

THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF MOLDAVIA VISIT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Ash Tuesday evening, 15th/28th February 2017, the Minister of Foreign affairs of Moldavia Mr. Andrei Galbur, visited the Patriarchate, escorted by the present Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign affairs and ex Consul of Moldavia in Israel Mr. Anatoli Vangeli, by another associate of his and the present Consul of Moldavia in Israel.

His Excellency the Minister and his escort were warmly received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, together with Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Master of Ceremonies Archimandrite Bartholomew, and Archdeacon Mark.

On this visit, the Minister expressed his happiness on the occasion of his visit in the Holy Land and the Patriarchate, which is not only for political but also for religious purposes.

His Beatitude related especially to the love and support of Jerusalem for the three monotheistic religions and the co-existence of Christians with Muslims since the time "Achtiname" which was written between the memorable Patriarch of Jerusalem Sophronios and Caliph Omar Khattab, and to the work of the Patriarchate in it, and the property that the Patriarchate owned in Moldavia.

On the occasion of this visit, the Minister offered His Beatitude an old Menaion in Slavonic for the Central Library of the Patriarchate, while His Beatitude offered Mr. Andrei Galbur and his associates an icon of the Theotokos and the

Holy Edicule and a medal of the 2000 years of the Patriarchate history.

From Secretariat-General

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REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST ORGANIZATION VISIT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday evening, 11th/24th February 2017, a fifteen-member team of the Christian humanitarian United Church of Christ Organization visited the Patriarchate, headed by the Executive in Middle East and Europe, Mr. Peter Makari.

This Christian humanitarian team, which actively supports the Syrian refugees in Jordan and other countries, among which is Greece, was warmly received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, at the presence of the Professor of the N.T.U. Mrs. Antonia Moropoulou.

Within the agenda of the meeting, His Beatitude praised this team's actions towards the refugees, which is in cooperation with the Patriarchate Office in Jordan under the Management of Mrs. Wafaa Ksous, and related to the contribution of the Patriarchate in the sustaining of the existence and the identity of the Christians, as well as the protection of the Holy Shrines as Christendom artefacts, peaceful meeting points

for all religions, and a protecting shield for the existence and identity of the Christians who are being persecuted in many places of the Middle East.

Being present, Mrs. Moropoulou mentioned the preservative and renovating project of the Holy Edicule and its worldwide appeal.

The above mentioned activists of peace and support to those in need, thanked His Beatitude for his help and hearing and repeated their commitment to cooperate with the Patriarchate for the help of the refugees in the Middle East region and in Europe.

From Secretariat-General

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HIS BEATITUDE AWARDS THE PRESIDENT OF MIDDLE EAST HILTON HOTELS

On Thursday, 10th/ 23rd February 2017, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos honoured with the distinguished honour of the Cross bearer of the Holy Sepulchre the President of the Middle East Hilton Hotels, Mr. Rudi S.K. Iagersbacher, in recognition of his piety and support to the Patriarchate.

Deeply touched, Mr. Rudi thanked His Beatitude and promised to continue his support towards the Patriarchate.

From Secretariat-General

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ADDRESS OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM AT THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN ACRE

On Tuesday evening, 8th/21st February 2017, the ceremony on the refurbishment of the Anglican Church of the Saviour took place in Acre.

This Church has its origin in the 19th century, since the establishment of the Anglican Church in the Holy Land, and it serves the needs of the English Community in Acre and the surrounding area.

His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos was invited to this ceremony by the Anglican Commissioner in Jerusalem Reverend Souheil Dawani. With His Beatitude also were, the Patriarchal Commissioner Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Patriarchal Commissioner in Acre Archimandrite Philotheos and Orthodox and Arab-speaking Priests from the area of Acre. His Beatitude's address is as follows:

21 February, 2017

Your Eminence Archbishop Suheil,

Dear Father Hosam,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Reverend Fathers,

Dear Friends,

As we gather for this blessed occasion, we recall the words of Saint Paul:

“I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

And in the Psalms we read:

“Bring to the Lord Glory and honour. Bring to the Lord the glory due His name; worship the Lord in His Holy Court” (Psalm 28, 29:1-2).

