

ARMENIAN COMMUNITY LEADERS IN JERUSALEM SEEK SUPPORT FROM PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III AMIDST EXISTENTIAL CHALLENGES

Jerusalem, December 16, 2023

Representatives of institutions of the Armenian community in Jerusalem engaged in a momentous visit to the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, where His Beatitude Theophilos III, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, graciously received them. The meeting served as a platform for community representatives to express gratitude, discuss recent existential challenges, and seek guidance from the Patriarch.

In light of recent adversities stemming from the aggressive actions of Israeli radicals, the Armenian community highlighted the lack of restraint by the Israeli police. The source of contention revolves around an illegitimate land deal concerning Church property, mirroring a situation akin to that of the Orthodox Patriarchate Jaffa Gate properties.

During the meeting, the community representatives extended their gratitude to Patriarch Theophilos and presented an official letter outlining the complexities they face. They passionately appealed for assistance in resolving the issues, acknowledging H.B.'s pivotal role in safeguarding the interests of the Christian community in Jerusalem.

In response, His Beatitude expressed his awareness of the challenges faced by the Armenian community and assured them of His commitment to providing support. The Patriarch of Jerusalem recommended that the community should collaborate closely with their spiritual leadership, emphasizing the imperative of unity among Christian communities to fortify the

Christian presence in the Holy Land.

His Beatitude extended His blessings to the Armenian community, lauding their courageous initiative in addressing the prevailing challenges. As the meeting concluded, the Patriarch conveyed His heartfelt wishes for a blessed Christmas season, fostering a spirit of hope and solidarity among the Christian brethren in Jerusalem.

This interaction stands as a testament to the unwavering commitment of Patriarch Theophilos to advocate for unity, peace, and justice within the fervent Christian communities of the Holy Land.

From Secretariat-General

THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM ADDRESSES THE URGENCY FOR A CEASEFIRE IN GAZA AND AFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO MULTIRELIGIOUS COEXISTENCE IN JERUSALEM

Tuesday, December 13, 2023

In a diplomatic visit, His Excellency Ambassador Sebastian Molina, the Representative of Chile to Ramallah, received a cordial welcome from The Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Theophilos III, at the Orthodox Patriarchate in the Holy City.

H.B. Opened his remarks with the hope of a quick ending to the atrocities in Gaza through an immediate ceasefire. H.E.

Sebastian Molina reflected on his country's position regarding the war. He also highlighted the substantial number of Palestinian Orthodox Christians who migrated from Beit Jala, Bethlehem, and Shepherd's Field to Chile over the last two centuries. The Ambassador stressed that those Palestinian migrants and their descendants maintain a deep desire to uphold their pastoral and spiritual connection with the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, their Mother Church and the Mother of all churches.

Despite the Jerusalem Patriarchate's designating their pastoral responsibility to the Church of Antioch in the United States, as the Canon Laws of the Church dictate, the Patriarchate through H.B. expressed its genuine interest in keeping them in thought and prayer as well as personal engagement.

H.B. Theophilos III emphasized the religious significance of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, advocating for a solution to political problems based on shared values from the scriptures: love for all, peace, and reconciliation. H.B. assured the Patriarchate of Jerusalem's pledge to defend the Status Quo in Jerusalem under the Hashemite Custodianship of King Abdullah and to promote respect for every individual in the city as the image of God.

Touching upon challenges with radical Israelis seeking exclusive control of Jerusalem, the Patriarch of Jerusalem underscored the city's multicultural and multireligious character. He added: "This inclusivity is evident in the thousands of pilgrims visiting holy places, particularly the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, irrespective of religious or ethnic backgrounds." H.B. pointed out that the Patriarchate of Jerusalem collaborates with other churches to advocate for peace and protect the rights of Christians in the Holy Land, rooted in the agreement between Patriarch Sophronios and Khalif Omar bin Khattab in the 7th century, recognizing the Patriarch of Jerusalem as an Ethnarch.

H.B. The Patriarch of Jerusalem also highlighted joint efforts of churches in sustaining schools where Christians and Muslims study together, fostering an environment for peaceful coexistence in society. H.E. Ambassador Sebastian Molina expressed gratitude for the update provided by His Beatitude and pledged to be cooperative and supportive of the Churches of the Holy Land. The meeting concluded with the exchange of gifts and expressions of gratitude.

From Secretariat-General

THE HEAD OF THE RUSSIAN MISSION IN JERUSALEM (MISSIA) VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, November 28/December 11, 2023, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos received the Head of the Russian Spiritual Mission (MISSIA) Archimandrite Vassianos and Archimandrite Nikon for a visit to express thanks for His wishes on the Name Day of H.H.B. the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril and to ask Him to send a Hierarch to the ceremony marking 150 years since the foundation of the Russian Monastery in Jericho, near the sycamore tree of Zacchaeus.

