mayor and the members of Ubeidiya Mayoralty in the area of the H. Monastery of St. Theodosios the Cenobiarch, east of Bethlehem, visited His Beatitude and thanked Him for the offer of the Patriarchate of

the place for the water tank, which will supply the surrounding areas and the Monastery of St. Theodosios with water.

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HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM ADDRESSES THE KING OF JORDAN

The meeting of the Heads of the Local Churches in the Holy Land took place on Sunday afternoon, December 4/17, 2017, at the Baptism Site of the Lord in the East Bank of the River Jordan, the Pilgrimage Centre of Jordan, at the presence of His Majesty the King of Jordan Abdullah Ibn Hussein II.

The meeting was held with the aim of tightening the cooperation in order to cultivate a climate of appeasement and tolerance regarding the recent political unrest. On behalf of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed His Majesty the King in Arabic as per the link below;

<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2017/12/17/34735>

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From Secretariat-General

MEDAL AWARDING AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday morning, December 3/16, 2017, Mr. Spanos Isidoros was offered the honorary distinction of the Grand Commander of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre by the Patriarchate, for his donation for the maintenance of the holy icons of Horrendous Golgotha, in the presence of Geronda Sacristan, Most Reverend Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis and Priest Euthymios from Thessalonica.

Awarding Mr. Spanos, His Beatitude thanked and praised him for his donation, which made possible the maintenance of the ceiling murals of the Horrendous Golgotha chapel, and wished him strength, blessing and a return of his generosity for this place where our Lord Jesus Christ shed His blood for the remission of our sins.

Mr. Spanos thanked His Beatitude and expressed his intention to help for the maintenance of other shrines.

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THE REPRESENTATIVE OF HUNGARY IN RAMALLA VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

The representative of Hungary in Ramalla of Palestine Dr. Csaba Rada visited the Patriarchate on Friday 2nd /15th December 2017.

His Excellency the representative of Hungary 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 reconciliation work of the Patriarchate with the co-operation of the other Local Christian Churches, especially in the recent tension in Jerusalem and the occupied areas.

Moreover reference was made on the long term co-operation between the Patriarchate and Hungary. Fruits of this co-operation were; the two visits of His Beatitude in Hungary; the financial support of Hungary in the restoration projects of the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Tomb; the scholarship funds to members of the Arab-speaking congregation; the intention of Hungary to continue its support and protection to the needy Christians of the Middle East.

There was a mutual interest and intention for the continuation of this beneficial co-operation.

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HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS OFFICIATES THE DIVINE LITURGY IN EKATERINGURG OF RUSSIA

His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy at the chapel of St. Catherine in the Holy Church of The Holy Trinity in Ekaterinburg of Russia, according to the calendar of the Russian Orthodox Church on Thursday 24th November/7th December 2017.

His Beatitude officiated this Divine Liturgy at the invitation of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril and the Most Reverend Metropolitan of Ekaterniburg, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Cyril and other Metropolitans of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Tikhon of Tabov who escorted His Beatitude, other Archbishops and many Hieromonks and Priests of the Moscow Patriarchate. The choir was composed of nuns who chanted also in the Byzantine Greek language. An impressive congregation stood still in silent prayer and contrition during the Service.

After the Divine Liturgy His Beatitude our Father and

Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed the congregation as follows;

“Most Reverend Archbishops,

Reverend Co-celebrants Presbyters and Deacons,

Blessed people of God,

Being in the city of St. Catherine as pilgrims by the invitation of your most devout pastor, in order to co-celebrate the memory of your patron Saint with this noble congregation, we wholeheartedly thank His Beatitude for the honorary invitation to Our mediocrity. From the Holy City of Jerusalem we convey the Gospel of our Lord who became Incarnate in the humble manger of Bethlehem for our salvation, abundantly offering to all of you the Life-giving grace of the All-holy Tomb, by which all creation is illumined, namely “the heaven the earth and everything beneath”, with the unwaning light of the Resurrection.

As we celebrate today the memory of Catherine the Great Martyr of Christ, who shines like another aurora borealis over the luminous shimmer of the martyrs, especially in this ultimate time of the earth, we feel indebted to offer hymns of praise to the protector of your city. We praise the feats of this all-wise woman, the modest and dexterous bride of Christ, the reliable guide “to the narrow and sorrowful path”, which leads however to the Kingdom of God, wherein the faithful friends of the martyrs march in great jubilation.

With extended hands and from the depths of our heart we beg her to remain always an irrefutable companion and defender of all the servants of God against the various deceitful workings of the lurking enemy.

We wholeheartedly thank her for being quick to intercede to the All-gracious God for every faithful beseeching her help, especially for those who willingly carry the cross of the

martyrdom of consciousness.

The Saint knows by her personal experience the pain of the martyrdom, but she also knows the glory of the saints. They suffered a little in this temporary life and received the eternal wreath of unceasing beatitude, and being the praising choirs of the righteous, they surround the throne of glorified Christ, forever celebrating the heavenly Liturgy. The Saint in fact denied herself and lifted up her cross and followed Christ, considering pulchritude, worldly wisdom, wealth and all other gifts given to her by the mercy of God too little, compared to the spiritual wealth. She thought of all these as "petty things", so she despised them "in order to win Christ". She displayed bravery according to the council of the Proverbs on the bravery of the woman, and patiently endured the torments contrived by the maliciousness of the people. In that manner, by the grace of God she was highlighted an eternal prototype for every Christian.

Catherine the great martyr is an ecumenical saint. She is honoured in the East and the West, by native Orthodox peoples and converts by missionary work, in parishes and monasteries. She is especially honoured in the Church of her hometown at the Patriarchate of Alexandria, as well as in the God-trodden Mount Sinai, which belongs to the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem Patriarchate for many centuries. She is also honoured in the vast land of Russia and the other Slavic Churches, in the blessed Greek-speaking world, and especially in every Church and every Monastery dedicated to her name. The reverence of the Orthodox people highlighted the commemoration of the Great Martyr in a prominent position among other feasts, especially by placing her feast after the apodosis of the Entrance of the Theotokos in the Temple.

According to the scriptures of the saints that narrate St. Catherine's life, our Lady Theotokos, at the Lord Christ's command, gave the Saint "the ring" signifying her betrothal to Him. In that manner the Theotokos became the guide to the

union of the Saint with the perfect love of the perfect man, namely the God-man Christ. According to the wise Archbishop of Thessalonica, St. Gregory Palamas, and our Father among the Saints Nicodemus of Mount Athos, the Theotokos is the most perfect creature that has ever been born in the world. All creation came into existence so that the Theotokos would be born, the woman who due to her immaculate purity would be able to bear the perfect God in her womb and consequently nurture Him. God the Word became incarnate so that He would be one of the people, and therefore be in communion with the people. This union of the created with the uncreated in the incarnate presence of Christ became the ladder that bridges the communion with God for all people. This is the pre-conceived plan of God, according to St. Maximus the Confessor. God the Word became incarnate not only to redeem the humankind from sin and corruption, but also to give it the chance of the full communion with Him, which is feasible to all those who willingly follow the path of the martyrdom of consciousness and of blood. Today's honoured St. Catherine was related to this perfect woman, the Theotokos. Both of them stand by God as bold intercessors. You have such a powerful protector and patron Saint for your city, that you should feel the absolute spiritual and physical security.

St. Catherine was distinguished for her strong worldly wisdom and immense patience in the atrocious tortures of her martyrdom. Nowadays that the secularized society is being projected and proclaimed, unfortunately led by foreign to the Christian doctrine authorities, the spirit and mind of the Saint are a bright beacon for all of us. As it was rightly noted by the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church in Crete last year: "In these years of secularization, the need to highlight the significance of the holiness of life becomes imperative, as we face the spiritual crisis which characterizes the contemporary world.. The Orthodox tradition that has been shaped by the actual living of the Christian truth, is a carrier of spirituality and of ascetic ethos,

which should be projected and highlighted especially in our contemporary era”.

Therefore, all of us the Orthodox Christians owe to bear witness to the Gospel of Christ in unity and strength, thus becoming “the light of the world” and “the salt of the earth”. It is a necessity for all Christians to realise that the starting point for the re-evangelization is the concrete testimony of Christ, of course in unity and respect of the ecclesiastical institutions, primarily of the Synodical institution.