Worship is at the heart of the Abrahamic traditions. We say that those who wish to understand the faith and life of the Christian Church must begin by experiencing worship. For worship of the Divine, which is the source of one's existence, is an inherent act of the human soul. “Indeed, in Christian tradition, the proper relationship between the created and the creator is best expressed through the relationship of worship. In every assembly of worship, Christians express their understanding of the nature of the Incarnate Logos, i.e. our Lord Jesus Christ, and of humanity's relationship with Him.”

It is in this way that we experience the unity of heaven and

earth. It is in the Divine Eucharist that we also experience the unity between divinity and humanity. In fact, the Divine Eucharist, which is reasonable worship, i.e. Logiki Latreia, in Greek, is a foretaste of deification, i.e. eternal life.

We are honoured to be present today, Archbishop Suheil, as you re-dedicate this church in Acre. Acre is an ancient city in which the witness of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim worship been manifest for millennia. Indeed, it has become a mosaic of ethnic and religious communities, all which synthesize this harbor. Acre embraces its Jewish, Christian and Muslim civilizations as part of our present, living tradition.

Our active, functioning churches here are an essential part of this vibrant, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious landscape, where both an ancient indigenous Christian community and pilgrims from all over the world give testimony to the essential Christian character of the Holy Land.

The restoration of this Church of Saint Saviour, after more than a quarter of a century during which it has been closed, is an important witness to this long tradition of the Christian presence in the Holy Land and to the fundamental role of places of worship and prayer. By restoring this church to the use of the Anglican diocese, you are emphasizing the life of the diverse Christian *martyria*, and you are making a unique contribution to the long and unbreakable character and destiny of this city.

If Jerusalem is the spiritual capital of the world, then Acre is surely the spiritual gateway to the Holy Land. For centuries pilgrims would alight here on their way to Jerusalem, and from Acre they would return to their homelands, having been refreshed by the spiritual blessings of the Holy Places. The Rum Orthodox Church of Saint George and the underground Church of Saint Nicholas are also living testimony that we are not newcomers, but we Christians are an organic part of the fabric of this Holy Land.

We would like to take this opportunity, Your Grace, to commend you for your pastoral zeal, and for the great effort that you have made in restoring this church. Your deep commitment to the Christian presence in the Holy Land, your attentive care for your flock and for the many Anglican pilgrims who come to our region every year, as well as your clear support for Anglican institutions, including schools and hospitals that serve not only the members of the Anglican Church, but all peoples of our region without distinction, are an inspiration.

As a sign of the long-standing and important relationship between the Orthodox Church and the Anglican Communion, and between the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Anglican diocese, we wish to present to Saint Saviour's Church this icon of the Resurrection for the veneration of the faithful. May it be a sign of hope that shines forth from the Holy Tomb of our Risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. After all, the Church of Jerusalem is first and foremost the community of the Resurrection.

May God bless you, Your Grace, Archbishop Suheil. And may God bless this city of Acre and our beloved Holy Land, for we consider this initiative to be a major contribution on behalf of both the Christian community and the local authorities to promoting peace, reconciliation, and mutual respect, which are the fruits of harmony.

Thank you.

THE AMBASSADOR MR. PETROS

MAVROEDIS VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday afternoon, 3rd/16th February 2017, on the day of the feast of St. Simeon the Reveiver, after the Festal Divine Liturgy at the Holy Monastery of St. Simeon in Kata Monas, the ambassador Mr. Petros Mavroedis, Manager of the Political Affairs Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece, visited the Patriarchate, escorted by the Ambassador Constantine Kakiousis, the Consul of the Greek Embassy in Tel Aviv Mrs. Anna Farou, and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos.

Mr Mavroedis and his escort were received by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers.

In the agenda of the meeting there was an interesting conversation on the nowadays constantly developing religious tourism, contributing in the establishment of peace in the Middle East, despite the difficulties due to the instability of the political affairs, the incidents of violence and the mines, which have not been removed in the Jordan River area, where thousands of pilgrims are attracted from the East Bank of Jordan, the West Bank of Israel and the Palestinian State.

