

# THE FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, August 15/28, 2023, the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos was celebrated by the Patriarchate in the Holy Shrine of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Gethsemane, where her Tomb is also located.

During this feast, the Church remembers that the Theotokos, the mother of Life, died and was buried by the Holy Apostles “in the village of Gethsemane” where the “tomb did not endure death”. Her body, which embodied the Lord of glory, was transferred to the heavens by the Lord, who inhabited her immaculate womb and she remained the “unchangeable hope and protection for all ages”.

This feast was solemnly celebrated and presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolas and Timotheos of Bostra, the Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Makarios of Qatar, with the co-prayer of the Hegoumen of the Shrine Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Fr Dometian from the Moscow Patriarchate, Fr Ioannis from the Patriarchate of Romania, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The service was attended by hundreds of pilgrims, at the changing of Hierodeacon Simeon in Greek and Mr Nabil from Saint James the Brother of God parish in Arabic. The Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and the Greek Consulate staff also attended the service.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“In giving birth Thou didst preserve thy virginity, in thy dormition thou didst not forsake the world O Theotokos. Thou wast translated unto life since thou art the Mother of Life; and by thine, intercessions dost thou redeem our souls from death” (Apolytikion of the feast).

Beloved brothers in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The Grace of the Holy Spirit brought us all together from the ends of the earth, in this Tomb of the Theotokos to honour and praise the Dormition of the most praised and most glorious Blessed Lady of ours the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, as the choir of the holy Apostles of old.

“The greatly honoured choir of the Lord’s wise Apostles,” the hymnographer says, “hath wondrously assembled to gloriously bury thine undefiled body, O Theotokos, thou all-hymned Maid. Joining them, the multitudes of Angels have gathered, singing holy hymns to praise thy blessed translation, which we celebrate in faith” (Matins, Kathisma 2).

The Translation, that is, the Dormition of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is none other than her transition from earth to heaven. The Mother of Life, that is, of God the Word and Son of God the Father, and her Son, moved to Life, the cause of Life, to God the Father. Just as the Theotokos preserved her virginity during His birth, so also during her Dormition she preserved the incorruption of her body.

Let’s listen to our holy father Saint John of Damascus saying: Oh, how the source of life is transferred to life passing through death. How does she, who when giving labour overcame the limits of nature, now bends to its laws and submits her immortal body to death. Why must this put off mortality and put on incorruption, since the Master, the Sovereign of nature, did not refuse to submit to death. He dies in the flesh and by death He abolishes death; and by corruption, He

grants us incorruption and makes His death the source of Resurrection.

The moral and spiritual but also saving magnitude of the contribution of the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary to the mystery of the Divine Providence is infinite, a miracle incomprehensible to the human mind. That is why Saint John of Damascus calls the Mother of God "the embodiment of the human race, the pride of all creation".

Graceful and blessed among women (Cf. Luk. 1:28), the Theotokos Mary became the Mother of God, of the Son and Word of God made flesh from her pure blood, and righteously just after her Dormition, appears at the right hand of her Son and God, now dwelling in the city of God in the heavens, as David says to her: "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God" (Ps. 87,2).

We, my beloved brothers, "do not have here a continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13,14), the city of "the living God" (Heb. 12,22), the city of the Son and God of the Immaculate Theotokos our Most Blessed Lady and Ever-Virgin Mary.

And now, standing in front of the holy Tomb of the Theotokos, we beseech her and after the hymnographer, we say: "When thou gavest up thy soul into His hands who once from thee had become man for our sakes, He, as thy Maker and thy God, removed thee unto the joy free of all defilement. With reverence therefore, we piously call thee blest, who alone art pure, untouched by any stain; and as is right, we all confess thee as Theotokos and cry to thee; Pray Christ, to Whom thou hast been translated, to grant our souls His salvation". Amen. Many happy returns".

After the Dismissal, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, who maintains the order and dignity of the Holy Shrine, offered a treat of refreshment at the rectory.

# THE FEAST OF THE HOLY TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST THE SAVIOUR AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, August 6/19, 2023, the feast of the Transfiguration was celebrated by the Patriarchate on Mount Tabor where the event of the Transfiguration took place.

