

PASCHAL VISITS OF THE RUM ORTHODOX FLOCK TO THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, 11th/24th April 2023, after Thomas Sunday, His Eminence Metropolitan Ioannikios of Montenegro and a group of pilgrims with him, Priests and laity, visited His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and asked His blessing and congratulated Him on the feast of Pascha.



After that, the Priests and members of the Bethlehem Community, under the Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem, His Eminence Metropolitan Benedictos of Diosaecarea,



followed by the Priests of Beit Sahour, the Stewards of Taybe from Ramallah district and the Stewards of Ramle, the ancient Arimathea, under their Hegoumen Archimandrite Niphon,



who invited His Beatitude at the feast of Ramle, next Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women.

From Secretariat-General

THOMAS SUNDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

Sunday, April 10/23, 2023, was celebrated by the Patriarchate as Antipascha or Thomas Sunday, that is, as a commemoration of the fact that the Lord on the eighth day after His Resurrection appeared to the disciples again, as they were

gathered in the Upper room with the doors closed when Thomas was also with them and He said to Thomas: "bring your finger here and put it in my side and do not be an unbeliever but a believer", "because you have seen and believed in me, blessed are those who have not seen and believe", (John 20, 27-29).

This event was celebrated during Vespers in the evening in the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection and the Divine Liturgy in the morning in the Holy and Life-giving Sepulchre, presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, concelebrated by their Eminences, the Metropolitan Ioannikios of Montenegro and Archbishop Makarios of Qatar, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and deacons. The chanting was delivered by His Eminence Archbishop of Aristovoulos of Madaba and Hierodeacon Simeon. The service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and the Consul Mrs Christina Zacharioudaki and their families, as well as the pilgrims visiting for Easter.

After the end of the Divine Liturgy of the Resurrection, the Episcopal Entourage returned to the Patriarchate, where His Eminence received the pilgrims.

The event of the touching of Thomas was celebrated today also in the city of Cana of Galilee in accordance with the Status Quo of the Community of this town, the one after the event of the blessing of the marriage by the Lord, and the transformation of the water into wine. The Evangelist John mentions the first of these signs of the Lord (John 2, 1-11) in his Gospel, the passages of which are read on the Sundays after Holy Easter and until Pentecost.

His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, being received by the Scouts, officiated this service with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and the Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Hegoumen of Cana Archimandrite Benedictos, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nektarios and

the Russian Priests of Galilee, Archdeacon Mark, Hierodeacon Eulogios and others.

To the assembled people, His Beatitude proclaimed the divine word as follows:

“Come let us drink a new drink, not one marvellously brought forth from a barren rock, but the Source of incorruption, which springeth forth from the grave of Christ, in Whom we are established”, exclaims Saint John of Damascus melodiously.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, suffering by the Cross and abolishing death and rising from the dead, brought us all to this holy biblical place of Cana of Galilee, so that on Easter we may celebrate the manifestation of His [Christ's] glory through signs, but also that of the inauguration of Christ's Resurrection, as well as the touching of the Holy Apostle Thomas.

The Resurrection of Christ is the cornerstone of our Christian faith according to the testimony of the apostle Paul: “If Christ is not raised, therefore our preaching is empty because our faith is also empty” (I Cor. 15,14). Moreover, the Resurrection of Christ is the truth, the answer to Pilate's question: “What is truth?” (John 18:38). This confession was proclaimed by the Lord Himself after parsimony, saying: “I am the way and the truth (John 14:6)... “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25).

This confession was confirmed by Christ through His many appearances before His holy disciples after His Resurrection, as the Evangelist Luke testifies in His Acts, saying: “And [Jesus] appeared alive after His suffering [to the Apostles] in many witnesses for forty days, appealing to them and speaking about the kingdom of God” (Acts 1,3).

We also have the presence of Christ with us, my beloved brothers, through His divine-human body, that is, the Church, of which body He is the head, (Cf. Col. 1,18) according to

Saint Paul. This does not mean that Christ Himself calls us to approach and touch His body as another Thomas, through our participation in the mystery of the “mystical blessing”, that is, of the Divine Eucharist, as Saint Cyril of Alexandria clearly teaches saying: “He comes” [=he visits] “and Christ appears to us all, invisibly and visibly; invisibly as God, and again visibly in the body. He [Christ] also allows his holy flesh to be touched. We draw nigh by the grace of God, in the making of the mystical blessing, receiving Christ in our hands, so that we too may [=properly] believe that He Himself truly raised the Temple”, [that is, His Body].

In other words, the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ constitutes a confession of the Resurrection of Christ, who said: “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.” (John 6, 54-56).

The blood of Christ is the new drink, which we are called by the hymnographer to drink. And this drink gushes from the Tomb of Christ, it is the Blood of Christ, “the one poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins”. (Matthew 26,28). Interpreting the meaning of Christ’s blood and body, Saint Andrew of Crete, from Jerusalem, says: “Your body and Blood, crucified above all, did you lay down Oh Word; the blood to wash me; you gave the spirit to bring me, Christ, to your Creator”.

“This is what Jesus did at the beginning of the signs in Cana of Galilee and revealed His glory and His disciples believed in Him” (John 2:11). As you know, there are two signs that Jesus performed here, in the city of Cana of Galilee. On the one hand, the sanctification and blessing of marriage through His physical presence in it. “The honoured marriage was sanctified, and the[ancient] curse against the woman was abolished” says Saint Cyril of Alexandria. On the other hand,

the transformation of water into wine by the unspeakable power of Christ: "By an unspeakable power the water was turned into wine. What is therefore [=difficult] to the all-powerful"? says Saint Cyril again.

According to Saint Clement of Alexandria, the wine at the wedding of Cana symbolizes the blood of Christ. "The scripture called the wine a secret symbol of holy blood. He proved again to the disciples that the blessed [water], was wine, saying: "I will not drink of the fruit of this vine until I drink it with you again in the kingdom of my Father" (Mt. 26,29).

In other words, the disciples of the Lord and all those who believe in Him will share in His joy and He in the joy of His disciples in the kingdom of His Father. "The drinking of wine does not only satisfy the need but offers to the senses the diverse pleasure; then the Resurrection from the dead, by which the decay of human bodies will have been removed and this nature of all things will be transferred to a place of renewal, so that even this joy of ours may be renewed by Christ Himself, our Saviour, Who instils His own innate joy into the souls of those who revere Him" says Saint Ammonios.

This, precisely, "the innate and unique joy of our Saviour Christ", we too, my beloved brothers, are called to settle in our hearts during this time of the Resurrection of Christ, listening to the exhortation of the Theotokos who says: "Whatever he says to you, do it." (John 2,5). And this is because the Risen Christ is He, "in whom we established", according to the hymnographer Saint John of Damascus, invoking the Holy Bible which reads: "My heart is established in the Lord", (1 Kings 2,1). Our firmness is none other than our faith in the Risen Christ (Cf. Col. 2:5), but also from the communion of the holy Body and Blood of Christ, who invites us all through the hymnographer exclaiming: "Come on this auspicious day of the Resurrection, let us partake of the new fruit of the vine of divine gladness and of the Kingdom of Christ, praising Him as God unto the ages" (Canon of Pascha,

Ode 8, Troparion 1). Amen! Christ is Risen.

After the end of the Divine Liturgy, there was a litany three times around the Holy Church, with a large crowd of faithful Christians following in gladness, rejoicing and praying.

At noon during the meal that was offered for the Patriarchal Entourage, His Beatitude delivered the following address to those present:

“This chosen and holy day is the first of the sabbaths, the queen and lady, the feast of feasts, and the festival of festivals, wherein we bless Christ unto the ages” (Canon of Pascha, Ode 8, Heirmos), Saint John of Damascus exclaims.

Honourable President and members of the Ecclesiastical Committee,

Your Eminences,

Reverend Hegoumen Father Benedictos,

Beloved Brethren in Christ

The queen and lady of feasts, the feast of Pascha, has gathered all of us in the biblical and historical town of Cana to celebrate the event of the revealing of Christ’s glory through the signs which He worked in this holy place.

The active presence of the Church of the Rum Orthodox, namely of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem throughout the centuries is also witnessed by the Christian presence of the local Christian community which preaches and confesses the moral principles and values of love for one another, even for the enemies, of peace, conciliation and good coexistence with all the fellow citizens and religious communities who live here. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Ps. 133,1) the psalmist proclaims.

This message is relayed to the whole world, given that Cana is

inextricably linked with the great sacrament of marriage, which our Lord Jesus Christ blessed, but also with the divine power through which He transformed the water into wine.

Cana of Galilee is a biblical and historical place, attracting thousands of pilgrims and visitors and it is a source of blessing, hope, and strengthening as well as relaxation. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11,28) the Lord says.

We also experienced this during our blessed ministry as the Hegoumen and humble spiritual shepherd for the people in Cana, in particular for our pious flock.

Because of this, today's company with you has special meaning, which refers to the unity between our Christian flock and the Patriarchate, according to Saint Paul's order: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4,3).

The presence of the Christians in the Holy Land, and of course in this blessed town of Cana in Galilee is encompassed in this order of Paul. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2,1). This advocate is the Holy Spirit, Who brings together and sustains the whole institution of the Church, that is why the Lord says, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 26,18), especially when it comes to the Holy Church of Jerusalem. Amen. Christ is risen!"

After the meal, His Beatitude made a Pastoral visit to the members of the congregation, which He had ministered in the past as an Archimandrite Hegoumen.

From Secretariat-General

VISITS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES ON OUR EASTER CELEBRATION

On the Tuesday of Bright Week, April 5th/18th 2023, the local Western and Pre-Chalcedonian Christian Churches of Jerusalem visited our Patriarchate on the occasion of Pascha.

First, the Franciscan Brotherhood, Custodians of the Holy Land, under their Abbot, His Eminence Francesco Patton visited the Patriarchate. These were addressed by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

Subsequently, the Patriarchate was visited by all the other Christian Churches of Jerusalem, that is, the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem under the representative of the Latin Patriarch His Eminence Somali, the Lutheran Church under its Archbishop His Eminence Sani Azar, the Anglican church under its Archbishop, Naum Husam, and the Pre-Chalcedonian Churches Copts, Syrians, Ethiopians, except the Armenians.

All these were received by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem with an address.

Subsequently, His Beatitude received the priests and the Trustees of the Community of the Cathedral of Saint James the Brother of God on the feast of Holy Easter.

The visit to the Coptic, Syrian and Ethiopian Churches was returned by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theodosios of Sebasteia.

From Secretariat-General

THE VIGIL OF THE RESURRECTION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

Early on Sunday morning at 01.00, 3rd/ 16th April 2023, the Service of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the feast of Pascha, was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

On this feast the Church commemorates that the incarnate Jesus Christ, our Lord, was crucified, died in the flesh and was risen from the dead as God-man, granting to His believers eternal life and the resurrection from the dead.

For this feast the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where bells tolling, the Canon of Holy Saturday was chanted, while the clergy, with their Primate, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos were being dressed. This was followed by a litany, three times around the Holy Sepulchre.

Then His Beatitude read the Gospel narrative of the Resurrection according to Saint Mark, followed by Christ is risen and the rest of the service of the Resurrection, with the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom.

The Service was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the visiting Metropolitan Makarios of Anea from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina and Theodosios of Sebasteia, and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios and representatives from the Patriarchates of Moscow and Romania,

Archimandrites Dometianos and Ioannis, many Priests from other Churches, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacons Eulogios and Dositheos.

The service was attended by a large congregation along with the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, the Consul Mrs Christina Zacharioudaki, and the Ambassador of Georgia, Mr Lasha.

Before the Holy Communion, the Pascha message by His Beatitude was read (see link):

<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/blog/2023/04/12/pascha-2023-message-by-his-beatitude-the-patriarch-of-jerusalem-theophilos-iii/>

At the end of the service, the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate where they were given cheese and Easter eggs.

From Secretariat-General

PASCHA 2023 MESSAGE BY HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III

THEOPHILOS III

By the grace of God, Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem

and of all Palestine

to the congregation of the Church, grace and mercy and peace

from the Holy and Life-giving Sepulchre of the Risen Christ.

***Come ye receive light from the unwaning light and glorify
Christ who is risen from the dead***

“It was very early at dawn on that day, the first of the Sabbaths” after the Crucifixion and burial of our Lord Jesus Christ. The women who followed Jesus from Galilee went into the city and “had bought sweet spices, that they might come to anoint the body of the Lord Jesus” (Mark 16, 1). When they arrived at the door of the sepulchre, the bright angel sitting on it said, “Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him” (Mark 16, 6 – 7).

“The Lord shewed himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen by them for forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1,3). “Making intercession for us from there” (Rom, 8, 34), He sent us another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, “who proceeds from the Father (Jn. 15, 26). This Spirit of the Son enlightened His holy disciples and apostles and strengthened and transformed and highlighted Spirit-bearing preachers of the Gospel. Through them, He enchanted the whole world and established the Church at its ends, which He redeemed with His blood. As the body of Christ, the Church is the steward of His sanctifying and redeeming mission on earth. It performs the redeeming sacraments and preaches to the world, as He did, peace, reconciliation and love to all, even the enemies. We pray in the Churches, along with Saint Basil the Great, “let the schisms of the churches cease, the heresies and revolutions be suppressed”, and “give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully” (1 Tim. 5,14).

The fulfilment of this mission rests particularly on the Church of the Holy Land. The Church “being” in Jerusalem, which from the empty and Holy Sepulchre, the source of the Resurrection, has been persecuted since the beginning, and recently severely, but struggles undefied, “as if dying and behold we live” (2 Cor. 6,9) preaching Christ Crucified and Resurrected and receiving its children, “from the west and the north and the sea and the east” through the sweet melodic greeting “Christ is risen” and through Our Patriarchal wishes and Fatherly blessings.

In the Holy City of Jerusalem

PASCHA 2023

Fervent supplicant for all before God

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

VISITS OF THE HAGIOTAPHITE BROTHERHOOD TO THE WESTERN CHURCHES ON THEIR EASTER CELEBRATION

On our Holy Tuesday, March 29/April 11, 2023, the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood visited the Western Churches on their Easter.

At first, they visited the Fraternity of the Franciscans,

Custody of the Holy Land.

In the context of this visit and reception, His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed the Franciscan Brotherhood under its abbot Fr Francesco Paton.

Afterwards, the Brotherhood visited the Latin Patriarchate.

Then His Beatitude addressed the Latin clergy under their Patriarch in Jerusalem, His Beatitude Pierre Battista Pizzaballa through His address below: (to be posted soon).

Afterwards, His Beatitude, with the Archdeacon Mark and the Geronda Secretary-General, visited the Apostolic Delegate and the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, Mr Naum Hussam, while the Most Reverend Archbishop Theodosios of Sebasteia, visited the Lutheran Church under Reverend Sani Azar.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF LAZARUS SATURDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, March 26/April 8, 2023, the feast of the resurrection of Lazarus was celebrated by the Patriarchate in Bethany and on the Mount of Olives. On this feast day, the whole Church, even that of Jerusalem, celebrates what was handed down in the Gospel of John (11:1-45) of the raising from the dead of the four-day-dead friend of the Lord Lazarus, in testimony of the common resurrection before His Passion: "Giving us before Thy passion an assurance of the general resurrection, Thou hast raised Lazarus from the dead, O Christ

our God".

This feast was celebrated in the Holy Monastery of his sisters Martha and Mary with a Divine Liturgy presided over by H.H.B. our father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina, Demetrios of Lydda and Philoumenos of Pella, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Steward of the Monastery Archimandrite Epiphanius, Fr Dometianos and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by Mr Gotsopoulos, and Monk Joseph from Mount Athos, as the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Vlioras and a multitude of believers.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon before the Holy Communion:

"Before Thine own death, O Christ, Thou hast raised from hell Lazarus that was four days dead, and hast taken the dominion of death. Through this one man whom Thou hast loved, Thou hast foretold the deliverance of all men from corruption. We, therefore, worship Thine almighty power and cry: Blessed art Thou, O Saviour, have mercy upon us" (Lazarus Saturday Matins, praises, Troparion 2).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the holy and righteous Lazarus has gathered us all in this holy place of his hometown Bethany, to celebrate his resurrection from the dead and glorify our Lord Jesus Christ Who appeared to us and said to Lazarus' sister Martha, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).

Approaching Jesus Christ's entrance to Jerusalem with palm trees' branches, where He suffered death on the Cross as well

as His three-day burial and the luminous resurrection, the Lord visited Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead, "he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin" (John 11:43-44), according to the testimony of Saint John the Evangelist.

Interpreting these words from the Gospel, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "Lazarus' miracle is a type of the complete resurrection from the dead, and having accomplished this, He set forth a good image of what is going to happen in general". And the hymnographer exclaims: "Giving us before Thy passion an assurance of the general resurrection, Thou hast raised Lazarus from the dead, O Christ our God" (Apolytikon).

Christ's resurrection, my dear brethren, is not a mere miracle, incomprehensible to the human mind, but rather, and primarily, freedom from the death of corruption, namely of sin, as the hymnographer says very clearly: "Thou hast raised from hell Lazarus that was four days dead, and hast taken the dominion of death. Through this one man whom Thou hast loved, Thou hast foretold the deliverance of all men from corruption".

This very message of the common resurrection, that is, the foretelling of the deliverance from the corruption of the death of sin for humankind, did Christ boldly denote before many people, as well as before His own disciples, through the resurrection of His friend Lazarus. In other words, Christ is the liberation of man, that is why Saint Paul advises: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1).

Death is the primary enemy of man, that is why Saint Paul preaches: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:26). Interpreting these words of Paul, Saint Chrysostom says: "How is death the last [enemy]? It comes

after all others, after the devil, after all other things. At first comes the devil's council and the disobedience, and then, death". And Zygavinos notes: "He called the death an enemy, as someone who fights against God's creature, and an appellant and a minister of the devil".

Christ, my dear ones, is the one who reconciled man with His death, so that He may present man as holy and immaculate and free from any condemnation. Saint Paul says, "Yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight" (Col. 1:21-22).

All of us, who have honoured the feast of the raising from the dead of Christ's friend Lazarus in Eucharist, "who became the redeeming foretelling of the rebirth", entreat him that by his intercessions, along with those of the Mother of God, we may be deemed worthy to become viewers of the Cross and the Passion and the luminous Resurrection of our God and Saviour Christ, the Victor over the death of corruption. Amen. Have a blessed Holy Week!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a Litany to the tomb of Lazarus, led by His Eminence Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, where the narrative from the Gospel of the raising of Lazarus was read (John 11:1-43)

After the end of the Litany, in the Holy Monastery, the Abbess Nun Eupraxia offered a meal.

The feast was also celebrated on the Mount of Olives, in the evening, and in the morning with the Divine Liturgy presided over by the Most Reverend Archbishop of Theofanes of Gerassa, with the participation of many faithful Christians.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday, March 25/ April 7, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Nazareth of Galilee.

On this feast, the Church, and especially the Church of Jerusalem, commemorates God's Providence for the salvation of us men. It commemorates that the Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to the pure Virgin Mary and announced that she was going to become the Mother of the incarnate Only-Begotten Son of God.

When the Virgin asked, "How will that be, for I know not a man", and then added, "Behold the maiden of the Lord, let it done unto me according to thy will", then the One without flesh became incarnate, the bodiless One received a body, the Son of God became also Son of Man, God-man, our Lord Jesus Christ.

This feast was celebrated at the Church of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Nazareth, where the spring of water is, presided over by His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Archbishops, Damascene of Yaffo, Aristarchos of Constantina, Philoumenos of Pella, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Priests from the neighbouring towns of Nazareth, Fr Dometianos from the Moscow Patriarchate, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by a

Byzantine choir from Greece, under Mr Balogeorgos in Greek, and by the local choir in Arabic, as the service was attended by a large congregation of faithful Christians from Greece and other countries.

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

“Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day” (Psalm 96,1-2), the psalmist exclaims.

Beloved brothers in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed the Blessed Virgin Mary, brought us all together in this holy city of the biblical Nazareth, to celebrate the Annunciation of the salvation of us people, that is, the revelation of the eternal Mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God from her pure flesh.

That is why the psalmist invites all the nations, all the inhabitants of the earth, to ceaselessly praise and glorify the name “the most excellent name which God the Father has given to His Son, and our Lord, Jesus Christ” (cf. Philippians 2:9). “All the earth sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day” (Psalm 96,1-2).

This “salvation” of God is nothing other than the liberation of people from sin and the corruption of death through Christ. This truth was announced by the loudest Isaiah saying: “ And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken” (Is. 40,5).

Indeed, the glory of the Lord appeared, on the one hand, through the sent Archangel Gabriel saying to the Virgin Mary:

“Rejoice, blessed one; the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women (Lk. 1,26-28); on the other hand, by the “New Child” called Emmanuel, which means God is with us (Matthew 1:23), born of the Holy Spirit the Virgin Mary in the cave of Bethlehem.

Interpreting the name “Emmanuel”, the divinely inspired Fathers of the Church say; Saint Chrysostom: “The phrase “they shall call Him Emmanuel” shows nothing else but that they shall see God with men; For He has always been with men, but never clearly”. According to Saint Cyril of Alexandria, “neither the God of humanity separated by nature, nor man stripped of divinity... God is with us, shows what has been received from us, for us, and preaches the incomprehensible of God the Word”.

The Annunciation of the Virgin Mary in place and time is the cornerstone of sacred history in general and of the mystery of the divine Providence in Christ in particular, as Saint John of Damascus teaches, saying: “And being perfect God, He is also made perfect man and the new of all times is made newest, the only new under the sun, through which the infinite power of God appears. What is greater than the fact that God became a man?”

It is noteworthy that the Annunciation of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary was prefigured before the eyes of the God-seer Moses on Mount Sinai, as the Scripture says: “Moses entered the land of God Horeb. And an angel of the Lord came to him in fire, a flame from the bush, and he saw that the bush was burning with fire, and the bush was not consumed” (Exodus 3, 1-2). According to Saint Chrysostom, the visible angel of the Lord is no other than the angel of the great council, that is, the Son of God. According to the Holy Bible “the Lord God is a consuming fire” (Deuteronomy 4:24).

Saint John of Damascus, praising the indescribable greatness and glory of the Most-Blessed Virgin Mary, exclaims in a hymn:

“ The whole world was amazed at thy divine glory: for thou, O Virgin who hast not known wedlock, hast held in thy womb the God of all and hast given birth to an eternal Son, who rewards with salvation all who sing thy praises”.

Indeed, my beloved brothers, the whole universe, Angels and men, heavenly and animate and inanimate earthly beings, remain ecstatic at the fact that the Virgin Mary conceived in her womb without a man’s seed, the God the Word and the Lord, He who God over all, as Saint Paul calls the Lord and God saying: “one God and father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all of us” (Eph. 4,5).

The response of the Virgin Mary: “I am the Lord’s servant, May your word to me be fulfilled” (Luke 1,38) to the angel Gabriel’s “Rejoice, the Lord is with Thee” (Luke 1,28), made her, (Mary) according to Irenaios of Lougdunos, “ the cause of salvation for herself and all the human race”, that is, the cause of deification. This historic and irrefutable event is commemorated by the Holy Church of Christ in the Nicene Creed: “I believe... and in one Lord Jesus Christ...Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from the Heavens and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man”.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is the one who confirms and testifies to the great mystery of piety, that is, of the divine Providence, as Saint Cyril of Alexandria declared: “If somebody does not confess that Emmanuel is truly God and for this reason, the Pure Virgin is the Mother of God, for she bore in the flesh the incarnate Word of God, let him be anathema. The Holy Ecumenical Synod of Chalcedon preached that Christ is the perfect God and perfect man in two natures, unmistakably and indivisible, and has thus ratified the contribution of the Virgin Mary to the mystery of the divine Providence, which undeniably for the psalmist is “the capital of our salvation”.

We, my beloved brothers, humbly and gratefully agree after the hymnographer, saying: "Hail, Thou who alone brings the sun, Christ, the dwelling place of light." And this is because the Most Holy and our glorious Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary preached to the world the light of truth, that is, Christ. To this very light we are called to come, all who want the righteousness of God, through repentance, as Saint Symeon the New Theologian says, "Everyone, of those who sit in darkness, are the sons of darkness and do not want to repent. For repentance is the door that leads out of darkness and into the light. Therefore, let us beseech the Theotokos and Mother of God, that by her intercessions we may be worthy to partake of the light of the glorious Resurrection of the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was born from her and of the Holy Spirit and made incarnate, to give peace to the world and mercy to souls. Many happy returns and blessed Pascha".

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a magnificent litany around the town, with the presence of the Body of Scouts of Nazareth and many other towns of Galilee.

At noon, His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos and the Community Council hosted a meal.

This feast was also celebrated at the Shrine of Gethsemane, presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias.

It was likewise celebrated at the town Rafidia, at the Holy Church of the Annunciation, presided over by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba.

From Secretariat-General

VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE

1- On the morning of Saturday, March 17/April 1, 2023, the Commissioners of the Community of South Pkea of the Ptolemais/Acre region of Northern Israel visited H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, in the presence of His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, and His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and asked for his blessing and help with matters of their Holy Church.

Blessing them, His Beatitude gave them a book of the Gospel and Pentecost in Arabic for use in their worship and a beautiful icon of the Resurrection and financial assistance for the construction of new pews.





2- His Beatitude also received a Delegation of the Greek Air Force under the Military Attaché of the Greek Embassy in Tel Aviv, Mr Georgios Petrou, and spoke to them about the Sacred History of the Old and New Testaments, which the Jerusalem Patriarchate embodies in the present time.



3- Finally, he received the pilgrim sisters Foteini and Anna,

daughters of the blessed Professor of the Patriarchal School Vassilios Oreopoulos, blessed them and prayed for the repose of their father's soul.

From Secretariat-General

VISIT OF THE COMMUNITY OF CANA AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday, March 18/31, 2023, the Hegoumen of Cana of Galilee, Archimandrite Benedict Kayal and the Commissioners of the Community visited H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and they discussed issues of the flock and invited him, according to the custom, for their next feast, on Sunday of Thomas.

From Secretariat-General