Likewise, Archimandrite Vassianos asked for the blessing of His Beatitude, so that the Russian Spiritual Mission (MISSIA) will celebrate a Divine Liturgy in the Basilica of the Nativity of Bethlehem on December 22nd 2023/January 4th 2024 in view of the approaching Christmas Eve, December 25, 2023 /7th January 2024.

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE AWARDS A PRIEST

On Saturday, November 26/ December 9, 2023, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos honoured the Head of the Rum Orthodox Community of Bir Zeit, reverend Priest Stavros Aranki with the medal of the Cross-bearer, in recognition of his dedicated Priestly ministry.

His Beatitude praised the Priest for his prosperous ministry so far and wished him to continue likewise by the help of the Holy Cross, for the benefit of the Christian flock of the Patriarchate.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEASTS OF THE HOLY NEW MARTYR PHILOUMENOS AND OF THE APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST MATTHEW AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, November 16/29, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the new Hieromartyr Philoumenos of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew.

On this feast, the Church, especially that of Jerusalem, commemorates that on November 29, 1979, the Archimandrite Philoumenos, who served as the Hegoumen of Jacob's Well, found

a martyr's death by an irreverent person next to Jacob's well, at the time of Vespers.

In honour of these two Saints, at Jacob's Well the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Archimandrite Leontios with the co-celebration of Priests of this area, hosted by the Hegoumen and founder of the marvellous Cathedral dedicated to Saint Foteini the Samaritan woman, Archimandrite Ioustinos. The service was attended by only a few faithful Christians due to the ongoing hostilities.

For this feast, His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos sent the following Sermon:

"If the world hates you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you...If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15,18-20), the Lord says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians,

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in this holy place of the confession of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Samaritan woman that "the Messiah that is to come, I that speak unto thee am he" (c.f. John 4,25-26). This is also the place of the martyrdom of the confessor and martyr Philoumenos, and we have come to honour his commemoration.

The Hieromartyr Filoumenos emigrated from the island of Cyprus to the Holy Land and joined the monastic order of the Studious (Spoudaioi), i.e. the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, he was distinguished by his devout zeal, his self-sacrificing ministry in the Holy Places and especially his care for our Christ-named flock, listening to the sermon of Saint Paul saying: "... Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1,28).

Just as the blessed Paul exhorted to always be a perfect man "in the virtues or in the knowledge of the mystery of Christ", as Zigavinos interprets, likewise, our Father Philoumenos did not stop instructing, that is advising and teaching every man, that Christ is the Saviour of the world, the truth and the light. And this is because, as Saint Chrysostom says, apart from Christ there is no perfection. "Perfect man, not in the [Mosaic] law, nor in angels, but in Christ."

His perfection in Christ, his union even after Christ, was achieved by Saint Philoumenos, becoming a co-witness of Christ's passion on the Cross, with the testimony of his blood, which [witness] was not accepted by his murderer. Paul saw the Lord in ecstasy saying to him: " Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me." (Acts 22,18).

Saint Philoumenos belongs to the cloud of martyrs (Heb. 12:1) of those who testified for the truth and for the Church of God, who was healed by his own blood" (Acts 20:28). This means that the glorious martyrdom of Christ is that which founded the Church of God, for the salvation of men. The Church of Jerusalem rejoices in the Lord, because "it first accomplished redemption through His [Christ's] blood, the forgiveness of trespasses according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7). Saint John of Damascus praises this fact, saying: "Hail, holy Zion, Mother of the Churches of God's dwelling place, for thou wast the first to receive forgiveness of sins through the Resurrection."

In other words, the martyrdom of Saint Philoumenos is the testimony of the blood of Christ, which was given as a ransom and freed us from the captivity of our sins, extending over the centuries. Moreover, it is a testimony in the Holy Land of the Holy Shrines, which testify to the mystery of piety, of the incarnation, namely of the God, Word and our Saviour Christ, of His martyrdom on the Cross and of His Resurrection. The city of Jerusalem, watered with the holy blood of the

Righteous One, that is, of our Saviour Christ, was transformed into an inexhaustible spring, gushing forth the divine blood of "the faithful and true witness of Christ" (Cf. Revelation 3:14).

This witness, " Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood", (Revelation 1,5), revealed the meaning of the unfathomable indeed mystery of the martyrdom of the Cross of our Saviour Christ, Whose (Christ's) every believer is called to imitate the martyrdom. " If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:20) the Lord says.

Interpreting the above words of the Lord, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "... as if Christ had said: I am the Creator of all things and I have under my control all things, things in heaven and things on earth, I did not put a rein on their anger... but rather I allowed them to choose what seemed right to them, and to do whatever they wanted, even though I had the power to prevent this when I was being prosecuted. So, when you were persecuted, you endured for a moment the aversion of those who hate you... and pursued the same ends that I pursued, that you might be partakers of the same glory. For those who sympathize with me will reign with me."

This is precisely what the holy Hieromartyr Philoumenos, who is honoured today, sought, imitating Jesus Christ in sympathizing with Him and co-reigning with Him in Christ's heavenly kingdom with all his co-martyrs and especially with the great martyr Foteini the Samaritan woman, to whom the Lord "sent His light and truth", (Cf. Psalm 43,3).

We, my beloved brothers, beseech our Father Philoumenos, whose remaining incorruptible relics adorn the Church of Christ, so that his supplications and the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, may be deemed as Saint

Paul says, "that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Eph. 4:1). May the peace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all those who love Him. Amen. Merry and blessed Christmas.

From Secretariat-General

THE CELEBRATION OF THE 18TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ELECTION AND ENTHRONEMENT OF HIS BEATITUDE OUR FATHER AND PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III

On Wednesday, November 9/22, 2023, at 10:30 p.m. The 18th anniversary of the election and enthronement of His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III was celebrated.

Due to this event, a Doxology was performed in the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, presided over by H.H.B. with the co-celebration of the High Priests of the Throne, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks, Elders from the parishes of Israel and from Palestine, Archdeacon Mark and other deacons. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon on the right and Mr Angelos Yiannopoulos on the left, in the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Dimitrios

Angelosopoulos and members of the Greek community.

After the Doxology, the whole congregation went to the Patriarchate Reception Hall, where the Geronda Chief Secretary, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina addressed His Beatitude as follows:

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

The city of Gaza is honoured by its mention in the book of the Acts of the Apostles of the early Church. ” A man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians” was headed to Gaza, when the Spirit of the Lord informed the apostle Philip to approach his chariot, preach to him and baptize him when they found water (c.f. Acts 8, 27-39). Subsequently, from AD 306, Gaza and its surroundings were the area of missionary, monastic and social activity of Saint Hilarion the Great, disciple of Saint Anthony. Between the years 395 and 421 AD Saint Porphyrios, who came from Thessalonica to the Holy Land, was ordained bishop of Gaza, and established Christianity in Gaza through many struggles. On these foundations from 743 AD, Cosmas of Jerusalem, the melodist Bishop of Maiuma of Gaza, developed his pastoral work for ten years.

This city, after such a glorious Christian cultural heritage, survived the political conquests and mutations of history, alas! today it is plagued and desolated by hostilities, the consequences of which are the ruins of building complexes, the loss of lives of innocent civilians, women and children, “of which there was no number”, which cause a heart-rending sigh, including the 18 victims of those who took refuge at the holy

Monastery of Saint Porphyrios of our Patriarchate.

Under the shadow of these gloomy and tragic events and in a spirit of participation towards the tested people and the Greek-Orthodox Arabic-speaking flock in Gaza, the Patriarchate and the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood within it is not celebrating solemnly this year. Instead, a special memorial is being made ecclesiastically, through Doxology at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, for the event of the election and enthronement of Your Holy Beatitude at the glorious Throne of the Mother of Churches, by God's blessing and the unanimous votes of the Holy Synod, eighteen years ago.

Continuing our ecclesiastical Synaxis in this historic hall of the Patriarchate, we consider it worthy and fair to mention that this honourable but also multi-responsible Patriarchal Pastorate was taken over by His Beatitude with the burden of illegal agreements on His shoulders, from those who promised an incalculable amount of material and cultural value property of the Patriarchate, that is the Imperial and Petra hotels of the Jaffa Gate. For the cancellation of these agreements, Your adamant Beatitude went to court and other battles which demanded huge sums of money.

As one of the priorities of Your Work, Your Beatitude had the preservation of this property under the full ownership management of the Patriarchate, mainly to ensure the always unimpeded access of Christian leaders and pilgrims to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. You did not neglect the care of the dignity of the Church, through the participation of our Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood in the conservation works carried out along with the Franciscans and the Armenians of the floor of the Rotunda and the area below the Seven Arches and to the south of it. Moreover, the preservation and restoration of the old Russian-made chandeliers by special conservators from Russia, as well as donors, under the direction and cooperation of the icon-conservator from Cyprus Mr Stavrou Andreas. Mr Stavrou continues his conservation work by extension to the

antiquities of the Library of the Monastery of the Holy Cross and the lower hall of the Patriarchate and to the icons of the Gallery for the purpose of their appropriate placement in the museum which is being prepared to be housed in the preserved and renovated house of the Blessed Patriarch Diodorus.

It should also be noted that the efforts of Your Beatitude were intense in rallying and mobilizing the Christian Churches of Jerusalem in a common dynamic Christian witness under the leadership of the Patriarchate, to protect the rights of Christians in their native Holy Land from verbal and physical abuse by the radical extreme Israeli elements, one of which happens to be the ongoing occupation of the property of the Patriarchate belonging to the School and the cemetery of Holy Zion.

To the Consuls of other visitors of various countries and those of the European Union who visited the Patriarchate without interruption, you put a great effort into their understanding and consideration of the factor of the religions, Jewish, Christian and Muslim, and their doctrines, as the basis for the solution of the old political Palestinian problem, wherever the status of the Old City of Jerusalem is preserved.

Through Your actions, Your Beatitude, you promoted the Patriarchate to the position it deserved as the most ancient Christian institution of the greatest religious, cultural and pacifying offering and scope and beyond the limits of its jurisdiction in the Holy Land. This is inferred from our visit, beginning last September, to the Exhibition organized in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, to the Ecumenical Centre of the W.C.C. in Geneva, where you presented the renovated Basilica of the Nativity of Bethlehem last year as the heart and the shield protecting the identity of the Christian and the entire Palestinian people. This is also inferred from our visit to the European Union in Brussels, during which you reiterated the need to protect the rights of

the Christians of the Holy Land, not least through your participation as an honoured guest at the coronation of the King of the United Kingdom Charles III with oil consecrated to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Also, from our recent visit to Pope Francis in the Vatican, when you once again appealed for the protection of the threatened Christians of the Holy Land and expressed the commitment of our Patriarchate to mediate for a dialogue for the sake of peace between Russia and Ukraine and for the sake of the dialogue of avoiding the consolidation of the schism in the disturbed unity of the Orthodox Churches.

In the dialogue with the other Christian Churches, our Patriarchate also continued to participate in order to approach and present, despite the existing doctrinal differences, a common Christian witness to the world suffering from various problems and asking for comfort. Proof of this is the dialogue hosted by the Anglican Church between the Orthodox and the Anglican Church, which hastily completed its work, due to the onset of the war in Gaza.

It is worth noting that since the start of this disastrous war, Your Beatitude has continuously consulted with the other local Churches for joint calls for a cease-fire and declarations of condemnation of the attacks, from which the innocent victims were numerous. The victims of the Monastery of Saint Porphyrios, for the repose of the souls of whom Your Beatitude held a memorial service in the Church of the Resurrection and the victims of the Gaza Hospital of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem.

The worthily commemorated here today, Your Beatitude, are only a few contributions from the rich Pastoral activity of our Patriarchate and Your inspired guidance and prudent government management for the strengthening and encouragement of us, the Holy Sepulchre Fathers, and the clergy and the people, so that we may continue united with each other and with You in our struggle for the conquest of what is best and perfect for the

praise of our blessed race and the glory of our Triune God.

Raising the glass, Your Beatitude, on behalf of the Brotherhood and the Holy Synod, I wish You many returns in good health, unbroken and stable, undisturbed, so that you may rejoice and be glad when you see the Church of Zion, the Throne of which God bestowed upon You, heading from success to success, from progress to progress and from glory to glory. So be it."

The Consul General Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos addressed His Beatitude as follows:

"Your Beatitude,

I have the special honour to express to You the warmest congratulations of the Hellenic Republic and mine personally on the 18th anniversary of your enthronement. My colleagues and I are happy to celebrate this glorious anniversary together with the Patriarchate, the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and your Flock, filled with profound respect for Your Beatitude and gratitude for Your struggle and the precious work You are doing, since the blessed day on which You ascended the holy Throne of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

No one forgets that You took on this task under conditions that were among the most demanding and dangerous in the modern history of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. But the Church always finds the strength and wisdom to face even the most serious crises. In the long and arduous journey since then, You and the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood have restored and strengthened the prestige and radiance of the Patriarchate, for the benefit not only of its high spiritual and pastoral work but also of the safeguarding of its rights, the protection of holy places in the Holy Land and of its highest mission, the guardianship of its two-thousand-year tradition in the Holy Land.

Moreover, under your enlightened leadership, the Patriarchate

of Jerusalem is not only an example of ardent adherence to the guardianship of its tradition and the Orthodox Faith but also a guide on the path of moderation and dialogue. In times of constant challenges, heightened international rivalry and intolerance, you have contributed the most with your guidance, with patience and brotherly love, so as to establish admirable unity and understanding among the Christian Churches in the Holy Land. An example of global reach, but also a necessary condition for saving the Christian heritage and presence in the Holy Land.

There is no lack of challenges today and perhaps there won't be any in the foreseeable future. Jerusalem, the Holy Places and the wider region are once again at the centre of a profound crisis, which has turned into a war. Against the pain and misery that provoke irrational and violent politics, national and religious upheavals, the Patriarchate, under your leadership, provides spiritual consolation, but also is an active and unwavering factor of stability and settlement. Above all, it is a reference point for noble moral and spiritual values, keeping unquenchable the hope that your trying flock, but also all the troubled Humanity, need.

As you know, I was called upon to take up my duties just three weeks before the outbreak of the present crisis. I am sincerely grateful to You for your undivided cooperation, but also for the wise advice you have generously provided me, valuable aids in my own mission.

Your Beatitude,

Greece surrounds you and the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood with sincere and profound respect, fully aware of your arduous mission. I have the honour to renew today on its behalf its assurances that it remains committed to its will to come as a helper and supporter of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. For the Hellenic Republic, the defence of the rights and privileges of the Patriarchate in the Holy Land, the strengthening of the

guardianship of the Orthodox tradition and the safeguarding of the Christian heritage and presence, are imperatives of the utmost importance. Which concerns the whole of Hellenism, inside and outside the Greek borders, its historical path and its spiritual identity. Therefore, and its future.