During this feast, the whole Church, especially that of Jerusalem, to which Mount Tabor belongs as a place of pilgrimage, remembers singing and glorifying the event of the Transfiguration of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Gospel accounts (Matthew 17:2 – 8 and Mark. 9, 2-8), because, a short time before His passion, the Lord took the three distinguished disciples and went up with them to Mount Tabor, and He was transfigured before them.

As the Fathers of the Church explain, He hid His human nature and revealed, as far as they could see, the glory of His divine nature.

His face shone brighter than the sun and His clothes became white as light and Moses as the representative of the sleeping and Elijah as the representative of the living appeared conversing with Him, while a bright cloud descended upon them and a voice was heard from the Father “This is My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him”.

The Lord revealed this mystery to His disciples, so that, having seen His glory, they would be strengthened at the time

of the cross and to show them what glory the righteous will enjoy in the resurrection of the dead.

In honour of this exquisite mystery, there was an all-night Vigil from midnight to 3 a.m., which was presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Theodosios of Tomis from the Patriarchate of Romania, Metropolitan Nikolaos from the Patriarchate of Georgia, and Archbishop Makarios of Qatar, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark and many Priests from Orthodox Churches and Arabic-speaking Priests from the Galilee district. The chanting was delivered by Mr Angelos Gianopoulos in Greek on the right and Priest George from the Metropolis of Elia in Arabic on the left from the Byzantine choir of the blessed Archimandrite Philotheos. The vigil was attended by tens of thousands of pilgrims from various Orthodox countries who went up the mountain on foot due to the unacceptable restrictive measures by the Israeli police.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude blessed the grapes and delivered the following Sermon in Greek and Arabic:

“Thou wast transfigured on the mountain, O Christ our God, showing to Thy disciples Thy glory as each one could endure. Shine forth Thou on us who are sinners all, Thy light ever-unending, through the prayers of the Theotokos. Light-bestower, glory to Thee”.

Beloved brothers in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The divine Grace of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, brought us all to this Holy Mount Tabor, so that we may thankfully celebrate His Transfiguration, listening to the call of the hymnographer saying: “Behold, we ascend to the mountain of the Lord, and in the house of our God, that we may behold the

glory of His Transfiguration, glory as the only begotten of the Father, so that we may receive light, and being born together in the spirit, let us praise the Trinity forever and ever”.

The Transfiguration of our Saviour Christ is an event, during which the greatness of the Mystery of the divine Providence, the mystery of the salvation of man, the “mystery hidden from the ages in God” was revealed in all its depth and breadth (Eph. 3.9).

The second great mystery of godliness, (1 Tim. 3:16) is Christ manifested in the flesh, “who in the form of God is not raptured, he is equal to God, but he emptied himself in the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men and being found in the form of a man, he humbled himself by becoming subject to death, death on the cross”, as Saint Paul preaches.

This confession of the Apostle Paul expresses with precipitation and interprets the words of the hymnographer for the reason of the transfiguration of Christ: “On the mount Thou wast transfigured, and Thy disciples, as much as they could bear, beheld Thy glory, O Christ our God; that when they should see Thee crucified, they would know Thy Passion to be willing, and would preach to the world that Thou art in truth the Effulgence of the Father” (Kontakion).

In other words, during the Transfiguration of the Lord on this high place, the revelation of His theanthropic hypostasis, the mixing of the two natures in the person of Christ, but also the revelation of the glory of God, that is, the dawning of God, was born. The ‘Effulgence of the Father’ means the radiance or the shine as the hymnographer says: “The changeless nature, having been mingled with mortal nature, **shone forth past all telling**, and in part revealed unto the Apostles the Light of Its own Immaterial Godhead” (Ode 5, Troparion 3). And again, “being perfect God, Thou becamest perfect mortal, mingling manhood with the entire Godhead in

Thine own Hypostasis, which Moses and Elias saw in his two natures on Mount Tabor" (Ode 3, Canon 2, Troparion 3).

Saint Gregory of Nyssa, interpreting the words of Paul "Christ as the effulgence of the glory of God" (Cf. Heb. 1,3) says "Just like the ray of light is related to the sun and to the lamp, likewise the effulgence of light is related to the Father". This example is used by the Holy Father Gregory of Nyssa, to make it clear that the Son and Word of God is the same as the Father and the Holy Spirit, therefore the "Father's dawned light" is the inaccessible and uncreated light of the Holy Trinity.

