

THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF UKRAINE VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday evening, 19th January/ 1st February 2017, the Foreign Minister of Ukraine Mr. Pavel Klimkin, visited the Patriarchate escorted by his personal consultant and the Ambassador of Ukraine in Israel Mrs. Gennadi Nadolenko.

The Minister and his escorts were received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the Patriarchal Commissioner, Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos, the Master of Ceremonies Archimandrite Bartholomew, and Archdeacon Mark.

In the agenda of the meeting there was an interesting conversation on the pastoral activities of the former Patriarchs of Jerusalem in Ukraine and Russia in order to fight the proselytizing of Unia and establish the Orthodox faith.

Of interest was also the conversation of the need for unity of the Orthodox nationalities under the wings of the Church, which respects the national and cultural traditions of each nation and heals in its body the occurring schisms.

This is the viewpoint that His Beatitude also expressed in the Great Synod of the Orthodox faith in Crete last summer.

For this visit, His Beatitude offered an icon of the Holy Sepulchre, wishing the protection of the Ukrainian people by the Grace of our Resurrected Lord Jesus Christ and of the Most Holy and Life-giving Sepulchre.

From Secretariat-General

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THE MUSIC SCHOOL OF ALIMOS VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday 18th/31st January 2017, a team of 16 students of the Music School of Alimos visited the Patriarchate, under the direction of the music teacher Mrs. Ioanna Aggelou, after the completion of two music performances at the Holy Metropolis of Acre-Ptolemaida on Saturday, 15th/28th January 2017, hosted by the Patriarchal Commissioner in Acre Archimandrite Philotheos, and on Sunday 16th/29th January 2017, at the Holy Metropolis of Nazareth, hosted by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth.

The distinguished team was received on the above mentioned day by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, and complimented Mrs. Aggelou and the students for their diligence and performance in music, especially in the Byzantine and traditional music parallel to their achievements in other subjects of Secondary Education.

Expressing their thanks, the students, headed by their Director Mrs. Aggelou, sang traditional songs and the Polychronion to His Beatitude.

From Secretariat-General

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THE TOWNSHIP OF KUFR YASIF VILLAGE VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday 14th/27th January 2017, the Township of Kufr Yasif village of north Israel, Priests and Council, Fr. Theodosios Mahoul and other notables of the Community visited the Patriarchate on the occasion of Christmas and the New Year 2017.

The representatives of the Township were received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem with Hagiotaphite Fathers, especially rejoicing at their visit and counselled them spiritually. One of the representatives addressed His Beatitude in Arabic; the link will be provided in due course.

From Secretariat-General

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HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS' ADDRESS AT THE TOWN HALL OF JERUSALEM

On Wednesday evening 12th/25th January 2017, a reception by the Mayoralty of Jerusalem took place at the Town Hall, on the occasion of the Civic New Year 2017.

At this reception, the Mayor of Jerusalem Mr. Nir Barkat addressed the guests, Leaders of the Christian Churches of Jerusalem or their representatives, Diplomats, Rabbis, Sheikhs, Mukhtars, representatives of the Police, etc., saying that Jerusalem is a Holy City for the three monotheistic religions, in which the followers of the three monotheistic religions have the right to live a peaceful religious co-existence without any phenomena of any form of violence.

To his address, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos replied on behalf of the Christian Churches with the following:

25 January 2017

“Your Excellency, Mr Mayor,

Respected Members of the Municipality,

Fellow leaders of our Religious Communities,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Once again we gather with the civic and religious leaders of Jerusalem to welcome the New Year, and we are grateful to you,

Mr Mayor, for your gracious invitation. We are deeply conscious that, at this time of the year, when the Abrahamic faiths that were born in this region celebrate ancient feasts of light and hope, the eyes of the world are turned to Jerusalem, and we remember the words of the Psalmist:

I was glad when they said unto me,

We will go into the house of the Lord.

Our feet shall stand in thy gates, oh Jerusalem.

(Psalm 122)

No other place has the spiritual or emotional impact on the human soul and imagination as Jerusalem does. Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike have been deeply formed by our devotion to Jerusalem, and even those with no particular religious faith understand the significance of this holy place. It is the focus of deep religious longing both for those who are native to this Holy Land as well as for those who may never be able to come here.

Throughout the world, Jerusalem has found a home. From Ethiopia to Russia, to Europe, there are many little Jerusalems – churches and monasteries that bear the name of Jerusalem or the Holy Sepulchre. There is nowhere where the great Abrahamic faiths have spread where Jerusalem is not celebrated.