With the many attracting Shrines, the Patriarchate is capable of helping the efforts of Greece to promote religious tourism.

On the occasion of this visit, Mr. Maroedis offered His Beatitude the coat of arms of Greece, while His Beatitude offered Mr. Mavroedis an icon of the Holy Sepulchre and the Book of the History of the Church of Jerusalem by memorable Chrysostom Papadopoulos.

Mr. Mavroedis thanked His Beatitude for His time and departed asking the blessing of the Holy Sepulchre in exercising his

mission.

From Secretariat-General

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HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CUTS THE NEW YEAR CAKE AT THE GREEK COMMUNITY CLUB IN JERUSALEM

On Sunday evening 30th January / 12th February 2017, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos cut the New Year Cake at the Greek Community club in Jerusalem, at the Hall that was built by the memorable Sacristan of the Holy Sepulchre Euthymios, and has been the centre of the Greek community both at hard and good times, with Jerusalem divided and central place as Holy Land of experiencing the traditions of our nation.

His Beatitude was addressed by the President of the Greek community Mr. Damianos Anastasios, referring to the support of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem to the Greek community in the past as well as at present.

Present was also the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, who wished to the members of the community that the year 2017 may be a year of progress,

happiness and prosperity, of unity and fruitful cooperation.

Having sung the festal apolytikia of St. Basil and the Circumcision of the Lord, His Beatitude cut the cake and wished that the New Year may be auspicious, peaceful, happy and creative.

Present was also the Elder Dentist of the Greek Community and author of the book "I am Jerusalem", Dr John Tleel, who mentioned his experience at St. Basil's church near his house at the Old City of Jerusalem.

With all the above, the members of the small Community of Jerusalem had a touching national evening.

From Secretariat-General

ADDRESS OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM AT ICCI & MUSALAHA

On 27th and 28th January / 9th and 10th February 2017, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos sent his address to the two-day conference of ICCI & MUSALAHA, that is, the International Christian Committee in Israel, which was organized at the Legacy hotel in Nazareth. His address is as follows:

CONFERENCE "Addressing the Challenges of Christians in Israel"

Sponsored by

The International Christian Committee in Israel

And Musalaha

At the Legacy Hotel,

Nazareth

9-10 February 2017

“Mr Elias,

Professor Munayer,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We greet you, dear Friends, as you gather in your conference, and we welcome this opportunity to send this message to you as you address various serious questions, and propose courses of action, in support of the Christian community of the Holy Land.

As we reflect on the questions before this conference, we remember the fundamental principle that the presence of the Christian community is an integral component of Middle Eastern society. The very roots of Christianity are here in this land, and without a vital, vibrant native Christian presence, the Middle East would be significantly diminished, and the very character of the Holy Land would be compromised.

Christians are not somehow foreigners or late-comers to the scene. To give just one example the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate is the oldest continuous religious institution in the Holy Land, pre-dating all other religious institutions in the region. This is why it is acknowledged by all Christians as the Mother of all the Churches, founded on the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. This alone is an eloquent testimony to the indigenous nature of the Christian presence here, but there are many others. We must always begin any conversation about the future of the Christian community of the Holy Land by

remembering our proper place at the very heart of this region.

Over the centuries this unique identity has been hidden by subsequent political and social developments. Having been a part of his land since the time of the Apostles, over the centuries our identity has been, as it were, separated out in various ways. We have been considered a separate and distinct group – a *tayfeh* – by those who have ordered our society, and the effect of this identification has been to mask the truth of our deep roots in the region. This has been the case with each successive ruler and governmental authority, stretching back hundreds of years.

One of our chief tasks is always to insist on a counter-narrative, a narrative of identity and belonging that emphasizes the truth of our sacred history, and the testimony of the Holy Places to the Christian presence here. This counter-narrative is not just a story; it is a living witness – a true *martyria* – and this living witness must be evident in the ecclesial and social life of the Christian community.

