

VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE

On Wednesday, September 21/October 4, 2023, His Beatitude received a twenty-member delegation of the Panathinaikos football team and blessed them for the victory in their match on Thursday, September 22/October 5, 2023, against the Israeli football team Maccabi Haifa.

For this purpose, the members of the group visited the Holy Sepulchre for veneration.

From Secretariat-General

PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM INITIATES MEDIATION AND DIALOGUE FOR HEALING IN UKRAINE AND RUSSIA

The Vatican, 29th September 2023

During his meeting with Pope Francis in the Vatican today, His Beatitude Theophilos III, Patriarch of Jerusalem, conveyed the Patriarchate of Jerusalem's commitment to mediation, fostering dialogue and healing in Ukraine and Russia. This initiative aims to address the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the threat of schism within the body of the Orthodox Church.

Acknowledging the profound pain, His Beatitude stated that the

Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, as the Mother of all the Churches, emphasises Christian unity and is deeply concerned about the Orthodox Churches worldwide. The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine and potential schism within the body of the Orthodox Church affects not only Orthodox Christians but the entire Christian world and people of goodwill.

The Patriarchate, rooted in centuries of reconciliation and peace efforts, offers a hand of goodwill and mediation to sisters and brothers in Ukraine and Russia. This initiative seeks to foster dialogue that may bring about an end to suffering and promote healing within the Orthodox family.

Recognising the challenges and deep divisions, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem is committed to the spiritual mission of dialogue and reconciliation. As Saint Paul wrote, "Christ is our peace," and the Patriarchate stands ready to assist in any way possible to help end conflict and suffering.

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THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM MEETS WITH POPE FRANCIS AND INITIATES CRUCIAL MEDIATION ON RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT

Vatican City, September 29th, 2023

His Beatitude Theophilos III, Patriarch of Jerusalem, has taken a significant step towards fostering dialogue and reconciliation in the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. During his visit to the Vatican, attending the ceremony of celebrating the elevation of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Pizzaballa to the Sacred College of Cardinals, Patriarch Theophilos met with Pope Francis, and extended the hand of goodwill from the Patriarchate of Jerusalem for Mediation to initiate a fresh dialogue aimed at ending suffering and promoting healing within the Orthodox family.

In his statement, Patriarch Theophilos emphasised the importance of Christian unity, stating that the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, as the Mother of all the Churches, emphasises Christian unity and is deeply concerned about all the Churches worldwide. He acknowledged the profound impact of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, not only on Orthodox Christians but on the entire global Christian community.

The initiative stems from the Patriarchate's rich history of reconciliation and peace efforts. It seeks to address the challenges posed by the deep divisions and wounds caused by the conflict. The Patriarchate is committed to the spiritual mission of dialogue and reconciliation, echoing Saint Paul's words: "Christ is our peace."

Expressing gratitude during the meeting, His Beatitude commended Patriarch Pizzaballa for his unwavering pastoral dedication to preserving the Christian presence in the region. He recognized the challenges facing Christians and Christian heritage in the Holy Land, particularly the rise of Israeli radical groups. Patriarch Theophilos pointed that these groups have been systematically undermining the legitimate "Status Quo" and the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious nature of the region. "Hate crimes, illegal property acquisitions, vandalism of Christian sites, and mounting

pressure pose significant threats” His Beatitude said.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem is grateful for the support of His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan, Custodian of the holy places, of the efforts to preserve Jerusalem’s Christian and Muslim character amidst these challenges.

His Beatitude ended his meeting with Pope Francis by emphasising that the journey towards dialogue and reconciliation is undoubtedly challenging, but the Patriarchate of Jerusalem stands ready to contribute in any way possible that may bring about an end to conflict and suffering.

His Beatitude’s speech reads as follow:

“Your Holiness,

We bring you greetings from our fellow Heads of the Churches of the Holy Land and the blessing of the Holy Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We rejoice in the elevation of our brother Patriarch Pizzaballa to the Sacred College of Cardinals, and we assure you of the prayers and support of the Heads of the Churches of the Holy Land and of the Christian communities.

As the Custos of the Holy Land and now as Latin Patriarch, he has been steadfast in his pastoral zeal for the Christian presence in our region, and resolute in opposition to all those forces that seek to undermine the integrity of the Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

As Your Holiness is well aware, we face deepening challenges and difficulties. While the majority of Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Holy Land recognise the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious reality of our region, in recent years we have seen the rise of Israeli radical groups

that are working systematically to undermine the legitimate "Status Quo" and to reshape our common life. Hate crimes, the underhanded and illegal acquisition of historically Christian properties in strategic locations, vandalism and desecration of church buildings and holy places, and increasing pressure at various levels are evidence of the single greatest danger to our life that we face.

Patriarch Pizzaballa has been, and continues to be, a strong presence and voice in opposition to all this, and he has been responsible over the years in building trust and effective co-operation between our two Brotherhoods so that we may speak and act with a united voice.

We are united and steadfast in routing out this existential danger, and are encouraged by the multitude of support that we are experiencing in particular through the Hashemite Custodianship of the Holy Sites.

We are appreciative to you, Your Holiness, for your ongoing support of a vital and vibrant Christian presence in the Middle East. May God continue to bless you, and may God bless all the peoples of our beloved Holy Land.

As the Mother of all the Churches, the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem has a special concern for the unity of Christians generally, and especially of the Orthodox Churches around the world. The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and the threat of schism in the body of the Orthodox Church, are matters of deep pain and difficulty not just for Orthodox Christians, but for the entire Christian world and for all people of good will.

In our life and witness in the Holy Land, we seek continually for reconciliation and peace. We have come to understand over centuries that true dialogue is the only way to effective reconciliation and lasting peace, and this has been our constant commitment.

It is in this spirit and mindfulness that we extend the hand and effort of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem to our sisters and brothers in Ukraine and Russia, to mediate and do all that we can to initiate a dialogue that may lead to an end to suffering and to a healing within the Orthodox family.

This work will not be easy. The divisions that have occurred over the decades are deep. The wounds of conflict will take time to heal. And trust, once broken, is hard to restore.

But the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, that was built upon the redeeming blood of Lord Jesus Christ, understands all this. Our life down the generations has been forged in the same crucible. We are strangers neither to conflict nor to the new life that is possible beyond it. As Saint Paul reminds us in the Letter to the Ephesians

Christ is our peace; in his flesh he has made both into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us...that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it (Eph. 14-16).

The journey in dialogue to reconciliation is our spiritual mission, and this is our wish for the Church and the peoples of Ukraine and of Russia. We stand ready to assist in any way that we can to help bring an end to conflict and suffering."



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THE FEAST OF THE UNIVERSAL EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, September 14/27, 2023, the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

During this feast, the Church remembers that Saint Helen, sent to the Holy Land by her son Constantine the Great, saw on the Horrendous Golgotha the Tomb of the Lord and the Cross, on which he was attached for our salvation, and she built the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the decade 326-336 AD.

To the glory of our Crucified and Resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, Saint Helen performed the Inauguration of his surrounding Church on September 13, 336 AD in the presence of the Archbishop of Jerusalem Makarios. Then he raised the Cross of Christ, so that the assembled multitudes could look at it from afar, and they repeatedly called out "Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy".

This act has remained as a tradition since then in the Church,

celebrated the day after the feast of the Inauguration, that is on September 14th.

