

THE FEAST OF SAINT GEORGE THE GREAT MARTYR IN LYDDA

On Thursday, November 3/16, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated in Lydda the feast of the glorious great martyr George the Trophy-Bearer.

On this day, the Church, especially the Church of Jerusalem, remembers that according to his wish, after his martyrdom in Rome, the relics of Saint George were transported and buried in Lydda by his servant. This is the city of his mother's origin.

When piety shone upon Constantine the Great, Saint Helen came to the Holy Land and erected a magnificent Basilica Above the tomb of Saint George. The consecration of that Church was held on November 3, thus we commemorate and celebrate that event along with the repatriation of the Saint's relics on this day.

In this Basilica, the celebration of the repatriation of the holy relics of Saint George took place during Vespers in the evening, presided over by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis. The Divine Liturgy in the morning was officiated by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with their Eminences, the Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Metropolitan Joachim of Helenopolis and the Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, the Archimandrites; Nectarios, Ieronymos, Niphon, and Christodoulos, Priest Hader Baramki, Archdeacon Mark and the Hierodeacons Eulogios and Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by the Community Byzantine choir as the service was attended by pious people who came despite the warlike situation. The service was also attended by the Ambassadors of Serbia and Albania to Israel.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the

following Sermon:

“Thou hast gone up into the mount of martyrdom, O prizewinner George, and hast received a crown from the hand of the Lord; for this is the reward of the Martyrs. Wherefore, as is meet, we all magnify thee” (Minaion, Matis, Ode 9, Troparion 5), the hymnographer of the Church exclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

Today the universal feast of Saint George has gathered us all. Today the grace of the Holy Spirit which has established brave George, the faithful servant and martyr of Christ’s love has gathered us all in the biblical town of Lydda to celebrate the commemoration of the consecration of his Church and the translation of his holy relics.

Saint George was the son of a rich and noble family from Cappadocia and served as a commander in the Roman army during the reign of Diocletian (AD 284-305). “When the emperor declared a severe persecution against the Christians, George declared himself to be a Christian, condemning the vanity of the idols and those who believed in them. Saint George suffered his martyrdom in Rome, or in Diospolis of Palestine, later named Georgioupolis, which is the current Lydda, where his tomb lies in his magnificent Church” according to Pasikratis, the Saint’s biographer.

Saint George, who had connected the confession of his faith to the crucified and risen from the dead Christ and the Holy Land, became a righteous cultivator of the mystery of the Divine Providence as his hymnographer proclaims: “Thou hast lived worthily of thy name, O soldier George, for taking the Cross of Christ upon thy shoulders, thou hast cultivated the earth that had become barren because of diabolic deception; and uprooting the thorny religion of the idols, thou hast planted the vine of the Orthodox faith. Wherefore, thou

gushest forth healings for the faithful throughout the world, and hast proved to be the Trinity's righteous husbandman" (Vespers, Glory).

Precisely because Saint George uprooted the thorny religion of the idols and planted the vine of the Orthodox faith, he became known all over the world, shining like the sun and like a bright star. The proof of this is that Saint George is the patron Saint of many peoples and nations until today.

Saint George is distinguished among the Church Saints because, like another Apostle, he became the preacher of truth, of Christ's gospel, not only by words, but with his very martyr's blood. Inspired by the Lord's prompting words, "fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10,28), and "And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say" (Luke 12,11-12), Saint George was assayed by the fire for the love for Christ. That is why the hymnographer says: "For longing conquered nature, persuading the lover to pass through death to the Beloved, even Christ God, the Saviour of our souls" (Matins, Glory of praises).

In other words, Saint George had the divine zeal in his heart and delivered himself to death, a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God (c.f. Romans 12,1), paying heed to Saint Paul's words: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1,21). That is the reason why Saint George became an imitator and communicant of Christ's passion. "He that abideth in me, and I in him" (John 15,5).

It is noteworthy that the martyrs of the love of the Righteous Christ, who suffered "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with

the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented" (Hebrews 11,36-37), had only one sole goal; the kingdom of God, His glory and righteousness. Enlightened by the Holy Spirit they beheld Christ, – according to His promise-, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14,18-19).