We who call this earthly city our home cannot forget the profound place that Jerusalem has in the human spirit as it has shaped religious traditions, national identities, the great heritage of art and music and the literatures of many cultures.

Nor can we ignore the spiritual power of Jerusalem to gather the human family. We need consider only the most recent feast of the Theophany as a prime example, which every year brings

together locals and pilgrims, and not just Christians, but members of all the Abrahamic faiths and a variety of nationalities.

This is the capacity of Jerusalem to be a sign of the unity of the human community, across every division. Jerusalem knows no distinctions and is the spiritual home of all people of good will. Recently a young woman pilgrim was returning to Jerusalem, and when asked why she was coming, replied that she loves Jerusalem because it is a holy place. This is the universal human response to this City.

We as civic and spiritual leaders living in Jerusalem must remember this. We can never be so focussed on the temporal management of Jerusalem that we lose sight that Jerusalem is first and foremost a holy place for all of us – Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike. This is the mission not just of religious leadership; the civic leadership has a responsibility to ensure that the religious communities of the City are respected and valued.

We know from long experience that when pilgrims are received well, they return to their homes as good ambassadors. It is not enough that pilgrims come here from other countries; they must be made to feel welcome among us. And equal responsibility falls upon us all for the integrity of the indigenous religious communities of our City. The well-being of each depends directly on the well-being of all, and Jerusalem's spiritual embrace is wide enough for everyone.

Therefore as we celebrate this New Year, Mr. Mayor, we are reminded of this great responsibility that we all share, whether we are civic, religious, or business leaders. May this New Year be a year of a renewed commitment of peace, reconciliation, and co-existence. May God bless you and your colleagues in the municipality in your efforts on behalf of all, and may God bless all the peoples of our beloved Holy City and Holy Land.

Happy New Year!

Thank you.”

From Secretariat-General

THE PRESIDENT OF THE GREEK PARLIAMENT VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday evening, 12th/25th January 2017, the President of the Greek Parliament Mr. Nikolaos Voutsis visited the Patriarchate, as part of his visit in Israel, accompanied by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and his associates.

The President of the Greek Parliament and his escort was received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with Hagiotaphite Fathers.

Within the agenda of the meeting there was an interesting conversation on Mr. Voutsis' visit in Israel, especially on his visit to Yad Vashem, monument on the memory of the Jew victims of the Nazi occupation and furry, on the recognition by the State of Israel of the Greek-Jew victims' rescue by the Greek Church and Government, and on the 348 Greeks who rescued Jews by putting their own lives in danger.

There was also talk on the project of the Renovation of the Holy Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre with the agreement of the three Communities, and the research and diligent execution of a scientific, religious and unique work by the N.T.U.A., since its foundation by the Greek nation and by Comnenos in 1810,

who revealed parts of the rock of the Tomb-Cave where our Lord Jesus Christ was buried and resurrected, clearly projecting messages of reconciliation and peace.

After the exchanging of gifts, Mr. Voutsis thanked His Beatitude, with the plan to visit the Holy Sepulchre the following day.

From Secretariat-General

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THE PRESIDENT OF THE PARLIAMENT OF CYPRUS VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday 12th/25th January 2017, the President of the Parliament of Cyprus visited the Patriarchate, accompanied by his associates and the Cypriot Ambassador in Tel Aviv Mrs Thessalia Siambou and other embassy staff.

Mr. Syllouris and his associates were warmly received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan and other Hagiotaphite Fathers.

An interesting conversation on the relationship between the

Church of Jerusalem and that of Cyprus took place on the agenda of the meeting, the latter having received Christianity by the first, as witnessed by the Acts of the Apostles.

This relationship has been sustained throughout the centuries either through Hagiotaphites of Cypriot origin, or through visiting pilgrims from Cyprus in the Holy Land.

Of interest was also the conversation regarding the role of the Patriarchate in the preservation of the religious and cultural Status Quo of Jerusalem, through its spiritual strengths and natural heritage assets.

After the exchanging of gifts, the President of the Parliament visited the Holy Sepulchre where he was received by the Elder Sacristan Most Reverend Archbishop Isidoros of Ierapolis, and then, through Via Dolorosa he visited the Holy Monastery of Praetorion and Christ's Prison, where he was received by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Parthenios.

From Secretariat-General

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**THE PRESIDENT OF THE
DEMOCRATIC PARTY MR. NIKOLAOS
PAPADOPOULOS VISITS THE**

PATRIARCHATE

At noon on 12th/25th January 2017, the President of the political Democratic Party of the Cypriot Democracy Mr. Nikolaos Papadopoulos and his associates visited the Patriarchate.

Mr. Papadopoulos and his escort were warmly received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the Most Reverend Archbishop Kyriakos of Nazareth and other Hagiotaphite Fathers.

Within the agenda of the meeting there was an interesting conversation on the Byzantine identity of the Greeks, the origin of the Arab-speaking Greek Orthodox people of Palestine, which is sustained by the Orthodox Church, respecting the National identity of the peoples belonging to it.

Furthermore, there was talk over the mission of the Patriarchate in sustaining the Status Quo of Jerusalem, protecting the peaceful religious co-existence of Christians, Muslims and Jews. This mission of the Patriarchate is respected by the local Governments of Israel, Jordan and Palestine.

After the exchanging of gifts, Mr. Papadopoulos continued his visit by venerating the Holy Sepulchre.

From Secretariat-General

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RECENT ACTIVITIES OF THE HOLY ARCHDIOCESE OF QATAR

1. Visit at the ruins of a 7th century Monastery at the Sir Bani Yas island

On Thursday 6th/19th January 2017, at the conference room of St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in Abu Dhabi, capital of United Arab Emirates, the annual meeting of the Gulf Churches Fellowship took place.

On the second day of the meeting there was a visit at Sir Bani Yas island, at the United Arab Emirates border with Qatar. The participants' team at the conference, approximately 30 clergy men, from different doctrines and countries of the Arab peninsula was accompanied by the Minister of Tolerance Seikha Lubna Khalid Al Qasimi herself.

The organization of the visit was undertaken by the Ministry of Tolerance of the United Arab Emirates Government and the expenses were covered by His Excellency, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi.

The discovery of the ruins took place in 1992, excavations began in 1994, and continue until the present time. Three million trees have been planted in the island, and a massive collection of animals has been transferred from various countries of the world, while there have also been constructions of an airport, three hotels and recreational areas.

The transition to the island was by plane, on a special 25-min duration flight. The archaeologists who have been carrying out the excavations gave a detailed guided tour to the members of

the clergy and their formal companions' team. During the tour, there was the first time ever presentation of artefacts with Christian symbols, which will be displayed at the Emirate of Abu Dhabi Museum.

2. The Feast of Theophany in Qatar

The Feast of Theophany was celebrated with the appropriate ecclesiastical brilliance at the Archdiocese of Qatar. Due to local conditions, the feast was moved to Friday 7th /20th January. On Thursday morning, 6th/19th January 2017, the Royal Hours were read after Matins, and Vespers was held in the evening. In the morning after Matins, the D. Liturgy was celebrated, followed by the Blessing of the Waters.

The services were led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Makarios of Qatar, with concelebrants Archimandrite Savvas and other clergy, at the participation of the Christian Congregation of the local Church.

From the Holy Archdiocese of Qatar

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VISIT OF THE HAGIOTAPHITE

BROTHERHOOD TO THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE ON THE OCCASION OF CHRISTMAS

Before noon on Friday 7th/20th January 2017, the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood led by its Hegoumen, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos returned the Armenian Church their visit on the occasion of Christmas which they celebrate together with the feast of Theophany as it was the custom of the Orthodox Church during the early Byzantine period.

The Hagiotaphite Brotherhood was received by the Armenian Patriarch Nourhan Manoukian with Armenian Fathers and gave them a welcoming address.

His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem addressed the Armenian Patriarch and the Armenian clergy with the following address in English:

" 20th January 2017

Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved members of the Armenian Brotherhood,

Dear Fathers,

We thank you for your greetings for the great Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we rejoice in the words of this hymn:

Today Christ is born of the Virgin in Bethlehem!

*Today he who knows no beginning begins to be,
and the world is made flesh.
The heavenly powers rejoice,
and the earth with humankind makes glad:
The Magi offer gifts to the Master,
and the shepherds marvel at his birth.
And we cry aloud unceasingly:
Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace, good will among all people*

(From Matins of the Nativity)

The Feast of the Nativity is one of great joy, a joy that is a gift from God the Father, and that is at the heart of our Christian faith and witness. This is the great joy that the angels announced to the shepherds (Lk 2:10), and this is the same joy that is born again on this Feast in the Holy Cave.

