

# VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE

On Friday, June 3rd/16th 2023, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos received the Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Holy See, Mr Chris Trott.



On this day His Beatitude gave the Head of the Rum Orthodox Arabic-speaking Community, Mr Emanuel Awad from the neighbouring to Ramallah town of Abud, a pectoral priestly cross, on the completion of twenty-three years of his priestly office.



On the morning of Saturday, June 4/17, 2023, a group of a hundred Georgian people, elderly, middle-aged and children under the Ambassador of Georgia to Israel Mr Lhasa visited H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and asked for His blessing and for their subsequent visit to the Holy Sepulchre and the Grotto of the Nativity in Bethlehem.



From Secretariat-General

## DECORATION OF DOCTOR MAJID TAWFIQ GANDOUS

On the morning of Tuesday, May 31/June 13, 2023, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos awarded with the medal the order of the Orthodox Knights of the Holy Sepulchre Doctor Majid Tawfiq Gadous.

This distinction was awarded to the honourable Dr Gadous for the dedication, care, effort, perseverance and patience, that he showed for the construction, decoration and dignity of the Holy Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos in the commune of Sakhnin of the region of Acre – Ptolemais of Northern Israel, which was consecrated by His Beatitude and is the jewel and the pride of the Greek Orthodox Community of the entire region.

His Beatitude praised Doctor Mr Majid and his present wife, who stood by him as another Cyrene.

**From Secretariat-General**

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUJ0Gr1082n5ebQS0hXtc7g>

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# **HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III WELCOMES EUROPEAN DIGNITARIES, REAFFIRMING COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING CHRISTIAN PRESENCE AND HERITAGE IN JERUSALEM**

His Beatitude Theophilos III, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, received today at the headquarters of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem a high level delegation of European dignitaries, led by His Excellency Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President of the European Commission, and His Excellency Sven M.G. Koopmans, European Union Special Representative for the

Middle East Peace Process, along with distinguished members of the European Union Commission and the European diplomatic corps in Jerusalem and Ramallah.

The delegation embarked on a visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Christian Quarter of the Old City. There, they witnessed firsthand the imminent threats posed by radical Israeli groups to the Christian presence and the rich heritage in Jerusalem.

Later in the evening, the dignitaries, alongside the heads of Churches in Jerusalem, convened for a dinner at the Imperial Hotel, an emblematic bastion of the Christian struggle to safeguard the mosaic nature of Jerusalem. The gathering at this specific location meant to symbolise Christian steadfast determination to counter the attempts of radical groups, seeking to undermine the Christian and Muslim presence, thereby preserving the diverse character of the holy city.

In his address, Patriarch Theophilos eloquently highlighted the challenges faced by the Christian communities in Jerusalem and the Holy Land. He expressed gratitude for the support received from the European Union and emphasised the need for continued attention and intervention from the international community. In his speech, the Patriarch of Jerusalem condemned radical groups that seek to force the Christian community out of their historic home and called for the preservation of the multi-religious character of Jerusalem and the Status Quo. H.B. suggested avenues for assistance included: international governmental delegations and diplomatic visits to raise awareness, support for the Hashemite Custodianship of the Holy Places in Jerusalem, and collective efforts to preserve the Christian Quarter and uphold the Status Quo. Patriarch Theophilos concluded his speech with an appeal to the governments of the European Union to persist in their support for the mission of defending the Christian presence and heritage in Jerusalem and the rest of the Holy Land.

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# **HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS INVITED TO THE CELEBRATION OF THE INDEPENDENCE DAY OF RUSSIA**

On the evening of Sunday, May 29/June 11, 2023, a reception was organized at the Sergei Hotel in Jerusalem by the Russian Spiritual Mission – (MISSIA) in honour of the National Independence Day of Russia.

H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos was invited to this event after the Elder Secretary-General His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, the Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Simeon.