Hence we urge you, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, to love Christ according to the example set by the Saint, wholeheartedly, and strive at all costs to proclaim our faith to all nations. In that manner Orthodoxy will be established once more the certain hope of the world.

May the grace of our All-gracious God be with you all!”

After this address, Metropolitan Cyril of Ekaterinburg offered His Beatitude a set of Patriarchal egolpia, while His Beatitude offered the Metropolitan an icon of the Theotokos’ Nativity, an ivory cross and a set of Episcopal egolpia, and then He venerated the Holy relic of St. Catherine.

After the Divine Liturgy there was a Litany around the city.

At noon, the Governor of the city offered a meal to His Beatitude at the State Building, where His Beatitude offered him a copy of the recently discovered at the restoration of the Sacred Edicule cross of the architect Kalfa Komnenos.

In the evening His Beatitude attended a cultural event of a traditional concert under the pianist Mr. Alexei Lioubimov.

THE LAST DAY OF THE VISIT OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM IN EKATERINBURG

On Friday 25th November/8th December 2017, accompanied by the

Most Reverend Metropolitan Cyril of Ekaterinburg, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos visited the underground place of the execution of the Tsar of Russia Nikolai and his family. A magnificent Church has been built at this place, dedicated to the Russian Orthodox new martyrs of the years of the communist regime. Therein the Patriarchal entourage chanted the apolytikion of the martyrs.

Afterward His Beatitude visited the historic small Church of St. John the Baptist. During the October Government this was the only open Church for the services of feasts, weddings, funerals and other sacraments for the religious needs of the citizens who number half a million.

Later on, at the invitation of the Metropolitan, His Beatitude spoke on the Gathering of the Metropolis which was attended by Priests, teachers, monks, nuns and catechumens. His Beatitude conveyed the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ who became incarnate in the Cave of Bethlehem and was resurrected from the dead at the All-holy Tomb. He especially underlined the continuous mission of the Church throughout the centuries: "I am the light of the world, you are the salt of the earth". He also underlined the significance of the centenary anniversary festivities for the Russian Church and all Churches, due to the persecutions and sorrows; the Russian Church was victorious over these, having as the first martyr the Patriarch of Moscow Tikhon the Confessor. He stressed that the rebirth of Russia and its Church is owed to two leading figures, President Putin and Patriarch Cyril, with the mutual cooperation of Church and government. President Putin is in favour of the Evangelic principles and morals against the liberate principles and morals projected by Globalization, which circumvent the institutions of family, national identity and biological entity of the people. The Priests as the Cyrenes of the Bishops should focus their attention to the young people.

On the occasion of this Gathering, Metropolitan Cyril offered

the medal of St. Seraphim of Sarov to distinguished Priests for their pastoral and ministerial work.

Finally, His Beatitude visited the historic Holy Monastery of St. Alexander Nevsky, which numbers 150 nuns. In this Monastery, the Church of Theotokos Novotichnaskoria is very large and most beautiful, with byzantine structure and murals. The Church has no electricity but its lighting is provided by oil candles. It is a place that one can admire the beauty of the Church as a reflection of the heavenly beauty.

The choir of the nuns of the Monastery chanted in Byzantine music and in the Greek language. The nuns keep iconography and translation workshops where they translate books from Greek into Russian. They welcomed His Beatitude and His Entourage in a touching reception, singing hymns of the Theotokos by St. Nectarios and the Polychronion.

His Beatitude spoke with reference to the present owner of the Church Mr. Igor Altouskin and his past donations for the Patriarchal Hall and the Exarchy of the Holy Sepulchre in Cyprus.

His Beatitude offered the nuns an ivory cross while they offered Him in return an embroidered cloth for the holy vessels and a complete embroidered Patriarchal set of vestments.

The welcoming reception at the Church was followed by a lunch meal offered by the Monastery.

Finally His Beatitude was escorted to the airport of Ekaterinburg by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Cyril of Ekaterinburg, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Tikhon and Archimandrite Theophanes. His Beatitude returned safely in Tel-Aviv airport by the grace of God.

From Secretariat-General

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