

# THE VISIT OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF GEORGIA TO THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday afternoon, May 17/30, 2022, the Prime Minister of Georgia Mr Irakli Garibashvili visited the Patriarchate, accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Ilia Darchiashvili, the Head of the State Security Service Mr Grigol Liluasvili, the Head of Government Administration Mr Revaz Javelidze and the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Mr Lasha Zhvania.

His Excellency the PM and his entourage were warmly received by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers, among whom the Patriarchal Commissioner, His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Geronda Secretary-General, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, His Eminence Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, Archdeacon Mark and the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod Hierodeacon Simeon.

During this visit His Beatitude addressed His Excellency the Prime Minister of Georgia as per below:

“Your Excellency, Mr Prime Minister,

Mr Garibashvili,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are very glad to welcome you and your distinguished delegation to our Patriarchate in this joyous Paschal season.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, that is to say, the Church of Jerusalem, is the Mother of all the Churches, for it was founded on the redeeming blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, who

suffered, died, and was raised from the dead in this Holy City.

Thanks to the great Roman Christian emperors Constantine and his mother Helen, who took care of the Holy Places in the Holy Land and established the well-known order of the Spoudaei, which became the current monastic community of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, the Brotherhood of the Holy Tomb.

It is precisely this monastic community of the Holy Tomb that has been instrumental in guarding, serving, and maintaining the Holy Places, our Churches, and our Monasteries down the ages as places of prayer and worship, and therefore as places that are accessible to pilgrims and visitors without distinction.

Needless to say, the Holy Places have been sustained by the sacrifices of blood and of money. Many have given their lives to protect them, and many benefactors have given from their financial resources to support them. For these sacrifices, we give thanks to Almighty God.

We welcome you, Your Excellency, as a leader and as a representative of an Orthodox country and a brotherly Orthodox Church. This means that the Church of Jerusalem and the Church of Georgia and its faithful belong to the same Body of Christ and His Church. This is why it is imperative, as Saint Paul commands, that we are always *eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph. 4:3).

The challenges that we are facing here in the Holy City of Jerusalem are well known, for Jerusalem is the spiritual capital of the whole world and especially for the Orthodox Christian nations and peoples.

Our mission here is to promote the values of our Orthodox Christian tradition and heritage, which are no other than the values enshrined in the Holy Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testaments and in the Sacred Tradition of the Church.

The love of Christ and His peace, justice and reconciliation are the pillars of the Church of Jerusalem.

The Rum Orthodox Patriarchate, that is the Church of Jerusalem, as the Mother Church embraces everyone without distinction or discrimination. This is why our Patriarchate enjoys the great respect of both the Israeli authorities and of course the Palestinian and Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan authorities as well, as you witnessed yesterday evening at our meeting in Amman.

Your Excellency, we take this opportunity to express our appreciation for your firmness and straightforward stand against globalization, which neglects Christian values.

We are therefore pleased to bestow upon you the Cross of the Holy Tomb of Our Lord Jesus Christ, so that you may be protected and inspired always by the salvific message of the Cross of the Righteous One.

Christ is risen!

Thank you".

The address was followed by the exchange of presents; the PM gave His Beatitude an icon of the Georgian Saint Ashot, while His Beatitude offered the Prime Minister a big icon of the renovated Sacred Edicule, icons of the Mother of God to the members of the Delegation and the Ambassador and finally Mr Garibashvili was awarded the honorary medal of the Grand Commander of the Order of Knights of the Holy Sepulchre.

Thanking for the warm reception of His Beatitude, the PM and the members of the Delegation left to venerate the Holy Sepulchre, where they were received by Geronda Sacristan, His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis. Before this visit, the Delegation had visited the Holy Monastery of the Holy Cross, where Georgian Monks thrived in the past.

# THE FEAST OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, May 9/22, 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the Sunday of the Samaritan woman according to the book of Pentecostarion.

On this feast, the whole Church and especially the Church of Jerusalem commemorates the event that has been handed over to us by Saint John the Evangelist (John 4, 5-42). According to this narrative, a woman from Samaria from town Sychar came to draw water from Jacob's well and met the Lord there. He conversed with her and revealed to her that "He is the Messiah Christ" and that "God is spirit and those who worship Him shall do so in Spirit and in truth". With His God-inspired words and because Christ told her the things she had done in her life, she believed and preached about Christ and finally suffered a martyr's death along with members of her family, brothers, daughters and her son.

In honour of Saint Foteini, the Samaritan woman, twenty-five years ago, the Archimandrite Ioustinos Mamalos built a magnificent Church at the place of Jacob's well, along with a chapel dedicated to the Holy Martyr Philoumenos the Hagiotaphite who suffered martyrdom at the well.

In this Church, the Divine Liturgy for the feast was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with co-celebrants their Eminences,

Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, and the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina, Philoumenos of Pela, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, among whom the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, and Archimandrite Ieronymos. The chanting was delivered by Archimandrite Leontios in Greek and the Community Choir in Arabic as the service was attended by many local faithful and pilgrims from various Orthodox Christian Churches, and faithful from the occupied territories of Samaria, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour and Bethlehem.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“At the sixth hour, the Well-spring of miracles came to the well to capture the fruit of eve; for Eve at this same hour departed from Paradise through the deceit of the serpent. The Samaritan woman, then, approached to draw water, and the Saviour, upon seeing her, said to her: Give me water to drink, and I shall fill thee with living water. And running to the city, that prudent woman at once announced to the multitudes: Come, see Christ the Lord, the Saviour of our souls”, the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (Vespers, sticheron of the Samaritan woman 1).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Samaritan woman has gathered us all in this holy place of the Patriarch Jacob's well, where Jesus met her, so that we may celebrate the great and wondrous doings of the Lord on earth so that we should gain the knowledge of His redeeming truth.

“There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink... Jesus answered and said unto her, 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. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw" (ref. John 4,7-15).

At the meeting and conversation of the Son and Word of God with the Samaritan woman, we have the revelation of the infinite philanthropy of the Saviour Christ, "Who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2,4). The Lord Himself revealed that He is the fountain of eternal life when He told the Samaritan woman "but 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 Lord calls the grace of the Holy Spirit water, and if somebody becomes communicant of this grace, then he will have as supply the knowledge stemming from the Holy Scriptures, having thus no need for admonition by others.

In other words, my dear ones, the enlightening grace of the Holy Spirit "shines forth and is visible" not only to the souls of the illiterate and uneducated people, like the Samaritan woman but also to the souls of those who have faith in their hearts and long to know the most perfect mysteries, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says.

Precisely because the Samaritan woman showed zeal in learning the doctrines and the truth of the Lord, as well as the correct manner of worshipping God, Jesus revealed to her two things: first that "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4,24). And secondly, that He is the Messiah Christ, as Saint John the Evangelist writes: "The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he" (John 4:25-26).

It is noteworthy that after this revelation to her, the Samaritan woman "The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4,28-29).

Interpreting this action of the Samaritan woman, Theophylactos says: "In this manner, the Samaritan woman preferred immediately Christ's water to that of the Jacob's spring". While Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "The woman that had many men, two or three days ago, now appears to be stronger and above the cares of the flesh. And the one who quite often became vulnerable to the shameful delights, now prevails over the needs of the flesh, that is the thirst and drinking; and she has transformed her needs anew for the love of Christ. That is why the hymnographer says: "O Lord, Who supportest Thy chambers in the waters, Thou, being the Water of Life, didst grant Thy worshipful springs unto the Samaritan woman who asked of Thee, when she had learned of Thy compassion" (Matins, Ode 1 of the Samaritan, Troparion 4).

Moreover, the Lord Himself says referring to the Scriptures: "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7,38). And Jesus said this, referring to the Holy Spirit that those who believe in Him shall receive, according to Saint John (John 7,39).

The Samaritan woman, who was called Foteini, became a vessel of the Holy Spirit and a preacher and Apostle of the Gospel of Christ and sealed her mission with her martyrdom during the reign of the Roman Emperor Nero, as her Synaxarist mentions.

We, my dear brethren, who honour the sacred memory of the Holy Equal to the Apostles and Great Martyr Foteini, the Samaritan woman, are called to imitate the simplicity of her faith to our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. And we say this, because the Samaritan woman preferred God's wisdom to the earthly water,

namely the denaturation of the Saviour, as the hymnographer of the Mother of God says: the invisible God the Word in nature, has become visible to men as a man through the pure Mother of God, recalling man to transform his nature to your Divinity. Amen! Christ is risen! Many happy returns, blessed and peaceful!”

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a procession around the Church under the chanting of Paschal hymns and a festal reception at the Hegoumeneion.

At noon the Hegoumen and owner and renovator of the Church, Archimandrite Ioustinos hosted a meal and offered His Beatitude a beautiful Cross, similar to the one placed on top of the Sacred Edicule after its renovation in 2017, so that He may use it at the processions according to the Typikon of the Church of Jerusalem.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **GRADUATION CEREMONY AT THE PATRIARCHATE'S SCHOOL IN RAMALLAH**

On Saturday evening, May 8/21, 2022, the graduation ceremony of 'Saint George' School of the Patriarchate took place in Ramallah.

The ceremony was held at the reception hall in a town hotel with the honorary presence of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, who was accompanied by Geronda Secretary-General, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of



Constantina, Priest Issa Mousleh, Archimandrite Galaktion, Priest Stephen from the Church of Greece, the President of the Palestinian State committee on Religious Affairs Mr Ramzi Chouri, the Manageress of his office Mrs Hane Amire, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the President of the West Bank Schools of the Patriarchate Mr Ode Kaouas, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, representatives from the Ministry of Labour of the Palestinian Autonomy, the thirty three graduates along with their parents and others.

The ceremony began with the Palestinian National Anthem, followed by the Greek National Anthem, a hymn for the recently murdered Palestinian martyr Shireen Abu Akleh, His Beatitude's welcome, the Gospel reading according to Saint Mathew " you are the light of the world" and a narrative from Saint Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the Corinthians, a reading from the Quran, the Schools hymn, and finally the baton's handing over from the graduates of the School year 2021-2022 to the last class of 2000-2023.

Consequently the School Principle Mr Jelal Muhaison spoke, underlining the important educational mission of the School, which is proven by the number of the graduates who enter Universities and also mentioned the moral and material support of the Patriarchate in this mission.

The honorary calling of the students who excelled with grades 98,50/100 followed, the address of the students in the Arabic and English languages, Palestinian songs and traditional Palestinian dances and the hymn of the Palestinian martyr who were this school's graduate in 2016, Tamara Abu Leyle.

The ceremony concluded with His Beatitude's address, read by Fr Issa Mousleh, stressing that this year, the 18<sup>th</sup> of the School's operation is dedicated to Shireen Abu Akleh. His Beatitude's address follows below in Arabic:

والأردن في تخريج طلبة مدرستنا الرومية الأرثوذكسية سان جورج  
21/5/2022

سيادة المتروبوليت يواكيم مساعدنا و معاوننا رئيس لجنة مدارس بطريركية الروم الأرثوذكس الجزيل الاحترام .

سيادة العين الدكتور عودة القواس الرئيس التنفيذي لمدارس بطريركية الروم الأرثوذكس الجزيل الاحترام .

المربي الفاضل الأستاذ القدير جلال محيسن مدير المدرسة الجزيل الاحترام ،

، حضرات المعلمات والمعلمين وأولياء أمور الطلاب المحترمين ،

الحضور الكرام مع حفظ الألقاب و الأسماء و الصفات الاعتبارية و الشخصية و الرسمية .

سلامٌ المحبة لكم° جميعاً

يسعدنا أن° نعبّر لكم° عن° وافر فرحتنا وابتهاجنا ونحن° نقف° بينكم° في هذا اليوم الذي نحتفل° به سوياً° لنخرج مجموعة من بناتنا وأبنائنا الذين أنجزوا مرحلة° هامة من مراحل حياتهم، وإننا° بذلك° نتقدم° بالكثير من الامتنان والاحترام لأولياء الأمور° والهيئتين الإدارية° والتدريسية° على ما قدّموه° من° جهدٍ وعطاءٍ في سبيل الوصول ببنائنا إلى أعلى المراتب والدُّرجات° ومساعدتهم للانطلاق نحو° أولى خطوات مستقبلهم .

إن من أهم° الأمور التي علينا أن نعيها أن° التعليم° يُعتبر° البنية الأساسية التي يتكئ عليها المجتمع، لذلك° علينا أن نتمسك° به° وأن نعمل على تطويره° ومسايرة التجدد° السريع° الحاصل في العالم، لكي تتمكن° الأجيال° من° مواكبة° مجالات الحياة° لبناء° الوطن و استقلال الذات .

إن° طالب° العلم° هو هدفنا الذي نسعى من أجله ، لذلك° فمن° واجبنا أن° نوفر° له° كل° المقومات التي تتيح° له° الاستمرار° نحو° الأفضل، كما أن° تهيئة° الظروف المناسبة° هي من° أهم° حقوق المرء° الوضعية التي من° خلالها سيقيم° بواجباته° . نحو° أسرته° ومجتمعه° ووطنه° .

، ، الحضور الكرام

إنَّ النِّظامَ التَّعليميَّ - في أيَّةِ دولةٍ - هو الأساسُ الرَّاسخُ والدَّعامَةُ الأولى لِيكتملَ البناءُ وَيَقوى و لتستمر الحياة ، فالتَّعليمُ يصنعُ الأيادي المِعطاءة الَّتِي تعمِّرُ وتبني وتُطوِّرُ ، ومنْ هَذَا المنطلقِ لا يسعُنَا إلَّا أنْ نقولَ كلمةَ حقٍّ في معلِّماتِنَا ومعلِّمينَا فهم من يبنون و يصنعون الأجيال ، فهاماتُهُم تعانقُ المجدَ وأياديهِمُ تغرسُ بذورَ الحبِّ والأملِ ، وبعطائِهِم تستمرُّ المسيرةُ .

وقيل في التعليم : الزراعة تسد الجوع و الصناعة توفر الاحتياجات لكن التعليم يزرع و يصنع وطننا

و في هذا المقام لا ننسى أن نرسلُ تحيةً من القلبِ إلى أسرةِ التَّربيةِ والتَّعليمِ الحاملةِ رايةَ هذه الرِّسالةِ ، فنحنُ نُثني على جهودِكُم ونباركُ ثمرةَ إنجازاتِكُم .

وحيثُ أنَّ بناءَ الإنسانِ هو قبلَ كلِّ شيءٍ ، فهذا ما يحتاجُهُ طلابُنَا اليومَ ، فإذا أردتَ أن تبني حضارةً فعليك ببناء الأسرة ثم عليك برعاية التعليم ثم عليك برفع القدواتِ والمرجعياتِ . فحتَّى تبني الأسرةَ عليك برعاية دورِ الأمِّ في تربيةِ أبنائِها والاهتمامِ بها لبناءِ جيلِ المستقبلِ ، وكى ترعى التعليمَ عليك بالمعلِّمِ اجعلْ له أهميةً في المجتمعِ وارفعْ من مكانتِه حتَّى يقتدي به طلابُ بهُ ، وكى ترفعَ القدواتِ عليك بالعلماءِ اجعلْ هُمُ القدوةَ للجميعِ حتَّى يعلو شأنُهُم ولا تشكُّكُ بقدراتِهِم حتَّى . يُسمَعُ لهم .

وإنَّنا نغتئمُ الفرصةَ مِن خلالِ هذهِ المناسبةِ الطَّيبةِ على قلوبِنَا جميعاً لنشيرَ إلى التَّقدُّمِ العلميِّ الَّذِي حصلَ في هذهِ المدرسةِ خلالَ الأعوامِ المنصرمةِ وعلى كافَّةِ الأصعدةِ المتعلِّقةِ بالعمليتينِ التَّربويةِ والتَّعليميةِ ، ممَّا أتاحَ الفرصةَ لطلبتِنَا الأعضاءِ أن يحصلوا على نتائجٍ مشرِّفةٍ في الامتحاناتِ العامَّةِ ، على الرغمِ من جائحةِ كورونا التي اجتاحت العالمَ و حدثتْ من التَّقدمِ في الكثيرِ من المجالاتِ إلا أن الإدارةَ العلياَ لمدارسِ البطريركيةِ و على رأسها سعادةِ العينِ الدكتور عودة القواس و بحكمتهِ الرزينةِ استطاعتِ التغلبِ على هذا الفايروسِ بمعيةِ مديرِ المدرسةِ الأستاذِ جلالِ محيسنِ ، كما لا ننسى الدورَ الريادي الَّذِي يقومُ بهِ رئيسُ لجنةِ المدارسِ المتروبوليتِ يواكيمِ الجزيلِ الاحترامِ

.برعايته و دعمه المعنوي و المادي لمدارس البطريركية

: الحضور الكرام

إنّ هذا الصّرح الأكاديميّ - الثّقافيّ - العربيّ - الرّوميّ -  
بمعلميه و إدارته قدّ خرّجَ أشخاصاً لهمّ مراكز مرموقة و عالية  
في مجتمعيّنا الأصيلِ والّذين نفتخرُ و نعتزُّ بهم

وفي الختامِ لا يسعُنّا إلّا الدعاءُ لأبناءِ شعبيّنا الفلسطينيّ  
بأنّ تتحقّقَ آمالهم بالسلامِ والحريّةِ والاستقرارِ وقدّ حقّقوا  
أهدافهم الّتي يثابرونَ منّ أجلّها كشعبٍ يستحقّ الحياةَ  
بإقامةِ دولتهمِ الفلسطينيّةِ وعاصمتها القدسُ الشريفةُ قدسُ  
الأقداسِ تحتّ ظلّ القيادةِ الحكيمةِ لفخامةِ الرّئيسِ محمود  
عبّاس رئيسِ دولةِ فلسطينِ حفظهُ اللهُ ورعاها، وأنّ يعمّ السلامُ  
والحبُّ في جميعِ الأراضي المقدّسة وفي منطقة الشرق الأوسط والعالم  
بأسره و نرجو لكمّ عامًا خاليًا من الوباءِ و البلاءِ و الغلاءِ وكلّ عام  
وأنتم بألف خير.

After the reading of the address, His Beatitude was offered a bouquet of flowers and He handed the titles to each of the graduates, wishing them all the best for success, career and higher education studies.

Finally there was honorary mention and giving of honorary board to those distinguished in teaching and especially to the parents of Shireen Abu Akleh, as well as a speech for her, which was delivered by the Al Jazeera representative, Fayez Abu Samir.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC MAN AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, May 2/15, 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the Sunday of the Paralytic Man, the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pascha according to the Book of Pentecostarion.

H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, after the welcoming reception by the Scouts, officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Community of Rhene, near the city of Nazareth.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Geronda Secretary-General, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archimandrite Artemios, the Dean Priest of this community Priest Simeon, Priest Stephen from the Church of Greece, other Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios.

The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine Choir of the Community in Arabic, and many local faithful Christians attended the Service.

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

“At the sheep’s pool a man lay in sickness and when he saw Thee, O Lord, he cried: I have no man that when the water is troubled, he might put me therein. And straightaway, taking compassion on him, the Saviour saith unto him; for thee I became man, for thee, I am clothed in flesh, and sayest thou: I have no man? Take up thy bed and walk” the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (Vespers, Entreaty, Glory).

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

Marvellous is our God, who has gathered us today in the faithful community of Rheine, to celebrate the Pascha of the Lord in gleefulness and joy, as we commemorate the miracle of the healing of the paralytic man who had been ill for thirty-eight years at the Sheep's pool (ref. John 5, 5-9).

During His presence on earth, the Lord worked many signs in order to reveal His glory so that they might believe in Him, and to show His healing power to anyone who asked for it, which stemmed from the obedience and faith in Him, the Son and Word of God.

"And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, 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" (John 5,5-7).

Interpreting this verse from the Gospel, the Holy Fathers of the Church wonder why our Saviour chose this certain paralytic man? Because he was suffering from an incurable disease; "For what reason did Jesus pass by all other (ill people) and came to this man? To show both the power and the philanthropy; the power, because the illness had become incurable and had seized the man; and the philanthropy because Christ and guardian and philanthropist saw this man before all others as he was indeed worthy of mercy and benevolence", Saint Chrysostom says.

To Christ's demanding question, "Wilt thou be made whole?" (John 5,6) Saint Chrysostom says that as the healer of our bodies and souls, Christ referred to the double paralysis of both the sins and the body. In other words, when there is mention in the Holy Scriptures about sin, we should understand this as our infirmity of both the soul and the body, which resulted in the death of corruption as Saint Paul preaches, having the Old Adam in mind: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed

upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5,12).

And Saint John the Baptist calls upon the words of Prophet Isaiah and says: "he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53,4). Seeing "Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1,29). And the wise Paul says: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15,3).

Moreover, according to Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, the Lord came on earth "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2,14), and "to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins". Let us hear the Holy Father saying: "wherever there is Christ, there salvation lies. And if he sees a publican sitting at the cashier, He makes him an apostle and an evangelist; and if He is buried with the dead, He makes them rise. And He makes the blind to see, the deaf to hear; and He visits the pools, not to see the buildings, but seeking to heal the sick".

It is noteworthy that the paralytic man was healed not by the water of the pool, but by the working of the power of the word of our Saviour Christ, as the hymnographer says: "O Lord, not the pool, but Thy word healed and renewed the paralytic; nor was he hindered by his sickness of many years; for the power of Thy voice proved to be more effectual. And he cast off the weight that was grievous to bear and carried the burden of his bed as a testimony to the multitude of Thy compassions. Glory be to Thee"(Matins, Glory of praises).

The paralytic man became healthy instantly when he heard the Lord's words "Take up thy bed and walk" (John 5,8-9). And the swift healing power of the Lord's voice is no other than the overshadowing of the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. And we say this, because the Church is the pool,

namely the healing place of our souls and bodies, while the Holy Sacraments, which are being held by the power of the Holy Spirit are the medicine that lead to the cure. According to Saint Chrysostom, the manner of treatment is common and the medicine is available for all. However, healing is not common for all, but it is achieved by the goodwill of those who use it.

Celebrating the Lord's Pascha, my dear brethren, let us hear the divine voice of the Resurrected Christ: "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28,20).

And let us say along with the hymnographer; "Having risen from the dead, Thou didst raise us also from the passions by Thy Resurrection, O Lord: And Thou didst destroy all the might of death, O Saviour, for this cause we cry out in faith: Remember us also in Thy Kingdom" (Sunday of the Paralytic, at the Liturgy, Troparion 2).

Christ is risen! Many happy and blessed returns!"

At noon the Community hosted a meal and among the celebrating guests were the Mayor of the city and the Sheikh.

His Beatitude addressed all present at the meal as follows:

"The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down" (Psalm 145,14), the psalmist says.

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Your Excellency President and respected members of the Ecclesiastical Committee,

Noble Christians,

The light of the Resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ which has filled both the earth and the heavens, as well as the parts below the earth, has gathered us all here so that along with the hymnographer Saint John of Damascus we may say:



“Willingly becoming poor with Adam’s poverty, O Christ God, Thou camest upon the earth, incarnate of a Virgin. And Thou didst accept the Cross that Thou mightiest free us from slavery to the enemy. O Lord, glory to Thee”(Wednesday after the Myrrh-bearing women, Matins, 1<sup>st</sup> Troparion of praises, of the Crucifixion).

And we wonder, who is the enemy of the slavery of man? The devil, namely the lord of this world (ref. Eph. 6,12) has put men under tyranny. From this tyranny of the devil did Christ liberate us through His Resurrection, as Luke the Evangelist says in the Acts of the Apostles: “ye know... Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10,37-38).

Through the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin and Theotokos Mary, in the Holy Spirit, the Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ became incarnate and took the same form of us men, so that He may transform the body of our humility to become of the same form with the body of His glory (ref. Phil. 3,21), that is, the body of His Resurrection.

In other words, my dear brethren, Christ conquered the death of corruption and sin and in more detail, the death of the body and soul’s paralysis, through His own death. And this happened, according to Saint Athanasius the Great, “so that the conciliation of God toward man may also be freedom of the whole humankind through man in the form of the new image of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”.

We, my dear brethren, being members of the body of Christ, have the Holy Church of Christ as our “Sheep’s pool”, where the healer of our bodies and souls is always present, both visibly and invisibly. God has granted us this great and unique beneficial and philanthropic Providence.

This Divine Providence is no other than our Mother and natural

feeder, the Church of Jerusalem, the Venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which throughout the centuries has remained a beacon and steadfast keeper of the truth in Christ, the faith in Christ, a guardian of the fatherly morals and an enemy of every newly-appearing seemingly religion, such as the Globalization and the New Order.

Christ and only Christ and His Church is the pool of life and the harbour of our recourse. Let us not turn our eyes and attention anywhere else, but only toward Christ, Who is the leader and founder of the faith and makes us perfect in it, as Saint Paul preaches: "...Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12,2)

Christ is risen! Many happy returns, blessed in the freedom of Christ!"

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **MEETING OF THE MAYOR OF JERUSALEM WITH THE HEADS OF CHURCHES**

On Monday afternoon, 26 April/ 9 May 2022, the Mayor of Jerusalem Mr Moses Leon met with the Heads of Churches of Jerusalem at the Monastery of the Franciscans in Jerusalem – Custody of the Holy Land.

At this meeting the Abbot of the Franciscans Fr Francesco Patton addressed the Mayor, underlining that the Jewish Passover was celebrated recently, during which the Jews remember the freedom God gave them from the bondage of Egypt.

The Christian Easter was celebrated as our transference from the bondage of sin to the freedom of the Resurrected Christ. Ramadan was also celebrated as a period of acquiring the virtues of fasting, abstinence and the help of the poor.

All these happened in Jerusalem, setting an example to remind us not only of the co-existence but also the brotherhood, the community of values and principles of life. "Believing these, we wish you Mr Mayor, wisdom and power to work toward the prosperity of all citizens of Jerusalem regardless their religion or nationality".

On this occasion, the Franciscan Brotherhood offered its emblem to the Mayor.

After the Custos, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed Mr Mayor as follows:

"Mr Mayor,

Your Beatitudes,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Ladies and Gentlemen

We thank you, Mr Mayor, for your kind invitation to this gathering in this festive season. This is a time of the year when the eyes of the world are turned toward Jerusalem, and when we are most aware of the importance of Jerusalem not just for those of us who live here, but for the whole of humanity.

As the focal point of the divine-human encounter, Jerusalem has a universal significance that transcends all human boundaries and divisions. We are all sons and daughters of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem is the spiritual home of all people of goodwill, regardless of their origin or creed. As we read in the Scriptures, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often have I

desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings” (Luke 13,34).

This Paschal season makes visible the mission of the Church in maintaining this special character of Jerusalem and in upholding the multicultural and multifaith heritage that we share. As you are well aware, this unique identity of Jerusalem and its universal vocation are the serious peril from Israeli radical groups whose actions threaten the very fabric and foundation of this Holy City. So egregious is their activity, that it is catching the attention of religious and governmental leaders around the world, who recognise the dangers of such groups, and we cannot but express our deep concern to you.

The Churches are willing to work together with you for the common benefit and common good of all our people, but this work must rest upon mutual respect and the security of the historic rights and privileges of the communities that make up our society. We wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank our fellow Heads of the Churches, especially His Paternity Father Francesco, who has been instrumental in building up our common witness.

We are living in challenging times, and the role of Jerusalem is of greater significance to the human family than ever before. We understand fully the complexities of the issues that we face, and we are committed to finding appropriate solutions that will contribute to the well being of all our people.

May God bless you, Mr Mayor, and your colleagues, in the work that you do on behalf of our Holy City and all who live here and come here on pilgrimage.

Thank you.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE FEAST OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN SUNDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

Sunday 25 April/ 8 May 2022 was celebrated by the Patriarchate as the Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women according to the book of Pentecostarion.

On this Sunday the Church commemorates Saint Joseph of Arimathaea – present-day Ramle – who asked Pilate for the Lord's body and buried Him along with the Myrrh-bearing Women.

This event was celebrated in Ramle, at the Holy Monastery of the Patriarchate, with the Divine Liturgy which was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences, the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina, Damascene of Yaffo, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Arab-speaking Priests, with the attendance of a large congregation of the Orthodox faithful of this city.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen,

and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre" (Mark 15,43-46) Mark the Evangelist testifies.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

Today the Holy Church of Christ honours and venerates the commemoration of the Holy Myrrh-bearing Women and that of the secret disciple, Joseph from Arimathaea, the current city of Ramle. According to the witness of the Evangelists, the Myrrh-bearing Women were true witnesses of the Resurrection, while Joseph and Nicodemus of the burial of our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as of His God-man nature of His.

"The Myrrh-bearing Women were the first people to see the Resurrection and they evangelised it to the disciples" according to the synaxarist. These women were the first witnesses of Christ's resurrection. "Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him" (Mark 16,6). Joseph and Nicodemus were distinguished for their bravery and boldness as Mark the Evangelist says: "Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus" (Mark 15,43).

Christ's resurrection, my dear ones, is the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets, that is the revelation of the purpose of the mystery of the incarnation of God the Word through the pure flesh of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. In other words, the Myrrh-bearing Women and the Lord's secret disciples Joseph and Nicodemus were given the grace of witness and speak about the One of whom "we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled" (John 1,1).

This graced of the Holy Spirit was given to the former

blasphemer and persecutor and injurious (1 Tim. 1,13) Saint Paul, when he was called unto his Apostolic office. He says: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3,8-10).

We, my dear brethren, being members of the body of Christ, that is the Church, which He beautified with His own blood (ref. Acts 20,28), have become communicants of this incomprehensible richness of Christ and the enlightenment of the mystery which was hidden for centuries in God, as well as of the diverse wisdom of God.

Indeed, the Church of Christ is his empty tomb, where "we receive the experience" (ref. Hebrews 11,36) of our resurrection in the communion of the body and blood of Christ during the Divine Liturgy. "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6,54) the Lord says. Our Holy Church of Christ is the place of "the Lord's Pascha", namely the place, or rather the empty tomb from which Christ God transfers us from the death of corruption and sin (= infirmity) to life eternal and from the earth to heaven, as the hymnographer says: "We celebrate the death of death, the destruction of Hades, the beginning of everlasting life. And with leaps of joy we praise the cause thereof, the only blest and most glorious God of our Fathers" (Easter Sunday, Ode 7, Troparion 3).

Saint Paul scorns those who say "that there is no resurrection" (1 Cor. 15,12) saying that if Christ is not risen then the faith of us Christians is in vain. "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your

faith is also vain" (1 Cor. 15,14).

Pointing out the power of faith the Holy Apostles and Evangelists advice thus; Saint Paul says, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving" (Col. 2,6-7). Judas, the brother of James the brother of God writes in his letter: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Judas 3). Saint John the Theologian preaches: "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5,4). No one can face our faith, which through works has gained the trophies for us, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says.

"We celebrate the death of death, the destruction of Hades, the beginning of everlasting life," the hymnographer says, paying heed to Saint Paul's preaching: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15,20). In other words, being perfect God and perfect man, Christ became the firstfruits of those who slept, because He was the first of men to tumble down death, just as our ancestor Adam entered the death of sin and became the firstfruits of the fallen, leading us to corruption, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says.

And according to Saint Gregory Palamas, "the Lord's resurrection is the renewal of the human nature, it is the reviving and renewal and restoration of the first Adam to the eternal life, because he was devoured by death because of sin and through death he regressed to the earth by which he was created".

Just like Eve was the first one to see Adam, likewise the first one to see the resurrected Christ was also a woman, Saint Gregory Palamas says. "First of all others was a woman



that saw Him; the Theotokos received first the gospel of the resurrection, as it was befitting and righteous, and she saw Him resurrected before anyone else, and enjoyed His divine voice”.

Through His Resurrection our Lord and God Jesus Christ inaugurated the entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, therefore, we, my dear brethren, let us entreat the Most Blessed Theotokos, the Myrrh-bearing Women and Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus, who buried the Lord, that by their intercessions we may be deemed worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven. Amen. Christ is risen! Many happy and peaceful returns!”

The feast was organised by the energetic Hegoumen Archimandrite Niphon, who addressed the Patriarch and hosted a meal along with the Community Council. At the meal His Beatitude addressed those present as follows:

“Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious” (Psalm 66,1-2), that Christ is risen!

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Respected President and honourable members of the Community Council,

Your Grace Archimandrite Niphon,

The grace of Christ’s secret disciple Joseph has led our footsteps to his hometown, the biblical Arimathaea, the current Ramle, to celebrate along with our Rum Orthodox flock living here the Lord’s Pascha, namely the three-day burial and the luminous Resurrection of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This event of our blessed Paschal gathering of both the clergy and the people shows the hypostatic power of the truth of our Christian faith, according to the true testimony of the

Evangelist John who says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1,14).

This glory of "the only begotten of the Father" Who is immortal is preached and confessed boldly by the Holy Church of Christ and especially by the Mother of all Churches, namely the Church of Jerusalem, which is founded on this very place of Golgotha, the sanctified by the divine blood on the Cross, but also by the new and empty tomb, from which the true shone forth, the Light of the Resurrected Christ.

This unwaning light of the glory of the Resurrected Christ, namely the truth, peace, righteousness and love of His, as well as His infinite philanthropy, is served throughout the centuries in the Holy Land by the visible and invisible presence of the Church of Jerusalem, the Venerable Rum Orthodox Patriarchate, which always follows the Lord's commands, "Fear not" (Matt. 10,31), "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16,33). "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God" (1 John 5,4-5).

We say this because in our days the power of evil and lawlessness is active as Saint Paul preaches: "the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (2 Thess. 2,7). However, we, my dear brethren, are fortified by the divine light and the hope of the resurrection and neither worry nor flinch, because as Saint Paul says, "God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2,13-14). Christ is risen! Many happy, blessed and peaceful returns!"

This feast was also celebrated at the chapel of the Myrrh-

bearing Women within Saint James Cathedral, with the Divine Liturgy which was officiated by His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa. Co-celebrants to His Eminence were the ministering Priests of the Cathedral, Fr Farah Bandour and George Baramki. The chanting was delivered by Monk Joseph of Mount Athos and Fadi Abdelnour in Greek on the right, and by the Cathedral's choir under Mr Rimon Kamar in Arabic on the left. The service was attended by the parish members of this Cathedral.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, the Myrrh-bearing Women's association of the Cathedral's community hosted a reception at the Ouzud restaurant.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THOMAS ' SUNDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

The Sunday 18 April / 1 May 2022 was celebrated by the Patriarchate as the second Sunday after Easter and Thomas' Sunday.

On this Sunday the Church commemorates that on the eighth day after His Resurrection, the Lord appeared to His Disciples in the upper room while the doors were closed when Thomas was also with them. The Lord urged Thomas to touch Him and when the latter did so, the Lord told him, "because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20, 24-31).

1. This event was celebrated in Cana of Galilee, along with

the celebration of the miracle of the wedding in Cana, that is, the turning of water into wine and the blessing of the wedding. This is celebrated on Thomas' Sunday due to the gospel narrative about the wedding in Cana, which is read on the Monday after Thomas' Sunday.

The feast in Cana was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Hagiotaphite Hierodeacons and Arab-speaking Priests from the Galilee district.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him" (John 2,11).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The divine grace of the resurrected Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour, has gathered us all in this holy place of Cana in Galilee where Christ's feet stood, but also His mother's the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, so that we may boldly confess the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this, is because as Saint Paul preaches, "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. 15,14).

Today and tomorrow's gospel narrative refer to the signs Jesus worked before His disciples, so that both they and we, may believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and by believing in Him we may have eternal life in His name (John 20,31).

In today's gospel narrative according to the Evangelist John,

we hear the Lord saying to Thomas: "because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20,29), while in the other gospel narrative we hear that "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 of Damascus refers to the need and power of faith for the comprehension of the mystery of the divine providence by saying: "the wonders are made manifest unto those who worship the mystery in faith" (Thursday of renewal week, Matins, praises, Troparion 1).

"And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God" (John 20,26-28).

Interpreting these words, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "So we reasonably do the gatherings on the eighth day and if we need to say the most secret ... although we close the doors, Christ comes and appears to all of us, both invisibly and visibly; invisibly as God, and visibly again in the body. He also allows them to give His holy flesh to hold. Because we approach by grace with the coming of God through a secret blessing, we accept Christ in our hands so that we too may believe that He truly resurrected Himself as a temple ... So we abandon infidelity as destructive and after we touch Christ, we find ourselves to be very faithful and to have absolute confidence in our mind."

In other words, my dear brethren, our participation in the sacrament of the mystical blessing, namely the communion of the sacred body and blood of our Saviour Christ, is the true confession and remembrance that the Lord died and was

resurrected for us in order to save us.

“And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage” (John 2,1-2).

Commenting on Christ's presence at the wedding in Cana, Zigavinos says: “The One who established marriage by law came to honour the wedding and sanctify it by His presence”. Saint Cyril of Alexandria references Saint Paul and says: “Being a friend of man, the Saviour honoured the wedding by His presence, as He is the joy and happiness of all so that He would distance the ancient curse of childbearing.” This is because the one who is in union with Christ is a new creation. The ancient curse which the Law of Moses had created and the sin have passed away. Behold, everything has become new. “Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5,17).

According to the witness of Saint John the Evangelist, speaking about Christ, Saint John the Baptist presents Him as the bridegroom and says: “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom” (John 3,29). Interpreting this verse, Saint Cyril of Alexandria refers to the spiritual wedding between humanity and Christ, which is accomplished through the Holy Baptism. And according to Zigavinos, the bride is “the faithful people, namely the Church which is mystically attached to Christ through faith”.

“In the manner of a sunray did Christ's glory shine”, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says, when “He did the beginning of the miracles in Cana of Galilee, in front of His Mother and Disciples” (ref. John 2,1-11). Among the many other signs Jesus did before His Disciples, is the touching of His side by the Apostle Thomas; His side which was pierced with the military spear.

Through His resurrection, my dear brethren, Christ conquered the death of corruption and sin and also dissolved the hatred between God and the people and granted us His peace “which passeth all understanding” (Philip. 4,7). “For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us” (Eph. 2,14) according to Saint Paul.

Our Holy Church calls upon this peace of Christ, namely the peace of the Holy Spirit, in every place and time. The confused and turbulent world is in need of this peace of Christ like never before. “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 are the words that our Lord and God Jesus Christ, Who is risen from the dead tells us. Amen. Christ is risen! Many happy returns, blessed and in peace!”

At noon the Hegoumen Archimandrite Chrysostom and the Ecclesiastical Council hosted a meal, where His Beatitude addressed all present as follows:

“This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118,24), the psalmist proclaims.

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Respected members of Churchwardens,

Reverend Archimandrite Chrysostom,

Dear brothers and sisters

The Holy Church of Christ rejoices today and is glad, especially the local Church of your city of Cana in Galilee, on this festal and Paschal day.

We thank our Triune God for the blessing He bestowed upon us, to gather in this place after the trial of the deadly covid disease.

The Passion on the Cross, the three-day burial and the Resurrection of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ are the fulfilment of the Divine Providence.

The living presence of the Christians in the Holy Land and in this holy shrine is a soundproof that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16,18), as the Lord said.

The preaching of the gospel of Christ is the preaching of righteousness, love, peace and divine philanthropy. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matt. 9,13) the Lord says. This is confirmed by Saint Paul's words: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6,12).

Behold again, why Christ's resurrection is the fulfilment of the mystery of the incarnation of the Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15, 26), Saint Paul preaches, calling upon the prophet Isaiah, who says: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15,54-55 / Isaiah 25,8).

My dear brethren, who live and visit the city of Cana in Galilee, where our Lord Jesus Christ worked His first miracle and revealed His glory; We have come along with our honourable entourage from the place of the resurrected Christ, our Saviour, the Holy city of Jerusalem, to exclaim the victorious greeting against death, "Christ is risen"!

Needless to say, We consider Ourselves personally a citizen of Cana and a member of your blessed Christian Community. For this reason, we tell you through the mouth of wise Paul; "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5,17).

Christ is risen! Many happy returns, fruitful in Christ."



## 2. At the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

The feast was celebrated with Great Vespers on Saturday afternoon, with the veneration of the Deposition slate and the Holy Sepulchre, the incense offering, Great Entrance and the Blessing of Bread at the Catholicon, which was led by the Patriarchal Commissioner, His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, along with Hagiotaphite Hieromonks. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and the Typikon Keeper of the monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen Archimandrite Alexios, as the service was attended by many local faithful Christians and numerous pilgrims.

On Sunday morning the Divine Liturgy was held as a 'Small Parresia' at the Holy Sepulchre, officiated again by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, with the co-celebration of Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Hierodeacons. The service was attended by local faithful Christians and numerous pilgrims and the chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon with the help of the Patriarchal School students.

After the feast, the Episcopal Entourage returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters.

There, the Patriarchal Commissioner wished the faithful Christians present, the light and the power of the Resurrected Christ.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE VISIT OF THE CHURCHES OF

# JERUSALEM ON THE OCCASION OF OUR PASCHA

On Wednesday, 14/27 April 2022, Wednesday of the Bright Week, the Churches of Jerusalem visited the Patriarchate on the occasion of our Pascha.

The first to visit the Patriarchate was the Franciscan monks, the custody of the Holy Land, under their Abbot, Fr Francesco Patton, whom His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed as follows:

“Your Paternity, dear Father Francesco,

Beloved members of our respective Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers

We welcome you warmly to our Patriarchate and we thank you for your thoughtful and heartfelt Paschal greetings.

We are living at a time when the contrast between the darkness of Good Friday and the light of Easter have never been more apparent to us. On Good Friday we sang these words:

*The whole creation was charged in fear,*

*When it saw you, O Christ,*

*Hanging on the Cross.*

*(Good Friday Vespers)*

And now we can sing:

*Your resurrection, O Christ our Saviour,*

*Has enlightened the whole world;*

*And you have restored your own creature.*

*(Paschal Vespers)*

This experience of darkness and light in our liturgy mirrors the experience of darkness and light in our lives and in our world.

The common purpose and efforts in which our Brotherhoods have been engaged in recent years have borne real fruit. In the care of the Holy Places and in the restoration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Church of the Nativity, we have accomplished much of importance together. Our united voice and witness have brought to the attention of the world the increasing challenges and threats that we face, and we take the opportunity of this blessed feast to thank you once again for your steadfast commitment to this.

We are fully aware of the realities we are experiencing in this Holy City and our beloved Holy Land. These realities include the increased activity of well-known Israeli radical groups against Christian properties at Jaffa Gate and New Gate. They also include the authorities and many police obstacles that our worshippers have faced in coming to the Holy Fire ceremony. It is incumbent upon us, who have built such an effective partnership, to continue to do our best to encourage the other members of the Christian family here to be drawn into our cooperation. For our best future depends on our deepening cooperation and our clear united witness.

Day by day we must keep our presence in the Holy Land visible, locally, regionally, and internationally. At this time of the year the eyes of the world are on the Holy Land, and what they see when they look at us is crucial. They must understand our common mission as a Christian family here. Therefore, it is time to lay aside matters of pride and triviality for the sake of the greater good and for the sake of protecting the Christian presence in this region.

Pilgrims come here precisely to escape the darkness and

difficulty of so much of life around the world. They come here to find comfort in times of fear, peace in times of unrest and violence; spiritual safety in times of worldly danger. They come here from the Good Friday of their daily lives even just for a brief glimpse of the light of the resurrection and the hope that this brings to them. In the Christian family here they must see this same comfort, this same peace, this same spiritual safety, this same light and hope.

As we keep this joyful Eastertide, let us recommit ourselves to this spiritual mission to which the Divine Providence has called us. Let us encourage our brothers and sisters in the Christian family and beyond to join us in this collective witness to the light of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us, as the Liturgy reminds us, lay aside every earthly care, that we may receive the King of all who is risen from the dead, and who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9).

May God bless you, dear Father Francesco, and your Brotherhood during this glorious season of the Light that shines from the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb, and May God bless all those entrusted in your care.

Christ is risen!

Thank you.”

Then the other local churches visited the Patriarchate, the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem under the Latin Patriarch Pierre Battista Pizzaballa, the Coptic church, the Syriac, Ethiopian, Lutheran and others.

The Latin Patriarch and the other Heads of churches were addressed by His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos as per below:

“Your Beatitude, dear Archbishop Pizzaballa,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers,

We welcome you gladly to our Patriarchate, and we thank you for your greetings as we celebrate this Easter feast. Our journey over these last few days has taken us from the darkness and fear of Good Friday to the triumph and joy of Easter Day.

With the Most Holy Mother of God on Good Friday we lamented:

*Where, O my Son and God,*

*are the good tidings of the Annunciation*

*that Gabriel brought me?*

*He called you King and God and Son of the Most High;*

*And now, O my sweet Light,*

*I behold you naked, wounded, lifeless.*

*(Good Friday Vespers)*

And yet, now we can sing with equal fervour:

*Your resurrection, O Christ Saviour,*

*has enlightened the whole world.*

*(Paschal Vespers)*

We celebrate this Paschal Feast, confident that light has overcome the darkness, and hope has banished fear. This is the heart of the message that the world longs to hear in these times of war and conflict, confusion and distress, instability and dread.

In this Holy City in our beloved Holy Land, we are celebrating this blessed season confronted by certain realities that we must face. These realities include the increased activity of well-known Israeli radical groups against Christian properties at Jaffa Gate and New Gate. They also include the authorities and many police obstacles that our worshippers have faced in coming to the Holy Fire ceremony. Therefore, this is a reminder that we must be ever vigilant in remaining united in our common purpose, if we are to present ourselves, and be seen by others locally, regionally, and internationally, to be a Christian family here. As Saint Paul says, who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (Romans 8:35).

We rejoice in the strength and commitment of the mutual respect and understanding that exist between us, and we take this blessed opportunity, Your Beatitude, to express our gratitude for, and our recognition of, all that you have done and continue to do to ensure the best possible cooperation between our two communities.

We must continue to do all in our power to bring along the other members of our Christian family here into a closer fellowship of purpose and resolve. We must build on the foundation that we share, so that we may be stronger to meet the challenges and difficulties that we are all facing in the current climate. As we read in the First Epistle of Saint Peter, Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves, must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God MAY be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 4:11).

A world wrapped in fear looks to Jerusalem in hope, especially this season. MAY we, in all that we do, embrace without reserve our common vocation to be a living witness to this hope. MAY we be those who live the light of the resurrection, so that all those who are bound by terror and despair MAY find

here joy, renewal and encouragement.

MAY God bless you, Your Beatitude, your colleagues, and the communities that you serve, and MAY the light that shines from the All-holy Tomb and Life-giving Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ banish all fear and darkness from our minds and hearts.

Christ is risen!

Thank you.”

The Patriarchate returned this visit to the churches celebrating the Feast of Easter on the same date, the Syriacs, and Ethiopians, through His Eminence Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia.

During the Bright Week also, the Communities of the Rum-Orthodox Arab-speaking flock of the Patriarchate visited His Beatitude, for the Feast of Easter.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE LITURGY OF PASCHA AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

The joyful Feast of Pascha was celebrated by the Patriarchate with an all-night Vigil at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on Sunday night 11/24 April 2022. After the cathode from the Patriarchate at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at midnight (summertime) the Canon of Holy Saturday was chanted at the Catholicon while the Patriarch, the High Priests, Priests and Deacons put on their liturgical vestments.

After the Canon, there was a litany three times around the Sacred Edicule, which concluded with the reading of the Gospel narrative according to Saint Mark on the resurrection. This was followed by the chanting of "Christ is risen".

Consequently, there Canon of Saint John of Damascus was read, the 9<sup>th</sup> Ode, the Praises, the Glory and with "Christ is risen" changed three times the Matins was completed.

The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom began at the Holy Sepulchre, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, and the Archbishops, Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis and Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella. The service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and members of the Consulate General, and many faithful Christians who chanted joyfully and loudly the 'Christ is risen' in Greek, Arabic, Romanian, Russian and other languages.

Before the Holy Communion, the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod read His Beatitude's Pascha message as per below:

"Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matthew 28, 5-6).

With these comforting words, the Myrrh-bearing Women were encouraged by "the angel that hath come down from heaven and moved the stone of the tomb", where the crucified Jesus Christ the Nazarene had been buried. The Myrrh-bearing Women, who bore the myrrh in tears, were astounded by the vision of the empty tomb, for this reason, the angel encouraged them with his presence and with the words: "fear not ye". Appearing "like lightning and white like snow", he was sitting at the tomb and said to the women: "I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen". And he was



not ashamed to call Him crucified, for this was the good chapter", according to Saint Chrysostom.

The bright like lightning angel announced something unheard of and impossible for the people. He announced what could happen only by the providence, the will and the power of God. That Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son and Word of God, and crucified in the flesh, having been buried, was risen from the dead and co-resurrected the human flesh He had received along with the whole Adam, by a mighty hand. Out of love for man, Saint Chrysostom explains, "having risen from the royal thrones, God entered the earth and even Hades, and the devil became an opponent not to a naked God but to a God hidden within the human nature" and we see "death being released by death and the curse annulling the curse, and through these, the tyranny of the devil in all things he prevailed is now abolished". Indeed, through the Saviour's death, the tyranny of death has been abolished. "Through the Cross, joy came unto the whole world". Hades became bitter and therefore he was mocked, thinking that he received a common mortal. That is why, in the faith and power of Christ's Resurrection, the Apostle of nations rephrases the prophesy: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15, 54-55).

The Myrrh-bearing women experienced the Resurrection not only from the vision of the empty Tomb and the Angel and the hearing of his words but also from the vision of the Resurrected Lord Himself. "Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me" (Matthew 28, 9-10). Indeed, for forty days the Lord appeared many times as the Apostle Paul testifies, "And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After

that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles" (1 Corinthians 15, 5-7), speaking to them, confirming His crucified and resurrected body, receiving food and eating before them. Finally, receiving the worship of the eleven in Galilee, the mountain where Jesus had appointed them, He ordered them to go and teach all nations (Matthew 28, 16-19).

Fulfilling this command, the Apostles received the Holy Spirit and preached unto the ends of the world "the one they had seen with their own eyes and touched with their own hands", they enchanted the universe, becoming the twelve pillars of the body of the Church, while Christ is its cornerstone. The body of the Church that has been built by the Lord, for which He said "the gates of hell shall not overcome it" (Matthew 16,18), continues throughout the centuries His sanctifying and redeeming mission through His Disciples and their heirs, the Bishops and Priests. In its crucified-and-resurrected course in the world, the Church, vivified by the blood of the Cross, from which it was created, conveys power, hope and joy for the creation, maintenance, refreshment and restoration of man from the ruins and the ashes of wars, repeating the comforting invitation of Christ, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11,28).

The Church of Jerusalem, appointed by the Resurrected Christ Himself to serve at the places of His appearance in the flesh, being under pressure, especially recently, by radical extremist and hostile to it elements, however, not crushed by them, fights bravely in one accord and unity for the rights of the Christian presence and its flock in the Holy Land and welcomes the pious pilgrims during their pilgrimage as its own flock and sends to them and its pious flock all over the world the Paschal greeting "Christ is risen from the dead, by death He hath tumbled down death and to those in the grave He hath given life!"

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, Pascha 2022

Fervent supplicant for all before God,

**THEOPHILOS III**

Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem

When the Priests received the Holy Communion inside the Edicule, the crowds of the people also received the Holy Communion around the Catholicon.

Before dismissal, the Sermon of Saint John Chrysostom was read.

Finally, bells tolling, the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate, where Easter eggs and cheese were offered.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **BROTHERHOOD VISITS FOR THE EASTER FEAST OF THE WESTERN CHURCHES**

On Holy Tuesday morning, 6/19 April 2022, the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood according to the custom and contributing to the peaceful pilgrims' coexistence, visited the Franciscan Fraternity Custodian in the Holy Land for the Feast of Easter.

For this visit, the Hegoumen of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed all present as follows:

“Your Paternity, dear Father Francesco,

Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

We greet you today as you celebrate the Feast of Easter with joy and in Paschal hope. As Saint John of Damascus says on this feast:

*For it is meet that the heavens should rejoice,*

*and that the earth should be glad,*

*and that the whole world, both visible and invisible,*

*should keep the feast;*

*for Christ, our everlasting joy, hath risen.*

(The Canon of Pascha)

We celebrate the Paschal Feast with joy and hope, even in the face of so many challenges around the world and throughout our region. We celebrate the Paschal Feast with joy and hope, even in the face of conflicts and wars around the world. We celebrate the Paschal Feast with joy and hope, even in the face of grave difficulties facing our communities in this Holy City.

For we are privileged to celebrate Easter on the very spot where the blood of the Righteous One was shed and in the very place from which He was raised from the dead. This alone is a cause of joy and hope.

We remind ourselves at Easter that ours is an apostolic mission as the guardians and servants of the Holy Places, a mission of prayer, peace, reconciliation, and salvation.

And we have seen remarkable fruits of this mission in our common work to continue and complete the restoration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. At no time in our history have our two Brotherhoods been in closer alliance and

collaboration, and this is itself a cause of both joy and hope. We wish to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to you for your unwavering commitment to this work.

In our common mission, we continue to work to defend the rights of Christians to worship at the Holy Places and especially in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre during this holiest of seasons in the face of the attempts by the authorities to restrict the number of worshipers. Together, we are standing against increasing threats from Israeli radical groups at Jaffa Gate and at New Gate, which have been exacerbated by the trespass into the Little Petra Hostel. And these incidents are in addition to the increase in the daily insults and intimidation to which our clergy and people are subjected.

As we celebrate this joyful and hopeful Paschal season, we recommit ourselves to our shared responsibility to do all in our power to preserve the Christian character of Jerusalem and to make it possible morally, spiritually, and materially for Christians to remain here in Jerusalem and in the Middle East. This is our home, and the power of the witness of the Gospel of peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation in our broken and confused world depends on a vibrant Christian presence in the Holy Land.

We wish you, dear Father Francesco, your Brotherhood and the communities that you serve, a joyful and hope-filled Easter.

Christ is risen!

Thank you."

After this visit, the Brotherhood visited the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem, under the leadership of its Patriarch, