

THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM DECORATES PROFESSOR IOANNIS KONIDARIS

On Friday the 16th/29th of November 2013, His Beatitude Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, conferred the medal of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher on Mr Ioannis Konidaris, Professor of Canon Law at the University of Athens Faculty of Law. The humble ceremony was held in recognition of Mr Konidaris' services, both past and present, to the Church, the nation, and even more so to the Church of Jerusalem.

Deeply moved, Mr Konidaris thanked His Beatitude, pledging to carry on as eagerly offering his services to the Church as a whole and to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

From the Secretariat-General

[httpv://youtu.be/SZal8lNF7vE](http://youtu.be/SZal8lNF7vE)



THE FEAST OF ST PHILOUMENOS THE HIEROMARTYR AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday the 15th/28th of November 2013, the Hieromartyr Saint Philoumenos the Hagiotaphite was commemorated one day in

advance due to pastoral reasons.

The feast was celebrated at Jacob's Well, where the then Hegoumen, Archimandrite Philoumenos, had suffered a martyr's death on the 16th/29th of November 1979. Following a decision in 2009 of the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Saint's martyrdom was added to the Synaxarion of Hieromartyrs (Martyrology).

His Beatitude Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, led the divine Liturgy on the morning of the aforementioned day. Co-officiating were the Most Reverend Kyriakos, Metropolitan of Nazareth; the Patriarchal Commissioner in Bethlehem, His Eminence Theophylaktos, Archbishop of Jordan; and the Most Reverend Isaiah, Metropolitan of Tamassos and Orinis, visiting from the Church of Cyprus. The liturgy was held in the presence of a crowd of local Orthodox faithful from the region of Samaria but also from Jerusalem, and pilgrims from Greece, Russia, Romania as well as a group from Cyprus, led by the Metropolitan of Tamassos, Isaiah. The choir chanted under the direction of the Head Cantor of the All-Holy Church of the Resurrection, Archimandrite Aristovoulos, in Greek, Arabian and Russian.

During the *Koinonikon* of the divine Liturgy, His Beatitude preached the Word of God in Greek. This is an excerpt from His speech:

[...] Christ's martyrs occupy a prominent position in the ranks of saints of the Church. And this because their blood, shed for the light of truth in Christ, has made them communicants of Christ's redeeming blood, "who hath purchased the church of God, with his own blood", (Acts 20, 28). After all, those without hope, and without God in the world, according to the wise Paul, "who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ...consequently, they are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household", (Eph. 2, 12-19).

In other words, my dears, the blood of the martyrs is what has made them fellow citizens of the first-born saints and members of Christ's household. And this is exactly what the memory of the holy martyrs calls upon us, to become fellow citizens of the saints and members of Christ's household. "Have you honoured the martyr by presence? Honour him, too by correction of kin. Because to honour the martyr is to emulate the martyr", says the Holy Chrysostom. And this because: any disorderly attachment to the body and to the vanity of this world is a burden and a weight that hinders us from running the good race, the race "marked out for us" (Hebr. 12, 1) "throwing off the burden of the living things and their concerns, and with them negligence and sloth", says the commentator Ecumenios.

Martyr Philoumenos whom we celebrate today, having joined the cloud, namely the crowd of the martyrs of the Church of Christ, is not only a witness of this world, but keeps witnessing in heavens in favour of truth and the redeeming faith in Christ, though invisible amongst us.

The divine Liturgy was followed by lunch, hosted by the founder of the Church that stands on Jacob's Well in the name of St Photini of Samaria, Hegoumen, Archimandrite Ioustinos.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/QCWHbViSWRw>



EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ENTHRONEMENT OF PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS OF JERUSALEM

On Friday the 9th/22nd of November 2013, the eighth anniversary of His Beatitude Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

On the occasion of the anniversary, a Doxology service was held in the All-Holy Church of the Resurrection.

His Beatitude led the service with co-officiating Hagiotaphite Prelates, Hieromonks and Presbyters of our congregation, visiting from Monasteries and parishes either near or remote, within the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Doxology was attended by the Greek Consul-General in Jerusalem, Mr Georgios Zacharoudiakis, joined by his associates and his honourable wife, as well as by local faithful and pilgrims.

At the end of the service, amidst the sound of church bells, the Patriarchal Retinue proceeded to the Patriarchates. There, according to the protocol, His Beatitude was greeted by the Elder Secretary-General Aristarchos, Archbishop of Constantina. In his greeting, the Elder Secretary-General referred to the deeper ecclesiastical importance of the Enthronement, as an event which *'being an ecclesiastical act, it has, as a connecting link, brought together the separate members of the body of Christ and of the Church of Sion under a single power and authority, that of Your Beatitude, and from there on marked the continuation of its harmonious operation, as well as that of the Church as a whole. After all, in the word of the Apostle Paul, "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices*

with it" (Corinthians A, 12, 26)

The Greek General-Consul, Mr Georgios Zacharoudiakis, addressed His Beatitude in Greek. This is an excerpt from his speech:

[...] Your Beatitude,

Greece, in recognition of Your personal contribution, and honouring its indissoluble ties with this sacred foundation, confers to You its full aid and unreserved support, embracing You with its trust. We remain Your helpers in Your indefatigable and unrelenting efforts. The recent visits of the country's Prime Minister, the Vice-President of the Government and numerous Ministers and Officials, provide testament to this fact, and a proof of dedication to You, and of our non-negotiable and firm alignment with You and this sacred institution. [...]

Also addressing His Beatitude were the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth; the representative of the Russian Spiritual Mission (MISSIA), Archimandrite f. Theophanes, the Archbishop of Joppe, Damaskinos; the Archbishop of Qatar, Makarios, on behalf of the Metropolitan of Philadelphia, Benediktos, and on behalf of the Archbishopric of Qatar; the Archbishop of Pella, Philoumenos; the Hegoumen of Accra, Archimandrite f. Philotheos; the Principal of the Patriarchal School of Sion; the Headmaster of the School of St Demetrios, f. Issah Awad, vicar at the Cathedral of St James the Brother of God; the Hegoumen of the Community of Beit Jala, Archimandrite Narkissos on behalf of whom spoke f. Georgios Sahuan, and the Community of Remli.

In His reply speech, His Beatitude thanked all those present. This is an excerpt from His speech:

[...] This venerable anniversary of the Patriarchal Enthronement in the seat of Christ's reigning city, does not pertain only to our Mediocrity but also to our Christian community, the one

within the ecclesiastical boundaries of Our spiritual jurisdiction.

This we say because the entire Universe, especially so our own region, is tried fiercely by both visible and invisible powers of the ruler of the darkness in this century (Ephesians, 6, 12) according to Paul. And because of this, humanity as a whole anticipates the safe haven of hope, Christ crucified and risen, "whom we, the humble, preach and acknowledge in piety and gratitude" in these natural sites of His redeeming work. "Because Christ is in you, the hope of glory". (Colossians, 1, 27)

In this situation in which we were in when God called us (1 Corinthians, 7, 20) we are invited to prove ourselves worthy of our Hagiotaphite mission, "in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left" (2 Corinthians, 6, 6-7).

His Beatitude's address was translated into Arabic by the Patriarchate's spokesman for Arab-speaking Mass Media, f. Issah Musleh.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/VQPwzXwNcwk>



THE FEAST OF THE HOLY

ARCHANGELS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday the 8th/21st of November 2013, the feast of the Gathering of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

The feast was firstly celebrated in the city of Joppe, where the Patriarchate maintains a Holy Monastery dedicated to the Archangels by the sea, on the site where the Apostle Peter had the vision of the great sheet descending from the sky, and heard a voice telling him to kill and eat from all clean and unclean animals seen into the sheet: "Kill and eat, what God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy" (Acts, 11, 7). Through this very vision, God declared His will that the church should open its gates to the gentiles, considered unclean.

In this church, which was renovated after having been reduced to ashes in a fire, at the expenses of His Eminence Damaskinos, Archbishop of Joppe, His Beatitude Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, led the Divine Liturgy. His Beatitude arrived from Jerusalem with His retinue and was welcomed by the Boy Scouts Association in the square near the Monastery.

Co-officiating with His Beatitude were the Most Reverend Kyriakos, Metropolitan of Nazareth; Bishop Jovan of Ulpiana, visiting from Serbia; His Eminence Damaskinos, Archbishop of Joppe; His Eminence Aristarchos, Archbishop of Constantina and Elder Secretary-General; His Eminence Methodios, Archbishop of Tabor; the Patriarchal Commissioner in Bethlehem, Archbishop Theophylaktos of Jordan; His Eminence Nektarios, Archbishop of Anthedon; Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Arab-speaking Presbyters and Hierodeacons.

The Greek Ambassador in Tel Aviv, Mr Spyridon Lambrides, piously attended the Divine Liturgy in the company of associates of his from the Embassy and a crowd of Orthodox faithful from the city of Joppe and other cities of Israel, whilst, under the direction of the Head Cantor of the All-Holy Church of the Resurrection, Archimandrite Aristovoulos, the choir chanted in Greek, Arabic, Russian and Romanian, the congregation participating piously.

To the faithful, His Beatitude preached the Word of God. This is an excerpt from His speech:

[...] These immaterial Minds, namely the angels, "are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Hebrews 1, 14). The angels' ministry is confirmed by the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ, saying: "there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents", (Luke 15, 10). Besides, the Melodist of our Church declares: "Let us praise the bodiless ministers of God, those who always mediate for our salvation and commend repentance".

[...] The angels, as God's ministering spirits, actively participate in the work of man's salvation, as revealed through the words of Christ: "For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done" (Matthew 16, 27).

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a brief reception, then lunch at the Hegoumen's Quarters, courtesy of His Eminence Damaskinos, Archbishop of Joppe.

The feast of the Archangels was also celebrated at the Monastery dedicated to them in Jerusalem by means of Vespers and a Divine Liturgy, led by His Eminence Demetrios, Archbishop of Lydda, who also preached the Word of God to the faithful.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/nESo4EydL-g>



HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS' CONGRATULATORY SPEECH TO MAYOR NIR BARKAT OF JERUSALEM.

Jerusalem, Monday 18-11-2013

Honorable Mayor Nir Barkat,

We are gathered here today to welcome your new term as Mayor, and it is our pleasure to extend to you, on behalf of the Jerusalem Christian community and on behalf of our Patriarchate, our sincerest wishes for productive municipal governance throughout your term.

We look forward to further cooperation and understanding between our Christian leadership and the municipality, and encourage you to sustain your attentiveness to the sensitivities of the various Jerusalem communities, especially our Christian communities, which have modeled the ecumenical character that defines Jerusalem.

"I am present like springtime in the mountains, like the feet of one who announces a good report of peace, like one who

preaches good things (Isaiah 52:7).”

The municipality of Jerusalem holds a unique position amongst all other local governments of the world due to the holiness of this land, which has been implemented by God Almighty, and is shared by the Jews, Christians, and Muslims. It is, after all, the place where heaven and earth meet.

For this reason, the office of Mayor of Jerusalem is one that carries with it high prestige, yet at the same time bears an equally high level of responsibility. Jerusalem, as a spiritual oasis for the whole world, calls visitors from every corner of the globe, from every faith and background. It is looked to by all as a microcosm of humanity co-existing. It is in this regard that we take so seriously the need to engage ourselves in continued interaction for the common benefit of all people.

Mr. Mayor, as we celebrate this event to honour you in the commencement of your incumbency, it should not be inappropriate to bring to your attention our concerns and reasonable expectations as an ancient presence and integral embodiment of this sacred city. We kindly request to have a meeting with the municipality administration to discuss some matters related to the religious character of Jerusalem, and of course, of practical common concern.

Since Jerusalem continues to be a living wellspring for the soul, we seek to fulfill our responsibility as co-inheritors of its sacredness, looking forward rather than to the past, in order to strengthen and support this lifesource; wherefrom peace and reconciliation emanate.

Allow us to reassure you of our commitment to uphold our spiritual and historical mission, which is to guard and serve the holy places that have been entrusted to us, and to maintain them as places of worship, accessible to all faithful without prejudice. In doing so, we also assure our commitment

to Jerusalem, which is per se, a holy place of blessedness, not only for us who reside here, but for the whole world.

As Jerusalem prepares to enter its festive season, we would like to wish you and your colleagues, health, long life, and full success in your important administrative mission. Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

CONDOLENCES NOTE OF THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM ON THE DEATH OF PRESIDENT GLAFKOS CLERIDES

(Jerusalem, 17 November 2013).

Your Excellency,

With great sorrow, yet with equal sorrow in Christ who has vanquished death by the cross, we communicate through this Patriarchal Letter of Ours with Your esteemed and distinguished Excellency in order to offer our condolences to You and Your respectable government as well as to the entire afflicted people of Cyprus, on the demise of the former President of the Republic of Cyprus, the ever-memorable

Glafkos Clerides.

The former President, who departed full of days, is recognized the world over as a fighting Greek Cypriot patriot, a skilled and perceptive political leader, the man who initiated the accession of the Republic of Cyprus into the European Union, uncompromisingly working for its reunion, and offering in deed his support to our long spoken of Patriarch of Jerusalem.

We share the grief of the people of Cyprus on the death of this esteemed and popular President, praying from the All-Holy and Life-Giving Sepulcher that God our Lord rest his soul in the land of the living, and that Your Excellency be enhanced to successfully complete Your struggle towards a just resolution of the political problem facing the martyric Great Island of Cyprus.

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, the 17th of November.

Of Your Honoured Excellency,
Fervently Praying to the Lord,

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

THE FEAST OF ST GEORGE THE GREAT-MARTYR IN LYDDA

On Saturday the 3rd/16th of November 2013, the feast of the translation of the relics of St George the Trophy-Bearer and

Great-Martyr was celebrated in the Holy Church dedicated to him in Lydda.

The Holy Church of St George was the first to be built in his honour after the Edict of Milan was issued by St Constantine in 313 AD, by his mother St Helena who came to the Holy Land in 326 AD. St Helena built the church on the grave wherein the saint's holy relics had been translated by his servant from Rome. In Rome St George suffered a martyr's death after having confessed his faith in Christ, thus abandoning the Roman army to join the army of Christ's martyrs.

This holy Church conquered the force of time and the alternation of powers in the Holy Land. It has been conferred on the basis of the building's history and structure, half of the building has been seized to be used as a mosque.

In the remaining magnificent part of the church, on top of the tomb which has been preserved in the form of a crypt-chapel, His Beatitude Theophilos, Our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem led the Divine Liturgy. His Beatitude was welcomed by the Boy Scouts of the city of Lydda; the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery, the Very Reverend Archimandrite Sophronios; the Greek-Orthodox Council, Majlis, and the Acting Mayor of the city of Lydda, Mr Abib Wasserman. Co-officiating were the Most Reverend Isychios, Metropolitan of Capitolias, and His Eminence the Archbishop of Joppe, Damaskinos; the Elder Secretary-General Aristarchos, Archbishop of Constantina; the Most Reverend Metropolitan of Archangelsk, Daniel, visiting from the Church of Russia; the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod, His Eminence Demetrios, the Archbishop of Lydda; the Exarch of the Holy Sepulcher in Constantinople, His Eminence Nektarios, the Archbishop of Anthedon; Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the Hegoumen of Remli, Archimandrite Nephon; Arab-speaking Presbyters and Hierodeacons; the Greek Ambassador to Tel Aviv, Mr Spyridon Lambrides; the Serb Ambassador, and a great crowd of faithful from the city of Lydda and the neighbouring countries of Joppe and Remli, but also from the

cities of Galilee and the occupied areas of Judea and Samaria, whilst, under the direction of the Head Cantor of the All-Holy Church of the Resurrection, Archimandrite Aristovoulos, the choir chanted in Greek, Arabic, Russian and Romanian, the congregation participating piously.

To the faithful, who had gathered to venerate the tomb of St George in piety, respect and devoutness, His Beatitude preached the Word of God during the *Koinonikon* of the Divine Liturgy. This is an excerpt from His speech in Greek:

[...] The festive commemoration of the martyrdom of St George, my dear brothers, as well as his time, is not the historical past; it is indeed the present and the future. And this we say in the face of an indisputable reality of displacement, of persecutions and martyric deaths of innocent children and our fellow human beings, especially our brothers in conviction and religion, both near and far from what Paul has termed our temporary stay; to this very reality the word of the Gospel can be fully applied: "in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God" (Jn: 16:2) Indeed: as if this weren't enough, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think that not only is he not committing a crime, but that with this murder he is worshipping God. [...]

In other words, the work of the devil has many times been conducted in the guise of God's deacon and many times ferocious enemies of the truth in Christ sat "in the Temple of God", (2 Thessalonians, 2:4)

In Arabic, the speech may be read here: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2013/11/16/2822>

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, Archimandrite Sophronios offered refreshments and pastries to the Patriarchal Retinue and the crowd, in the Hegoumen's Quarters opposite the church. At noon, lunch was offered by the

Hegoumen and the city's Community Council at "Nandi" –Orthodox Group, in the presence of the Acting Mayor of the city of Remli, Mr Abib Wasserman; former MP, the Christian Nadia Heloue, and a representative of the Islamic Community of Remli.

There, His Beatitude addressed those present with this speech:
<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2013/11/16/2821>

and went on to offer monetary assistance for the benefit of the Community and the Boy Scouts of the city of Lydda.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/WQhwDhVGbhI>



LITURGY OF THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM IN IB'LIN AND INSTALLATION OF NEW PRIEST

On Saturday the 27th of October/9th of November 2013, His Beatitude Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, performed the divine Liturgy in the city of Ib'lin (Abelin), in Northern Israel, where the Patriarchate preserves a Rum Orthodox Community, numbering approximately five thousand members. The Community falls under the jurisdiction of the Holy Metropolis of Ptolemais, present-day Accra.

The liturgy was intended for the spiritual communication and collaboration between his Beatitude and His spiritual children; also, for the installation of recently ordained

priest, f. Savvas Haj. Father Savvas will serve as assistant parish priest to the elder f. Spyridon, who has been serving the Community of the city of Ib'lin for several years now.

Co-officiating were the Prelates of the Patriarchate, the Most Reverend Kyriakos, Metropolitan of Nazareth, and His Eminence Theodosios, Archbishop of Sevasteia.

During the *koinonikon*, His Beatitude addressed the installed priest, f. Savvas, and the pious congregation. This is an excerpt from his address:

[...] To increase and establish our holy zeal, we have proceeded, upon a Synodic decision, to the appointment of two parish priests, who are to co-officiate with the venerable and grey-haired priest and Steward, Spyridon Aouad. These new labourers in our Lord's vineyard are your fellow parishioners, the recently ordained f. Savvas, and Steward f. Demetrios, for the time being a minister in the Community of Haifa.

Let us, my dears, summon our Father, the God of lights, so that his Only Son and Word, He who is the true light, may illuminate their faces and guide their steps towards the achievement of His commandments, by means of the mediation of the Mother of God, the Ever Virgin Mary, and the supplications of the Holy Great-Martyrs, St Demetrius and George. Amen.

At the conclusion of the divine Liturgy, during a reception held in a hall next to the church, the installed priest, f. Savvas, addressed His Beatitude. In his address, f. Savvas extended his thanks for the privilege to serve as priest in his hometown of Ib'lin. In His reply, His Beatitude wished f. Savvas a fruitful diaconate ministry, endowed with hieratic consciousness, diligence and dedication.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/JhUG5ybI4ro>



FEAST OF ST JAMES, BROTHER OF THE LORD, AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, 23rd of October/5th of November 2013, the memory of the glorious apostle and hieromartyr James, the Brother of the Lord, was celebrated by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in the ancient church dedicated to him. The church stands between the Central Monastery of the Hagiotaphites and the All-holy Church of the Resurrection, beneath its belfry. It constitutes the Cathedral of the Rum Orthodox Arab-speaking Community of Jerusalem.

In the afternoon, at 2:30 pm, Vespers was held, led by His Beatitude Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem. The procession of Vespers was attended by Hagiotaphite Fathers, nuns, Arab-speaking locals, parishioners and pious Greek-speaking and Russian-speaking pilgrims. After the procession, amidst the sound of bells ringing, the Patriarchal Retinue progressed to the Patriarchates.

On the day of the feast, at 8:00 am, His Beatitude Theophilos arrived at the Church of St James, began chanting the Katabasias, and led the Matins and Divine Liturgy. Co-officiating were Hagiotaphite Prelates: their Eminences the Archbishops of Avila, Tabor and Sevasteia, Dorotheos, Methodios and Theodosios respectively; Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and the presbyters of the Church of St James, Steward f. Issa Touma and priest Farah-Charalambous Bantour, and hierodeacons. The Greek Consul-General in Jerusalem, Mr Georgios Zacharoudiakos attended the service in the company of his

associates and a crowd of Orthodox faithful, Jerusalemite parishioners and pious pilgrims.

To this Christian crowd, His Beatitude preached the Word of God in Greek. This is an excerpt of His speech in English:

Today the Church of Christ and indeed the Church of Jerusalem delights and rejoices because St James was proclaimed an Apostle and the first Bishop in Jerusalem by the Lord himself and was the first to write and set forth the Divine Liturgy, taught by none other than Christ.

In other words, my dear brothers, St James became an eye and ear witness to the mystery of divine economy in Christ and of Christ's teachings, as demonstrated by his catholic epistle, where he names himself James of God, the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. And truly, he is recognized as a servant of Christ. This, because he faithfully emulated Christ in words and deeds, as attested in the preaching on faith included in his epistle, namely: "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead". (James 2, 14-17 & 26)

In Arabic, the speech may be accessed here:
<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2013/11/05/2810>

At the end of the d. Liturgy, the Patriarchal Retinue progressed to the Patriarchates, followed by Hagiotaphite Prelates from the rooftop of St James, as is the custom. Blessed bread was distributed by the supervisors of the Patriarchate's bakery, Hieromonk f. Paisios and the reverend nun Serapheima, at the exit from the Central Monastery on the

way to the Patriarchate.

During the reception at the Patriarchate, His Beatitude addressed in Greek the Hagiotaphite Fathers, the Consul-General and laymen. An excerpt from the address is cited here in English:

“It is precisely the wisdom of God, namely the Holy Spirit, which makes us not strangers to God but his fellow citizens, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone”. (Ephesians 2, 19-20).

The safe-keeping of the construction of the Church, assembled in Christ, is guaranteed by the apostolic succession through which the Church is prolonged in Christ and through Christ along the centuries. As proprietors of this treasure in the face of the holy, glorious and most honourable Apostle James, we have properly and assuredly performed the divine liturgy in the church consecrated to St James, where we made a supplication for a righteous and peaceful condition of the entire world, especially our region, for the spiritual well-being and progress of our holy Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and of our pious Christian race.

In Arabic, the address may be read here:
<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2013/11/05/2808>

The address was followed by brotherly embrace and kissing the hand of His Beatitude.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/tNc0mRoh9ok>



REMARKS AT THE CONFERENCE OF THE SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND ON THE STATUS AND NATURE OF HOLY SITES.

Jerusalem, 30 October 2013.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

First, please allow us to thank our dear friend, Mrs. Sharon Rosen, for her kind invitation to address this conference. The subject of Holy Sites is, needless to say, of supreme importance to all the religious communities of the Holy Land, and it is crucial for us to gather together to discuss both the nature of Holy Sites and their meaning for us all today. We would also like to acknowledge and thank Rabbi David Rosen for moderating this part of our conference, as well as his instrumental work in the Universal Code on Holy Sites.

The Nature of Holy Sites

According to the Psalms, “The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness. The world and those who dwell therein (Psalms 23:1).”

In the Christian tradition, holiness is the supreme attribute of God. Human beings share in God’s holiness insofar as we share in the divine life. “For it is written, be holy for I am holy.” We call those people “holy” who reflect the divine life, and we call places “holy” where that divine life breaks through into our temporal reality. The goal of true Christian

living is precisely this: that by sharing in God's life in the church we shall attain full union with God for eternity. Therefore holiness cannot be created by us; but we can nurture holiness where it is found, both in places and in people, and we can participate in this dynamic life.

For the Christian, too, a proper understanding of Holy Places flows naturally from our biblical theology of creation and the mystery of the divine economy of the Incarnation. We believe that God created all things from nothingness, and that all creation will be redeemed and restored by God to its original purpose. Therefore even geography has the potential to mediate the divine life. The Christian monastic tradition is especially sensitive to this, and monasteries have often been built in situations of particular beauty or starkness, as being the most propitious to the ascetic endeavor.

Our theology of the Divine Logos tells the Christian that because we believe that God became a human being in a particular time and place, and because we know from our experience that we may know the presence of God in this life, we have a keen appreciation for the holiness of places. In his own earthly life, our Lord Jesus Christ inhabited specific places, spilling his sacrificial blood, and so made not only human history but geography sanctified. These are precisely the places where, over centuries, the faithful have come to venerate and become an eye-witness to a person in our sacred history – that is, the Christian history of salvation. Holy Sites, therefore, are “the intersection of the timeless moment” where earth and heaven meet, and we are enabled to see a glimpse of eternity.

Holy Sites do not depend on our presence for their true nature to be evident. In other words, particular sites are holy whether there is a solitary pilgrim lost in silent prayer, or whether there are thousands gathered for a great religious feast. We in the Holy Land who are accustomed to great crowds of worshippers and pilgrims also know what it is like to be

alone in the quietude of a Holy Place and experience the “gentle breeze” (aura) that is the voice of God.

These remarks naturally bring us to a difficult subject, which is the tendency of Holy Sites to be turned from pilgrimage destinations to mere tourist attractions and archeological sites. We who have been entrusted with the guardianship and service of the Holy Sites are indeed sensitive to this delicate issue. Of course we acknowledge that even some who call themselves faithful Christians visit Holy Sites more as observers than as worshippers, still, we are aware of the fact that Holy Sites are to be conducive to their primary purpose to be “intersections of the timeless moment.” To allow Holy Sites to become simply tourist attractions is to gravely undermine their true nature. In this regard, one of the great benefits of the “Universal Code on Holy Sites” is to support religious communities in safeguarding and sustaining Holy Sites around the world from this exact sort of misdirection.

“Holy Gifts for the Holy” and Others

Holy Sites are gifts both for the faithful who claim the site as well as for the entire human family beyond the bounds of a specific religious community or group for whom the site is sacred. We know this in the Holy Land, for pilgrims come to us from all over the world. For example, we welcome many pilgrims to sites that are distinctly Christian, but however, are equally sacred to other religious traditions of the Holy Land and beyond. All of us, we must admit, whether Jew, Christian, or Muslim, have observed that pilgrims from other traditions often treat our Holy Sites with more reverence than our own faithful do!

No doubt, Holy Sites testify to the power of the faith and hope of those who kneel there to worship, “as the deer pants for the water brooks” (Psalms 42). In fact, Holy Places possess layers of sanctity for those whose religious tradition and attachment is fully identified; sanctity that may escape

even the most pious person from another tradition. "For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him?" (1 Cor. 2:11). For instance, the Church of the Anastasis (known as the Holy Sepulcher), which encompasses the crucifixion place and tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ, will have spiritual implications that are as much emotional and inexpressible for Christians as they may be explainable to others who are not necessarily Christian. Just as the Western Wall (known as the Kotel) will have spiritual implications for Jews, and the Haram as-Sherif (known as Al-Aqsa) will have spiritual implications for Muslims. There are levels of religious experience that we can only know in the heart, and for which words are inadequate.

And yet, it seems to us that here is a point of convergence for the faithful of various religious traditions. That is to say, as Christians, we may not be able to perceive what the Kotel means for the Jewish soul, as we also cannot perceive what Haram as-Sherif means for the Muslim heart. But we as Christians know what it is to feel divine intimacy at a Holy Site, just as Jews and Muslims also feel at Holy Sites. This experience can be for us one of deep unity, since we share a common humanity and a common destiny. Needless to say, it is in this respect that through the sanctity of the Holy Sites we find grounds for peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding.

One should not underestimate the undeniable power of holy places to be points of cohesion for religious identities and unique facilitators of unity, not just of the religious kind, but the kind that transcends national and human barriers. It is so often faith that unites people under their national identity and fosters solidarity between nations. One should bear in mind that this is a mighty stronghold against which globalization has not yet managed to influence.

Furthermore, it should be underscored that the unwillingness or failure to take into serious consideration the inherent

sensitivities and concerns of various religious communities, both individual and collective, especially in our region and in particular the Holy Land, can turn the Holy Places into a metaphorical volcano that is imminently ready to explode with unpredictable consequences for both the religious and political realms.

We cannot conclude these brief remarks without the observation that we have not only Holy Sites in our region that are specific to our respective religions; we have Holy Sites that we share in common. It is one thing to have claims of exclusivity over one's own tradition's Holy Sites. It is quite another thing to have discreet access to the sanctity of those places.

It is here where we are presented with both a challenge and wisdom. Our human predicament is the desire to possess and to exclude, while the divine impulse is to give and include with discretion. The Sites that we hold in common are a challenge to the boundaries that have been fixed around our religious and cultural traditions. It should be said that we are not the possessors of sanctity which emanates from holy places; it is sanctity that possesses us. It is our commitment to the sanctity of the Holy Places that holds us in a divine encounter.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem