

# VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE

## 17-05-2024

On Wednesday, May 4 / 17, 2024, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos accepted:

1. The representation of the Scouts of Jerusalem who expressed their wishes for the Easter holiday and requested help for their activities.
2. A group of pilgrims from the Czech Republic.
3. Members of the Arabic-speaking Orthodox flock of the Patriarchate.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THOMAS' SUNDAY IN CANA OF GALILEE

The Feast of the Touching of Thomas was celebrated in Cana of Galilee, on the morning of the Sunday of Thomas, on April 29/May 12, 2024, with a festive reception by the Scouts and the Community, followed by a Divine Liturgy, which was officiated by His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks with the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios first in rank, Priest from Cana district, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The service was attended by many faithful people of Cana and the honourable presence of the

Ambassador of Greece to Israel Mr Kyriakos Loukakis and the Ambassador of Russia to Israel Mr Anatoly Viktorov.

His Beatitude delivered the following sermon to this congregation:

“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him” (John 2,11) Saint John the Evangelist says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Devout Christians and pilgrims

The life from the grave, that is, the risen Christ from the grave, our God, brought us all together today in this Biblical place of Cana of Galilee, to celebrate “the beginning of the signs, which Jesus wrought here” and the touching of the Holy Apostle Thomas.

As much as the emerging sign of the change of water into wine in the presence of Jesus and His Mother in the Marriage herein, as the touching of the side of the resurrected Christ by the Apostle Thomas, which was pierced by the soldiers on His Cross is one of these many signs, i.e. miracles, which our Lord Jesus Christ performed in the presence of His disciples.

And this, so that firstly His glory may be revealed and secondly, that people may believe in Him, as Saint John the Theologian orders in his Gospel saying: ” But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31).

According to Saint Cyril of Alexandria, Jesus Christ is “not just a son, but the Son of God uniquely and especially”. This is what Saint Cyril says, invoking Christ: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him

that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (John 5, 24-26).

This means that the Son of God, that is, Christ, is a perfect God, as Saint Cyril of Alexandria also interprets, saying: "For since the Only Begotten is life by nature and partaker of the life to come, it is needless to say that He has the power to vivify just as the Father does".

The resurrected Christ, my beloved brothers, is the New Adam, who redeems the New Eve on the Cross with His precious blood but also with the water that flowed from His pierced side (Cf. John 19:34). The blood and water symbolize the mysteries of the Church, but also the love of the bridegroom for his bride. "Husbands love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25), Saint Paul preaches.

We, being members of the Church, which is the Body of Christ, have learned that we are also members of the Body of Christ. In other words, the relationship between God and man in the person of Christ is the relationship and union of Marriage. The foundation and the unifying force of Marriage is the perfect love, the love that is revealed in Christ, which "does not seek its own things and never falls away", (Cf. 1 Cor. 13, 4-8).

Precisely this infinite philanthropy, that is, the love of God, lifted His Son up on the Cross and brought him down to Hades, in order to free and heal the great wound, the man, as Saint John of Damascus writes: "Thou camest to Thy Disciples, O Christ, while the doors were shut. Then, by dispensation, Thomas was not to be found among them; for he said: I will not believe except I also behold the Master, and see the side

whence there issued the blood, the water, the baptism, and see the wound through which man, the great wound, was healed" (Vespers, Glory).

It is noteworthy that by touching Christ's side, the faithless Thomas became a sharer and partaker of the "sweet mystical communication of the soul between the visible and invisible worlds of His fiery glory", that is, of the brilliant glory of Christ's Resurrection. We too, my beloved brothers, the approved people of the Church, the bride of Christ, enjoy this sweet mystical communication of the soul between the visible and invisible worlds of the Resurrection of Christ, in the mystery of the secret blessing, that is, of the Divine Eucharist, as Saint Cyril of Alexandria teaches, saying: "Christ descends and appears to all of you both invisibly and visibly; invisibly as God, visibly and again in the body. He also allows and gives His holy flesh to be touched. Let us, therefore, draw nigh by the grace of God to the mystical communication of the soul between the visible and invisible worlds, receiving Christ in our hands, so that we also may believe, as we should, that He truly raised His own temple."

Through the presence of Him with His mother, Mary the Mother of God, in the wedding in Cana, Christ sanctified marriage on the one hand and freed the woman from the curse, on the other. "Marriage [in Cana] is sanctified because it is honest, so the curse against the woman is gone; the children are no more born in sorrow, and this is the beginning of our birth, which was blessed by Christ", Saint Cyril of Alexandria says.

And through the secret blessing of the mystery, namely the divine Eucharist, we participate in the mystical, spiritual Marriage of the Bridegroom Christ and the bride Church, that is, of humanity. "The marriage is solemnized on the third day, that is, at the end of the present times", says Saint Cyril again, invoking Saint John the Theologian, who writes in his book of Revelation: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his

wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God" (Revelation 19, 7-9).

"The marriage supper of the lamb", my beloved ones, is none other than the kingdom of heaven, about which the Lord commands: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Mt. 6, 33). Let us also say along with the hymnographer on this glorious Easter day: "O great and most sacred Pascha, Christ; O Wisdom and Word and Power of God! Grant us that we partake of Thee fully in the unwaning day of Thy Kingdom" (Canon of Pascha, Ode 9). Amen. Christ is Risen!"

A litany followed three times around the Holy Church, the advance of the Scouts and the widespread participation of the people.

At noon, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Benediktos, the Council and the congregation of Cana hosted a meal for His Beatitude, to which the Commissioners of the Community of Cana and the Russian Ambassador to Israel Mr Anatoly Viktorov and the representative of the Greek Embassy in Tel Aviv, Mr Mavroidis addressed His Beatitude.

After the meal, His Beatitude inaugurated the opening of a housing complex erected by the Community of Cana on a dedicated plot of land belonging to the Patriarchate. At this ceremony, His Beatitude spoke with the following address:

"And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands" (Hebrews 1:10).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Dear President and Honourable members of the Ecclesiastical

Committee,

Our Lord Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, called us all to celebrate with thanksgiving the inauguration of Christ's Resurrection, as well as the touching of the Holy Apostle Thomas in your holy city of Cana in Galilee, where the Lord sanctified the marriage through His presence, with His Mother, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.

True witnesses of this event are not only the Apostles and Evangelists but also the Rum Orthodox Christians living here throughout the centuries, who are the blessed Christ-named congregation of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, that is, the Mother of the Churches, founded on the blood of the cross of its founder; "for nothing else can be a foundation than what is laid, which is Jesus Christ", Saint Paul preaches.

We rejoice and in this "divine zeal and willingness of you, the young Trustees of our local Church, we boast" (Cf. 2 Cor. 9,1). We say this because the new generation, despite the difficulties it faces in its daily life, is distinguished by its zealous devotion to the traditions of the Church and especially by its selfless love for the land of its ancestors and progenitors.

We rejoice because today, with the laying of the foundation of this stone, a good and socially beneficial work is being inaugurated, a work demonstrating the concern of the Mother for her children, of the Church, that is, of Jerusalem for the members of her body, so that according to Paul "there should be no schism in the body, but let the members take care of this for each other" (1 Cor. 12:23).

We wish you success in this good work and every good initiative of yours to the glory of God and the praise of His Holy Church. And this is because, according to the voice of the wise Paul, " For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" (1 Cor. 3, 9).

Christ is Risen!"

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR GEORGE THE TROPHY- BEARER IN ACRE**

On Saturday, April 28th / May 11th, 2024, the Feast of the Great Martyr George the Trophy Bearer was celebrated with transfer by the Patriarchate in Acre, a city in northern Israel, ancient Ptolemais.

During this holiday, the commemoration day of the martyrdom of Saint George the Trophy Bearer, a reception was held for our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theofilos under the Acre Community, that is, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Silouanos, the Boy Scout Corps, the President of the Community Mr Fuad Break, the Commissioners of the Community and believers from other Communities of the area of jurisdiction of Acre.

Matins and the Divine Liturgy were officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Patriarchal Representative in Acre, Archimandrite Silouanos, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Archimandrites Meletios, Artemios, Nikon from MISSIA, other local priests, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by the Acre Byzantine choir which was founded by the late Archimandrite Philotheos. The Liturgy was

attended by the Ambassador of Greece to Israel Mr Kyriakos Loukakis, the representative of the Ministry of Interior of Israel Mr Caezar Marjieh and many faithful, in reverence and Paschal joy.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Behold, the spring-tide season of grace is arisen; upon all men there shineth our Christ’s Resurrection, and with it now shineth forth the bright-beaming, all festive day of the valiant George, the trophy-bearer and Martyr. Come ye all let us with divinely-bright vesture exultantly celebrate” (Minaion, April 23, Matins, Kathisma 1).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians,

The grace of the Holy Glorious Great Martyr George the Trophy Bearer, brought us all together on this Easter day in his Church in Acre / Ptolemais, to celebrate his sacred memory.

Saint George, who excelled as a military officer during the time of the Roman Emperor Diocletian, proved himself to be a faithful witness, that is, a faithful follower and disciple of Christ, always listening to the word of Him saying: “ Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also” (John 15:20).

Interpreting these words of the Lord, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: “This is as if he [Christ] said I, Who am the Creator of all and have under my control all things in heaven and on earth, I did not restrain the anger of my hearers, nor restrained the feeling, their emotion as if it were an insult



to me. Rather, I allowed them to choose what seemed right to them and to do whatever they wished... So, when you are persecuted, endure for a moment the repulsion/loathing of those who hate you... following my own Providence and pursue with Me the like purposes, so that you may share in the same glory. And this is because those who suffer with me they will also reign [with Me]”.

The words of the Lord, “If they have persecuted me they will persecute you”, (John 15, 20), constitute His “Providence”, which is formulated in another declaration of Christ saying: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24).

In this teaching of the Lord, the “preference” of the person who wants to follow Christ is distinguished and underlined, as Saint Chrysostom says, interpreting this: “I am not in a hurry, I am not forcing, but I am giving each person his own choice” and more specifically: “I am not obliging neither do I force, but I make everyone, who is master of his own free will, says the Lord”. According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa, “This is the free choice, a free word of action and an autonomous in the freedom of the mind”.

It was precisely this free choice, that is, the divine zeal, which he had in his heart, that led Saint George to become an imitator of our Savior Christ’s martyrdom, listening to the prophetic command of Isaiah: “Be my witnesses and I am a witness, says the Lord God... before me there was no other God, and with me he is not” (Is. 43,10). The hymnographer of the Church exclaims: “In his longing for Christ the King, Who laid down His life for the life of the world, this soldier, the great George, strove diligently to die for His sake; for having divine zeal in his heart, he offered himself up. Let us therefore faithfully sing his praise as our fervent protector, as Christ’s glorious servant, who verily imitated his own Master, and who asketh Him to grant all the forgiveness of trespasses” (Minaion, April 23, Oikos).

The glorious George is distinguished among the cloud of martyrs of the Church because he excelled as a superior official over the Roman Emperor Diocletian, who declared a harsh persecution of Christians, he did not hesitate to declare himself a Christian, but also to go against the vanity and disease of idols and to those believing in them.

In other words, the wonderful George martyred with his own blood for the truth of Christ, who, at the time of His condemnation before Pilate, said: "I was born into this and I was born into this world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice" (John 18,37).

This confession of Christ clearly demonstrated the ultimate purpose of divine revelation, that is, God's intervention in human history in the person of the Son and His Word. This fact is none other than the mystery of piety, that is, of the divine Providence, as Paul preaches: "The mystery of piety is indeed great; God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, was seen by the angels, proclaimed to the nations, believed in the world, was taken up in glory".

The blessed George showed himself as a faithful witness of the mystery of piety, as the hymnographer expresses this saying: "Having been cultivated well by the Lord God, as the most honoured cultivator of piety thou hast now gathered sheaves of virtues for thyself; for as thou didst sow with tears, thou dost reap with rejoicing; with thy blood didst thou contest and thou now hast received Christ" (Kontakion).

Indeed, my beloved brothers, the great athlete George showed himself to be of true piety, of the faith of Christ, an honourable farmer, for he also reigns in heaven with the King of Powers. "The righteous to eternal life... for this they receive the kingdom of decency and the diadem of beauty from the hand of the Lord", (Soph. Solomon 5,15-16). "God tried

[George] like gold in a crucible and accepted him as the whole fruit of a sacrifice", according to the wisdom of the Wise Solomon, (Soph. Sol 3,6).

We, my dear ones, who at Easter honour the holy memory of the Holy Great Martyr and Trophy Bearer, are called to imitate his desire and divine zeal and beseech him with the intercessions of the all-holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, that we may partake of the unweaning light of the Resurrection of our Saviour Christ.

After the psalmist we say: " O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill and to thy tabernacles" (Cf. Psalm 42,3) where Your glorious Martyr George came. Amen. Christ is Risen."

After the Divine Liturgy, a treat was served in the reception hall in the presence of the Mayor of the city of Acre, its Sheikh and the President of the Acre Community, Mr Fuad Break. Afterwards, His Beatitude blessed the renovated hall of the Ecclesiastical Court of Acre.

In the end, a meal was hosted by the Community and the Hegoumen Fr Silouanos, and His Beatitude addressed again those present with the following address:

"Behold, the spring-tide season of grace is arisen; upon all men there shineth our Christ's Resurrection, and with it now shineth forth the bright-beaming, all festive day of the brave George, the trophy-bearer and Martyr. Come ye all let us with divinely-bright vesture exultantly celebrate" (Minaion, April 23, Matins, Kathisma 1).

Dear Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Dear Father Silouanos, our Patriarchal Representative in Acre,

Honourable President of the Ecclesiastical Council, Mr Fuad Break,

and Respected members of the Community,

Today's Paschal feast is an irrefutable testimony, on the one hand, of our faith in the crucified and risen Christ, and on the other hand, of the undivided and active presence of the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and its Christian flock in the Holy Land in general, and the city of Jerusalem in particular.

This Christian presence and witness throughout the centuries is due first and foremost to the preaching of the Gospel: "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16), but also to the Lord's command to His disciples: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14, 27).

These evangelical words inspired today's honoured Saint George the Trophy Bearer, who, imitating Christ's passion on the cross, was a co-martyr of His blood, as his hymnographer says: "Cultivation with all care the saving seed of God's commands, thou didst piously disperse all thy riches to the poor and in return didst acquire Christ's eternal glory. Then boldly wentest thou to conflicts with the foe and unheard-of pains, O glorious Martyr George; and as a sharer in the Passion and Rising of the Dispassionate, thou sharest also now in his Kingdom, praying for us in fervour" (Matins, Kathisma 3).

This double celebration of the Resurrection, namely of our Lord and God and Saviour Christ, as well as of the memory of the Holy Great Martyr George, the actual co-minister of the Holy Angels in the heavenly glorification of God, provides us amid the trials of our region the living hope of faith in the God of love and peace.

Therefore, we have prayed to the Holy God, by the

intercessions of Saint George and the most blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, saying after the Holy Martyr and Apostle Peter: " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1,3) Amen. Christ is Risen".

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE (9-5-2024)**

On Thursday, April 26 / May 9, 2024, His Beatitude received:

A'. The people who keep the keys of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in addition to the Patriarchate, with professors of the University of Jerusalem.

B'. His Beatitude inaugurated the meeting of the Presidents of the Ecclesiastical Courts of the Patriarchate on regular matters at the Notre Dame hotel.

C'. He received the Ambassador of Jordan to Israel Mr Esam Albdoor.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# VISITS OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES ON THE CELEBRATION OF EASTER DAY

On Tuesday, April 24/May 7, 2024, the Christian Churches of Jerusalem visited the Patriarchate on the feast of Easter.

1. A) The Franciscan Confraternity – Custody of the Holy Land visited under their Deputy Abbot Fr Ibrahim Faltas.  
B) All the Christian Churches visited, that is, the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem under the Latin Patriarch Pierre Battista Pizzaballa, the Coptic Church, the Syrian Church, the Ethiopian Church, the Lutheran Church under its Bishop Mr Sani Azar, the Anglican Church under its Bishop Husan Naum and other Churches. Also in this meeting, the importance of Christian cooperation for the proper Christian witness in the Holy Land was duly underlined, and in fact at a time of a war in the Holy Land that was in full swing.
2. C) At 11:00 am on this day, the priests of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem visited our Patriarchate under the Representative of the Patriarch His Eminence Mr Gurion. In this visit, the importance of a sincere cooperation for the protection of the pilgrimage rights of the Christian Communities in the Holy Land was duly emphasized.
3. D) On Wednesday, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem under His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos returned the Armenians' visit to their Patriarchate in Jerusalem.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# MESSAGE OF H.H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III FOR THE FEAST OF PASCHA 2024

THEOPHILOS III

By the Mercy of God, Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem  
and all Palestine,

to all the Church members, grace, mercy, and peace from the  
All-Holy and Life-giving Tome of the Risen Christ.

*“This is a day of festival: at the Awakening of Christ,*

*death has fled away and the light of life has dawned;*

*Adam has risen and dances for joy.*

*Therefore, let us cry aloud and sing a song of victory”*

(Sunday of the Adoration of the Cross, Troparion 1, Ode 1)

Today, the Church of Christ proclaims the gospel of unspeakable joy to the world. It proclaims to the ends of the earth the Resurrection of its Founder and our Saviour Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, the Crucified. Jesus Christ the Son and Word of God, made Incarnate of the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin, born in the flesh and seen on earth. To him who received our human flesh in one hypostasis, the Humanity, and in two natures, the Divine and the human, and was acquainted with us human beings. He taught us ways of repentance, living in peace, solidarity and love, even towards our enemies. He

healed the infirm and the incurable sick and raised the dead. He loved us humans to the end and willingly submitted Himself to death for us, even the death of a dishonourable cross. He shed His divine blood for the forgiveness of our sins. He offered himself a living sacrifice, redeeming and pleasing to God.

Having been crucified by Pontius Pilate and buried, He also went to those in Hades, to those who had died for ages and were held by the devil. He also included these in His saving redemptive work, *"which the Father had given Him to do"* (Jn. 17, 4). These *"were first received by the divine economy beheaded John the Forerunner, who had prepared them for repentance"*. The Lord Jesus Christ, who descended to Hades for three days, also preached to them. Those who believed in Him, He saved from Hades, from the torment of eternal hell. Condescending to them, He resurrected and granted them eternal life saying, *"enter again into Paradise"*. In the completion of this work, Hades had no power over Him. He couldn't keep Him. Hades thought that he had found a man, but encountered God. By the power of the Father and by His self-given divine power, Jesus Christ, the Lord, crushed eternal levers, crushed the locks of death and autonomously *"raised from the dead and resurrected Adam with an almighty hand"*.

The Resurrection of Christ from the dead, that is, His victory against death, does the Church celebrate with joy, singing: *"O life-giving Lord, after Thy dread Resurrection, as Thou brakest not the seals of the Tomb, so when the doors had been shut fast, Thou didst likewise enter and while bringing joy of heart to Thine all-famed Apostles didst grant Thine upright Spirit unto them for the sake of Thine immeasurable and great mercy"* (Thomas' Sunday, Matins, Praises, Troparion 1). This Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, initiated, that is, Christ *"infused"* into His disciples on the first day of the Resurrection, saying, *"Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them "* (John 20,



22). Nevertheless, He transmitted it as well in all His appearances after His resurrection *“by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God”* (Acts 1,3), *“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight”* (Acts 1, 9).

Ascended gloriously into the heavens, Jesus Christ sat down at the right hand of the Father and *“deifying the flesh which He assumed”, He “did not leave His disciples orphans”* (Jn. 14, 18), but sent them instead, from the Father, as it was promised, *“another Comforter”* (John 14:16), the Spirit of truth. He sent the Holy Spirit *“on the day of Pentecost in a sound like a violent breath”* and in divided tongues like fire, which sat on each one of them (Acts 2, 1-3). Through the Holy Spirit, He enlightened and strengthened them and they became fervent heralds of the Cross and of His Resurrection. *“He made the fishermen wise”* and through them *“enchanted the world”*. Through their preaching, they *“planted”* the Church in all the earth until its end, against which, as promised, *“the gates of Hades shall not prevail”* (Matthew 16:18).

To this, as the manifestation of His kingdom on earth, He assigned the work of Evangelism, that is, the ministry of evangelism, to the Father's pleasure, because as the apostle of the nations says, *“God was in Christ, calling the world to Himself”* (2 Cor. 5, 19) *“and because in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”* (Col. 2, 9).

This work of reconciliation is performed by His Body, the Church, through the centuries throughout the world. The Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of the Churches, *“the first to receive remission of sins through the Resurrection”*, does this in the places on earth where Christ appeared in the flesh. To them, both near and afar, peace is preached, especially in these difficult times of war raging in the world and destroying not only property and residence but also human

life.

From these places, namely from the Holy and Life-giving Tomb, from where the light of life arose and where the Paschal Resurrection Divine Liturgy is celebrated, the Church of Jerusalem appeals for the cessation of all hostilities, primarily to Gaza, the entire Holy Land and the Middle East. It also appeals for the unity of the Orthodox Churches in the bond of peace and for its unifying testimony to the suffering world, anxiously awaiting for this.

None the least, to its flock in all its normal jurisdiction, Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian state, Qatar and the pilgrims all over the world, it addresses the Easter greeting "Christ is risen" and the triumphant speech of the Saviour, "*Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33).

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, PASCHA 2024

Fervent supplicant for all before God,

**THEOPHILOS III**

**Patriarch of Jerusalem**

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# **THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS AT THE HOLY MONASTERY OF MARTHA AND MARY IN BETHANY**

On Saturday, April 27/14, 2023, a Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos in the Holy Monastery of Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus in Bethany. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolias, and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina. The

chanting was delivered by Mr Eustathios Tsoumanis and Monk Joseph from Mount Athos, as the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos and the Consul Mrs Anna Mantika, many local faithful and some pilgrims.

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

“O Lord Thy voice destroyed the dominion of hell, and the word of Thy power raised from the tomb him that had been four days dead; and Lazarus became the saving first-fruits of the regeneration of the world” (Friday Vespers, stichera of the Saint), the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of our God and Saviour Christ, has gathered us all in this town of Bethany, where Lazarus was born, and in this place where Lazarus' sister Martha met Jesus, to celebrate the raising from the dead of the holy, righteous friend of Christ, Lazarus, who was four days dead.

According to the true testimony of Saint John the Evangelist, Martha said to Jesus: “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” (John 11,21). “Jesus said unto her, 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).

In interpreting Christ's words, Saint Augustine says: “The one who believes in Christ will die due to the death of the flesh, but will never die due to the life of the spirit and immortality and resurrection”. Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: “The one that believes in Him [Christ], will have endless life in the ages to come, full of beatitude and incorruption”.

According to the hymnographer of the Church, Christ, along with His disciples, went from the place beyond the River Jordan to Bethany, where His friend Lazarus had died, to certify the abstract energy and power of His divinity. "As true God Thou hast known of the falling asleep of Lazarus and hast announced it beforehand to Thy disciples, giving them proof, O Master, of the infinite power of Thy divinity" (Mattins, Ode 6, Troparion 4), the hymnographer exclaims. Moreover, to confirm before His Passion, the general resurrection. "Giving us before Thy Passion an assurance of the general resurrection, Thou hast raised Lazarus from the dead" (Apolytikion), the hymnographer exclaims again.

Because the redeeming Passion of Christ on the Cross was approaching, He shook the power of the death through the resurrection of Lazarus who had been four days dead. He also foretold His three-day burial and His resurrection.

So, we cannot but wonder; What does the "general resurrection" mean? The general resurrection is the resurrection of our Saviour Christ. The resurrection of the God-man Christ refers to the human flesh that He received from the pure flesh of the Theotokos Mary through the Holy Spirit. In other words, the general resurrection of Christ means the freedom of all men from the corruption of sin.

It is noteworthy that the "freedom of all men from corruption" should not be interpreted morally or metaphysically, but as a true fact, given that man's death is an undeniable truth.

Through the loud voice of Christ "Lazarus come forth!" (John 11,43), the life-giving power and the mission of the Son of Man are declared, as He assured the faithful, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5,24).

This transition from death to life was declared by the

resurrection of Lazarus, who, according to Saint Andrew of Crete, “became the first fruits of the regeneration”, that is, of Christ’s resurrection.

Today, my dearly beloved, being in Bethany and foretasting the General Resurrection of our Saviour Christ, the Victor over death, let us say along with the hymnographer; By the prayers of the Most Pure Theotokos and the intercessions of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, grant us O Lord to see Your Passion on the Cross and Your glorious Resurrection, O friend of man. Many happy returns, and a Happy Easter. Amen”.

A procession around the Monastery followed before the end of the service. Then the elderly Abbess Eupraxia hosted a modest reception in the rectory, with the Mayor of the Municipality of Bethany as the guest of honour.

The procession to the tomb of Lazarus followed, led by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolias, where the Gospel narrative according to Saint John on the resurrection of Lazarus was read. The feast concluded with the return to the Patriarchate Headquarters.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE**

## **24-04-2024**

On Wednesday, April 11th / 24th 2024, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos accepted:

1. The Architect of the Church of the Resurrection, Mr Theodosios Mitropoulos.

2. Mr Theodor Georgi as the Representative of the Russian Embassy in Tel Aviv.
3. The Reverend Sani Azar, Archbishop of the Lutheran German-speaking Community in Jerusalem with a Delegation, in which the former Propst Rev. Wolfgang Schmidt participated.



His Beatitude thanked this Delegation for supporting the Christians of the Holy Land, especially in the current difficult war situation.

The former Propst Rev Wolfgang Schmidt, as a memento of the visit, offered His Beatitude a silver coin with an image of bread and wine in memory of the Holy Eucharist. His Beatitude offered him and the members of the Delegation an icon of the Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre and the Theotokos.



4. His Beatitude awarded the medal of the Cross of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre to Mr Savilov Viktor in appreciation of his work in the maintenance of icons of the Patriarchate and the chandeliers of the Church of the Resurrection.





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## **VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE (22-04-2024)**

On the morning of Monday, April 9/22, 2024, His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos accepted:

1. The recently ordained by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, as deacon and Priest Marko Nirman with his wife and daughters and with the monk Irinarchos, Supervisor of the Holy Monastery of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul in Capernaum.

His Beatitude blessed the newly ordained priest, and gifted him a priest's cross, wishing him strength from above for the

exercise of his pastoral work in the Russian-speaking  
Community of the Patriarchate.



2. His Beatitude received Mr Issa Ghrrayyeb with his son in Cana of Galilee, where he himself had been a Hegoumen, and blessed them and wished them a good Holy Week and Holy Easter.



From Secretariat-General

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## **VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE (20-04-2024)**

On the morning of Saturday, April 7/20, 2024, His Beatitude received a group of three hundred and fifty members from the Communities of the Patriarchate from northern Israel, mainly from the county of Abu Snan under its Supervisor, Father Nikolaos Moussa.

During this visit, Fr Nikolaos thanked for His practical interest in the pastoral care of the Communities and the maintenance of Churches and their icons.

Responding, His Beatitude blessed this amiable numerous group, the spiritual children of the Church of Jerusalem, from which the Risen Lord Jesus Christ, shone forth life and Resurrection and our truth and peace in the difficult times of the ongoing war.

**From Secretariat-General**