Saint John of Damascus, dazzled by the mystery of the Transfiguration, says: because the Word 'became flesh' and the flesh the Word, even though it had not come out of His divine nature. A miracle that surpasses all understanding. The body did not acquire the glory from without, but it went from within itself from the inexplicably united with Him during the existence of the transcendental divinity of God the Word.

It is worth noting that during the Transfiguration of Jesus in this holy place, "the face of Jesus shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light" (Matthew 17,2). On the other hand, "Behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice from the cloud said: This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Matthew 17:5).

According to Saint John of Damascus, the bright cloud that overshadowed Jesus symbolizes the light of the Holy Spirit. "Clouds and light overshadowed the aurora of the Spirit." Regarding the voice from the cloud, Saint John of Damascus says: "Voice of the Father from the cloud of the Spirit was heard"; "This is my beloved Son". "This is the man we see, the man born yesterday, the humble one we associate with, whose face now shines." As for the divine command "Hear ye him," he says: "The one receiving Him, receives me, the one who sent me, not in a despotic way but in a paternal way. As a man is

sent away, as God abides in me, I am in him. He who does not honour my only begotten and beloved Son does not honour the Father, who sent Him." "Hear ye him", has eternal life words. This is the conclusion of the completion, this is the power of the mystery." [And in more detail: Whoever accepts Him, Jesus Christ, accepts Me who sent Him not as Lord (authority) but as Father. He is sent as a man, in whom as God he dwells in me and I in Him. Whoever does not honour my only begotten and beloved Son, does not honour the Father, I who sent him. "He is the one you should listen to" because he has the words of eternal life. This is the conclusion of what is happening, this is the power of the mystery of the Transfiguration].

It is precisely this power, that is the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we too, my dear brothers, are called to see, not with physical eyes, but with the mental eyes of a pure mind and a pure heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they see God" (Matthew 5:8), says the Lord. To this end we are again called to imitate Christ's disciples, who "were heavy with sleep", they were overcome by heavy sleepiness, but in a little while they woke up and saw His glory. " and when they were awake, they saw his glory" (Luke 9:32).

So let us also, my beloved brothers, shake off from ourselves the sleep of ignorance; standing up after the hymnographer, let us say: " Shine forth Thou on us who are sinners all, Thy light ever-unending, through the prayers of the Theotokos. Light-bestower, glory to Thee". Many peaceful returns!"

In the morning, a Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the Central Church of the Transfiguration, presided over by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, with the co-celebration of Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks and Arabic-speaking Presbyters and the participation of local Orthodox pilgrims.

At midday, the renovator of the Monastery and of the icons of the Holy Church, Hegoumen Archimandrite Hilarion, offered a meal to the Patriarchal and Episcopal entourages and many

others.

The Feast of the Transfiguration of the Saviour was celebrated in the Holy Shrine of Gethsemane with a Divine Liturgy presided over by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolas, along with the Priests of the Holy Shrine and the Hierodeacon Eulogios at the attendance of faithful pilgrims, and of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

After the Divine Liturgy, a reception was hosted by His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Hellenoupolis at the rectory.

It was also celebrated with Vespers in the evening and Divine Liturgy in the morning in the Holy Church of the Transfiguration in Ramalah, presided over by the Most Reverend Archbishop Christophoros of Kyriakoupolis, along with the priests of the Church under the chanting by the Community Choir and the participation in prayer of the local believers.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE VISIT OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF GEORGIA MR IRAKLI GARIBASHVILI TO THE PATRIARCHATE**

On the afternoon of Thursday, August 3/17, 2023, the Prime Minister of Georgia, Mr Irakli Garibashvili visited the Patriarchate, accompanied by a group of his associates and the Ambassador of Georgia to Israel Mr Lasha Zhvania.

His Excellency the Prime Minister and his delegation were warmly received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, addressing him with the word “you are most welcome” and referring to the diverse work of the Patriarchate, pilgrimage, pastoral, unification of the Orthodox Churches and to its good relations with the Patriarchate of Georgia. His Beatitude wished the Prime Minister success in his visit to Israel and offered him an icon of the Sacred Edicule and the Theotokos.

His Excellency the Prime Minister referred to the peaceful work carried out by the Country of Georgia and to its promotion of human values and thanked His Beatitude for his support to the Georgians who come each time on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and asked for the blessing to worship the Holy Sepulchre.

On the visit to the Holy Sepulchre, he was accompanied by the Elder Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos and the Holy Sepulchre monks welcomed him, wishing him success in his visit.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF SAINT JOHN THE NEW HOZEVITE ASCETIC AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Thursday, July 28/ August 10, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of our Holy Father John the new Hozevite from Romania, at the Holy Monastery of Hozeva, located at the bank of Brook Chorath, near Jericho.

On this feast, the Church, and especially the Church of Jerusalem commemorates that Saint John came to the Holy Land from Romania in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and lived in utmost asceticism and humility at the Holy Monasteries of the Jordan River area, and in that of Saints George and John the Hozevites, he slept in peace and was deemed worthy to work miraculous signs, that is why he was canonized among the saints by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 2016.

The feast of the Dormition of Saint John was celebrated with an all-night vigil at the Holy Monastery of Hozeva, and the Hegoumen and renovator of the Monastery, Archimandrite Constantine welcomed H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, who presided over the vigil with the following address:

“Blessed Father and Master,

The glorious feast of Saint John the New Hozevite, who came from Romania, has dawned for another year. The holy hymnographer characterizes him very successfully as the father of peace and silence and of prayer.

If we delve into the above characterizations, we will clearly perceive the work of each Monk, who, through his silent preaching, renounces the entire world. The monk leaves the world not motivated by hatred, but by love for God first and for his fellow man. He listens to the misery and pain of his brothers and effectively helps through prayer and almsgiving. And how does the monk perceive the world one could ask. But precisely through quietness and silence and prayer”, which were dominant throughout the life of the honoured Saint.

God does not ask the monks to go out into the world to help people walk, but He asks them to give them the light with their experience to lead them to eternal life. Should not the lighthouses always be placed on the rocks? What; should they go to the cities to be added to the traffic lights? The

lighthouses have a different mission, the traffic lights have another. The monk is not a traffic light to be placed in the city at one end of the street and to light the passers-by so that they do not stumble. It is a distant Lighthouse, set high on the rocks, which with its flashes illuminates the seas and oceans so that the ships can be guided and reach their destination towards God”.

Blessed Father and Master,

Being such a man, a torch flamboyant in life, Sant John even after his dormition, through his intercessions, helps, comforts, inspires, sweetens the pain, and heals the illnesses of souls and bodies, as testified by the thousands of pilgrims of every race and language, who visit him, but as we also testify that as we have been greatly benefited by the Saint many times.

Welcome!

Let us commence the feast!”

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolas and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina. The chanting was delivered by Leonidas Doukas, Christos Stavrou, Gregorios Zarkos, Nikolaos Papadimitriou, Vasilios Papadimitriou, Pavlos Papadimitriou, as the service was attended by monks of the Monastery and other Monasteries from Jericho and Jerusalem.

His Beatitude delivered the following sermon before the Holy Communion:

“For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light (Ps. 36,9).

Because You, Lord, are the source of life and with Your own light we will see the true light, exclaims the psalmist.

Beloved brothers and fathers in Christ,

The Grace of the Holy Spirit, who enlightened and sanctified and directed the footsteps of the holy Prophets Helijah of Thesbis and John the Forerunner in this holy place of Hozeva, brought us all together so that we solemnly honour the memory of our holy Father John the New Hozevite.

Our Holy Father John had been seized by Divine zeal since his childhood, left his homeland Romania and came to the Holy Land, where he retreated and hid himself like another Elijah in the caves of Brook Chorath, near the River Jordan (3 Kings 17:2-3) and where Saint George from Leukara of Cyprus founded his Monastery, which became a fountain of divine healings for those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ who said, ““He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7,38).

This living water is none other than the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Son of God and our Saviour Christ according to the testimony of the Evangelist John (John 7, 39). This very Spirit is the source of light, as the Lord says “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8,12).

On this word of the Lord, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: “Whoever follows me, i.e. whoever walks in the footsteps of my teachings will not be in the dark but will obtain “the light of life”, i.e. he will achieve the revelation/manifestation of the mysteries concerning me and the revelation, able to lead to eternal life”.

And we ask ourselves, what is eternal life? “Eternal life is the transcendence of the death of corruption, that is, of sin through the death of incorruption, that is, the death of the Risen Christ. In this death of Christ, our Holy Father John became a communicant and sharer, who listened to the order of Saint Paul saying: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: just

as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so, we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6,3-5).

Our sanctified Father John not only walked in newness of life but also fore-tasted the future resurrection of Christ, as his incorruptible and fragrant whole-body relic testifies before our eyes.

The incorruption of his body was achieved by the spirit-bearing John, listening and applying in theory and practice, the exhortation of Saint Paul: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Romans 12,1). Interpreting this word of Paul, Saint Chrysostom says: "What is rational worship? The things of the soul, the things of the Spirit (God is Spirit, and those who worship Him, shall worship Him in Spirit and Truth), (John 4:24); what is not seen in the body, what is not seen in the organs, is not in the places, which are leniency, sobriety, mercy, non-judgment, long-suffering, humility... "I want mercy and not sacrifice" (Hesiah 6:6)... and there are other miracles, indeed the holocausts, the bodies of the holy martyrs; there is a saint and a soul and body; that smell of fragrance is great". [And in more detail; what is rational worship? Those that are offered with the soul, with the spirit (because the Lord said "God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him, do so in Spirit and in truth"), meaning what is not needed by the body, by organs, by places. And such are; leniency, temperance, charity, non-judgment, tolerance, humility, "I want mercy and not sacrifice"... however, there are other sacrifices, the real holocausts, the bodies of the holy Martyrs. Both the soul and the body are holy there, they have a great fragrance.

Indeed, my beloved brothers, our celebrated Father John loved

God with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his mind (cf. Matt. 22,37), thus becoming a sacrifice pleasing to God. Because even the psalmist exclaims, "God is wonderful in His saints" (Psalm 67:36).

The Father of the Church, Saint Chrysostom, points out the value and power of rational worship, which leads the faithful Christian to the purification of the heart (God, create in me a clean heart – Psalm 50,12) and consequently to incorruption, says: "You can too if you want this sacrifice to be repeated... Let your body die and crucify, and you also shall receive the crown of this martyrdom", [and simpler; you can too if you want to offer your body as an instrument and then will you yourself receive the crown of this martyrdom].

Our holy Church of Jerusalem boasts of boasting in Christ (Rom. 15,17), because the Monastery of Hozeva, by the intercessions of the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and of the today honoured Saint John the New, continues to be a lodging of the holy and righteous men of God, and those who practised and are practising their monastic striving in this Monastery and Lavra "these are shining lamps everywhere on earth", according to Saint Chrysostom.

We thank the Holy Triune God and after Saint Paul, we say: "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen" (Eph. 6:24). Many happy returns."

After the dismissal of the vigil, there was a monastic meal.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE FEAST OF THE PROPHET ELIJAH IN THE COMMUNITY OF MAALOULE

On Saturday, July 22/August 5, 2023, the feast of the prophet Elijah was celebrated by the Patriarchate in his Holy Temple, in the village of Maaloule, near Nazareth.

This Holy Church belonged to the Greek-Orthodox Arabic-speaking Community of Maaloule, it was abandoned due to the events during the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, and it was maintained during the last years by the Patriarchate and His Eminence the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth with the funding of the Hegoumen of Tabor Archimandrite Hilarion, with the permission of the Israeli army and a Divine Liturgy is celebrated in it during the feast of the Prophet Elijah.

In this well-preserved Church, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, and their Eminences, the Metropolitans, Kyriakos of Nazareth and Isychios of Kapitolias, and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Fr. Simeon of the Holy Metropolis of Nazareth, at the chanting of the Acre Byzantine choir and that of Nazareth, as the service was attended by many Arabic-speaking faithful Christians, descendants of the founders of the Church and others from Nazareth.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“When thou wast united unto our God through thy virtue and unspotted life, O Prophet of renown, and hadst for this cause received from Him authority and power, then thou didst change creation as seemed good to thee, and by thy will didst shut

the gates of rain on high; and thou didst bring fire down from above, wholly consuming and impious. Do thou entreat Christ the Saviour that our souls be saved" (Matins, praises, Troparion 1).

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

"The incarnate Angel and the prophet's summit and boast, Elijah the glorious", has gathered us all in this holy place to celebrate his holy commemoration of his fiery ascension into the heavens in Eucharist.

Praising the character of Elijah of Thesbis, Sirach says about him: "Then Elijah arose, a prophet like fire, and his word burned like a torch. He brought a famine upon them, and by his zeal he made them few in number. By the word of the Lord he shut up the heavens, and also three times brought down fire. How glorious you were, Elijah, in your wondrous deeds! Whose glory is equal to yours?" (Sirach 48,1-4).

Saint James the Brother of God, referring to the power of the righteous man's prayer says in his catholic epistle: "The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest" (James 5,16-18).

And Luke and Mark the Evangelists mention the presence of the Prophet Elijah during the Lord's Transfiguration on Mount Tabor: "Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one[a] on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus" (Mark 9,2-4/ Luke 9,28-30).

The conversation among Elijah, Moses and Jesus testifies to the fact that Christ is the Lord of the Law of Moses and of the prophets and Moses appears as the representative of the Law, while Elijah is the representative of the prophets according to the interpretation of Origen and of Saint Cyril of Alexandria. "Moses appears as the man of the Law, while Elijah as that of the prophets; for He [Christ] is the Lord of the Law and of the Prophets".

Elijah was distinguished to the extent that he was the only one of the prophets, after Moses to converse with the Transfigured Christ, the Christ that they both knew on Mount Sinai; Moses knew Him as "fire and steam and darkness", while Elijah like "fine breeze of thin air" (3 Kings 19,22). They saw God with their own eyes, in the Transfigured Jesus Christ on Mount Tabor, becoming the exception to the Lord's word to His disciples: "Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it" (Matt. 13,17).

Indeed, my dear brothers and sisters, Elijah from Thesbis was especially favoured by God. And this was because as the hymnographer says: "When thou wast united unto our God through thy virtue and unspotted life, O Prophet of renown, and hadst for this cause received from Him authority and power, then thou didst change creation as seemed good to thee, and by thy will didst shut the gates of rain on high; and thou didst bring fire down from above, wholly consuming and impious. Do thou entreat Christ the Saviour that our souls be saved" (Matins, praises, Troparion 1).

This authority was also received by Christ's disciples and saints, as Saint Luke the Evangelist says: "See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you" (Luke 10,19).

Interpreting these words of the Lord, Saint Basil the Great

notes that it is impossible for man to exercise this power, if he has not cleared himself and become fortified by the Lord beforehand, the Lord who said to the apostles, behold I have given you the power to tread on snakes and scorpions.

In other words, my dear brothers and sisters, the one who hears and keeps God's commandments is able through the power of the divine Grace to become a communicant of the power of the prophet Elijah, just like the prophet Elisha, who followed him.

Behold why Saint Paul says, "Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1,27).

It is noteworthy that the prophet Elijah has a special place in both the Old and the New Testament. And this is so because Elijah is recognized as the second forerunner of the presence of Christ, meaning the last days of the Judgment. Regarding the reappearance of zealot Elijah during the last days, the prophet Malachi says about him: "Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes" (Malachi 4,4). Replying to His disciples' question, "Why, then, do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" Jesus replied, "Elijah is indeed coming and will restore all things" (Matt. 17,10-11).

According to the interpretation of the distinguished Church Fathers, the Lord here speaks about His Second Coming, of which Elijah is the forerunner. "I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but they did to him whatever they pleased" (Matt. 17,12). This second Elijah is Saint John the Baptist who came before our Lord Jesus Christ. Saint John the Baptist was very much like Elijah of Thesbis which is why the Scripture calls him "With the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1,17). Interpreting these words, Zigavinos and Origen say: "[The Scripture] named 'spirit' the spiritual gift, while power is the strength. It thus says that he has both the gift and the strength of Elijah".

As for us, who keep fervently the commemoration of the prophet Elijah, let us say along with the hymnographer: "Compassionate Lord, grant Thy people remission of sins and the great mercy, by the intercessions of the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and of the holy glorious prophet Elijah of Thesbis". Amen, Many happy returns."

After the Divine Liturgy, under the shade of the towering pines, a recreational reception was held by those who sustain the Church, Archimandrite Hilarion and those with him, while at lunch the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth hosted a meal for His Beatitude and His Entourage at the Metropolis.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE**

On Thursday, July 21/August 3, 2023,

1. His Beatitude received a representation from the football team of P.A.O.K. and spoke to them about the role and name of the Patriarchate as "Roman Orthodox Patriarchate" and appealed to them to continue the championship and to remain in the roots, principles and values of Romiosyni.

The representatives of P.A.O.K. offered to His Beatitude a double-headed eagle, a symbol of their group, and holy myrrh from the pilgrimage of Saint Demetrius in Thessaloniki.

His Beatitude offered them a silver painting of the city of Jerusalem and wished them good success in their team's football match this evening after the Israeli Beitar football

team.

1. In the end, His Beatitude received a group of two hundred Russian pilgrims under Metropolitan Mark and two Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church of the former Diaspora. He spoke to and blessed them and wished them a blessed feast of Saint Mary Magdalene the equal to the apostles at the Holy Monastery in Gethsemani of this Russian Church, in view of His visit the next day.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III PRESIDES OVER THE SERVICE OF THE DIVINE LITURGY AND THE FORTIETH DAY MEMORIAL FOR THE BLESSED SOUL OF ARCHIMANDRITE PHILOTHEOS IN ACRE**

His Beatitude Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem Theophilos III visited the Monastery of St. Georgios in the city of Acre, accompanied by His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the General Secretary of the Patriarchate Archbishop Aristarchus, the Metropolitan of Jordan, Archbishop Christophoros, and a group of the esteemed clergy. The patriarchal envoy was received by Archimandrite Silwanos, the deputy of the Patriarchal Vicar in Acre, the

venerable fathers, the pastors of the churches, and Mr. Fouad Breik, the head of the Church Council in Acre, as well as the heads and members of the pastoral councils.

During the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude spoke in his sermon about the concept of divine love and zeal that operates in the Church, which the blessed Archimandrite Philotheus possessed through his service to his parish, demonstrating in words his paternalism, his honesty, his ecclesiastical and monastic morals, his close affiliation with the Jerusalem Patriarchate and the brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher. He also talked about his liturgical and church chanting talent, which moved the believers' souls to praise and glorification, expressing that his sudden death left a void and sadness in the hearts of everyone who knew him, affirming our hope that he cherished the true vine in Christ, praying to the compassionate God to immerse himself in the trials of the saints.

His Beatitude continued, saying, "The divine grace, through the Holy Spirit, visited the Holy Church in this historic city, through the decision of the Holy Synod to appoint Archimandrite Silwanos to this high position, to carry his message and responsibilities." A verse, advising him to always remember what the Apostle Paul said to his student Timothy, the apostle Paul gave this strong command: "But flee youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2:22)

After His Beatitude held the fortieth day memorial service for the blessed soul of late Archimandrite Philotheos, he went with the accompanying delegation and the faithful to the main hall of the monastery, which from this day is called the "Hall of Archimandrite Philotheos" in his honor. Where a memorial ceremony was held, including a speech by the highly respected Archbishop of Jordan, Christophoros, on behalf of His Beatitude, in which he focused on the spiritual unity that we attained through the Divine Liturgy, as we unite with our risen God, it is our faith and our consolation. He also spoke

about the social unity of the people of Acre, and the bond of love and coexistence embodied in preserving the common Christian and Islamic identity. Moving forward to advance the church and the community.

Other speeches were delivered by His Eminence Sheikh Samir Assi, Father Samer Zaknoun from the Maronite Church, Mr. Iskandar Suleiman from the Galilee Choir, Mrs. Salma Hazboun, and Miss Rania of Sunday Schools, Mrs. Siham Mansi on behalf of the Ladies of St. Grace and Mr. Fouad Brik. Through it, they express the importance of moving through the Lord with the hope of resurrection and eternal life, and the spiritual and architectural work of the Blessed One of the Church and his good social and human sense in the Acre community.

After the end of the memorial service, Archimandrite Silwanos and the head of the Church Council, Mr. Fuad Barik, hosted His Beatitude and the accompanying delegation and the attendees to a lunch in the monastery, where the meeting was distinguished by the atmosphere of love and comfort.

Towards the end of the visit, His Beatitude and the accompanying delegation bid farewell to the attendees, thanking everyone for the warm reception, hospitality, and the spirit of love that brought the pastor together with his children and flock.

