

VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE – SEPTEMBER 2/15

On Friday, the 2nd / 15th of September 2023, His Beatitude received:

1. The Metropolitan Varsanufius of the Moscow Patriarchate, with a group of clergymen of the Spiritual Mission to Jerusalem (MISSIA) and pilgrims.

To them, His Beatitude said that under the current conditions of disorder and confusion in the world, our prayer takes precedence in order to preserve the unity of the Church.

On this visit, His Eminence offered His Beatitude a series of Patriarchal gilts, and His Beatitude offered him an icon of the Virgin Mary, the Sacred Edicule and a painting of Jerusalem.

1. Finally, His Beatitude received a large group of Orthodox pilgrims from Ukraine, Italy, Serbia and Romania.

From Secretariat-General

VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE

On Thursday, September 1/14, 2023, His Beatitude received:

1. The Hegoumen of the Shrine of Gethsemane, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenopolis with the expert of the National Technical University of Athens, Mr

Konstantinos A. Karadimos, regarding the maintenance of the Holy Place of the Dormition of the Theotokos at the Theotokos' Tomb.

2. A twenty-member group of students in the third year of the Theological School of the Dormitio Benedictine Monastery of Saint Sion under the Abbot Fr Nicodemus and the Dean Priest Fr Stephen Athanasiou, Lecturer of Orthodox Theology from the Holy Metropolis of Switzerland.
3. A large group of pilgrims from Ukraine and Serbia led by the Exarch of Serbia to Moscow Bishop Antony.

From Secretariat-General

HEADS OF CHURCHES MET WITH UNITED KINGDOM FOREIGN SECRETARY JAMES CLEVERLY

Tuesday evening, at the British Residence in Jerusalem, UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly met with Church leaders representing various churches in the Holy Land, and His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos represented His Beatitude Theophilos III in this meeting.

The Church leaders and Mr Cleverly discussed the important role the churches play in promoting coexistence and keeping the harmony in the Holy City, including the services provided through education and healthcare throughout the Holy Land.

Threats and challenges facing the Christian community in the

Holy Land and in Jerusalem particularly were also raised with the Foreign Minister, including the National Park expansion in the Mount of Olives, rising hate crimes, and attacks on Churches properties and how to confront them.

This gathering follows an All Party Parliamentary Group meeting on Christianity in the Holy Land earlier that day in London, signifying the UK's commitment to Christians in the region.

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III LEADS THE OPENING CEREMONY FOR 'BETHLEHEM REBORN PALESTINE: THE WONDERS OF THE NATIVITY' EXHIBITION IN GENEVA

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III , Patriarch of Jerusalem and all Palestine, spoke today, Tuesday September 12, at the opening ceremony of "Bethlehem Reborn Palestine – The Wonders of the Nativity" exhibition held at the Ecumenical Center of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Geneva, Switzerland.

"The exhibition shows the renovation of the church building itself and the beauty of the mosaics, the columns, and the different types of tiles and crafted wood. It is of crucial

importance that this unique architectural structure be carefully and faithfully preserved, but the basilica is more than a building of historical or artistic interest, and Bethlehem is more than just another city." With these words His Beatitude started his opening speech as one of the key speakers at this monumental event.

"As we struggle to preserve a vital and vibrant Christian presence in the Holy Land in the face of a resurgence of radicalism and hatred in the society, and as our world is plunged deeper and deeper into confusion and despair, the universal spiritual vocation of Bethlehem and the Basilica has never been more urgent."

His Beatitude emphasized that the church is not a mere archaeological site or museum but rather "it is a living witness to hope and to light and to life."

Giving a small history background to the audience regarding the Church of the Nativity, His Beatitude added "There has been a church on this site since the early 330s and the present structure dates from the reign of the Emperor Justinian in the 6th century. It was one of the first of the Holy Places to be reconstructed by the Emperor Saint Constantine and his mother Saint Helena, and it is the oldest complete church in the Christian world. The Rum Orthodox Church has been the guardian and servant of this church from its very foundation, and has been a witness down the ages to the embodiment of our common sacred history in the region and to the divine-human encounter. For here the divine Logos was revealed."

Towards the end of his speech His Beatitude thanked the World Council of Churches (WCC) for their tremendous efforts to establish this exhibit and their unwavering support to the Church in Jerusalem and the communities. Patriarch Theophilos also thanked His Excellency the President of the Palestinian State, Mr Mahmoud Abbas, who took the initiative and has been

instrumental in the restoration work and who continues to show concern about preserving the Church of the Nativity, "which is a symbol of hope and peace and a symbol unity and co-existence for the Palestinian people, both Christian and Muslim."

His Beatitude was accompanied by a high-level delegation from Palestine, including: Dr Ramzi Khoury, member of the Executive Committee of the PLO and chairman of the Higher Presidential Committee of Churches Affairs in Palestine; Ambassador Ibrahim Khraishi, permanent observer of the state of Palestine to the UN-Switzerland; Ambassador Issa Kassisieh, ambassador of the state of Palestine to the Holy See; Ambassador Omar Awadallah; assistant minister for UN and specialized organizations; Minister Khouloud Daibes, executive director of the Bethlehem Development Foundation; Ambassador Amira Hanania, Higher Presidential Committee of Churches Affairs in Palestine; Ahmad Hammoudeh, chargee d'affaires at the Embassy of the state of Palestine to the Holy See; and Doa Nofal, second secretary at the POM of the state of Palestine.

On his behalf, Dr Ramzi Khoury, member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and chairman of the High Presidential Committee for Church Affairs, said that "Our demand is for our people to live a dignified life free from occupation, like any other nation in the world, to build a prosperous future and preserve, with your assistance, the remaining Palestinian Christian presence in the Holy Land." Mr. Khoury added "our people, despite all obstacles mentioned and more, are a resilient people who safeguard their heritage and sanctities."

The exhibition is promoted by the State of Palestine; Higher Presidential Committee of Churches Affairs in Palestine; Presidential Committee for the Restoration of the Church of the Nativity; and the Embassy of the State of Palestine to the Holy See in cooperation with Bethlehem Development Foundation; Piacenti S.p.a and with the participation of University of Pavia.

The exhibit will be available to the public from 13 September-5 October daily. Marking the first renovation of the Church of the Nativity in hundreds of years, has toured different world cities, including Paris, Rome, and other parts of Italy. After four weeks in Geneva, it will move to Washington, DC, in November.



Photo credit: Ivars Kupcis/WCC



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PASTORAL VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE

1. On Saturday, August 27/September 9, 2023, the new

Community Council of the city of Shahnin in northern Israel visited His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos for a blessing on the assumption of its duties and for an invitation to the upcoming feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos.

2. The representative of the Nur-Sat television network, Mrs Bassima, visited His Beatitude for cooperation with the Patriarchate.



3. A committee of the Church of Greece consisting of His Eminence Metropolitan Dionysios of Corinth and Mr Katsiaras visited His Beatitude and invited him on behalf of the Church of Greece to participate in the ceremony of the centenary of the publication of the magazine "Theology" by the Holy Sepulchre Archbishop Chrysostomos Papadopoulos of Athens.

From Secretariat-General

THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE OF IRELAND VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday afternoon, August 24 / September 6, 2023, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos received Mr Micheál Martin, TD, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defence of the Republic of Ireland.

In this meeting, His Beatitude informed Mr Martin about the challenges faced by the Christian community at the hands of radical Israeli elements, including verbal and physical attacks, and vandalism of Churches and Christian property. His Beatitude gave as an example the Holy Place Stella Maris in Haifa, which was visited for support by the President of Israel Mr Isaac Herzog, as well as our Abba Gerasimos Monastery.

His Beatitude also referred to the feast of the Transfiguration in Tabor, when the Israeli Fire Brigade prevented Christians from coming to the feast in an unacceptable manner.

The Christian Church of Jerusalem maintains good relations with the State of Israel and continues to advocate to encourage the State to seriously tackle and effectively deal with these radical elements of the society.

Jerusalem as the Holy City is the heart of identity for the three monotheistic faiths and needs to preserve its multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious character. The Holy

Places attract thousands of pilgrims who contribute to Israel's tourism development. These Holy Places remain open to all and are centres of peaceful coexistence, symbiosis, and dialogue.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which is the only Autocephalous Church of the Holy Land, is cooperating in a campaign to deal with these problems, including the Jordanian authorities, as the Hashemite King of Jordan has the Custodianship over the Islamic and Christian Holy Places of the Holy Land.

Thanking His Beatitude for the information, the Minister promised to convey these to the competent authorities and left to venerate the Holy Sepulchre.

From Secretariat-General

THE AMBASSADOR OF FINLAND VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday, August 24 / September 6, 2023, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos received Mrs Päivi Peltokoski, the Ambassador of Finland in Ramallah.

At this meeting, His Beatitude spoke to Mrs Peltokoski about the Holy Places, which were promoted by Saint Helen, after the command of her son Constantine the Great and about their preservation by the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood. His Beatitude also spoke about the Christians, who have been living in the Holy Land for centuries, and the challenges being faced in the Holy Land. Nevertheless, the Church continues its struggle for

the community in hope, because the Lord said: "Have no fear, little flock".

His Beatitude ended with giving His blessing for the success of her diplomatic mission.

From Secretariat-General

MR CHRISTIAN TERHEŞ MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, August 22 / September 4, 2023, Mr Terheş, a member of the European Parliament, visited the Patriarchate.

Mr Terheş was received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and answering his questions spoke to him about the work of the Patriarchate as the oldest ecclesiastical institution in the Holy Land, about the incidents of violence against Christians and about the role that the European Union can play in bringing about peace in the region of the Middle East, which for centuries housed the three monotheistic faiths; Jews, Christians and Muslims.

His Beatitude also emphasised the paramount importance of investing in the educational systems as one of the best methods of instilling values of tolerance and respect for the other.

Mr Terheş showed interest in these views of His Beatitude and undertook to relay them to the European Union, before leaving to venerate the Holy Sepulchre.

From Secretariat-General

THE BODY OF SCOUTS OF THE JOPPA AREA VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, August 20th/September 2nd, 2023, about fifty members of the Joppa Community Scouts' Body, their Leaders and younger executives visited the Patriarchate, in order to thank His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos for the help they received from the Patriarchate.

His Beatitude received and blessed them, wished them progress, success and Christian Education and led them to worship the Holy and Life-giving Tomb and the Holy Tomb of the Theotokos.

From Secretariat-General

AWARD OF A SPECIAL MEDAL TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE CONSUL

GENERAL OF GREECE IN JERUSALEM

On Thursday, 18th / 31st of August 2023, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos awarded the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Evangelos Vlioras, who served successfully and now retired, a special medal cut for the renovation of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre in 2017, thanking him for his support of our Patriarchate and wishing him success in the representation of the motherland Greece in the European Union in Brussels.

From Secretariat-General