

THE FEAST OF SAINTS CONSTANTINE AND HELEN AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, May 21 / June 3, 2024, the feast of Saints Constantine and Helen was celebrated in the Patriarchate.

On this holiday, the Church commemorates the work of the great glorious king and equal to the apostles Saint Constantine, the recognition of Christianity as a free religion within the Roman state by the decree of the Milanese, in AD 312 and of Saint Helen, who visited the Holy Land in the year AD 326 and erected the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem and other shrines.

Through the work of these two saints, the new era of Rum Orthodox tradition in the Holy Land was inaugurated.

In honour of these two holy sovereigns and equal-to-the-apostles, Constantine and Helen, founders and protectors of the Rum Orthodox era in the Holy Land, which is held today in the presence of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Great Vespers was held on Sunday afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on Monday morning at the Central Monastery presided over by His Beatitude Our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Typicon Keeper Archimandrite Alexios and the Archimandrites Nicodemus, Stephen, Amphilochios, Makarios, Epiphanius and Dionysios.

On Monday morning the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude with the co-celebration of the Typicon Keeper Archimandrite Alexios and the Archimandrites Nicodemus, Stephen, Amphilochios, the Patriarchal representative in Acre Archimandrite Silouanos and Priest Farah. The chanting was delivered by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba and Hierodeacon Simeon with the help of the Patriarchal School

of Zion students. The service was attended by the Consul Mrs Anna Mandika, local faithful and pilgrims.

After the Liturgy, the congregation went up to the Patriarchate Hall, as the Fathers were still dressed in full priestly liturgical vestments.

At the central Gate of the Patriarchate, the responsible for the Bakery, abbess of the Holy Monastery of Panagia Sayda-Naya, nun Seraphima, distributed small loaves of bread to all, as a traditional blessing.

In the Patriarchate, His Beatitude addressed those present as follows:

“Not from man did great Constantine with his blest mother Helen receive the royal sovereignty but by God’s grace from Heaven. For he beheld the divine Cross as a bright flashing trophy. With it was he victorious over all who opposed him, and he destroyed the deceit and error of all the idols while making strong throughout the world Orthodox faith and practice” (Matins, exaposteilarion).

Your Excellency, Consul General of Greece Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Dear Christians and Pilgrims,

Today the Holy Church of God and the city of Jerusalem are glad and rejoice on the solemn memory of the glorious saints, God-crowned and equal to the apostles, the great sovereigns Constantine and Helen.

These Saints became great sovereigns and leaders not only for Christ’s Church but also for the whole of humanity, since Constantine the Great issued, the Decree of Milanese in AD 313, through which all the persecutions against the Church ceased, Christianity triumphed and the darkness of demonic

idolatry was dispelled. In 325 he convened the First Ecumenical Council in Nice, which he presided over in person. In 328 he laid the foundations of the so-called Constantinople, to which the imperial throne was transferred from Rome, also named New Rome.

This invaluable contribution was greatly magnified by the reverence of Saints Constantine and Helen for the Holy Land and for the building of the redeeming testimony, the Holy Sepulchre of Christ in 326. "This is my first and only purpose... that this holy place, which by God's commandment, I released from the addition of the burden of idols, and was made even holier, as it was holy by the beginning of God, and testifies for the faith of the redeeming passion, it was thus brought to light as a great structure to be magnificently adorned", King Constantine writes to Makarios Bishop of the Church in Jerusalem.

Being grateful to these glorious founders of the "Order of the Spoudaioi (Studious)", that is, our Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood on the one hand and to the originators of the Christ-like spiritual greatness of Romiosyni on the other, we celebrated a Patriarchal Divine Liturgy in the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen and prayed to the Holy Triune God for peace in our region tested by the fire of war.

Along with the hymnographer, let us say: "Rejoice, O great all-wise Constantine, thou fount of Orthodox Faith, that dost water continually all the lands beneath the sun with thy sweet and delightful streams. Rejoice, O root from which there sprouted forth the fruit that nourisheth Christ's most holy Church. Rejoice, thou most glorious boast and fame of all the farthest ends of the earth, fist of Christian kings. Rejoice, thou joy of faithful men" (Matins, Praises, Troparion 1).