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**PASTORAL ACTIVITY OF HIS  
BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF**

# JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS

On Friday, July 15/28, 2023, His Beatitude received:

1. The newlyweds Mr Amer Nassar and Mrs Elisabeth Chunk with the groom's parents and blessed them.
2. A group of believers from the Community of the town Zdeide under Mr Yussef Kassis and Fatherly admonished them.
3. Finally, His Beatitude, accompanied by the Holy Sepulchre Fathers, the conservators Mr Andreas Stavros and Mr Igor from Russia and their collaborators, inspected the preserved and restored chandelier in the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## MEETING OF WOMEN'S COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS OF THE PATRIARCHATE IN BEIT JALA

On the morning of Thursday, July 14/27, 2023, a Divine Liturgy was held in the Holy Church of the Nativity of the Virgin of the Beit Jala Community under the leadership of its priests, presided over by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Ignatios, with the participation in prayer of the Priests and the Ladies, (approximately 300), from eleven Communities of the Patriarchate of the West Bank of the Palestinian Authority. His Beatitude blessed this liturgical event with the following address:

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”(Ps. 133,1), the psalmist proclaims. “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”(Matt. 18,20) the Lord says.

Beloved children in Christ, brothers and sisters.

Our gathering in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in this historic and biblical town of Beit Jala is indeed excellent and pleasant. And this is because, in his Hierarchal prayer, Jesus Christ prays to His God and Father for Himself, His Disciples the Apostles, and all those who will believe in Him, saying: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so, have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes, I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17,17-21).

Interpreting these words of the Lord, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: “Christ seeks the bond of love, unity and peace, to gather those who believe in Him in the unity of the Holy Spirit”. And Zigavinos says: “Having as a starting point of reference love and unity, Christ concludes in this again, showing that love is God-pleasing and most significant”.

It is noteworthy that this is not referring to a unity of essence, as in the case of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, but of love. It is about the unity of the Spirit that will result from the fact that they will be “one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling”, having “One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all” (Cf. Eph. 4,4-6), as Saint Paul preaches. And according to Saint John the Theologian, Jesus died “that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were

scattered abroad" (John 11,52).

During Christ's Passion on the Cross, this love, the mother's love, was primarily shown by His Mother, the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and secondly by the myrrh-bearing women. This love was expressed by Lazarus' sisters, Martha and Mary when they received Christ in their house in Bethany, where Jesus took the opportunity to reprimand Martha with the words, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10,41-42).

Interpreting these words of the Lord, Theophylactos notes: "Great is the benefit of hospitality, which Martha showed, and it cannot be disregarded; however, it is of greater good to pay heed to the spiritual words". And Zigavinos says: "Jesus said 'the good part', not meaning that the other part was evil, but He called 'good' the one which was superior. There are two good parts, but the one is better than the other".

In other words, my beloved children in Christ, the serving of the two sisters Martha and Mary is distinguished in two parts; the care of the body, the daily needs, and the care of the soul, the care of the spiritual needs. Both types of serving by those who love the Church, the vineyard of the Lord, should aim at the glory of the Lord, according to each person's calling. "Every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that" (1 Cor. 7,7).

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences in administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all" (1 Cor. 12,4-6), the wise Paul preaches.

This means that woman is nowhere less in the struggles of faith, as Saint Chrysostom teaches: "There is no male nor

female sex for Christ, neither the nature of man, neither the infirmity of the body, neither age nor anything else of the like which would prevent those who walk in the path of reverence if there is a brave willingness and vigilant mindset and fervent and rooted fear of God in our souls”.

These words of Saint Chrysostom are confirmed by the multitude of the holy women, prophetesses, equal-to-the-apostles, righteous great martyrs and confessors, who are commemorated in the Old and New Testament of the Bible, as well as in the historical course of life of the earthly Church devoted to God. And again, Saint Chrysostom stresses the fact that as far as the struggle for God and the toils for the Church are concerned, it is the woman who engages in good efforts and labours more boldly than man.

It is made clear that the mission of the Christian woman today, “just like that of the holy women of old” (1 Peter 3,5), in the world of confusion, apostasy, lawlessness and “in the day of temptation in the wilderness” (cf. Hebrews 3,8), is more necessary than ever. Therefore, we are called to listen to the Apostle Peter saying: “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for He careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5, 6-8).

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem, founded upon the Resurrected Christ’s Blood on the Cross, continues its redeeming mission, according to the Apostolic tradition and that of the Holy Fathers, fortified and encouraged by the Lord’s word: “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16,18).

Finally, we would like to thank all those who contributed to organizing this God-pleasing gathering of the Rum-Orthodox women’s unions, especially the Reverend Father Elias who took this initiative, as well as our dearest Fathers Boutros and

Yusef.

May the Grace of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE**

On Wednesday, July 6 / 19, 2023, the Community Council of Haifa visited H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos for issues related to this Community.

**From Secretariat-General**