We who are the Christian community of the Holy Land must be appropriately self-critical in order both to understand and to bear proper responsibility for redressing the imbalances of our present situation. On the one hand, we recognize that we depend on the support and encouragement of Christians and others of good will around the world. We see this support and encouragement most clearly in the many thousands of pilgrims who come to this land every year, and we know that when pilgrims have been spiritually renewed by their visit here, they return home as our best ambassadors.

We can see this also through the engagement of our Churches with each other, and also in the work of the World Council of Churches, the Middle East Council of Churches, and all the many organizations that work with us for peace, justice, and reconciliation.

On the other hand, we are clear that we must see in the Christian community of the Middle East a fresh commitment to the visible practice of the Christian faith, to the showing in new and significant ways to the world the fruits of our Christian faith. This means an increased participation in worship as well as in acts of service. We say this because it is precisely in the Eucharistic gathering that we show our unity and oneness, and make visible our Christian mission here. We must have a hand in determining our own life and future, and we cannot expect others always to do for us what we are failing to do for ourselves.

True partnerships expect and require true maturity. The Christian community of this region has given birth to, and embodies, the noblest achievements of our human civilization. We must resist attempts to infantilize or undermine the genuine nature of our life. We cannot consider ourselves to be without a significant contribution. On the contrary, we take pride in our part in the history and culture of the Middle East, for we embody in the life of the Christian community of the Holy Land the divine-human encounter.

This divine-human encounter is at the heart of our faith, life, and values. The Church, as we have mentioned, is a Eucharistic community that celebrates this reality, and without this the heart of the Holy Land ceases to beat and to give life.

We know only too well from our experience of life in this region that religion determines so much in terms of identity and existence. This makes it all the more crucial that Christians must be committed to the values and truths of our faith, so that our actions reveal our *politeia* in Christ. As Saint Paul encourages us in the Letter to the Philippians, "live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Philippians 1:27).

As we look to the future of the well-being of the Christian

presence in the Holy Land and the Middle East, our own energy and activity as those whose faith is clear for all to see will be the single most determinative factor. We must learn afresh the meaning of our Lord's words in the Gospel of Saint Matthew, when he said "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see you good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Mt. 5:16). If we want to be truly faithful Christians, we also know that we shall experience sadness and sorrow, for we are the community of the Cross. It has been so from the beginning, as Saint Paul says in the Second Letter to Timothy that "indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12).

This is why we are aware that the tasks before us are not easy. We must not be discouraged or faint-hearted. There is no doubt that we live in a time of unprecedented difficulty and even persecution of Christians and other innocent human beings in our region. This puts an even greater premium on the life of our communities and on the role that we who call the Holy Land our home are prepared to undertake. Of course, we need the help of our friends; but we need also a renewal of commitment among our own people, so that together we may offer a new and more visible mission and *martyria* in which the Christian community of the Middle East takes its rightful place in the rich landscape of nationalities and religious communities of our region.

We wish you every encouragement and success in the endeavours of this conference. May God bless you, and all the peoples of our beloved Holy Land.

Thank you."

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM OF GREECE VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday 26th January/8th February 2017, the Minister of Tourism of Greece Mrs. Elena Kountoura visited the Patriarchate with her associates and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos. The Minister and her associates were received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with Hagiotaphite Fathers.

At her visit, the Minister expressed her joy on the third visit she makes in the Holy Land, the prior two of which were at a younger age on occasions of athletic activities. His Beatitude agreed with the Minister after her experience, saying that Jerusalem acts in a transformative way in the souls of both the pilgrims and its citizens, due to the special blessing it bears, to have been watered with the blood of the Prophets, and especially with the very blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For this reason Jerusalem continues to mesmerize and attract thousands of pilgrims throughout the centuries.

On the occasion of this visit, His Beatitude offered Mrs. Kountoura a pectoral Cross to protect her in the practice of her important ministry of tourism of Greece, and wished her a worthy pilgrimage at the Holy Sepulchre in the Church of the Resurrection.

From Secretariat-General

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THE MAYOR OF RHODES VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday 24th January/6th February 2017, the Mayor of Rhodes Mr. Fotis Chatzidiakos visited the Patriarchate, escorted by the coordinator of the restoration project of the Holy Edicule of the H. Sepuchre, the Professor of the National Technical University of Athens Mrs. Antonia Moropoulou, Mrs. Anastasia Chatzilazarou and Maria Siviou.