These words of the Lord, "but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14,19), are addressed to us also, my dear brothers and sisters, through the martyrs, and thus, the great martyr George, and through our holy Church, which is the body of the crucified and resurrected Christ.

We say this, because, during our Church services and especially during the service of the Holy Eucharist, we have with us, in our midst, present the living Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, the God of love and peace. Moreover, we have the living testimony of the translation of the holy great martyr George's relics, in his tomb that lies here. "Having been disciplined a little, Saint George received great good, because God tested him and found him worthy of himself; [6] like gold in the furnace he tried him, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted him" (c.f. Wisdom of Solomon 3,5-6).

Today, just like the light of the holy glory, we are illumined by this solemn event of the commemoration of the consecration of Saint George's Church and the translation of his relics, amidst turbulence and hostilities in the Holy Land.

Let us pray, my dear ones, to our Father of lights, that by the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and those of the Holy great martyr George the trophy-bearer, the light of the infinite philanthropy of God may enlighten the minds of those in power and guide them in the path of peace and conciliation. Amen! Many happy returns."

A reception and lunch followed.

This feast was also celebrated in the Old City of Jerusalem in the Holy Monastery of Saint George at the Jewish Quarter, with the Divine Liturgy in the morning, hosted by Nun Kyriaki, in place of the renovator of the Church Abbess Marianna. The Abbess is currently in Cyprus due to the ongoing war.

The feast was also celebrated in the Holy Monastery of Saint George of the Hospital with Vespers in the evening and the Divine Liturgy in the morning, presided over by the Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, under the chanting of Hierodeacon Simeon and His Eminence Archbishop Dimitrios of Lydda helped at Vespers. The celebrations were hosted by the Abbess of the Monastery, Nun Pansemni.

From Secretariat-General

THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM AND THE ITALIAN CONSUL GENERAL HOLD A MEETING ADDRESSING GAZA CRISIS

Jerusalem, November 14, 2023

Today, His Beatitude Theophilos III, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, received in His office His Excellency Mr. Domenico Bellato, the Consul General of Italy in Jerusalem. The meeting comes at the onset of His Excellency's tenure, which commenced on October 8, 2023.

During the meeting, the Consul General conveyed his government's point of view on the ongoing war in Gaza and emphasized the importance of ensuring the safe departure of Italian citizens residing in the affected areas.

The Consul General sought insight into the Patriarchate's perspective on the political situation, prompting His Beatitude to stress the role of faith leaders in diffusing tensions. His Beatitude emphasized the need to envision a future beyond the conflict, promoting peace for all residents of the Holy Land.

Patriarch Theophilos also expressed concern for all the residents of Gaza who have been victims of unbearable living conditions. He called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and a total halt of all hostilities.

The Patriarch asserted the importance of preserving Jerusalem's multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious character and the historical significance of agreements, such as that between Caliph Omar Bin Al-Khattab and the Patriarch of Jerusalem Sophronios.

His Beatitude stressed the importance of the Hashemite custodianship over Muslim and Christian Holy Places and the adherence to the Status Quo while raising concerns regarding the Christian presence and threats posed by radical Israeli groups in various locations, including Mount Zion and the Mount of Olives.

His Beatitude underscored the collaborative efforts among churches to uphold biblical values of love, coexistence, and peace.

The meeting concluded with expressions of gratitude and an exchange of gifts, cementing the Consul General's commitment to fostering positive relationships for the well-being of Christians and all residents in the Holy Land.

HUNGARIAN REPRESENTATIVE VISITS THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM, DISCUSSES HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS IN GAZA

Jerusalem, November 6, 2023

Her Excellency Mrs Rita Herenescar, the Representative of Hungary in Ramallah, accompanied by her deputy, paid a visit today to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem where she was received by H.B. Theophilos III, the Patriarch of Jerusalem. The meeting emphasized the importance of cooperation to solidify humanitarian efforts in Gaza.

As Hungary's newly appointed representative in Ramallah, H.E. Ms. Herenescar expressed her pleasure by the meeting and extended an invitation to His Beatitude to visit Hungary.

During the meeting, H.E. Ms. Herenescar conveyed her sympathy for the innocent victims of the war in Gaza and the unfortunate casualties of the Monastery of Saint Porphyrios, the Orthodox Cultural Centre, and the Anglican Church hospital. His Beatitude emphasized that various churches had called for an end to the war and prayed for peace and enlightenment among the governing authorities. He added that a special memorial service was held for the war victims at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Highlighting coexistence between different faiths, His

Beatitude mentioned the town of Burkin, where Muslims and Christians live harmoniously around a holy site associated with the therapy of the ten lepers. He underlined Jerusalem's role as a multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural city. This spirit of coexistence, as per the Caliph Omar bin Khattab's agreement with Patriarch Sophronios, also extends to Gaza and other parts of Palestinian territory.

His Beatitude affirmed that the churches of the Holy Land stand united in their commitment to the values of the Bible, opposition to antisemitism and islamophobia, and work tirelessly for the promotion of peace and coexistence. He also expressed gratitude for Hungary's support in renovating the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre a few years ago.

His Beatitude also noted the severe economic challenges facing the region. The absence of pilgrims and tourists on Jerusalem's streets and disrupted communication between Jerusalem and Palestinian Autonomy towns have added to the economic woes as a result of the war on Gaza.

His Beatitude requested that H.E. Ms. Herenescar convey His gratitude to the President of Hungary, whom he had met during his last visit. During that visit, he had admired Saint Stephen's Church and acknowledged the Byzantine architectural influence on Hungarian buildings. He expressed his consideration of the invitation to visit Hungary again when the time is right and extended thanks for the scholarships Hungary provides to students of the congregation.

His Beatitude emphasized His Christian commitment to keeping churches open as sanctuaries for all people in Gaza. Assuring that the Christian faith in the Cross and resurrection of Christ remains unwavering, even in the shadow of hostilities and economic hardships.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT JAMES THE BROTHER OF GOD AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, October 23/November 5, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy Glorious Apostle and Martyr James, the Brother of God and first Hierarch of Jerusalem.

On this feast, the whole Church, especially the Church of Jerusalem, remembers that Saint James was the son of a woman who was previously married to Joseph, the betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos, therefore, he was also called the brother of the Lord. Because of this legal relationship, Saint James was named Brother God. The Apostle Paul also testifies to this, saying: "None of the apostles did I see but James the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1:19). He was righteous, a type of virtue and holiness, also called "hoblias", that is, righteous and protector of the people.

Saint James was installed by the Lord as the first Hierarch of the Church of Jerusalem, as his Kontakion says, "The Word of God, the Father's Only-begotten, came down and dwelt here in our midst in these last days. He then appointed thee as the first shepherd of all-holy Jerusalem, and He made thee her teacher and a faithful steward of lofty spiritual mysteries. For this cause as is meet, O wondrous James, O blest Apostle, we all praise and honour thee".

Through this authority given to him, he exhorted the Church of Jerusalem most devoutly, he wrote his Catholic letter in the New Testament, and he was calm, peaceful, presentable and beloved by all the people of Jerusalem. He presided over the

first Apostolic Synod of Jerusalem in AD 49, which opened the doors of the Church to the nations and confessed the Lord as the Son of God and for this, the Jewish rulers threw him down from the wing of the Temple and killed him around AD 60. X. at an old age.

In his honour, in the Cathedral named after him, adjacent to the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and the Church of the Resurrection, Vespers was held in the evening, presided over by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the Divine Liturgy in the morning, concelebrated by their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias and the Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina and Philomenos of Pella, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nektarios, the ministering Priests of Saint James Cathedral, Fr Farah Badour and Fr Hader Baramki. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon with the students of the Patriarchal School of Zion on the right in Greek and by the choir of the Church under Mr Rimon Kamar on the left in Arabic. The service was attended by the congregation of the Orthodox Community of Jerusalem, monks, nuns and a few remaining pilgrims, in the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos and members of the Greek Consulate General in Jerusalem.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following sermon:

“And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace”, (James 3:18). [The spiritual fruit of justice and Holiness is sown peacefully and without strife by those who practice and spread peace and who are truly wise and peace-making teachers], Saint James the Brother of God teaches.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The grace of the righteous Apostle James, the Brother of God

brought us all together today in his Holy Cathedral, adjacent to the Holy and Life-giving Tomb of our Saviour Christ, to honour his holy memory.

Saint James acquired a prominent position in the holy Church of God and the city of Jerusalem, and because of his great piety he was given the title "the Just".

In fact, Saint James was shown to be a "pillar of the faith" and a support of the Church"; and this, because his Catholic letter shows him as "a teacher of great personal prestige among its readers". On the other hand, his participation in the Apostolic Synod of Jerusalem and his teaching concerning the evangelization of the Gentiles, that is, the idolaters, confirm the prestige of James.

Saint Chrysostom, interpreting the fact that the Brother of God spoke in the Synod "after Barnabas and Paul had silenced them", (Acts 15:12) says: "This [James] is the bishop of the Church in Jerusalem, for he says clearly; and "in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is established" (Cf. Matt. 18:16), then it is fulfilled. The hymnographer of the Church, extolling the preaching of Saint James, says: "Unto all the farthest regions of the earth, the sound of thy words hath resounded most mightily; and through them, O blessed James, we have been enlightened in all godly virtues and we are guided faithfully to the divine knowledge of the Trinity. We therefore importune thee: as a hierarch, offer up fervent prayer unto Jesus, the Friend of man, in His mercy to save our souls" (Minaion, Vespers, sticheron 2).

James the Brother of God boldly declared the Lord Jesus God as the Word and Creator of everything and that God the Father is the supreme and unique source of all enlightenment, physical or moral, and says "The wisdom of the people descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife are, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then

peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3, 17 -18).

In other words, the fruits of God's wisdom are produced through the power and grace of Jesus Christ. And among the good things of these fruits, the fruit of justice is distinguished. And this fruit is none other than the peace of Christ, who said "Without me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Even Saint Paul commands saying: "Be filled with the fruits of righteousness through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1,11). And Isaiah says: "And let the works of righteousness be peace, and let righteousness keep rest, and trust forever" (Is. 32,17).

[And in more detail: the result of justice will be peace. Justice will bring rest and peace, and people will walk in faith after everything].

Justice and peace between people are essentially the fruit of God's Grace and faith in Christ according to the testimony of the hymnographer:

"Truth has arisen from the earth and justice has flowed from heaven" (Psalm 84:12). For this reason, Saint James who was an eye-and-ear-witness, i.e. a natural witness of the mystery of piety, of the mystery of the divine Providence in Christ, on the one hand refers to Christ, Who walked the path of righteousness and opened it for us as well; on the other hand, he wonders, where wars and battles among men come from: "Whence are wars and battles among you? Are they not from your desires, rooted in your body parts?... adulterers and adulteresses! Have you not seen that the friendship of the world is the enmity of God? Whoever, therefore, willfully is a friend of the world, becomes an enemy of God".

Interpreting these reasons, Ecumenius says: "Have you not seen

that the friendship of the world is alien to the friendship of God, or it makes enemies of God? In the world [the Brother God] calls out all material life, as the mother of corruption. He who communes with it hastily becomes an enemy of God”.

Indeed, my beloved brothers, “the friendship of the world alienates us from the friendship of God. And this, because according to the Righteous James, God is all light and out of His own good will He gave birth to us spiritually through the gospel, which is the word of truth, so that we may be among the first and most honourable of His creations, chosen and dedicated to the God. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (James 1,18).

Let us who solemnly honour Saint James, the Brother God and the first Hierarch of Jerusalem, beseech him so that by his prayers and the intercessions of the most blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, the Lord our God, may implant in the hearts of all of us, this word of truth, namely of the divine light of righteousness and of peace, especially in the hearts and minds of the keepers of the world and our tested region. Amen. May you have many blessed and peaceful returns.”

After the end of the Divine Liturgy, the full congregation went up to the Patriarchate Hall through the historic steps of Saint James carrying the Holy Icon of Saint James, passing through the Gate of the Patriarchate, where they received the ceremonial loaf of bread as a blessing by Nun Serafima, who is in charge of the Patriarchate’s bakery.

In the hall of the Patriarchate, a prayer was offered, the Polychronion of His Beatitude was chanted and a reception followed, where His Beatitude spoke again as follows:

“Come and with sacred hymns let us all magnify James, the first enthroned bishop and luminary of the Church, as a hierarch and divine herald, who was fittingly called the Just”

his hymnographer exclaims.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos,

Dear Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved brothers in Christ,

The Holy Church of Jerusalem honours and commemorates today the sacred memory of the holy Hieromartyr and Apostle James the Brother of God, the so-called "the Just".

This Saint James, who in his epistle calls himself "a servant of God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1), became bishop of Jerusalem and was called to the Apostolic office by the Lord. As such, Saint James appears as the operator of the whole church life, of the formation and indeed of the organization of the administrative system of the Church of Jerusalem, which as the mother of all the Churches throughout the world was the model for everything on the part of the Church. This is evidenced by his universal epistle of the greatest Apostolic authority addressed to "the twelve tribes in the diaspora" (James 1:1) of the Jews who believed in Christ.

Saint James, who was appointed by the Father of the only begotten God the Word as the first Hierarch, shepherd, teacher and faithful steward of the spiritual mysteries, became the foundation stone of the apostolate "indeed the cornerstone of Jesus Christ" (Eph. 2:20) of the Church of Jerusalem and the celebrated commemoration of Saint James refers to the Apostolic and Patriarchal throne of the Zionist Church, whose Minister and Successor Our Modesty became.

To this end we came, accompanied by honourable members of the High Priests, Priests and Hierodeacons in the holy Church of Saint James, where we celebrated in a Patriarchal Assembly the great Sacrament of the divine Eucharist to the honour and

glory of the celebrated saint and righteous James, co-martyr of our crucified Saviour Christ by his own blood.

Today's institutional celebration of the Throne and of the holy memory of the holy glorious Apostle James the Brother of God and first Hierarch of the Church of Jerusalem is an undeniable testimony of the ongoing Apostolic succession, of the one imprinted on the face of each Primate of the Church of Jerusalem for one; and of the unceasing prayerful presence of the mission of the order of the Studious, of our Venerable Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, as well as of our devout Roman-Orthodox flock rooted and living in the Holy Land on the other hand.

This great Apostle and witness of Christ's love, let us beseech: Drive away all sorrows arising from the war in our region and grant us and the whole world justice and its fruit, peace.

Many and peaceful returns! Amen".

The celebration was sealed with the traditional handover by His Beatitude of the keys of the Cathedral of Saint James the Brother of God to its Priests and Stewards.

From Secretariat-General

UK MINISTER VISITS PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III AMIDST WAR ON

GAZA

Jerusalem, The Holy Land

1 November 2023

Lord Tariq Ahmad, Baron Ahmad of Wimbledon, the UK Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, and the United Nations at the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office, met this morning with His Beatitude Theophilos III, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, at the headquarters of the Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem. The meeting was also attended by His Grace Husam Naoum, the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem and Secretary General of the Council of Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem.

The meeting took place against the grim backdrop of the ongoing conflict in the region. Lord Ahmad acknowledged the challenging circumstances, expressing both happiness at the visit and sadness about the ongoing war. He conveyed his deep concern about the atrocities and discussed ways to contribute to the cause of stability and calm. Lord Ahmad recognized the pivotal role that the Church, in collaboration with other religious institutions, plays in the Holy Land. He expressed a readiness to listen to the Patriarch's insights and offered sympathy for the victims of the church bombings in Gaza.

Patriarch Theophilos III, in response, recounted the unfortunate destruction of houses of worship, hospitals, community services centers, schools and residential neighborhoods in Gaza. He highlighted the collective effort of various churches to preserve the multi-cultural and multi-religious character of the Holy Places. Their goal is to ensure these sites remain places of worship, prayer, and reconciliation.

The Patriarch spoke of the struggles confronting Christians in the Holy Land, facing oppression from radical Israeli groups who seek to expel them from the Holy Land. His Beatitude also stressed the importance of maintaining holy places not only as structures but as living communities, open to members of various religions, contributing to coexistence and peace. The

Orthodox Christians actively work to maintain harmony in the holy land, referring to the agreement made in the 7th century between Patriarch Sophronios and Caliph Omar bin Khattab as a historical precedent for coexistence.

The Patriarch underscored the historical role of churches as a safe zone during times of conflict, expressing deep concern for all war victims, including civilians, especially women and children suffering in Gaza.

Lord Ahmad called for a rational and logical approach, transcending emotions, recognizing the sanctity of every human life. The leaders present at the meeting collectively prayed for the avoidance of further escalation aiming to safeguard the land, including Jordan, where the Hashemite King holds the custodianship of Muslim and Christian places in Jerusalem.

Archbishop Husam Naoum of the Anglican also expressed gratitude for the visit, believing it will contribute to calming tensions and promoting peace. He decried the recent events in southern Israel and Gaza, emphasizing the role of religious heritage in finding a political solution. The Archbishop highlighted the importance of preserving the Status Quo of the Holy Places and raised the issue of Al Aqsa, as the holy place for Muslims.





THE SCHOOL CELEBRATION OF THE NATIONAL ANNIVERSARY OF OCTOBER 28, 1940

On the evening of Saturday, October 15/28, 2023, a school event took place at the Patriarchal School of Holy Zion in honour of the national anniversary of October 28, 1940.

This event was honoured by the presence of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, the Chairman of the School Board, His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos, Holy Sepulchre Bishops and Fathers, monks and nuns and members of the Greek parish.

The program of the event included a foreword by the Managing Director of the School, Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos Siopis, the speech of the day by the teacher Mrs Sarantidou Anna, and recitation of poems, singing of songs and acting in short plays by the students.

Through all these, the struggles of our Greek ancestors, worthy descendants of our Ancient, Byzantine, and those of 1821, against the Italian invasion and the Nazi and German occupation and their liberation at the end of the Second World War came to the fore.

The competitiveness of the Greeks in all regions of the Greek Empire, despite the victims of the struggle, dealt serious blows to the conquered, delayed their expansion towards Russia, and contributed the most to their crushing under the Great Powers.

The celebration ended with the reminder of our "debt" to the fighters of 1940.

His Beatitude and the Consul General thanked the Managing Director of the School, the teachers, and the students for the fact that through the actions of those presented on stage and screen, they transported us all to the battlefields of 1940 when the fighting spirit of the Greeks triumphed.

From the General Secretariat

THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM RECEIVES THE CONSUL GENERAL OF FRANCE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

Jerusalem, The Holy Land

27 October 2023

The Consul General of France in Jerusalem, Mr Nikolaos Kassianidis, extended his respects to His Beatitude, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III in a visit to the Patriarchate this morning.

Mr. Kassianidis expressed his gratitude to His Beatitude for sparing his valuable time. He emphasized that this visit marked the inception of his tenure in Jerusalem, with the primary objective of gaining insights from the Patriarch on how the Patriarchate navigates the multifaceted challenges and difficulties faced by the churches in the Holy Land amidst the ongoing state of conflict.

The Patriarch, in response, conveyed that the Patriarchate stands as the oldest religious institution in the Holy Land, steadfastly dedicated to fostering reconciliation and peaceful coexistence among all residents of the region, irrespective of their religious or ethnic backgrounds. The core mission of the Patriarchate is to ensure accessibility to the Holy Places without any discrimination.

One notable aspect of this mission, His Beatitude added, is the cultivation of religious coexistence through educational institutions, where Christian and Muslim students study side by side, embracing diversity as a strength.

The Patriarch of Jerusalem stressed “The ongoing commitment of the churches in maintaining the Status Quo in the Holy Land, particularly in the Old City of Jerusalem”. His Beatitude drew attention to the airstrike at the Christian Shrine of the Patriarchate in Gaza, exemplifying the unwavering determination of Archbishop Alexios, who, amidst challenges, vowed to protect the church. The conversation also delved into the tragic strike at the Anglican hospital in Gaza, resulting in the loss of 470 lives.

Further discussions highlighted the persistent challenges that the Patriarchate faces, including encounters with radical Israelis at the property on Mount Zion. His Beatitude stressed that a viable solution to the complex political issues could be realized through a profound consideration of the role of religion.

It was reiterated that the Patriarchate, as an autocephalous Church and decision-making authority, maintains its autonomy and does not rely on external parties for statements or decisions. His Beatitude stressed that collaboration with other churches is pursued, with a commitment to preserving the Status Quo, guided by the Custodianship of His Majesty, the King of Jordan, over holy sites.

His Beatitude explained that the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem extends across Israel, Palestine, Jordan, and Qatar and that its collaboration with other churches and the Kingdom of Jordan is grounded in an ancient agreement dating back to AD 637 between the second Caliph Omar ibn Al-Khattab and the then Patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronios. This historical accord underscores the commitment to harmony and coexistence that continues to shape the Patriarchate’s mission in the modern era.

From Secretariat-General

AWARD OF HONORARY DISTINCTION TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE RUSSIAN SPIRITUAL MISSION (MISSIA) IN JERUSALEM

On Friday, October 14/27, 2023, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos awarded the representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate to the Russian Spiritual Mission (MISSIA) in Jerusalem an honorary distinction for the completion of their fruitful ministry.

The Head of the Russian Mission, Reverend Archimandrite Alexander Elisov, was awarded the order of the Cross-bearer of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, and the Deputy Head Archimandrite Dometianos the medal of the small Cross-bearer of the same Order.

Presenting them with the medals, His Beatitude said that this honorary distinction is awarded to Archimandrite Alexander for his kind cooperation with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in matters concerning its relations with the Patriarchate of Moscow, as well as Archimandrite Dometianos for his devotion and effective cooperation with Archimandrite Alexander. Archimandrite Dometianos was praised for his care in cooperation with the conservator from Cyprus Mr Stavros Andreou as well as the conservators and a donor from Russia for the maintenance of the chandeliers of the Church of the Resurrection and the icons of the Art Gallery and the Museum of the Patriarchate.

Archimandrite Alexander thanked His Beatitude for the Patriarchal love and support in his work and for the always

hospitable reception of the Bishops, Priests and numerous pilgrims of the Moscow Patriarchate and pledged to become a messenger of this experience to the Moscow Patriarchate, in which he will continue his ministry.

From the General Secretariat

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE ANGLICAN COMMUNITY AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCH VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On the morning of Friday, September 23 / October 6, 2023, the International Commission for Dialogue between the Anglican Community and the Orthodox Church visited the Patriarchate, convened in Jerusalem at the invitation of Mr. Hosam Naoum, Anglican Archbishop, Jerusalem and St. Georges Cathedral Close' in Jerusalem from October 5 to 12, 2023.

Anglican Churches from various countries, Orthodox Patriarchates and Orthodox Churches participate in this dialogue, as is evident from the list posted here:

Orthodox members

Co-Chair:

Ecumenical Patriarchate Metropolitan Athenagoras of Belgium

Co-Secretary:

Rev. Dr Christos B. Christakis

Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation

Greek Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa:

Metropolitan Serafim Kykkotis Archbishop of

Zimbabwe & Angola

Patriarchate of Antioch: Fr. Jonathan Hemmings

Patriarchate of Jerusalem: V. Rev. Dr. George Dragas

The Anglican members

Canada: The Revd Canon Philip Hobson OGS

England: The Rt Revd Graham Usher, The Revd Canon Dr Alison Joyce

Wales: The Very Revd Dr Sarah Rowland Jones

USA: The Revd Dr Christopher Beeley

Jerusalem & The Middle East: The Rt Revd Michael Lewis,
The Most Revd Hosam E. Naoum

Brazil: The Rt Revd Dr Humberto Maiztegui Gonçalves

Southern Africa: The Revd Gcebile Phumzile Gina

Australia: The Rt Revd Dr Phillip Aspinall

Sri Lanka: The Revd Marc Billimoria

Archbishop of Canterbury's Representative

The co-chairs of the Dialogue are from the Orthodox side His

Eminence Metropolitan Athenagoras of Belgium of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and from the Anglicans side the Most Reverend Michael Lewis.

The plenary session of the Committee was warmly received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos Who addressed them and emphasized the contribution of this dialogue, which has been ongoing for years, for the Theological mutual understanding and approach between the respective Churches on the basis of the Holy Bible and the Fathers of the Church.

To his words, the Presidents of the Orthodox and Anglican Committees responded with gratitude for the warm welcome and thorough theological address of His Beatitude, giving a Christian witness to a world “of disorder, wars, crimes of violence against children and injustices against the innocent.

The Co-President of the Anglican Church expressed his joy that it is witnessed that the Christian Churches are not fighting each other as in the past, but are harmoniously cooperating for a Christian witness under the wise guidance of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. His Beatitude referred in particular to the difficult task of renovating the Sacred Edicule, when the energy and unifying power of the Life-giving Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ was seen not only by the leaders but also by the members of all the Christian Churches.

After the blessing of His Beatitude, the members of the assembly left for veneration to the Holy Sepulchre to ask for the illuminating power of the Crucified and Risen Christ for their work during these days.

From Secretariat-General

https://jerusalem-patriarchate.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/2023_10_07_18_05_27.pdf

HIS BEATITUDE RECEIVES THE HEAD OF THE EU REPRESENTATION OFFICE TO WEST BANK & GAZA STRIP WITH THE HEADS OF CHURCHES

Today, Tuesday, October 3, 2023, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos received the Head of the EU Representation Office to West Bank & Gaza Strip, Mr Alexandre Stutzmann with the Heads of Churches and their representatives.

In this meeting, His Beatitude said that the Churches in the Holy Land aim to promote reconciliation and peace, the Holy Places should be accessible to all, and efforts must be fortified to protect the Christians from the attacks of radical Israeli elements. His Beatitude also emphasised that the Churches are effectively cooperating among themselves and are steadfast in their struggle to keep the Status Quo of the Old City of Jerusalem unchanged.

The Patriarch also referred to his recent visit to His Holiness Pope Francis in the Vatican and joined the events of elevating the Latin Patriarch Pierrebatista Pizzaballa to the Sacred College of Cardinals.

Mr Stutzmann expressed his appreciation for the work of the Churches and said he feels at home in the Patriarchate. He also said that he happened to be present in incidents when Christians were spat on by radical Israeli groups. He noted also that the European Union is not a religious institution

but it has Christian roots, because, he said, "our fathers were Christian democrats". He expressed his commitment to be in sympathy and support of the Christian communities and in support of the religious and cultural heritage in the Holy Land; "we as politicians shouldn't forget the role of religion in the solution of difficult problems".

The Heads and representatives of the other Churches referred also to issues and problems the Churches face. His Paternity the Custos referred to the recent problem in "Stella Maris" in Haifa and how the Christian properties are recognized as property of the Churches but without the right to be developed. Also, the Custos referred to the lack of free access of the Christians to their Churches and to the infringements on the freedom to worship as was seen in the feast of the Orthodox Church of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor.

His Eminence Bishop Marcutso said; "we try to keep our properties because they help the Churches sustain religious and educational institutions. Our Christians, especially the young people, feel vulnerable. We have our own educational system and try to teach our young people to live in peace and coexist with members of other religions.

On this occasion of the visit, His Beatitude offered Mr Stutzmann a picture of the Old City of Jerusalem.

From Secretariat-General