Amen. Christ is Risen. Many and peaceful returns."

A monastic meal followed.

THE SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, May 19/June 1, 2024, the feast of Sunday of the Samaritan woman was celebrated with a transfer by the Patriarchate at Jacob's well in Samaria, Nablus.

On this holiday, the whole Church of Jerusalem commemorates following the Evangelist John () that the Samaritan woman, coming to draw water, drew the gift of life, our Lord Jesus Christ, from the Well of Patriarch Jacob in Nablus. There the Lord revealed to her everything about her life and that He is the expected Messiah, the one who speaks with her.

Since then, the Samaritan woman abandoned her previous sinful life and even martyred and is honoured as a martyr, as well as other members of her family, sons and brothers.

There, by Jacob's Well and within the surrounding Church, which was erected by the active Hegoumen Archimandrite Ioustinos, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, celebrated the Divine Liturgy with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Metropolitan Epiphanius of Lydra and Hegoumen of the H. Monastery of Machaira, the Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archimandrite Christodoulos, priests of the region of Samaria, the Hegoumen Rafidia Archimandrite Leontios, Archdeacon Markos

and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by the Hegoumen of Rafidia Archimandrite Leontios in Greek and the Nablus Byzantine choir in Arabic. The service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos and the local congregation.

His Beatitude delivered the following sermon before the Holy Communion:

“Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4, 13-14).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The Grace of the Holy Spirit brought us all together today in this holy place of the Well of the Patriarch Jacob, to celebrate the feast of the Samaritan woman, of the Holy martyr Foteini.

In His next dialogue with the Samaritan woman, Jesus says to her: “The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4, 14). Interpreting these words of the Lord, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: we must know that the Saviour here calls “water” the Grace of the Holy Spirit. If someone is to become a sharer of this Grace, then he will have the provision of divine knowledge, originating from himself, so that they no longer need the admonition of others. Instead, they will be sufficient and able to exhort/encourage with ease those who thirst for the divine and heavenly word. These were the Saints, the prophets and the Apostles during their earthly life, but also the heirs of their service/ministry, about whom it is written: “ Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation” (Isaiah 12, 3).

Interpreting again the words of the Prophet Isaiah, Saint Cyril says: "He calls water the life-giving word of God, while He calls springs the Holy Apostles, Evangelists and Prophets. Salvation He calls Christ. Indeed, by the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit the Holy Prophets, Apostles and Evangelists wrote the Holy Scriptures. The Holy Scriptures are those who nourish the saving faith in Christ through their knowledge, as Paul says to his disciple Timothy: " And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3, 15-17).

In other words, the water that Christ offered to the Samaritan woman was the gift of the Holy Spirit, who leads the man with a pure heart to his divinity, that is, to eternal life. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," says the Lord (Matthew 5, 8).

It is noteworthy that Jesus in his dialogue with the Samaritan woman, on the one hand, teaches that "God is a Spirit and those who worship Him in Spirit and in truth worship him" (John 4, 24), on the other hand when the Samaritan woman said: "I saw that the so-called Christ is coming; when he comes, he will tell us everything" (John 4, 25), because he is the Messiah", He reveals to her " I that speak unto thee am he" (John 4:26).

Commenting on the above words of Jesus, Saint Theophilaktos says: Many give spiritual worship to God, that is, with their mind, but they are outside the redeeming truth. The Holy Father of the Church says this because the purity of life and the correctness of doctrines constitute God's true and saving worship.

And St. Cyril of Alexandria says: Christ does not reveal himself simply and only to souls who are uneducated and completely unlearned (like the Samaritan woman), but in those souls he shines and is seen, who have prepared themselves to learn something and within them, they have born faith and "toward the most perfect knowledge they hasten", that is, they hurry to learn the most perfect mysteries. This is exactly what the Samaritan is distinguished for, in the search for the knowledge of the most perfect faith, which faith is distinguished into introductory and complete.

Saint Cyril of Alexandria comments: "Christ stops the dialogue after the Samaritan woman, when His disciples came and marveled that He spoke with that woman", (John 4:27) [So Christ is silent, says the Scripture. Since He planted the warm spark of faith in the Samaritan woman, Christ allows during the passage of time that this spark will grow into a great flame. This is how you will have to understand what He said: " I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?" (Luke 12:49).

This divine and warm spark, implanted in the innocent heart of the Samaritan woman, made her a great martyr and an apostle of the Gospel of Christ, for this reason, our Holy Church especially honours her in her own homeland, Samaria, as the hymnographer: "Thou camest to Samaria, my Saviour, Thou Almighty Lord, and speaking there with a woman, Thou didst entreat her for water, Who for the Hebrews broughtest forth fresh water from a flinty rock; and her Thou broughtest unto faith in Thee, and now she enjoyeth life in the Heavens forever" (Matins, Exaposteilarion).

It should be noted that this "The Hot spark of the word of life" anointed the disciples of Christ "Christians", as the Evangelist Luke reports in the book of the Acts of the Apostles: " Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled

themselves with the church, and taught many people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11, 25-26).

With this name, the first called Christians expressed the expectation to inherit the Lord's Kingdom in heaven; to become "heirs of God" and "joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8,17). This name was adopted and honoured by the Samaritan woman with her martyr's blood, who was born as a co-heir of Christ, "the one who told the people; look, come to see a man, who told me everything I did", (Cf. John 4, 28-29).

We, my dear brothers, also received this priceless inheritance, that is, the name "Christian", upon our baptism, having been incorporated into the body of the Church. However, this name implies conformity to our Christ-like way of life. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price", (1 Cor. 6, 19-20), Saint Paul preaches. Indeed, we no longer belong to ourselves, because we have been bought with the holy Blood of our Crucified and Resurrected Saviour Christ. We are now members of the secret Body of Christ, that is, of His Church.

We, my beloved, who today honour the memory of the holy Samaritan, beseech the merciful Lord with her, saying: "Grant me the water of faith, and I shall receive the streams of the font of baptism, unto exceeding gladness and redemption. O Giver of Life, Lord, glory to thee" (Vespers, stichera, 9).

Christ is Risen. Many and peaceful returns."

After the Divine Liturgy, a litany of three processions took place around the Holy Church. Before exiting the Holy Church, His Beatitude gladly heard the hymn "Christ is risen" in Greek and Arabic, as well as other religious hymns by a group of students from the Catechetical school of Zababde, under the

lead of the Rum-Orthodox faithful Daoud, who studied theology in Cyprus.

Afterwards, there was a reception and a solemn meal hosted by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Ioustinos.

From the General Secretariat

VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE

On Thursday the 17th / 30th of May 2024 H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos received Mr Alexander Gormatguk, an expert of the Foundation of Archangel Michael's Institute in Russia, who, under the care of His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, preserved an icon of the Shrine of the Theotokos' Tomb in Gethsemane.

On Friday the 18th / 31st of May 2024, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos received:

1. The Metropolitan Epiphanius of Lydra, Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Machaira in Cyprus, with two of his priests and one layman. His Beatitude thanked His Eminence for his support to the Patriarchate.



2. The Archimandrite Father Artemios, Hegoumen of the Community of Haifa with the two Priests of the flock.
3. The Priest and the Commissioners of town Zdeide of Northern Israel.



4. The Archimandrite Parthenios, Hegoumen of the Holy

Monastery of Prophet Elisha in Jericho.



From Secretariat-General

A GROUP OF RUSSIAN-SPEAKING BELIEVERS FROM NORTHERN ISRAEL VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, May 14 / 27, 2024, His Beatitude received a group of Russian-speaking believers under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate, under the Supervisor of the Holy Monastery of the First Apostles Peter and Paul of Capernaum, monk Irinarchos.

The Russian-speaking believers of Northern Israel are served for their religious needs in this Holy Monastery of the Patriarchate.

In this meeting, His Beatitude explained to the members of this group that they have the precious blessing of belonging to the Church of Jerusalem, which is the Mother of the Churches, as it was watered under the redemptive blood of Jesus Christ "it first received the remission of sins through the Resurrection".

"In the Church of Jerusalem", His Beatitude continued, "the saying of the Apostle Paul applies that 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, but you are all one in Christ Jesus'" (Col. 3:11).

The members of the Russian-speaking Community in Israel are spiritual children of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and at the same time politically belong to the State of Israel, owners of the Jewish Identity.

The State of Israel knows and recognizes their situation and helps them in their daily living conditions.

His Beatitude praised the work being done by Rev. Metropolitan of Nazareth Kyriakos, Rev. Archbishop of Madaba Aristovoulos and the monk Irinarchos and blessed this group which left to venerate the Holy Sepulchre.

From Secretariat-General

THE SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC MAN IN THE PATRIARCHATE

On the Sunday of the Paralytic, May 13/26, 2024, the miracle of the healing of the Paralytic by the Lord was celebrated by the Patriarchate, as told by the Evangelist John (5:2-16) in the Sheep's Pool, which had five porches, next to the Temple of Solomon.

The Lord, through these life-giving words, tightened the paralyzed limbs of the man who lived in paralysis for thirty-eight years and gave him the strength to lift his bed and walk.

This miracle was celebrated in the neighboring Nazareth town of Reine.

His Beatitude was received with a warm welcome by the Scouts, the Priests and the people, and celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the Church of Saint George, with: their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina and Aristovoulos of Madaba, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, local Priests, among whom Fr Simeon, who serves in this community, and Russian-speaking Elders, under the chanting of the Byzantine choir of the Church in Greek and Arabic.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following sermon:

“In Solomon's Porch, there lay a multitude of sick folk. And at Mid-feast, Christ found there a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight and thirty years. To him He called out with a voice of authority: Wilt thou be made whole? And the infirm man replied: Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool. And He saith unto him: Take up thy bed. Behold, thou art made whole, sin no more. By the

intercessions of the Theotokos, O Lord, send upon us Thy great mercy" (Vespers, Aposticha, Glory), the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians

Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who healed our infirmities and sufferings, brought us all together today, the fourth Sunday after Easter, in the surrounding Church of your laudable Rum Orthodox Community in Reine, so that we may celebrate with thanksgiving the feast commemorated miracle by Saint John the Evangelist of the healing of paralytic man.

In today's Gospel narrative, we distinguish two things: first, the thirty-eight-year-old paralyzed man who had his illness, who hoped for his healing in the power of God. "For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had" (John 5, 4), the Evangelist John says. And secondly, the presence of Jesus at the place of the sheep's pool, saying to the paralytic man: "Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk" (John 5, 6-8).

According to the approved fathers of the Church, Christ chooses the specific paralytic among the many sick to demonstrate that man in general is a great wound and that the Word of God, Christ is the unique and indisputable healer of man's physical and mental wounds, as St. Cyril of Jerusalem says: "where the Saviour is seen, there is also the salvation of man. He goes to meet Matthew the publican and not only does He make him His disciple, but also an Apostle and Evangelist. He resurrects the dead, gives sight to the blind, to the deaf

the ability to hear. He goes around the pools of water, not so much to admire the buildings, but "to heal the sick people".

The Psalmist also testifies to the fact that man is a great wound (trauma), that is, a mental and physical illness, and our Lord Jesus Christ is man's physician: " Bless the Lord, O my soul... Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;" (Ps. 102, 1, 3).

In other words, the Lord forgives and heals not only the moral evil, i.e. sin, but also the physical evil, i.e. disease.

That is why Jesus says imperatively to the paralytic: "Take up thy bed and walk" (John 5:8). Interpreting the Lord's words, St. Chrysostom says: "Not only does He command the man to stand up, but also to take up his bed, so that what is happening is believed to be a miracle and nothing of imagination, nor thought to be some sort of hypocrisy", and St. Cyril of Alexandria says, " the command was God-like and of superhuman strength and power. He does not seek the solution of the disease so that it does not appear like that of the holy prophets, but as the Lord powerfully commands it to be done".

Although the miracle that took place, the healing of the Paralytic was not imaginary or fake, Christ acted as the Lord of Powers authoritatively and not as one of the Prophets. This exact truth that Jesus Christ is " the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see", (1 Tim. 6, 15-16) according to Saint Paul, the Holy Church of our Christ proclaims and confesses forthwith on the current feast of the feasts of Easter, of the luminous Resurrection of our Saviour Christ. "Christ is the new Pascha, the living sacrificial Victim, the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world" (Megalyrnarion 3, Ode 9 of Easter Sunday), the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

After this, Jesus finds him [the paralytic man] in the sanctuary and says to him: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14). Commenting on this speech of Jesus, Saint Cyril says: with these words, Jesus teaches that God not only stores up people's faults for the future judgment, but also that He scourges people in different ways, in so far as they are in life physically before the great and famous day of the judgment of all things. The wise Paul will testify that we are often afflicted, and tested when we sin and grieve God. "For this cause, many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11, 30-32).

With His words, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14), Jesus pointed out to the healed and recovering Paralytic the great danger that relapse entails, that is, the return to the sinful life or better said, the repetition of the transgressions of sin, which brought about the physical and mental, but also the incurable paralysis. Sins, my beloved brothers and sisters, are forgiven, as long as the person's repentance is sincere. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise", (Ps. 51, 19), the psalmist says. However, the scars of sin remain in the soul, just as they remain in the body after the wounds have been healed, as the great Father of the Church Athanasios says: "he who repents of his sins ceases [to sin], he [nevertheless] has the scars of his wounds", for this reason, Saint Isidore of Pelusion also points out this truth by saying: after your repentance and confession, do not proceed without fear/fear to sin. Because, even if you are healed again, the scar shows that some passion wounded the soul.

In other words, after the relapse, the soul hardens and

repentance becomes very difficult, as Saint Theophilaktos interprets: "He who does not improve by the previous punishment will go to hell as an insensible and scorner". [He who has not improved himself from the previous punishment is led to worse hells as an insensible and a scorner]. Therefore, my beloved brothers, let us beseech the Lord our God who raised the dead of old and after the hymnographer let us say: "Even as Thou didst raise up the paralytic, O Christ, heal my soul which is palsied by transgressions, and prosper me to walk in Thine upright paths" (Matins, Ode 5, Troparion 10). Amen. Christ is Risen!"

His Beatitude addressed also those present in the reception as follows:

"Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1, 11-14), Saint Paul preaches.

Reverend Fathers,

Honorable President and honorable members of the Ecclesiastical Council,

Beloved brothers in Christ,

Today's Easter Synaxis with you fills our hearts with joy and gladness. And this, because we discern that although we are numerically few, steadfast in God, who delivered us from the power of darkness" (Col. 1:13), you have the hope of the light of the Resurrection.

Our holy Church of Jerusalem, the source of the eternal light of the three-day Resurrection of Christ and our Saviour, but

also the mother of the Churches, preaches and denounces Christ crucified and Risen not only evangelically and spiritually, but emotionally and physically. " That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life", (1 John. 1,1) according to the testimony of Saint John the Evangelist and Theologian.

The Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, that is, the Church of Jerusalem, is the body of Christ, while we, both clergy and the people, are the members of His body and the "remnant chosen by grace" (Romans 11, 5).

And this "remnant chosen by grace", is no other than the faithful people of God, who confess to the Kingdom of the Son of love, peace, and righteousness. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4, 16). Saint James the Brother of God says regarding Job's patience: "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5, 11).

It is precisely this infinite love, philanthropy, and compassion that our holy Church proclaims, through the feast of the memory of the miracle of the paralytic man found in the sheep's pool, who had his disease for thirty-eight years. (Cf. 3, 15).

The whole world and especially our region of the Middle East and the Gaza Strip, my beloved brothers, is being tested by the cruelty and the deadly poison of war and its consuming fire (Cf. Heb. 12-29). This is due to the arrogance of people's lives (Cf. 1 John 2-16), but also to sin, as Saint John the Theologian preaches saying: " Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John. 3,4) This is why the physician of our souls and bodies, the Lord Jesus Christ, says to the paralytic: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a

worse thing come unto thee.” (John 5, 14).

And we, my beloved brothers, are called to walk in the light of Christ, in Him in whom we believe, “so that darkness may not overtake us”, (John 12, 35). Christ is Risen. Many and peaceful returns.

Then His Beatitude bestowed upon the Community of Reine the beautiful icon of the Theotokos for the protection of their parish.

After this, His Beatitude consecrated the new centre of the Community, which was founded on the ground the Patriarchate had bought, which was called “Makar Rum”, that is, “the Hearth of Romiosyni”.

From Secretariat-General

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VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE

On Thursday, May 10 / 23, 2024, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos received:

1. Mr Ode Kawas, inspector of the Arabic Schools of the Patriarchate.
2. The ministering Priest of the Community of Yaffo Fr Konstanti.
3. A group of representatives of the Middle East Churches for Peace organization.

4. The director of the Schmidt German School in Jerusalem Mr Dietrich Bäumer with a group of teachers and students of the School. This meeting was held under the supervision of the German archaeologist Professor Dieter Vieweger, who carried out archaeological work on the hill of Holy Zion.

From Secretariat-General

VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE

On Wednesday, May 9/22, 2024, His Beatitude received the Ambassador of Moldavia to Israel Mr Alexander Roitman.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE MYRRH-BEARERS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

Sunday, May 6/19, 2024, was celebrated as the Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing women in the Patriarchate.

A'. In Ramle, ancient Arimathaea

Joseph was descended from there, who also bears the name, "Joseph of Arimathaea". Because of this, the Holy Evangelists tell us that he "came to Pilate" and "he took the body of Jesus" and buried it after the Myrrh-bearing women in the

monument “near Golgotha”.

For the memory of the Lord’s burial under the Myrrh-bearing women and Joseph of Arimathaea and for the memory of the announcement to the myrrh-bearers that the Lord had indeed risen, His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos celebrated the Divine Liturgy, right after His reception by the teachers and male and female students of the Catechetical School of the Patriarchate in Ramle in the Holy Church of Saint George of the Patriarchate. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, the Archbishops, Damascene of Yaffo, Aristarchos of Constantina, Isidoros of Hierapolis, and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Archimandrites, Ieronymos, Marcellus and Christodoulos, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The feast was held under the supervision of the Hegoumen and renovator of the Monastery, Archimandrite Nifon. It was attended by the faithful Christians of Ramle and its district, the teachers and students of the Patriarchate’s School in Ramle, Nuns and other faithful from Jerusalem, as well as the Ambassador of Greece to Israel Mr Kyriakos Loukakis and the military Attachés of the Embassy, and the President of the Community Council of Ramle.

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

“When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus’ disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered” (Matt. 27,57-58) the Evangelist Matthew writes.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians,

The Grace of the Risen God and our Saviour Christ guided our journey to your city, the holy city of Arimathaea, from which the hidden disciple Joseph came, so that we may celebrate his feast after Nicodemus, the night disciple of Christ, as well as the feast of the myrrh-bearing women.

Today's Sunday, the third after Easter, is called the Sunday of the myrrh-bearing women in honour of the brave and devoted women who, as the Evangelist Luke reports, "followed him (Jesus) from Galilee" until He was buried and remained faithful to the teaching of the One who came to the tomb, so that the body of Jesus could be anointed with myrrh, defying every danger. For they were the first to hear from the shining angel: "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you" (Matthew 28:5-7).

Then they heard this "Rejoice" from the Risen Jesus, who met them. "And those who came to him held his feet and worshipped him" (Matthew 28:9).

Interpreting the above words, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: that the female race benefited because it received the solution of reproach and the abolition of the curse. Because the One who told the woman in the past that she would bear her children in sorrows, now He says to the women "Rejoice" when they met in the garden of the sepulchre.

Zigavinos says: "The myrrh-bearing women, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, that is, the Virgin Mary, held the feet of Jesus out of desire and honour. And Jesus did not dissuade them (=he did not prevent) them, providing they were informed (=giving them the certainty) through the message that Jesus is not a spectre, (i.e. a ghost)".

In other words, the myrrh-bearing women showed in a way that “their weak nature conquered that of men” and thus became the first true eye-witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ, as the hymnographer says: “The Myrrh-bearers, coming early in the morning, and beholding the sepulchre empty, said unto the Apostles: He that is mighty hath destroyed corruption, and hath seized from their bonds those in Hades; proclaim ye with boldness that Christ God is risen, granting us great mercy” (Matins, Kathisma 3).

The hidden disciples of Christ, Joseph and Nicodemus, were shown to be the accomplices of the Myrrh-bearing women, who also demonstrated their devotion and manliness, “Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid” (John 19, 40-41)

Interpreting these Gospel words, Saints Theophylactos and Chrysostomos say: “They are not burying [Jesus] like a convict, but luxuriously”, as “someone great and wonderful”. Saint Cyril of Alexandria points out: the newness of the monument means the foreign and illusory way, so to speak, of the return from death to life and innovation (=renewal), which Christ designed to deal with decay. Our death becomes new in Christ’s death, transforming into a kind of sleep, with similar power and (physical) function. As far as we live in the future, now we are alive in God, according to the scriptures (Cf. Rom. 14, 8). This is why the blessed Paul everywhere refers to those who have died as “sleeping” (Cf. 1 Cor. 15, 20/15, 51).

According to Saint Gregory the Palamas, the resurrection of the Lord is a renewal of human nature, it is a revival and regeneration and a return to the immortal life of the first Adam, who was swallowed up by death because of sin and through death returned to the earth from which he was made.

Both the Myrrh-bearing women and the hidden disciples of Jesus did not understand the great and unique and unrepeatable event of the Resurrection of Christ, the transition, albeit of our human nature, from the depths of Hades to the all-light and divine and heavenly height. "They didn't even recognize that most blessed Saturday, which marked our transition from the depths of Hades to the full of light divine heavenly height", Saint Gregory Palamas says.

This is why the Church of Christ especially honours the memory of the holy Myrrh-bearers as well as of the hidden Disciples of Christ. Because all those people, who participated in the burial of Jesus Christ who died on the Cross, testified in their simplicity, as St. John the Theologian says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life", (1 John 1, 1).

And we, my beloved brothers, who confess and expect the Resurrection of the dead, imitating the Holy Myrrh-bearing women and the hidden disciples, let us say: "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)".

After the dismissal, a litany took place, three times around the Holy Church, followed by a reception at the Hall, in which the Hegoumen Archimandrite Nifon addressed those present, analyzing the activity of the parish and thanking His Beatitude for His support. The male and female students of the Catechetical School under the guidance of their teacher Mrs Virginia sang the Paschal hymns in Greek and Arabic.

At noon, a meal was offered, with the Ambassador Mr Loukakis, the Mayor of the city, the President of the Community Council, the Commissioners, and many people present. His Beatitude addressed them again with the following address:

“In Thy Cross, Thou didst abolish the curse of the tree; by Thy burial, Thou hast slain the dominion of death; and by Thine arising, Thou hast enlightened the race of man. Wherefore, we cry out to Thee; O Benefactor, Christ our God, glory be to Thee” (Great Vespers, Anatolian Stichera 2), the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Dear President and honourable members of the Community Committee,

This holy day of the great and holy Easter, the Resurrection of Christ, constitutes the foundation and the crown of our saving faith, as Saint Paul clearly says: “And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain” (1 Cor. 15,14,17).

The Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, that is, the holy Church of Jerusalem, to which the Lord entrusted the good legacy, the Apostolic declaration of tradition and faith, preserves it through the centuries intact and sanctified from one person to another, through the Holy Spirit that dwells in it, on the other hand, through its holy persons, as today’s honoured Joseph and Nicodemus, the hidden disciples of Christ in your ancient biblical town of Arimathea.

We say this because the little flock (Luke 12:32) of Arimathaea / Ramle, continues to keep the flame of the Christian faith burning, but also of the eternal light of the Resurrection of God and our Saviour Christ. “For God is light, and in him there is no darkness... he who loves his brother abides in the light, but he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and he has nowhere to go” (1 John 1,5-2,11).

We also celebrate this unattainable light of Christ’s love on the holy day of Easter. This is precisely the mission of the

Church and the Church of Jerusalem, in the world and our war-tested region.

The Resurrection of Christ, my beloved brothers, is true and life-giving. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is "the one who regenerated us to hope of life through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1,3) the Apostle Peter preaches.

We, clergy and people, lived this experience of rebirth in hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we live as guardians and ministers of the Life-giving Tomb of our Savior Christ, but also faithful shepherds of our Christian flock, of the acknowledged people of Christ. Christ is Risen!"

The celebration ended with refreshments being offered at the Rectory by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Nifon and Nun Fevronia.

B'. In the chapel of the Myrrh-bearers next to the Cathedral of Saint James the Brother of God in Jerusalem.

In this chapel, adjacent to the Holy Church of Saint James the Brother of God, a Divine Liturgy was celebrated, presided over by His Eminence, Archbishop Theophanes of Gerrash, and concelebrated by Archimandrite Philoumenos, the ministering Priest of the Cathedral, Fr George Baramki and Hierodeacon Simeon, under the chanting of Fr Ioannis Antoniou and the students of the Patriarchal School of Zion in Greek and the choir of the Cathedral under Mr Rimon Kamar in Arabic.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Archpriest, the Priests, and the people went to the assembly centre of the parish "Ounjout-Hypostasis".

The President of the Trustees, Mr Ibrahim Salfiti, then spoke, analyzing the activity of the parish of the Cathedral of Saint James in general, and the representative of the "Myrrh-bearing Women", Mrs Arlet, about the activity of the "Myrrh-bearing Women" Organization.

From Secretariat-General

VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE

18-05-2024

On Saturday, May 5/18, 2024, His Beatitude accepted:

1. A twenty-seven-member group of believers from the city of Pkea, (Biblical Pkeen) in Northern Israel under their priest Father Elias, who paid their respects and their festive Easter greetings.
2. A group of forty members from the nearby Nazareth parish of René under their priest Fr Samaan, so that they too could pay their respects and invite His Beatitude for their feast on the Sunday of the Paralytic man.



3. A thirty-member group of the Russian-speaking Community of the Patriarchate in the city of Beer Sheba in South Israel under the head of the Russian-speaking faithful of the Patriarchate His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos and the priest of the parish of Beer Sheva Father Alexander, who paid their respects and their festive greetings on the feast of Easter. They also sang paschal hymns in different languages to the joy of His Beatitude and all the listeners.



4. Mrs Maria Zozonaki, who represents the European Public Law Organization, with Mr. Francesco Totaro, European Investment Bank Representative for the West Bank and Gaza, and Mr. Giorgio Pasqualucchi, Head of Finances, Contracts and Audit Section at EU Delegation, visited the Patriarch of Jerusalem.
5. A thirty-member group of believers from the city of Turan in Northern Israel under their priest Fr Nektarios Raja, to pay their respects on the Easter holiday.



From Secretariat-General

VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE (16-05-2024)

On Thursday, May 3/16, 2024, His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos received visitors on the feast of Holy Easter:

1. The Director of the School of Saint Dimitrios, Mr Samir Zananiri, with some teachers.

2. The Apostolic Delegate – Nuncio, i.e. representative of the Vatican in the Holy Land Archbishop Adolfo Tito Yllana.
3. Members of our Orthodox Flock and the representative of the Community of Jerusalem, Mr George Varakla.

From Secretariat-General