In honour of this event, Great Vespers was held on Tuesday afternoon in the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection after incense and the blessing of bread presided over by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

On the morning of the feast, Wednesday, September 14/27, 2023, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection, led by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitans Isychios of Capitolas and Panteleimon of Xanthi, two Bishops from the Patriarchate of Serbia, the Hegoumen of the Monastery Vlatadon, Reverend Bishop Nikiforos of Amorio, the Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Philoumenos of Pella, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks, priests from other Orthodox Churches, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Angelos Gianopoulos with the help of Byzantine singers from Greece. The service was attended by a large congregation and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Demetrios Angelosopoulos.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a litany which marched from the Catholicon to the Shrine of Deposition, went down the stairs to Saint Helen's chapel and after the incense offering at the Altar of the Armenians and the throne of Saint Helen, it went to the Cave of the finding of the Cross. The exaltation of the Cross followed there, held by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the Holy Wood was exalted at the four parts of the horizon, under the chanting of the apolytikion of the feast. The Holy Cross was placed at the place of its finding and it was venerated by the High Priests and the Consul General.

The litany continued to the Holy Sepulchre, thrice around the Sacred Edicule as the Holy Wood was held on top of the heads of H.H.B. the High Priests and concluded at the Horrendous Golgotha. There the Cross was exalted again at the four parts of the horizon by His Beatitude, while the large crowd of people were chanting the apolytikion of the feast. The High Priests and the Consul General venerated again the Holy Cross there, holding basil branches in their hands, which they will keep as a blessing in their homes.

After the dismissal of the Liturgy, all the congregation venerated the Holy Wood which is kept in the case of King Justin.

At the end of the service, the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate Reception Hall, along with a large crowd of faithful Christians to whom His Beatitude delivered the following address:

“Christ on the cross; let us come together as partakers of His sufferings, so that we may also be born of His glory. Christ in the dead, let us die to sin, that we may live in righteousness... Christ in hades; let us come together to the highest humility, that we may also meet and be exalted and be glorified, forever seeing God and be seen”, says Saint John of Damascus.

Beloved brothers in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The power of the Holy and Life-giving Cross deemed us worthy to celebrate in this place of its finding under Saint Helen, but also in the place of the Crucifixion of our God and Saviour Christ in the Horrendous Golgotha, the so-called “Skull Place”, its Universal Exaltation.

The truly great mystery of the divine Providence, as well as of the Holy Cross, whose “word to those who are lost is a

blessing, to those who are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18), cannot be understood by human logic, but only through faith and the purity of the soul, as Saint John of Damascus says: "Great grace, admittedly, the mystery of the divine Providence will not be understood, it will be believed only by one who is free, of a pure mind, out of fear of God and with a desire to be given."

The Cross is the sacrificial power of God, and this is because in the Cross and through the Cross the great mystery of man's salvation was accomplished. It is written; "God our king, centuries ago, worked salvation in the midst of the earth" (Ps. 73,12). The Son of God, "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (Eph. 5:2). Because of this, all who obey him "he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him"(Hebrews 5:9).

The Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is "the beauty of the Church", "the support of the faithful", and the "weapon against the devil". The Cross is the trophy of Christ, through which the demons flee. "The cross is a trophy for Christ; Once it was stood up, forever it is woe to the demons who are driven away", says Saint John of Damascus.

Saint Cosmas, bishop of Maiouma, extolling the sermon of today's great feast, of the exaltation of the Holy Cross, exclaims hymnologically: "O Theotokos, thou art a mystical paradise, which being untilled hath blossomed forth Christ, by Who the life-bringing Tree of the Cross was planted in the earth. In worshipping Him now through its exaltation, thee do we magnify" (Ode 9, Heirmos).

In other words, Jesus Christ, as perfect God, is the one who planted "the tree of life in Paradise" (Genesis 2:9). He Himself planted "the life-giving tree of the Cross on earth" from the pure blood of the Virgin and Theotokos Mary during His incarnation.

The life-giving tree is none other than the wood of the Cross, on which he was crucified and in which “we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1, 7- 8). Through the cross, we worship “Christ our God, who was lifted up on the cross and sacrificed for our sins”. Let us honour and magnify the most blessed Theotokos and Mother of God, who gave birth to our God, the Word and our Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory and the kingdom now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen. Many happy returns”.

After this address, His Beatitude blessed all present. He awarded the honorary distinction of the Superior Brigade of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre to the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Vlatadon, His Eminence Bishop Nikiforos of Amori in recognition and appreciation of the accomplishments of the centre of this Monastery of outstanding theological and uniting work of the Churches and the provision of hospitality to students of the Patriarchate in it.

The multitudes of the faithful, receiving the Patriarchal blessing glorified to God for the salvation He provided to the world through the Cross of His Son.

From Secretariat-General

THE AWARDING OF Mr NASRI MOUSA ABU SAMIR

On Tuesday, September 13/26, 2023, His Beatitude our Father

and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos honoured with the distinction of the Cross-bearer of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre Mr Nasri Moussa – Abou Samir, who worked for many years in the Greek Orthodox Arabic-speaking Community of Beit Jala as a Steward and as a Byzantine choir singer.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS IN BEIT JALA

On Sunday, September 11/24, 2023, the feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos was celebrated by transference in Beit Jala.

On this feast, the Rum Orthodox Arabic-speaking community of Beit Jala commemorates that the Theotokos was given to the Ancestors of God Joachim and Anna as a gift for themselves and for the whole of humanity so that Christ our Saviour would be born in the flesh from her.

This feast was celebrated at the beautiful 19th-century Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos.

His Beatitude had a very warm welcoming reception by the Hegoumen of Beit Jala Archimandrite Ignatios, the priests and the scouts.

The Divine Liturgy and all the feast were presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with their Eminences, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Archimandrite Ieronymos and the Priests of the community, Fr Boulos, Fr Yusef and Fr Elias, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting

was delivered by the community Byzantine choir as the service was attended by a large congregation praying in joy and reverence.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following sermon:

“Thy Nativity, O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy the whole world; for from thee hath dawned the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, annulling the curse and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting” (Apolytikion).

Beloved brothers in Christ,

Dear Christians

The grace of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Most High, who overshadowed the Virgin Mary, brought us all together in this magnificent Church, to celebrate her Nativity, listening to the exhortation of our Holy Father John of Damascus: “Come all nations, every race of people and every language and age and every position, let us celebrate with joy the nativity of the universal joy”.

It is indeed an event of universal rejoicing the Nativity of our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, because as the hymnographer says to her “In thee O immaculate Maiden is the mystery of the Trinity praised and glorified. For the Father was well pleased and the Word dwelt among us, and the Divine Spirit overshadowed Thee” (Matins, Ode 6, Glory).

The Nativity of the Theotokos Mary marked the “beginning of salvation for the world”, that is, the lifting of the curse on the one hand and the abolition of death on the other. Both Adam and Eve were under the law of sin, curse and death due to their disobedience to God’s commandments. On the contrary, through the gracious Virgin Mary, who became the Mother of the Sun of Righteousness, the joy of Christ was proclaimed to the

whole world.

The Nativity of the Theotokos brought joy to the whole world because as Saint John of Damascus says, the Virgin Mary gave birth to the world of a treasure of goods that cannot be taken away because with Her the Creator transfigured/transformed all nature through the human nature of Christ. That is to say, if the man who stands in the middle of mind and matter is the link of all visible and invisible creation, the word of God since He was united with the nature of men, through Him has been united with all creation.

The birth of the Virgin Mary heralded the freedom not only of man but also of all creation from the slavery of decay and death. This is why Saint Paul preaches saying: " Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8,21).

Moreover, the birth of the Virgin Mary revealed the energy of "the mystery hidden from ages and from generations", (Col. 1,26) " Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel", (Is. 7:14) exclaims the prophet Isaiah. This so-called Son Emmanuel is none other than the manifested Christ, as the hymnographer says: "We faithfully celebrate and worship thy holy nativity, which came of a promise, O immaculate Virgin, whereby we were delivered from the curse of our first father when Christ appeared" (Matins, Ode 7, Canon 2, Troparion 1).

Also noteworthy is the use of the Prophet Amos saying: "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen" (Amos 9:11). In this prophetic word of Amos, Saint Cyril of Alexandria discerns the resurrection in Christ of the human tabernacle, that is, of the human flesh, saying: "For we are a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) according to the scriptures, for his sake; and death dug down (Amos 9:11) all

[people's] tabernacles, and God the Father in Christ rebuilt them."

The hymnographer of the Church at the birth of the Virgin Mary discerns the pattern of the salvation of man in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ saying: "The prophecy of the Lord is fulfilled, let it be; I will raise up the tabernacle of the holy David, in you, They were prefigured, through whom the companion of men, in the flesh of God, was incarnated."

The birth of the Virgin Mary, who protected her chastity and virginity, has a special significance for the Church of Christ, which according to the great Paul is the body of Christ (Col. 1, 18) and he is the saviour of the body of the Church (Eph. 5:23).

In other words, in the person of the most blessed Mary, we consider the mystery of the divine Providence, according to which "the whole of earthen men was incarnated in the flesh of the pure blood of the Ever-Virgin Mary under the Son and Word of God the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ. "It was well-pleasing to the Father so that not from a physical connection, but from the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin, supernaturally the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us", preaches Saint John of Damascus.

Today, my beloved brothers, our Holy Church calls us through the righteous Joachim and Anna, who were ambassadors of the world's salvation with the birth of their All-Holy daughter Theotokos, to celebrate this great gift of our God to mankind and assign all hope in Him. And after the hymnographer, we say: "O Adam be made new again; our mother Eve, be magnified, ye Prophets with the Apostles, dance in delight with the righteous. Today the world is filled with joy common to Angels and to men: From chaste and righteous Joachim and godly Anna is born now the Theotokos and Virgin" (Exapostilario 2). Alone, and only her introduced Christ into the world for the

salvation of our souls.

Many happy returns and blessed the new year of the very goodness of the Lord. Amen”.

After the Divine Liturgy, a litany took place around the Church accompanied by the Scouts’ parade.

After this, a treat reception took place in the hall next to the Church, and finally, a meal where the Patriarchal Entourage, the Mayor of the city and representative of the Head of the Ecclesiastical Supreme Palestinian Committee, Mr Ramzi Khouri were present.

From Secretariat-General

THE AWARDING OF THE CONSUL GENERAL OF GREECE IN JERUSALEM MR DEMETRIOS ANGELOSPOULOS AND OF THE CONSUL MRS CHRISTINA ZACHARIOUDAKI

On Saturday morning, September 10/23, 2023, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, according to the existing order of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, honoured the new Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Demetrios Angelosopoulos with the honorary distinction of the Grand Commander of the Order of Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, recognising the beginning of his office in the Consulate and

as the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross approaches.

His Beatitude wished Mr Angelosopoulos the strength of the Holy and Life-giving Cross, for a prosperous and fruitful ministry, for the benefit of the beloved nation of Greece, our Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, the Jerusalem Patriarchate, our flock and all the communities of the Holy Land, stressing that the Patriarchate is a historical continuation and proof of the bond of the Holy Places with the Byzantine Empire throughout the centuries, as well as with Greece, and a guarantee for the presence of all Christians in the Holy Land. The Consul General was accompanied by his wife, Mrs Pothiti Pappa.

Mr Angelosopoulos thanked His Beatitude for this honour and offered Him gifts on the occasion of the beginning of his Office, a copy of a 16th-century silver platter with the inscription of the Holy Great Martyr George the Trophy-bearer.

On this same joyous occasion, His Beatitude awarded the honorary distinction of the Cross-bearer of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre to the Consul Mrs Christina Zacharioudaki, who was accompanied by her husband Mr Constantaras, upon the expiration of her service in the country, as an official of the Greek Consulate in Tel Aviv, and her loving cooperation with the Patriarchate.

Mrs Zacharioudaki thanked His Beatitude and promised that from her position in Greece she will always be an advocate for the rights of the Patriarchate, and all the communities of the Holy Land.

From Secretariat-General

VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE

2023-09-20

On Wednesday, September 7/20, 2023, His Eminence Archbishop Tychon of the Holy Archdiocese of Rouza of the Moscow Patriarchate, who served in the past as the Head of the Russian Mission in Jerusalem (MISSIA), visited the Patriarchate with the MISSIA Representative Archimandrite Dometian and a small group of clergy and pilgrims.

In the words of His warm reception, His Beatitude underlined the importance of the Holy Sepulchre as safeguarding the unity of Jerusalem and the unity of the Orthodox Churches.



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Afterwards, His Beatitude received a large group of Priests and Pilgrims from the Patriarchate of Serbia, the Holy Metropolis of Eleftheroupolis of the Church of

Greece and from the parishes of the Holy Metropolis of Gortyna and Arcadia of the Church of Crete.



Among the last of these was the Hegoumen of the Monastery Koudouma, Archimandrite Makarios, accompanied by monks of the same Monastery and a group of pilgrims from the village Charakas, the birthplace of the blessed Archimandrite Philotheos.



The Hegoumen of the Monastery Koudouma and his entourage and the parish priests of Charakas Fr Nektarios and Fr Georgios were received personally by His Beatitude, Who presented to them the liturgical vestments of the blessed Archimandrite Philotheos and an icon of Jerusalem, praising the important pastoral work, which he performed for the benefit of the flock of the Metropolis of Ptolemais-Akris, a praise for the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and his birthplace, saying that his death was sudden, which we accept according to God's grace and economy.

From Secretariat-General

VISIT OF THE NEW CONSUL GENERAL OF GREECE TO THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, September 19, 2023, the new Consul General of Greece Mr Demetrios Angelosopoulos accompanied by Mrs Christina Zacharioudaki of the Consulate visited His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III and expressed his thanks for the honour to be received at the beginning of his service in Jerusalem as well as the commitment of the Greek government to support the rights of the Rum Orthodox and all Christian Churches in the Holy Land.

His Beatitude and Fathers of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood received him warmly, expressing joy for the visit a few days before the feast of the Holy Cross, which Cross helps the Churches to face recent challenges. The Patriarch also referred to the unfair imposition of municipal taxes and the blocking of the bank accounts of the Patriarchate and other Christian Churches by the Municipality of Jerusalem.

His Beatitude described how all the Churches are cooperating to face these challenges for the benefit of the Christian congregations. He asserted how the Churches at one point a few years ago reached a difficult decision of closing the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in protest to the unfair municipal taxes and water bills charges attempted to be imposed on the Churches by the Municipality of Jerusalem.

“Our problems do not arise from the State, the Government, nor the people of Israel”, His Beatitude said, “but from radical groups and elements within Israel”.

His Beatitude also referred to the project of the Sacred Edicule which was completed a few years ago, stressing that the Patriarchate’s attitude is to keep the Holy Places as

places of worship, accessible to all.

From Secretariat-General

THE COPTIC ARCHBISHOP OF ENGLAND VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, September 19th, 2023, the Coptic Archbishop of England, His Eminence Archbishop Angelos accompanied by His Eminence the Coptic Archbishop in Jerusalem, Archbishop Antonios, visited our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Theophilos III.

In this fraternal meeting were discussed issues concerning the Christian Churches in Jerusalem, like the challenges of unfair municipal taxes by the Jerusalem Municipality, as well as attacks of radical elements against Christians and their Churches.

The churches cooperate to overcome these challenges as well as serving the thousands of pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. The Churches further strive to maintain the multi-religious and multi-cultural character of Jerusalem.

The issue of Der Sultan problem was discussed as well for a solution through dialogue between the Churches and without the interference of any external factors. We are optimistic, said Patriarch Theophilos III, because we are the Church of the

Resurrection.

The issue of the repetition of the Theological dialogue between the Eastern Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches and pro-Chalcedonian Churches was also discussed.

The Patriarch offered His Eminence, Bishop Angelos, an "*Engolpion*" and the icon of the Theotokos and of the Edicule, and His Eminence offered the Patriarch an icon with Coptic children iconography.

From Secretariat-General