We must always nurture this joy in ourselves and in our communities. Our Christmas celebration has a special significance for our Christian *martyria*, not least because we are experiencing new developments in the challenges that we face in our region: the rise of extremism, persecution, and displacement; attempts to restrict some religious practices; and the pressure that is put on our sacred property and on our inheritance. And in the world over we see a disturbing rise of violence of all kinds.

Jerusalem is the place where the members of our local Christian communities, the pilgrims who come to us, and all people of good will, are renewed in the energy of hope, the consolation of the fruits of our faith, and the sacred atmosphere of this Holy Land.

This is the visible sign that our mission is not in vain. Those who are critical of the Church must understand that our spiritual and Eucharistic mission is strong and continues to have a huge impact. We are hearing calls for a fresh understanding of the oversight of the Holy City, with a special body to ensure the Status Quo and the administration of the Holy Places. This is a challenge to our role, and we must be prepared to assume this greater role, which must increase in importance with respect to the establishment of a lasting peace. Therefore our unity of heart and purpose is crucial.

Christmas is the feast of peace and justice. We who lay claim to be the followers of the Prince of Peace know that in trusting God there can be no peace without justice. As the Prophet Isaiah proclaims:

*The effect of justice will be peace,
and the result of justice,
quietness and trust forever.*

(Isaiah 32:17)

The peace and justice of God's promise to us are assured to us again by our Lord himself, when in the Sermon on the Mount he says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Mt. 5:6). Therefore there is no way for peace to co-exist with injustice.

In this Feast of the Nativity, we declare that the fruit of truth, justice, and reconciliation have been brought to earth by the Incarnation of the Divine Logos. This fruit of new life the world rejects, but we know it to be the way, the truth and the life.

This coming to earth of the fruit of truth, justice, and reconciliation is the cause and the sustenance of our joy. As

the spiritual leaders of the Christian community and the guardians of the Holy Shrines, we give thanks to God, who has enlightened our minds and strengthened our hearts to join our efforts in the restoration of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre and to continue the renovations of the Church of the Nativity.

We rejoice in particular at the good work that we are doing together for the restoration of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre. Our unity of purpose in the restoration of this, the most holy site in the world, is a wonderful witness to our common faith in the Incarnation and the Resurrection, and it shows that we can indeed overcome a long history of suspicion and difficulty for the sake of our spiritual mission.

May Christ our God, who is born in the Cave of Bethlehem, renew his joy in us and in the hearts of our communities and all the people of the Holy Land, that we may work for the fruits of truth, justice, and reconciliation, and may God bless you and the members of your Brotherhood, this Christmastide and the Holy season of Epiphany.

We pray to our Lord Jesus Christ that the New Year will be a fresh season of reconciliation and co-existence of the Abrahamic traditions in the Holy Land, for this is the work that brings forth the fruit of peace.

Thank you”

From Secretariat-General

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THE GREEK MINISTER OF PUBLIC ORDER AND CITIZEN PROTECTION VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday evening, 4th /17th January 2017, the Minister of Public Order and Citizen Protection Mr. Nikolaos Toskas visited the Patriarchate, accompanied by a team of his associates, his wife 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.

Within the framework of this visit, the Minister asked His Beatitude to update him on the progress of the exceptional work of the maintenance and restoration of the Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre by the N.T.U.A. , on the incoming pilgrims despite the recurring incidents of violence in Jerusalem, tomorrow's visit in the River Jordan, the arrivals of a multitude of local and from other areas of Israel pilgrims there, as well as pilgrims from the occupied Palestinian regions, and those from Greece, Russia, Romania, Ukraine and Cyprus.

His Beatitude also briefed the Minister on the efforts of the Patriarchate to preserve the Status Quo of the Holy Shrines and the character of Jerusalem as the Holy City and a prototype of a peaceful, religious cohabitation.

The Minister thanked His Beatitude for his reception and updating, while His Beatitude asked him to convey to the Prime Minister of Greece Mr. Alexis Tsipras His best wishes and the invitation for the delivery of the Edicule at the completion

of its restoration project.

The Minister offered His Beatitude a gilded crown with laurel leaves, while His Beatitude offered him and each of the members of his colleagues icons of the Holy Edicule and of Theotokos; the visitors left with the intention to visit the Church of the Resurrection the following day.

From Secretariat-General

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