The Mayor and his escorts were received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

In the agenda of the meeting, His Beatitude referred to the Mayor's hospitality which He enjoyed in His former visit to Rhodes, as well as to the importance of the island of Rhodes as a stopover for the pilgrims to the Holy Land, and a meeting station of cultures, while the Mayor commented on the continuing restoration project of the Holy Edicule, after his visit with Mrs. Moropoulou there earlier that day.

For his contribution to this pious and remarkable project, His Beatitude honoured the Mayor with the honorary distinction of the Grand Commander of the Order of the Nights of the Holy Sepulchre, so that by its Grace, he may continue his work of sustaining our Byzantine tradition in the island of Rhodes, and his efforts for the completion of the restoration project of the Holy Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre.

At the award of this honorary distinction His Beatitude addressed the Mayor as follows:

“Most Honorable Mayor of the Historic and multicultural island of Rhodes, Mr. Fotis Chatzidiakos,

The stronghold of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood welcomes you and your escorts in the lands where once stood the incarnate light of truth, righteousness and peace, meaning God the Logos and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Holy City of Jerusalem, which is inextricably connected with the Sacred History, is the reference point of the whole world. The venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem, known as Rum Orthodox, was rendered by the Divine Providence the guardian and minister, and moreover the deacon of the Holy Shrines, which are the undeniable witnesses of our faith in the crucified and resurrected Christ.

We therefore say this because the pious nation of the Romans, which includes the Christian nation of the Greeks, was highlighted as the natural and spiritual guardian of the God-given heritage of these salvific attestations.

Your pilgrimage Mr. Mayor is of particular importance, not only for the people of Rhodes but also for the people of the Holy Land, and especially for the Christians who inhabit the region of the tested Middle East. This means that your visit is a blessing for both of our peoples.

Your hospitality and reception during Our stay in Rhodes Mr. Mayor remains vivid in our hearts.

We wonder, what can we offer you in return for your offerings? The blessing of the Sacred Cross and the Grace of the Holy and Life-giving Sepulchre of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Mr. Mayor, the Holy Church of Jerusalem with the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood deemed appropriate to honour you with the Cross of

the Order of the Nights of the Holy Sepulchre, and this is in recognition of your contribution and concern for the Holy Sepulchre, as well as your support for the harmonious co-existence of the Religious Communities.

It is moreover noted with particular honour, that the leader of the restoration project of the Holy Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre, Professor of the National Technical University of Athens, Mrs. Antonia Moropoulou, was born and raised in the island of Rhodes.

We wish you a blessed pilgrimage and success in your mission."

Moved by the event, the Mayor thanked His Beatitude and promised to continue his support to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and moreover noted that this honorary distinction has a reflection upon all people of Rhodes.

Following this ceremony, His Beatitude offered a meal to the Mayor. After the meal, the Mayor visited the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Holy Monastery of St. Savvas the Sanctified, accompanied by Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina. In the evening His Beatitude hosted a dinner in honour of the Mayor, who would participate in a tourist exhibition in Tel Aviv the following day.

From Secretariat-General

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THE METROPOLITAN OF MESOGAIA AND THE METROPOLITAN OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARY VISIT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday morning, 21st January/3rd February 2017, the Metropolitan Nikolaos of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki of the Church of Greece and the Metropolitan Arsenios of Austria-Hungary, of the Ecumenical Patriarchate visited the Patriarchate, leading groups of pilgrims.

They were warmly received by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with Hagiotaphite Fathers.

His Beatitude talked to them about the Holy Shrines as testimonies on earth of the incarnate presence of our Lord Jesus Christ and as places of worship which have been preserved by the Great Ones, meaning the Order of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, which was founded by St. Helen in the 4th century A.D.

In these Shrines the pilgrims become viewers and participants of God's glory.

The aforementioned Metropolitans thanked His Beatitude for his words and asked His blessing for their pilgrimage and the celebration of the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Shrines.

From Secretariat-General