On behalf of the Hellenic Republic and the members of the Consulate General, I offer You our warmest wishes for many and happy returns on the Patriarchal Throne of Jerusalem, health and continued success in Your high mission.”

His Beatitude thanked all of them with the following reply:

“The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works” the Psalmist exclaims, (Ps. 144,9).

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Dimitrios Angelesopoulos,

Dear Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Dear Christians,

“My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord” (Ps. 144,21), as Holy David says, on today’s Eighteenth, the anniversary of the Enthronement of Our Mediocrity on the historical and Apostolic Throne of the holy and righteous James the Brother of God and the first Hierarch of the Holy Church of Jerusalem.

As the apostle Luke says: “The Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20,28). This Holy Spirit made the righteous James the Brother of God, shepherd and “bishop of God” (Titus 1,7), “A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Heb. 8, 2).

We say this because the solemn anniversary of this enthronement does not relate to Our Mediocrity, but to the sacred institution of the Church, of which Christ is the head,

and He is the Saviour of her body (cf. Eph. 5,23) according to Saint Paul.

Because we too, being grateful for the Lord's favours, went after the accompanying honourable members of our Venerable Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, we rendered a thanksgiving praise to the Holy Triune God " who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth forever" (Ps. 135,4).

Recalling the words of Saint Peter: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5, 2-3), we have not diminished the daily care of the Christians and of the pious flock of the Rum Orthodox Communities serving under the spiritual and ecclesiastical jurisdiction our Patriarchate, saying supplications and prayers of thanksgiving for all people, as the Lord will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Tim. 2,1-4).

Moreover, we did not give sleep to Our eyes and eyelids (cf. Psalm 131,4) in order to preserve the Holy Shrines which are the visible and true witness of the iconographic history in general and of the great mystery of piety (1 Tim. 3,1-6) more specifically, but also of the holy places of logical worship as well as the defence of the indescribable privileges and sovereign rights of the pious and noble race and nation of the Rum Orthodox Christians.

Even so, following the words of the Prophet Isaiah: "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest" (Is. 62,1), we did not stop protesting and denouncing every political and diplomatic authority, locally and internationally, the subjugated alteration of the existing poly- religious and multinational character of the holy city of Jerusalem, on the one hand, and the characterization

invented by the Civic Authorities and related factors, ab-antiquo recognized ecclesiastical properties and pilgrimage lands, as public gardens (National Parks), on the other. Let it be noted that for this we have the Primates and the other Christian Communities in the Holy Land as -companions.

On the other hand, with agony and deep sadness we are watching the indescribable dramatic developments of the ongoing military conflict in the Gaza Strip, the loss of innocent human lives regardless of age, as well as the precarious situation of those taking refuge in the Holy Monastery of Saint Porphyrios of Gaza for protection, as well as of our Holy Sepulchre brothers, His Eminence Archbishop Alexios of Tiberias, our Patriarchal Representative, and the Hieromonk Silas, who is the ministering Priest there, who serve our Christian flock with self-denial. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his soul for the sheep" (John 10,11), says the Lord.

Our Venerable Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and Our Mediocrity, being faithful to our spiritual and ecclesiastical mission, which was bestowed upon us by the Divine Providence, and hearing the Chief of the Apostles Peter's advice, "brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (2 Peter 1,10), have unceasingly tried to recompense to no man evil for evil, to live peaceably with all men (c.f. Romans 12,17-18). We put in action the good tidings of love, peace and righteousness of Christ. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14,17), Saint Paul preaches.

The eighteen-year enthronement anniversary of Our Mediocrity, celebrated today, relates mainly and primarily to the God-ordained institution of the Church of Jerusalem, founded on the redeeming blood of our Saviour Christ. For He tells us all that "the gates of heaven shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18) and "that God is indeed among us" (1

Cor. 14:25). This does not mean that the purpose of the holy Church of God is the building up in Christ and the salvation of our souls. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jud. 1:3), the Apostle Jude orders.

We say this because the mission of the Christian in our contemporary world, when "the whole world lies in wickedness" (1 Jn. 5:19) and is under the bondage of sin, is the testimony of our faith in Christ "unto the world, to bear witness to the truth" (John 18:37). This is exactly the truth of Christ, which we were called to bear witness to. "Do not receive a spirit of slavery, but receive a spirit of adoption" (Rom. 8,15) and "with freedom, Christ has set us free" (Gal. 5,1) the wise Paul preaches. The testimony of the truth of Christ is denounced throughout the world by the holy Church of Jerusalem from the place of the "Martyrdom" that is Golgotha as well as the "Empty Tomb" of our Risen Saviour Christ.

We, the successors of the apostolic office of Saint James the Brother of God, and as Saint Hippolytus says, "appointed guardians of the Church", are not alone in our Patriarchal, ecumenical and pastoral ministry, because we have as communicants and meet comforters the respected and beloved in Christ, Holy Sepulchre Fathers and brothers High Priests, priests, hieromonks, deacons and monks distinguished by the moral and sacrificial and philanthropic spirit of the Church. "Let us all love one another in unity; and I shall not see my neighbour according to the flesh, but in Christ Jesus. Let there not be among you that which may divide you, but be united to the bishop, submitting to God through him in Christ" the hieromartyr Ignatius of Antioch orders.

This enthronement anniversary of Our Mediocrity calls us all to the unity of faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit, especially with the brotherly Orthodox Churches. "Unity is

achieved through love and truth and a preference for good", the great Origen points out. This "good choice" was shown very recently by the sister and neighbour Holy Church of Antioch, which restored the Eucharistic Communion with us. Let the love in Christ do this for the imitation of the brothers of the Orthodox Churches who are in misunderstanding and division.

For we too are in ministry to the saints, that is, to Christians as well as to the holy places of the Nativity, Crucifixion and Resurrection of God and our Saviour Christ, ordering ourselves "in all things grieving but not distressed" (2 Cor. 4,8) we continually thank and pray to God, that He may pacify our region, tested by the fire of the enemy, and preserve, in the hearts of the Primates of the brother Churches, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (cf. Eph. 4,3).

Let us ask the Lord to direct our hearts "to the love of God and to the patience of Christ" (2 Thess. 3,5), through the intercessions of our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos Mary and the prayers of our holy Father Nektarios, Bishop of Pentapolis. May the Grace of the Holy and Life-giving Tomb strengthen and protect us all in everything and always, especially during these difficult days.

Therefore, we call upon, on all those praying with Us and honouring through their presence the enthronement on this feast of Ours, for power from on high, the illuminating energy of the Holy Sepulchre, and every blessing from God, expressing warm thanksgiving to those who addressed Us: His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Chief-Secretary, who spoke on behalf of the respected members of the Holy Synod and of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos, the representative of the Holy Church of Russia, Reverend Archimandrite Vassianos, who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril, the representative of the Holy Church of Romania, Reverend Archimandrite Theophilos,

who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Romania Daniel, His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Nazareth, His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Yaffo, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Yaffo, Reverend Fr Charalambos Badour, who spoke on behalf of Saint James Cathedral, the representatives of our Russian-speaking flock Fr Nikolaos Koulinsky, Fr Alexander from the Beer Sheba community, Fr Stavros Aranki who spoke on behalf of Birzeit community, the Ambassador of Russia to Israel Mr Victorov, the Ambassador of Georgia to Israel Mr Lasha, Mr Ode Quas, who spoke on behalf of the Schools of the Patriarchate and Mrs Panayiota Kafetzi, who spoke on behalf of the School of Saint Dimitrios, as well as all others who have participated in this celebration of the Enthronement Anniversary.

The reception was followed by a meal for the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood at the Patriarchate's refectory.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE ARCHANGELS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, November 8/21, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Synaxis of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel and of all the heavenly Bodiless Hosts.

On this feast the Church gathers to thank the Archangel Michael because when the fallen Lucifer rose against God, the

Archangel called all the angels and called out "Let us give heed", meaning let us be careful and turn into prayer and unity with God so that we will not become like the fallen angel, who was turned from light into darkness.

The commemoration of this event was celebrated by the Patriarchate at the Holy Monastery of the Archangel Michael in the seaside town of Yaffo. This Church which was burnt during the 50's was rebuilt and brilliantly renovated by the current Hegoumen, His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Yaffo.

In this Church, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Archbishops, Damascene of Yaffo, Aristarchos of Constantina and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Archimandrites, Alexios, Niphon, Marcelus, Artemios, Ieronymos and Christodoulos, the new Head of MISSIA Archimandrite Vassianos, Priests from the neighbouring areas and from Galilee, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by the Community Byzantine choir, as the service was attended by the flock of Yaffo and faithful Christians of Russian and Romanian origin, as well as the representative of the Greek Embassy to Tel Aviv Mr Kyriakos Loukakis and other members of the Embassy.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"Supreme Commanders of God and ministers of the Divine Glory, guides of men and leaders of the bodiless hosts: Ask for what is to our profit and for great mercy since ye are Supreme Commanders of the bodiless hosts" (Kontakion), the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all today in this holy Church of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel in your historic biblical town of Yaffo, to celebrate the Synaxis of the holy bodiless heavenly hosts.

All Angels, according to Saint Paul, “are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Hebrews 1,14). In more detail, all Angels are ministering spirits who do not act according to their own initiative, but are sent by God to serve those who are meant to inherit eternal life.

The Angels are called by the psalmist to praise God: “Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word” (Ps. 103, 20). In other words, all Angels are called to praise God because they excel in strength, obey the Divine voice, “do his commandments” and are willing to execute God’s commandments, “hearkening unto the voice of his word”.

According to Saint John of Damascus, “All Angels were created by the Word and were made whole by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, participating in enlightenment and grace according to their value and order”.

Regarding the nature of Angels, Saint John of Damascus says: “An Angel is a noetic substance, mobile, bodiless, which ministers God, by Whom he has received immortality in his nature by grace and the kind of this substance is only known to God”.

It is noteworthy that today’s feast is linked with the Grand Commander of the bodiless hosts, the Archangel Michael, and the fall of Lucifer, that is, Satan. This Lucifer, Saint John of Damascus says, “by his own will was turned against his nature and raised himself above God, Who created him, wanting to rebel against God, and was the first to become evil since he distanced himself from good; because nothing else is evil,

but the lack of goodness, just as darkness is the lack of light. Goodness is a noetic light, just as evil is a noetic darkness...since the demons have the same nature as the Angels, they have become evil, arbitrarily turning their choice from good to evil”.

When the Grand Commander Michael saw this apostasy, that is, Lucifer's fall, along with the fall of a multitude of other angels from the angelic order, as Christ says, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Luke 10,18), he gathered all the orders of the Angels saying “Let us give heed. Let us stand firm”. He praised God, exclaiming along with all the heavenly hosts, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Sabaoth, the heaven and earth are filled with Thy glory”. The hymnographer describes this action of Archangel Michael, saying: “Our God and Maker showed thee forth, O divine Chief Commander, as champion and governor of the race of us mortals, the noblest steward of our good, and He also honoured thee with the unspeakable glory of unceasingly crying the divine and thrice-holy and God-inspired hymn of victory” (Exaposteilarion 1).

According to Saint John of Damascus, “This very God is the maker and creator, creating them from non-being into being, according to His image, a bodiless nature, an immaterial spirit and fire, as David says; “Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire” (Ps. 104, 4). The heavenly Angels of the earthly Saints of the Church are distinguished as thus, ministering spirits and flames of fire. “Secondary noetic lights, receiving their illumination from the Initial Light Who has no beginning and is the source of light”, Saint John of Damascus says.

According to Saint Gregory the Theologian the Angels are the emanation of the Initial Light because they receive their light from the irreproachable, unspeakable and incomprehensible light of God. That is why they appear in the Bible as helpers in the redeeming mission of our Saviour Jesus Christ. “Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath

by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (Hebrews 1,4), Saint Paul preaches.

The Angels care for the protection of the people. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18,10), the Lord says. The Angels convey the Saints' prayers to God; they transport the souls of the righteous to God's Kingdom. "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16,22). Under the lead of their Chief Michael, the Angels fight for the Church's defence against its adversary the devil. "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels" (Rev. 12,7), Saint John the Theologian says. "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 1,9).

The Angels connect the heavenly with the earthly world, the triumphant Church and the unceasing praising worship of God. "... they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Rev. 4,8). "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men" (Luke 2,13-14), Luke the Evangelist says.

Behold why our Holy Church renders this worthy honour to the Angels, especially to the Chief Archangels Michael and Gabriel. The Saints and the Righteous of Christ's Church, who had human flesh and lived in the world, became imitators of the Angels through prayer and asceticism, they became heavenly people and earthly angels, according to Saint Paul's advice, which is directed to us also: "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven... And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of

the heavenly" (1 Cor. 15,47-49).

Let us say along with the hymnographer: "O Marshal passing glorious, O divine leader Michael, thou wast appointed by God's will to be the chief and foremost of the Authorities, Powers, Dominions, Thrones, and Angels, Archangels, Principalities; wherefore, as thou now standest at that dread Throne, guard and keep and save and protect and shelter all them that honour thee with faith, who art the world's defender" (Exaposteilarion 3).

As for us who celebrate, maybe have the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos bring forth peace in the tested Holy Land and all over the world. Amen! Many happy returns, peaceful and blessed Christmas!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a meal that the Hegoumen His Eminence Archbishop Damascene hosted.

The feast of the Synaxis of the Archangels was also celebrated at their Holy Monastery in Jerusalem, with Vespers and the Divine Liturgy, led by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, along with Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, Archimandrite Klaudios and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Angelos Gianopoulos with the Patriarchal School students. The service was attended by a large congregation of monks, nuns and faithful Christians from Jerusalem, who were offered a treat after the Liturgy by the Hegoumen and renovator of the Monastery, His Eminence Archbishop Dimitrios of Lydda.

From Secretariat-General

THE NEW HEAD OF THE RUSSIAN SPIRITUAL MISSION TO JERUSALEM (MISSIA) VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On the morning of Monday, November 7/20, 2023, the new Head of the Russian Spiritual Mission to Jerusalem (MISSIA), Reverend Archimandrite Vassianos, visited the Patriarchate, accompanied by Archimandrite Nikon and asked for the blessing of His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos upon assuming his duties. Archimandrite Vassianos conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow, Cyril and His thanks for Patriarch Theophilos' indicated interest in the Churches of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine and for the unity of the Orthodox Churches.

The new Superior Archimandrite Vassianos was received with praise by H.H.B. wishing him a fruitful service in the Russian Mission (MISSIA) within the framework of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, based on the always good relations of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Patriarchate of Moscow. This relationship is strengthened by the fact that the Church of Jerusalem is based on the Cross, of the redemptive blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His empty Tomb, testifying to the Resurrection.

In support of his ministry, His Beatitude presented Archimandrite Vassianos with an Archimandrite's Cross, the icon of the Most Holy Theotokos of Gethsemane and the renovated Sacred Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre and Chrysostom Papadopoulos's approved book of the History of the Church of

Jerusalem.

From Secretariat-General

**EMBRACING UNITY: H.B.
THEOPHILOS III'S LETTER TO
H.H. KIRILL STRESSES
IMPORTANCE OF UNITY, AND
EXTENDS DEVOTIONS ON HIS
HOLINESS BIRTHDAY AT THE HOLY
TOMB OF JESUS CHRIST**

ΕΛΛΗΝΟΡΘΟΔΟΣΙΟΝ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΕΙΟΝ
ΙΕΡΟΣΟΛΥΜΩΝ



GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE
JERUSALEM



No. 669

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill
Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia
Moscow
RUSSIA

Your Holiness, dear Brother and Fellow Concelebrant in the Lord,

On the happy occasion of your birthday celebrations, we greet you from the Holy City of Jerusalem, and we wish to extend our warmest fraternal best wishes to you. It is a sadness to us that we cannot join in these celebrations in person so that we might enjoy together the full expression of the unity and communion that we share in the Divine Liturgy.

As you are fully aware, we face a most difficult ongoing situation here where our people are enduring tremendous hardship and violence, and this prevents us from being with you. However, we shall offer a devotions for you at the Holy Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Even as we do our utmost to support and to minister to our people here, we are committed to our spiritual mission to uphold the unity of the Orthodox Church and to do all in our power to contribute to the healing of the unhappy divisions that exists between our Orthodox sisters and brothers in Russia and Ukraine. We are grateful to you for the encouragement in this process that you gave after our recent announcement in September and we further appreciate your support echoed in the October meeting of the representatives of Russia's religious communities. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem has always had a special concern for the unity of the Church, and has acted across the ages when the need was calling. We shall be devoted in our efforts to continue this legacy and to uphold in every possible way the journey of reconciliation that we started in Amman, with care and accommodation to all our fellow Orthodox primates.

May the Prince of Peace, whose Nativity in the Holy Grotto of Bethlehem we are preparing now to celebrate, strengthen you in your primatial ministry, and may he bring lasting peace and reconciliation to our beloved Holy Land and to our Holy Orthodox Church in every part of the world.

With fraternal love in Christ.

THEOPHILOS III
Patriarch of Jerusalem

Holy City of Jerusalem
Monday, November 20th, 2023

CHRISTIAN ACTIVISTS VISIT THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM IN SUPPORT OF HALTING NON- RELIGIOUS CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS IN SOLIDARITY WITH GAZA

Jerusalem, November 18, 2023

A high delegation representing the diverse Christian civil society institutions in Jerusalem, visited His Beatitude Theophilos III, The Patriarch of Jerusalem, at the Orthodox Patriarchate's headquarters. The purpose of their visit was to express gratitude for the decision taken by the Holy Land Churches to suspend all non-religious ceremonial celebrations of the Christmas Advent and Christmas feast. This decision is in response to the ongoing war in Gaza, aiming to show respect for the lives lost in the war and the suffering endured by civilians.

During the meeting, the representatives expressed their desire to co-sign the appeal issued by the Patriarchs and heads of Churches in Jerusalem, endorsing the call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. They delivered a signed letter in support of the churches' position on this matter.

The group strongly condemned the tragic atrocities in Gaza, particularly the killing of 18 individuals in Saint Porphyrios' Church and the 500 lives lost at the Anglican Church hospital. In response, the Patriarch reassured the

delegation that this year's Christmas celebrations would be marked by solemnity and reflection, refraining from the usual festivities due to the current situation.

His Beatitude emphasized the significance of the Christian presence in the Holy Land, the cradle of Christianity. Despite challenges posed by radical Israeli elements, the Patriarch affirmed his commitment to preserve the indigenous Christian presence and declared the land as a land for its people. He urged Christians to manifest their presence through participation in Christmas festivities, albeit in a more sombre manner this year.

Acknowledging the responsibility towards the people in Gaza, the Patriarch of Jerusalem emphasized the sanctity of every human life as an image of God. He proposed the formation of a group of individuals to maintain constant communication, working together to promote an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. The representatives affirmed their commitment to continue their engagement, scheduling another meeting with H.B. the Patriarch to further address matters of peace and solidarity with Gaza.

From Secretariat-General