

THE FEAST OF THE PROPHET ELISHA AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday, June 14/27, 2024, the feast of the Holy Prophet Elisha was celebrated by the Patriarchate in his Holy Monastery in Jericho, near the sycamore tree of Zacchaeus.

This Monastery is located in Jericho, due to the action of the prophet mainly in that place.

During this feast, the Church commemorates the prophet, Elisha, as descended from the village of Abel-Meiz. This was the son of Shafat, a farmer by profession and was called by God to the prophetic office by the prophet Elijah. Elijah the prophet anointed Elisha as a prophet and threw his mantle on him. Elisha left the twelve pairs of oxen with which he was ploughing, and slaughtered and used them for a feast for the people and followed the prophet Elijah, being faithful to him throughout his life. He worked many miracles, as narrated mainly in the book of 4 Kings of the Old Testament. He saw his teacher Elijah taken up on a chariot of fire into heaven and he asked for and received his grace and mantle, on which he passed the Jordan river as if on a boat.

In the aforementioned Holy Monastery, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos celebrated the Divine Liturgy with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolias and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Holy Sepulchre Fathers, the first of whom was the Typikon keeper of the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen Archimandrite Alexios, the Archimandrites Silouanos and Kyriakos and Fr Issa Mousleh, the Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. Hierodeacon Simeon was the Greek chanter with the assistance of Mr Georgios Varaklas and the choir of the Orthodox congregation chanted in Arabic.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude proclaimed the divine word as follows:

“And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so” (4 Kings 2, 9-10).

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Reverend Christians

The spirit of the prophet Elijah, that is, the Holy Spirit that was transmitted to his disciple Elisha, has gathered us all in this Biblical place of Jericho in the Jordan River area, where the Monastery of Prophet Elisha is located, to celebrate his annual commemoration.

The Holy Prophet Elisha is distinguished among the prophets who prophesized the incarnate presence of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth, because, as a disciple of the great prophet Elijah, he learned of him and worked many miracles by the grace of God, as his synaxarist writes: “the water is naught, and the ground barren. And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake” (4 Kings 2, 19-22).

Moreover, the great Elisha raised dead people; he cleansed Neeman the Syrian from leprosy and made his servant a lepper as a punishment for his greed and disobedience; He even smit the waters of the Jordan River and made them part, using

Elijah's mantle (Cf. 4 Kings 2,14).

The Holy Church of Christ honours the prophets as the "righteous" people of God, the saints of God. The prophets, and of course, prophet Elisha are the chosen vessels of God, inspired by the luminous power of the Holy Spirit. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4,24), the Lord says.

The holy prophets are those who prepared and foretold the great mystery of the Divine Providence in Christ, as Saint Paul preaches: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Tim. 3,16).

Regarding this, the Lord's words to His disciples after His resurrection are noteworthy: "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24, 25-27).

Interpreting these words of the Lord, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "Nothing coming from God is of no importance, but all and every single one of them have their specific place and use. The servants of the Lord were sent to the right place beforehand, to prepare the Lord's coming, introducing prophecy as the necessary preparation for the faith in Christ".

In other words, my dear ones, the gift of prophecy that God gives, is the gift of revealing the hidden plans of God, as the prophet Amos says: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3,7).

Like another Paul, who was taken up in the third heaven (Cf. 2 Cor. 12,2), the prophet Elisha reached spiritual heights and

received the hidden knowledge of God by God. As his hymnographer writes: "Plainly informed by a divinely inspired oracle, the wondrous Elijah anointed thee a prophet, O glorious Elisha. In thee the bounteous grace of the Holy Spirit found rest and came to dwell" (Matins, Ode 3, Troparia 1,2).

It is made clear that the gift of prophecy is the prototype of the Apostolic office, from which both the prophets and the apostles draw strength and genuine divine knowledge. According to the true testimony of the writer of the Book of Kings, the prophet Elisha used Elijah's mantle and made the waters of the Jordan River part and walked through them, reaching the other side of the river. Through this 'sign', the other prophets recognized Elisha as Elijah's disciple and honoured him, bowing down their heads before him (Cf. 4 Kings 2,13-15).

Let us implore this great and marvellous vessel of the Holy Spirit, the great prophet of God, that along with the intercessions of our Most Blessed Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, he may pray for us all. And let us say along with the hymnographer: "With hymns let us the faithful honour Elijah and Elisha, the pinnacles of the Prophets, those brightly shining luminaries of the whole world; and let us cry out in harmony unto Christ: O compassionate Lord, by the entreaties of Thy Prophets, grant Thy people forgiveness of sins and great mercy" (Vespers, Aposticha Glory). Amen! Many happy and peaceful returns!"

After the Divine Liturgy, the good carer of the Monastery, Archimandrite Parthenios, offered a reception to the Patriarchal entourage and the congregation.

At noon the Hegoumen of Abba Gerasimos Monastery Archimandrite Chrysostom hosted a meal in honour of His Beatitude in a restaurant in the city.

From the General Secretariat

THE FEAST OF SAINT ONUPHRIUS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, June 12th/25th 2024, the commemoration of our Holy Father Onuphrius of Egypt was celebrated by the Patriarchate in the Holy Monastery named after him in the site south of Siloam's pool and in the place of Alcedama, i.e. the field of "the price of blood" which the Jews bought to bury the foreigners with the money that Judas returned repentantly.

On this day, the Church remembers that the holy Onuphrius lived initially in the Coenobitic monastery of Hermoupolis and then went to the desert and lived there for sixty years with extreme fasting and prayer, even without clothing. The monk Paphnutius found him in this condition, who also revealed him to the Church and buried him there covering him with his garment. On his memory and in this place, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with concelebrants their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Hegoumen of the Oblou Monastery Archimandrite Nektarios, Archimandrites Claudios, Ieronymos, Silouanos and Christodoulos, Archdeacon Markos, and Hierodeacon Dositheos. Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Eustathios Tsoumanis delivered the chanting as the service was attended by faithful Orthodox Christians.

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

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new

man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness", Saint Paul preaches (Eph. 4,22-24).

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The Grace of the Holy Spirit brought us all to this hagiographic place of Alkedamas, i.e. the village of blood (Acts 1:19), the eponymous Holy Monastery of Saint Onuphrius of Egypt, so that we may thankfully celebrate his sacred commemoration.

Our Father Onuphrius is distinguished among the righteous and faithful personalities of our Holy Church, because he was, in his ascetic and solitary ascetic life, a perfect imitator of the great prophets Elijah of Thesbes and John the Forerunner. "At the age of sixty, Saint Onuphrius lived in the desert, a man who did not understand the whole" his synaxarist reports. His hymnographer also says: "Thou becamest an earthly Angel, deified by thy Godward striving, O all-blessed Onuphrius; for thou didst emulate the life of John and of Elijah" (Matins, Ode 6, Troparion 2). And elsewhere, "As Angels in the flesh who dwelt with the hosts incorporeal, ye lit the desert like stars flashing n the night with your ascetic pains and toils. Now, O God-bearing Fathers, importune God's great mercy for us who sing your praise, Onuphrius and cry out: Alleluia" (Kontakion).

And the psalmist chants wondering: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob" (Ps. 24,3-6).

Those who seek the face of Jacob's God, that is, God the Father, are according to the wise Solomon the righteous, whose

reward is in eternal life and in the Lord and their care of the Most High; "for this, they receive the kingdom of decency and the diadem of goodness from the hand of the Lord". (Wisdom of Solom 5,16).

Our Holy Father Onuphrius, who is honoured today, was shown to be righteous, who, on the one hand, received his care in the desert, being alone in it for sixty years, apart from the Most High God; on the other hand, he obtained the diadem of beauty that is, the crown of justice from the hand of the Lord. In this case, let us also listen to Saint Paul saying: " I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing", (2 Tim. 4, 7-8).

According to Saint Chrysostom, "there is not one surface, but two. One is the present and existing, the other is the future and in the end gloriously existing". The second and subsequent appearance of the righteous judge, that is, of Christ, was loved by all the friends and believers of him, of Christ, especially the blessed Onuphrius. And this is because Jesus Christ commanded: " If a man loves me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14, 23).

Interpreting this word of Jesus Christ, St. Cyril of Alexandria says; those, whose mind shines with every virtue and who is suitable for learning the divine and hidden mysteries, will receive the fatherhood, the illumination of the Holy Spirit and will see with the eyes of their intellect the Lord, Who has dwelt in them. Therefore, the knowledge of the saints is not common to all, but it is excellent, special and very different.

Our God-bearing Father Onuphrius, who loved God with all his mind and with all his heart, received precisely this guidance,

illumination, but also the knowledge of the Holy Spirit in his mind and pure heart.

To this, our wonderful Father Onuphrius exhorts us and calls us, to the love of the Son of God our Lord Jesus Christ through the intercessions of our Most Blessed Virgin Mary the Theotokos and the Holy Apostles.

And after the hymnographer we say: "O righteous Father Onuphrius, since in all godliness thou didst possess a most sacred soul, thou didst bear temptations well, being strengthened with faith divine; and once united to God by means of love, thou in the land of the meek didst pitch thy tent, since thou wast made most fair with the splendour of the virtues; hence, we all joyously keep festival on thy memorial" (Matins, Praises, Troparion 2). Amen. Many and peaceful returns!"

Subsequently, a Trisayon ☩☩ took place for the repose of the soul of the departed nun of the Monastery Serafima Euthymiadou. Then at the Tomb of the Monastery's Founder Hieromonk Kyrillos, the blessing of the beginning of the fruits was read.

Finally, the hard-working and caring Nun Paisia, the abbess of the monastery, offered a rich festive treat and recreation necessary for the heat of that day.

From the General Secretariat

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

AT THE RUSSIAN CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY -MISSIA

The feast of the Monday of the Holy Spirit was solemnly celebrated on June 11/24, 2024 at the magnificent Cathedral of the Holy Trinity belonging to the Russian Mission of the Mosco Patriarchate (MISSIA).

The Divine Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitans Kyriakos of Nazareth and Isychios of Capitolias, the Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Head of MISSIA Archimandrite Vassianos, Archimandrite Nikon and other Hieromonks and Priests of MISSIA, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks, among whom, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archimandrite Christodoulos, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the female Church Choir of Ein Karem Gornia, as the service was attended by the Ambassador of Russia Mr Anatoli Victorov, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos and many Russian-speaking faithful Christians.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” (John 16,7) the Lord said to His disciples.

Reverend Archimandrite Vassianos, Representative of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril in Jerusalem,

Dear Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The grace of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ has gathered us all in this historical Church of the Holy Trinity, today, Monday of Pentecost, to celebrate the life-giving and Almighty Holy Spirit, the One Person of the Holy Trinity, who is equal, of one essence and of the same glory with the Father and the Son.

The Holy Church of Christ gives special honour to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, which brings together the whole institution of the Church. The institution of the Church is the body of Christ, as well as the spring of life, that is of eternal life, of our salvation as the hymnographer writes: "The Holy Spirit provideth all things; He gusheth forth prophecy; He perfecteth the priesthood; He hath taught wisdom to the illiterate. He hath shown forth the fishermen as theologians. He holdeth together the whole institution of the Church" (Saturday Vespers, Sticheron 3). And elsewhere he writes: "The Holy Spirit hath ever been, and is, and shall be, neither beginning nor ending; but He is ever ranked and numbered together with the Father and the Son. He is Life, and life-creating; Light, and light-bestowing; by nature good, and the source of goodness; through Him the Father is known, and the Son is glorified; and thereby all men acknowledge a single sovereignty, single covenant, a single worship of the Holy Trinity" (Sunday Vespers, Sticheron 2).

Great wonders did the Lord work on this day when the Holy Spirit revealed the Church of Christ to the world. Great is the Lord's glory, for by the power and illumination of the Holy Spirit we become through baptism members of Christ, of the Church, as we put on Christ. And we are sealed with the permanent seal of the Holy Spirit.

The Disciples and Apostles of Christ travelled around all nations preaching the Gospel of Christ, consecrating Churches and were distinguished in hard toil, to whom Saint Paul says: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed

the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20,28). Interpreting these words, Saint Chrysostom notes that "Paul says these, not because it is preferable to have the salvation of the flock, but because it is the benefit of the flock when we look after ourselves".

Paul's example refers to the current active pastors in the various local Orthodox Churches, which Christ "gave...for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children,... carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4, 11-14) that is, "the rulers of the darkness of this world" (Eph. 6,12).

This unity and "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4,3), have we come to proclaim in this Eucharistic gathering, with the brotherly Churches of Russia and Romania in the Holy City of Jerusalem, where the words of prophet Joel were fulfilled: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh" (Acts 2,17).

The events that took place at the Upper Room in the Holy Zion, where all the disciples of Christ were gathered (Cf. Acts 2,1) remain always the prototype for the unity of our brotherly Orthodox Churches in the Holy Spirit and in the love of Christ. As Saint Cyril of Alexandria says; "the pouring of the Holy Spirit was given, God pleased the human nature excessively, crowning it with the glory from on high, hiding their sin out of His goodwill as it was in the beginning".

It is noteworthy that the melodic words of Saint John of Damascus "Come receive the fire-breathing dew of the Spirit, as the ransom cleansing from faults and offences, O all ye

that are the Church's light-formed children; for now is the Law come forth from holy Sion: tongues formed of beacon-fire, even the Spirit's grace" (Katavasia, Ode 5). And in more detail; light-formed children of the Church, accept the fiery dew of the Holy Spirit, that is the cleansing from our sins. Because now the grace of the Holy Spirit has gushed forth from Jerusalem in the form of tongues of fire.

Indeed, the Holy Spirit who enlightens and sanctifies our souls, made us light-formed children of the Church, through His divine illumination, as Saint Gregory the Theologian says: "The enlightenment is the illumination of the souls...partaking of the light, abolition of darkness". Therefore, our dear brethren, let us pray to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Theotokos Maria, to become partakers of the light of the Comforter Holy Spirit.

And let us say along with the hymnographer: "Of old the tongues were confounded because of the audacity in the building of the tower, but now the tongues are made wise for the sake of the glory of Divine knowledge. There, God condemned the impious because of their offence; and here, Christ hath enlightened the fishermen by the Spirit. At that time the confusion of the tongues was wrought for punishment, but now the concord of tongues hath been inaugurated for the salvation of our souls" (Sunday Vespers, Glory). Amen. Many happy and peaceful returns!"

Soon afterwards the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude gave the following speech:

"Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Archimandrite Vassian,

Dear Fathers,

Beloved Monastics,

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

On this joyous day of the Monday of the Holy Spirit, we celebrate in the blessed grace of the Feast

of Pentecost, which we observed yesterday. The Feast of Pentecost is a great feast for all of

Christianity, but especially for Orthodox Christians, and especially for us who are here in the Holy

Land and in this City of Jerusalem, where our very heritage has been formed by the Christian

faith.

Here in this Holy City the Church was revealed on the first Pentecost, and the gift of the Holy

Spirit that was bestowed upon the disciples remains with us today. This gift of God's sustaining

Spirit has shaped the common heritage of the values of the Gospel in which Christians have been

brought up and which we bring to the human family.

The meaning at the heart of this common heritage of faith and the values of the Gospel means

that the unity of the Orthodox Churches, which are national Churches, is not in the first place

about the unity of doctrine; it is rather about the unity of the human family.

This is the vision and purpose of Pentecost, as our Lord Jesus Christ said to the apostles, that the

good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the

nations (Mt 24:14).

Today we can see that the human family is in trouble. Our unity is broken and the message of

Pentecost is obscured. The unity of the Church and the unity of the human family are damaged

the world over, and our existence and our own specific ethnic and cultural identity are under

threat. We see happening what Saint Paul in the Acts of the Apostles said, from one ancestor

[God] made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and

the boundaries of the places where they would live so that they would search for God and perhaps

grope for him and find him. (Acts 17:27). God made us from one ancestor, but we have wandered

far and are often lost in our search for God.

Our mission here as the Church of Jerusalem is to work for peace and reconciliation in our region.

We know full well the truth of Saint Paul's words, If one

member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it (1 Cor. 12:26). These words are as true of the family of the Church as they are of the human family, because we are all part and parcel for the human family.

We have the privilege and the responsibility of worshipping in the very places where our Lord

Jesus Christ shed his precious blood for the sake of the human family. It is in this light that we

understand the imperative of the unity of the Church and the unity of the people whom we serve.

The hymnographer says it well in the Kontakion for the Feast of Pentecost, when he writes

When the Most High came down

and confounded tongues of men at Babel,

he divided the nations.

When he dispensed the tongues of fire,

he called all to unity,

and with one voice we glorify the Most Holy Spirit.

We pray today to Almighty God, that we may respond with a full and eager heart to his call to

unity – the unity of the Church and the unity of the whole human family.

Thank you.”

On this occasion, His Beatitude offered an icon of Bethlehem, while Fr Vassianos offered an icon of the Holy Trinity made by Andrei Roubliov.

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a reception and a festal monastic meal, where His Beatitude addressed those present, stressing the need of the unity of the Orthodox Churches.

From the General Secretariat

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE D. LITURGY IN TURAN OF GALILEE

On Sunday, June 3rd/16th 2024, Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy in the Holy Church of Saint George of the Turan Community, a village located near Nazareth.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, and the Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantine, and priests with first in rank the

Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nektarios, the Priests of the Russian-speaking flock of the Patriarchate, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. Many Orthodox believers of this parish participated in devotion, as the local Byzantine choir delivered the chanting under the guidance of His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba in various languages.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude preached the divine Word with His following sermon:

“Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Dear Christians,

“The choir of the Fathers which came together from the ends of the whole world, taught the one essence and nature of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit, and clearly transmitted the mystery of theology to the Church. Praising them in faith let us bless them saying: O godly company, divinely eloquent warriors of the regiment of the Lord, greatly radiant stars of the noetic firmament, impregnable towers of the mystic Sion, flowers of paradise, wafting forth the scent of myrrh, golden mouths of the Word, boast of Nicaea, adornment of the whole world: pray ye earnestly in behalf of our souls!” (Matins, Praises, Glory) the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

The grace of the Holy Spirit brought us all together today in the Holy Church of your city, Touran, to celebrate the First Ecumenical Council of the three hundred and eight God-bearing Fathers, who theologized and proved that the Son of God was truly perfect man and proclaimed and confessed this perfect man and perfect God as of one essence and nature with God the Father.

This Ecumenical Council was convened in Nicaea by the Roman Orthodox Emperor Constantine the Great in the year 325, who attended there and sat with them at the prompting of the Holy

Fathers. In this Council, on the one hand, the blasphemies of the deacon Arius were condemned, who denied the divinity of the Son of God and proclaimed Him to be a "creature" and born "out of non-beings"; on the other hand, he was excommunicated and expelled from the God-human body of the Church and was deposed.

It should be noted that the heretical teaching and doctrine of Arius was the source of all the subsequent heresies created by "men who speak perversely" (Cf. Acts 20, 30) and "those who preached the faith were deceived" (Cf. 1 Tim. 6, 21). In other words, heretics are those who pervert the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Scriptures delivered to us by the holy disciples and apostles of our Saviour Jesus Christ, as Paul preaches: "The time has come for the sanctifying teaching to come." For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4, 3-4).

Those who possess the sanctified faith are the successors of the Apostles, that is, the Bishops ordained and established by their honourable hands, to whom the blessed Paul orders: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20, 28).

These are the Holy Spirit-Bearing Fathers, who saved and entrenched our right and sanctified faith, theologizing in the Ecumenical and Local Holy Councils.

It is because of this that Paul calls himself Father, because he begat many children in the Holy Spirit, as he says addressing the Corinthians: "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel", (1 Cor. 4,15). Interpreting this word of Paul, the great Origen says:

A father is the one who first spread and proclaimed the Christian faith, whereas a teacher is the one who takes charge of the child and takes care of his Christian education (education).

The communion in the Holy Spirit and succession between the Holy Apostles and Fathers of the Church is also expressed by the hymnographer of the Church: "The Church was strengthened unto one faith through the preaching of the Apostles and the doctrines of the Fathers. The Church is robed in truth woven of the word of God from above. It teaches truth, and glorifies the great mystery of faith" (Kontakion).

Indeed, the Church of Christ upholds and glorifies the great mystery of reverence, the mystery of the incarnation of the Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ from the pure blood of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, through its bishops and our godly Fathers, who are clothed with power from on high, which was given to the Apostles after the Lord's Ascension to heaven: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24, 49).

The Christ-bearing Fathers of the Church who assembled the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea were clothed with this power from on high, the illumination of the Holy Spirit, who with one mouth and one voice proclaimed the Son and Word of God to be of one essence with the Father, being God of the true God, and also wrote the blessed Creed.

The Creed, which was fulfilled by the second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in AD 381 is the "good legacy" (II Tim. 1:14), the good and precious treasure of the evangelical teaching, which Christ entrusted to the spirit-bearing Fathers of the Church. Let us also listen to the great Basil saying: Neither do we accept any newer confession of faith drawn up by others, nor do we ourselves dare to deliver products of our own intellect, in order to change the reasons of reverence

into human words. But what we have been taught by the Holy Fathers, these we proclaim to the enquirers.

In the person of this Father of the Church, the Holy Martyr Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, the prophetic and apostolic character of the Holy Fathers of the Church is depicted in the redeeming work of the Church in the world. And this is because the Holy and God-bearing Fathers of the Church are the guarantee of the unadulterated and sanctifying faith, that is, of our Orthodox faith, which defines, or better said, supports the way of life of us Christians.

Therefore, the Church of Christ today also honours the preachers of the faith with the great Apostles for the glory and thanksgiving of God but also for the consolidation of our Orthodox faith through the intercessions of our most blessed Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. After the hymnographer we say: "You are greatly glorified, O Christ our God, who established our Fathers as luminaries upon the earth, and through them led us all to the true Faith. O Most compassionate, glory to Thee" (Apolytikion of the Fathers). "Amen. Many and peaceful returns".

A reception and a banquet followed, which the Community provided in honour of His Beatitude and His Entourage.

This was followed by a visit to the family of the Rum Orthodox Mr Rawan Saad, who is helping with the Patriarchate's internet project.

From the General Secretariat

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 (Studios)", 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

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 Eldler 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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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" (Katavasias 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 Arimathea / 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

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

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