In his address, the Russian Ambassador to Israel, Mr Anatoli Victorov, referred to Russia's contribution to the defeat of the Nazi forces during World War II, as well as to His Beatitude's efforts to protect the presence and property of Christian Churches in the Holy Land, as well as in His efforts to restore the unity of the Orthodox Churches.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE STUDENTS OF THE PATRIARCHAL SCHOOL OF ZION VISIT HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

On the morning of Saturday, May 28/June 10, 2023, the cadets of the Patriarchal School of Zion, graduates, seniors and other students, visited His Beatitude on the occasion of the end of the school year and the beginning of the summer vacation.

In the context of this visit, the students thanked His Beatitude for the beneficial things they enjoyed at the School during their studies with the following address:

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

after we have navigated the sea of secondary education with toil and hardship, we stand before You with filial respect to thank You.

About 6 years ago, leaving our family home, which gave us a climate of love for the “living” but also the “living well”, we moved to the philanthropy of the spiritual family of the Patriarchal School, which operates under the paternal protection and love of You, to complete our circular education.

God’s providence defined our Holy Sepulchre School as a stage of virtues and knowledge. However, the difficulties of adaptation we faced, combined with the revolutionary concerns of our adolescence, often made us think of abandoning this beautiful struggle to return to our homeland with wounded memories.

But our victorious Resurrected Lord protected us from such an impulse and bestowed upon us His perfect gifts through You, Your Beatitude, the guardian of the Holy Light. In the few years that we lived near You, we gained our opinion that You are the Patriarch who knows how to love and knows how to sacrifice for His children.

Your patriarchal filial piety to assign as our Schoolmaster the Reverend Elder Dragoman Mattheos confirms "the truth of the word". Thanks to the multi-talented Fr. Mattheos and Your help, the School was renovated in terms of buildings and upgraded in quality, with the selection of teachers and support staff, who worked hard to impart good morals to us and equip us with wise and practical knowledge to move forward hopefully in our difficult and demanding times.

In the face of Father Mattheos, Your Beatitude, we saw Your sacrificial love for us. As our guardian angel, he instructed us, educated us, protected us and guided us to good.

We thank You, Father and Master, for all Your blessings, spiritual and material.

Your respected face will be like a guiding star, which will always lead us to life in Christ and we will invoke Your Holy Sepulchre prayers and wishes to overcome the manifold difficulties of our lives.

We promise You that we will honour with words and deeds the identity of the Holy Sepulchre student, keeping in our hearts the beautiful Holy Sepulchre experiences.

We wish you for many more decades, with unshakable health and forward-looking boldness, to defend the rights of our Patriarchate, as until now, without cowering before the principles and powers of "the ruler of this century".

Many returns to you!"



His Beatitude thanked the Managing Director and the teachers for the good operation of the School and praised the students for their performance in accordance with the data of the program of the Ministry of Education of Greece and the Patriarchate in anticipation of their inclusion of their free will in the Brotherhood in due course and wished them a good holiday, a good return and good success in the special entrance exams for foreigners to the University Faculties.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE D. LITURGY AT THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY OF MISSIA IN NEW JERUSALEM ON THE MONDAY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Patriarchate celebrated Monday, May 23/June 5, 2023, according to the divinely inspired book of Pentecost, as Monday of the Holy Spirit. It was honoured as a day of dedication especially to the Holy Spirit, because of His great work enlightening the Holy Glorious Apostles. The Holy Spirit, “God and deifying”, “fire divided into different gifts”, came from the Father through the Son to the apostles and sat in a kind of fiery tongues on their heads and strengthened and enlightened them “so that they could speak in different languages the greatness of God”.

For the worship and honour of the Holy Spirit, especially on this day, a Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the Church of the Holy Trinity of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Spiritual Mission to Jerusalem (MISSIA), presided over by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Head of MISSIA Archimandrite Alexander, Archimandrite Dometianos, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nektarios and the representative of the Church of Moldavia of Russia His Eminence Archbishop Ungheni & Nisporen Petros, Arabic-speaking Priests and Priests from of the Gornesky Mountain Monastery, chanting in the choir of the monks of MISSIA and of the Gornesky Mountain Monastery, with the participation in the prayer of many Russian-speaking mainly believers.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude spoke through the following speech from Greek translated into Russian as follows:

“Come receive the fire-breathing dew of the Spirit as the reason cleansing from faults and offences, O all ye that are the Church’s light-formed children; for now is the Law come forth from holy Sion: tongues formed of beacon-fire, even the Spirit’s grace” (Matins, 2<sup>nd</sup> canon, ode 5, heirmos) Saint John Damascene, the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Reverend Archimandrite Father Alexander, Superior and representative of His Holy Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow, Cyril in the Russian Spiritual and Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem,

Beloved brothers in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The grace of the Holy Spirit that has shone upon us today,

brings us all together in this Church of the Holy Trinity, to celebrate Pentecost, the epidemic of the Holy Spirit, the participating in the Eucharistic divine mystery of the Body and Blood of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit emanating from the Father and being worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son is the one who, as the hymnographer says: "the Holy Spirit provideth all things; He gusheth forth prophecy; He perfecteth the priesthood; he hath taught wisdom to the illiterate. He hath shown forth fishermen as theologians. He holdeth together the whole institution of the Church" (Vespers, Troparion 3).

An essential component of the institution of the Church, but also of Orthodoxy, are the Apostles, who on the one hand "were filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4) on the day of Pentecost; on the other hand, the Lord Himself "breathed upon them saying: receive Holy Spirit, if you forgive their sins, they are forgiven; if you keep them, they are kept" (John 20:23). Go ahead, he said to them, to the Apostles, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world", (Matthew 28,19-20).

From the order of the Lord "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (28,20) it is shown that this must form the basis of the teaching of the Apostles. Because even Basil the Great, in his interpretation of these words, says: "Teaching them, not keep some of them, while leaving aside others, but keep everything I have commanded you", and Saint Cyril of Alexandria, commenting on the Lord's words: even if [Jesus] goes to the Father, presenting Himself in the flesh on our behalf ... but receives has co-habitants the righteous through the Spirit [the Holy One] and co-exists with the saints for all things"; and Saint Chrysostom interprets more analytically saying: "he did not only say he will be with them but also

after all those who believe in them. The Apostles were not going to remain on earth until the end of time, but they would converse with the faithful as if they were one body", and for those then and those after this such and such promised grace, Zigavinos notes.

Through all this it becomes clear that the Communion of the Holy Spirit acts through the unity of the Church according to the word of the Lord: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). The Church, being the body of Christ is the abode of the Holy Spirit: "You are the body of Christ and members in part", (1 Cor. 12, 27), "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13), Saint Paul preaches.

This unity of the faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit is pervaded today by the participation of the brotherly Churches of Jerusalem and Russia and not only in the common cup of the "mystical blessing", of the divine thanksgiving of the Body and Blood of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. "Love unity, shun divisions; imitate Jesus Christ, as also He of His Father", orders Saint Ignatius the God-bearer. " Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1, 10), the wise Paul preaches.

However, the disturbed order and unity in the body of our One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church causes us agony and sorrow. And this is because, as Saint Paul preaches, "And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12, 26).

Therefore, we too, my beloved brothers, as members on behalf

of the body of Christ, who “gives us the ministry of redemption” (2 Cor. 5:18), and who “receive not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit emanating from God the Father and resting in the Son”, (Cf. 1 Cor. 2:12), let us pray to the Lord and after the psalmist, say: “Create in me a clean heart, God, and put a right spirit within me”, (Psalm 50,12) Amen. Many happy returns, blessed and peaceful.”

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF SAINTS CONSTANTINE AND HELEN AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Friday, May 20 / June 2, 2023, the feast of the glorious and God-crowned great sovereigns and equal to the apostles Constantine and Helen was celebrated by the Patriarchate with a transference of the actual feast date.

On this feast, the Church honours Constantine the Great as an apostle, because with the decree of the Milanese of the year AD 312, he recognized Christianity as the freed religion of the Roman state, and allowed the construction of Churches for the worship of the true God through Christ, His incarnate Son. The Church also honours his mother Saint Helen on this day, because, following her son as king, she came to the Holy Land and erected the Church of the Resurrection on the Holy Sepulchre and the Martyrdom on the Horrendous Golgotha and the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem and other churches in different places of the incarnate presence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This holiday was celebrated by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem through the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood in the central monastery's Holy Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, its patrons.

The feast was celebrated in the afternoon during Vespers, presided over by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of the Typikon keeper of the Church Archimandrite Alexios, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nektarios, the Exarch of Athens Archimandrite Raphael the priests of the Church Archimandrites; Stefanos and Amphilochos, Epiphanius, Claudius, Meletius and Dionysios, Arabic-speaking Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos, under the chanting of Hierodeacon Simeon and the members of the Brotherhood.

After Vespers, the Brotherhood sat down in the courtyard of the Epitropikon and received the boiled wheat and the bread with wine.

On the morning of the feast, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem officiated the Liturgy in this Church, with the Typikon Keeper Archimandrite Alexios, the ministering Priests of the Church as above, as well as the Archimandrite Ieronymos, Priest George Baramki from Saint James Cathedral and Fr Youssef Hodali, ministering Priest in Beit Jala, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos, with the co-prayer of representatives of the Patriarchate of Moscow and Romania, two Bishops of the Patriarchate of Serbia, John and Damascene, in the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Evangelos Vlioras, the Consul Mrs Christina Zacharioudaki, member of the Consulate and Mrs Zozonakis representative of the E.U. after her husband and many local believers and pilgrims from various countries.

After dismissal, His Beatitude the priests and clergy and the people, chanting in unison, went to the Patriarchate Hall, receiving, according to the custom, the bread of blessing from

the hands of the baker Abbess Seraphima in the aisle towards the Throne Hall.

At the Hall, His Beatitude spoke through His following address:

“Raising up thy perception to Heaven’s heights, and considering the comeliness of the stars, through them, thou wast brought to know the divine Lord of all that is; for amidst them the weapon of Christ’s Cross shone brilliantly; the words: Conquer and rule in this sign, were inscribed thereon. Wherefore, having opened thy soul’s eyes, thou didst read there the words written for thy sake, and didst learn what way thou shouldst take, O all-venerable Constantine. Intercede with Christ our God that forgiveness of all their transgressions be granted to them that with longing keep thy holy memory” (Matins sessional hymn after Ode 3), the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Dear Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

Today the Holy Church of Christ of the East, especially the Church of Jerusalem, honours the Holy memory of the glorious Saints, God-crowned and equal to the apostles, the great sovereigns Constantine and Helen.

The leadership personality of Constantine the Great undoubtedly contributed effectively to the reshaping of human history through the recognition of the Christian faith and the mission of the Church in the world. The First Ecumenical Council under him in Nicaea in AD 325, of the three hundred and eighteen godly Fathers is a landmark in the institutional organization of the Church on earth.

Saint Gregory, extolling the political and religious

significance of the work of Constantine the Great, of the reconstruction of the state into a single Empire of East and West, thanks to the freedom granted to the Christians and the Church, says: "...he increased the matters related to the Christians and joined the state with Christ's presence".

The hymn writer of the Church, speaking of the inextricable link of the reverence of Saints Constantine and Helen to the Holy Land, says: "Let us faithfully honour Constantine with his mother Helen?" for hearing the words of the Prophet, who spoke of cedar, pine and cypress, thy understood him to refer to the tripartite Cross, whereby the saving Passion was accomplished" (Matins, Oikos). "With divine deeds thou didst build up thy heart as a temple of God, O Helen? and thou didst raise up unto Him sacred temples at the places where He suffered for our sakes the immaculate Passion in the flesh" (Matins, Ode 7, Troparion 3).

The acceptance of the Christian faith by Constantine the Great, which resulted in the Christianization of the Roman Empire, created the wonderful culture of Romiosyni, whose spiritual greatness was reflected in the peoples and nations of the Mediterranean, but also in the Middle East and especially in the Holy Land and its centre, the Holy City of Jerusalem, which bears the indelible imprint of his seal.

A true witness of this fact is the Church of Jerusalem after the Order of the Studious (Spoudaioi), of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, which throughout the centuries has guarded and ministered to the Holy Places by erecting magnificent Temples, such as the Church of the Nativity and Resurrection of our Saviour Christ.

Therefore, we dutifully performed a Patriarchal Divine Liturgy in the monastic Church of the glorious Saints, great Sovereigns and equal to the apostles Constantine and Helen, surrounded by the honourable members of our Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and having as part of our prayers the faithful



members of our Christian flock, as well as the visiting pilgrims.

The venerable memory of the redeemed Constantine and his mother Helen, we solemnly honoured, having prayed to them, so that with the intercessions of our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, they may not cease beseeching the Lord for us of the Holy City of Jerusalem and for the peace of our region and the whole world. Amen. Many happy returns”.

At noon, there was a meal at the Patriarchate’s refectory, for our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, the Holy Fathers, Mr Vlioras and other guests of honour.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS CELEBRATES THE D. LITURGY IN THE COMMUNITY OF TURAN**

On Sunday, May 15 / 28, 2023, on the commemoration of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Synod, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos made a Pastoral visit to the Greek Orthodox Arabic-speaking Community of the county of Turan, adjacent to Cana of Galilee.

His Beatitude was warmly received by a parade of Scouts and a reception by the Priests, and he officiated in the Holy Church of Saint Georgios of this Community, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth,

the Elder Chief Secretary Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nektarios, Arabic-speaking Priests of the Galilee region, the Archdeacon Mark and the Hierodeacon Eulogios, under the chanting by the members of the Community choir and the participation of many faithful of the city.

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

“O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill and to thy tabernacles”, (Ps. 43,3), the psalmist exclaims.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Dear Christians,

The wishes of the holy God-fearing Fathers of the holy Church of Christ have brought us all together today in your city of Lower Galilee Turan, so that we may thankfully celebrate their holy memory as well as the establishment of the First Ecumenical Synod, in Nicaea of Bithynia, in the year 325.

Our holy Church especially honours the 318 God-bearing Fathers, because they are the ones who, at the invitation of the holy Emperor Constantine the Great, convened the first Ecumenical Council, which on the one hand condemned and fought against the heretic teaching of Areios; on the other hand, it formulated in the most precise way the Orthodox faith, as we profess it in the Creed.

The accuracy of the doctrines is that which also determines the correct way of life of the Christian. For this reason, Saint Paul commands his disciple, Timothy, saying: “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called” (1 Tim. 6,20).

Those who lost their aim at faith, are those who invent and do not resort to the sources of our faith, that is, to the Holy Bible, Old and New Testament and the holy Apostolic Tradition, constituting the totality of the divine sources of faith of salvific truths, handed down by the Lord and the Apostles to the faithful in the Church.

Let us hear in this case Saint John of Damascus saying: "You believe by hearing". "Listening to the Holy Scriptures, we believe in the teaching of the Spirit. This is the end of all those who are legislated under Christ, believing, worshipping and doing the commandments of the one who reformed us. The person who does not believe nor commune with the Catholic Church's tradition of beliefs through inappropriate works to the Devil is unfaithful". And more simply: "you believe by hearing", because by listening to the Holy Scriptures we believe in the teaching of the Holy Spirit. And this faith is perfected by all that was legislated by Christ since it is manifested by works, which show piety and apply the commandments of Him who renewed us. He, therefore, who does not believe in the tradition of the Catholic Church or communes with the devil, doing inappropriate works, is an infidel. This is what Saint Paul preaches: the Church, "which is the Church of the living God, is a pillar and ground of the truth" (Cf. 1 Tim. 3:15).

As for the Holy Apostles and their successors, the God-bearing and God-breathed ones who are said to be fathers of the Church, they received the light and truth of God, according to the psalmist saying, " O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill and to thy tabernacles " (Ps. 43,3).

Today's Gospel narrative of St. John the Theologian, who is known as "the priestly prayer of Christ to God the Father", refers to his preserving his unity with His disciples and the members of His Church: "Father, the hour has come...and the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be

one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me “, the Lord says(John 17, 22-23).

The prayer of Jesus Christ to God His Father: “that he may be one as we are one” (John 17:22), refers to unity, which is founded on the correct faith of the Church and is reflected in the life of believers through the expression of mutual love, that is, the spiritual unity of believers in imitation of the physical and essential unity of the persons of the Holy Trinity, as Saint Cyril of Alexandria says.

In other words, my dear brothers, we are called according to Paul to preserve the unity of love between us, “ With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”, (Eph. 4, 2-3).

In his prayer to God the Father, Jesus asks for the joy of His disciples: “that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves ” (John 17,13). Interpreting these discourses of the Lord, Saint Cyril of Alexandria asks: “What then is the fulfilled and perfect joy? To know and believe, not only that Christ was man for us, but also that He was like us except for having any sin and He is the true God. It is clear and there is no doubt that He (Christ) has the ability to save those who worship him, whenever he wills, even though he does not seem to be present in the flesh. This fact will give us the possibility to have complete joy because we always have near us a supporter who is able to save us from all evil.

Joy, my dears, has as its source God the Father. The Only Begotten Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, is the self-joy, as the Apostle Peter assures us: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that,

when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy " (1 Peter 4, 12-13).

It is worth noting that joy in Christ is inextricably linked to repentance, as the Evangelist Luke testifies, referring to Christ's sermon: "I say unto you, that likewise, joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15,7).

We too, my beloved brothers, can have fulfilled joy when we observe the correctness but also the unity of our Orthodox faith, listening to the voice of the holy and God-fearing Fathers who, by the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit, and the intercessions of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary the Most blessed, "With pious mind they refuted the godless dogma of the grievous Arius, and by synodal decree banished him for the Catholic Church. And they instructed all to openly confess the consubstantial and co-eternal Son of God, Who existed before the ages. This in exactness and piety, did they set forth in the Symbol of Faith. Wherefore, following their divine doctrines and believing with assurance, we worship, in one Godhead, the Father, Son and the All-holy Spirit, the Trinity in one essence". Amen, many happy returns!

A reception followed, where His Beatitude addressed the President and the members of the Ecclesiastical Committee and the congregation again as follows:

"Blessed are you, the God of our fathers, and blessed be your name, holy and glorious forever" (Tobit 8,5), " thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" (Ps. 143, 10).

Dear Mr President and respected members of the Ecclesiastical Committee,

Dear Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Dear Father Spyridon,

My beloved brothers,

In addition to today's feast, the Holy Church of Christ celebrates the glorious Ascension of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ into heaven and the memory of the first Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in AD325 of the three hundred and eighteen godly Fathers.

The feast of the Ascension of our Saviour Christ refers to the sealing of the glorious Resurrection of Christ. And this is because through His Ascension, our Lord Jesus Christ "divinized the body which He had assumed", i.e. our human nature, which was assumed by the pure blood of the Ever-Virgin Mary. The feast of the holy God-bearing Fathers of the first Synod in Nicaea, refers to the entrenchment of the sanctifying teaching, (1 Tim. 1:10) namely of the right faith, as Paul wrote to his disciple Titus saying: "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers...who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake...Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith" (Tit. 1,10-13).

This healthy teaching and correct faith, the Apostolic tradition, has been preserved by the Church of Jerusalem, the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, founded on the blood of the Cross of Golgotha and the empty tomb of the Resurrection of Christ, through the ages, thanks to its presence and constant tireless activity of the monastic order of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood.

We boast in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:31) that here, in your beautiful town of Turan, where our Christian Orthodox Community lives and we rejoice in your good testimony of the moral values and truths of the Gospel of love, peace, love for our fellow men and hospitality, especially the harmonious symbiosis and coexistence with other respected religious communities.

We also proclaim this Gospel message today, my beloved brothers, through the Eucharistic fellowship with you,

listening to the order of Saint Paul saying: " Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20, 28-30).

With these words, we want to assure you that the Venerable Rum-Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Mother of all the Churches, has never spared effort and expense, has never abandoned the Christian flock entrusted to it by the divine Providence, and has never ceased to care for the preservation of the Holy Places of our faith as well as for the preservation of the multi-religious and multi-ethnic status of the Holy City of Jerusalem. Many and blessed returns."

At noon, a hospitable, rich banquet was offered by the Community.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE AWARD OF THE TITLES TO THE GRADUATES OF THE SCHOOL OF SAINT DEMETRIOS**

On the evening of Tuesday, May 10/23, 2023, the 35th ceremony of awarding degrees to the thirteen graduates of the School of Saint Demetrios of the Patriarchate took place in the ceremony hall of the Notre Damme hotel near New Gate.

This ceremony was honoured by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, who was accompanied by the Inspector of Arabic Schools of the Patriarchate His Eminence the Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Elder Chief Secretary, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, His Eminence Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, Fr Farah Bandour, Fr Issa Mousleh and the Archdeacon Mark, in the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, the teachers, the parents and relatives of the graduates.

This ceremony began with the Palestinian and Greek National Anthems and the reading of a passage from the Holy Bible. The ceremony also included songs and dance performances by the students of the School's Primary School and a speech on the long-term educational experience of the School's director, Mr Samir Zananiri.

In his speech, the Director presented the important educational work of the School, which has been carried out for thirty-five years, and of this year, and praised the Patriarchate for the support of the School.

A student of the School offered His Beatitude a bouquet of flowers as an expression of gratitude for His support in the School.

One of the students addressed His Beatitude in Arabic, one student in English and one student in Greek. All three expressed their gratitude to their teachers and to His Beatitude for the support of the Patriarchate to the School.

Palestinian songs were sung and Palestinian and Greek traditional dances were danced. With the teaching of Mrs Panagiota Cafetzi and the performance of Mr Nikolaos Michailidou, they sang hymns and danced under the music of Pontus.

This was followed by the address of His Beatitude through the



mouth of Fr Essa and the awarding of titles by His Beatitude to each of the graduates, wishing them good academic and social success.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY AT THE HOLY CHURCH OF ST. GEORGE IN REINE**

On the Sunday of the Blind Man, 8<sup>th</sup>/ 21<sup>st</sup> May 2023, according to the book of Pentecostarion, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of Saint George in the Rum-Orthodox Arabic-speaking community of Reine, a town near Nazareth.

Before the Liturgy, His Beatitude was warmly welcomed by the Boy Scouts of the Community.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the ministering Dean Priest of the Church Fr Simeon, and other Priests from the neighbouring communities, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios, under the chanting of the local Byzantine choir.

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

“And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man who was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9,1-3).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Master and Creator of all, has gathered all of us through the Holy Spirit in this in this holy beautiful Church of yours, to celebrate the miracle Jesus worked on the man who was born blind, by applying clay to his eyes.

This miracle on the man who was born blind is distinguished among all other miracles of Jesus, because, “Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind” (John 9,32). It is noteworthy that Jesus cured the blind man out of “self-imposed goodness”, as Saint Gregory Palamas says: “In Jerusalem, when [Jesus] saw a man who was born blind, without being asked, but moved by self-imposed goodness, He spat on the earth and made clay and placed it on the blind man’s eyes, saying to him; go and wash in Siloam’s pool.”

Christ cured the blind man “by self-imposed goodness”, because this way he revealed that He is the greatest and most glorious of all, as Saint Cyril of Alexandria says. In other words, through this action, Christ proved that He has the power and the authority that none of the Saints had ever had. To this cause, Jesus refers to this miracle as proof of “reversing blindness”, which no one else had ever managed to achieve before or ever since.

As for the cured blind man, he boldly replied to the provoking accusations of the unbeliever Pharisees against Jesus Christ

who cured him, as well as to the threatening ironic comments against himself: "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing" (John 9,33).

These words of the blind man are a confession of faith, that the One who cured him is sent by God. His confession of faith stems from his faith according to the psalmist: "I believed, therefore, I have spoken" (Ps. 116,1), and as per Saint Paul: "We also believe, and therefore speak" (2 Cor. 4,13). This means, that we who have the same living faith as David the psalmist, believe in the true God, that is why we confess and preach our faith.

The power of the confession of the blind man's faith is noted in his reply to Jesus: "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him" (John 9,36-38).

Interpreting these words of the Gospel, Zigavinos says: "[the blind man] believed at once; for the words touched his soul immediately, finding it benign and shone upon it knowledge and faith." And Saint Basil the Great says: "Like this, worship comes after faith, while faith is confirmed through power...and we get to know God through power; so we believe in the One we know and worship the One we believe in."

Indeed, the action of the power of Christ, the Son of God, is the one that significantly contributed to the cured blind man's faith, as this is shown by his reply to the Pharisees: "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9,25).

It is noteworthy that the cured blind man does not offer explanations about the method of treatment, nor does he resort to theories to clarify the miracle, that is, the experience of the indescribable benefit he received from the light-giver Christ. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above,

and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1,17), the Apostle James preaches.

Christ, my dear brethren, granted the blind man not only the light to his eyes, but at the same time, He gave him "His wondrous light" (1 Peter 2,9). That is why the cured blind man said to Jesus: "Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him" (John 9,38). In other words, the blind man was called by Christ unto His wondrous light. "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), the Lord says.

Precisely this "light of life" shone upon the world during the luminous resurrection from the dead of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, as Saint John Damascene writes in his hymn: "Let us arise in the deep dawn and instead of myrrh, offer praise to the Master, and we shall see Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, Who causeth life to dawn for all" (Katavasiae of Pascha, Ode 5).

Christ is the Sun of righteousness, which causes life to dawn upon every man on earth. The unwaning light of the Resurrection breaks the darkness of night and the hope and joy of life in Christ comes after the despair of death. "The rising sun" from the tomb, namely our Lord Jesus Christ, grants eternal and true life to all.

"Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight" (John 9,11) said the blind man. This order of Jesus, my dear brethren, applies to all of us. And this is because Siloam's pool is no other than the Church of Christ, where the gifts of the Holy Spirit are freely offered through the holy sacraments, especially through the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Our Holy Church is the hospital and medical centre for our various mental and physical ailments.

Let us, therefore, entreat the healer of the man who was born blind and say along with the hymnographer: "O Christ God, Thou

spiritual Sun of Righteousness, Who with Thine immaculate touch didst enlighten both the body and soul of him who from his mother's womb was deprived of sight, illuminate the eyes of our souls also, and show us to be sons of the day, that we might cry to Thee with faith: Great and ineffable is Thy compassion toward us, O Friend of man; glory be to Thee" (Vespers, Glory of the Aposticha). Christ is risen! Many happy returns!"

At the reception after the Divine Liturgy His Beatitude also said the following:

"And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man who was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9,1-3).

Honourable President and members of the Ecclesiastical Council,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Reverend Father Simeon,

Dear Christians

Our Patriarchal presence among you during today's feast of the Sunday of the Blind man fills our hearts with joy and cheerfulness, according to the order of Saint Paul: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20,28).

Indeed, the Holy Spirit is the One Who has established bishops to pastor the Church of Christ. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of our God and Saviour Christ is the One Who puts together and

constitutes the whole institution of the Church, which is founded upon Christ's blood on the Cross. "Which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20,28), Saint Paul preaches. And according to the true testimony of Saint John the Theologian, whom we celebrate also today; "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10,11).

The Church of Christ, namely the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem boasts in Jesus Christ for the 'little flock' (cf. Luke 12,32) of your town Reine, which is distinguished for the unity and confession of its Christian faith, according to the example of the cured blind man, who said in today's Gospel narrative: "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing" (John 9,33).

This confession of the formerly blind man, that his healer, the man named Jesus, "was of God", namely, He was sent by God, gives further testimony to Jesus' reply to His disciples; "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9,3).

This appearance of God's works and His Church did we also see with our own eyes in your blessed community. That is why we rendered glory and thanksgiving to the resurrected from the dead, our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And we say along with Saint Chrysostom: "Christ is with me, of whom shall I be afraid? Even if the waves are striking against me, or the open seas, or the lord's wrath; for me all these are less powerless than a spider's web". Christ is risen! Many happy returns, fruitful in Christ!"

After the reception, the Community hosted a meal for His Beatitude and those with Him.

**From Secretariat-General**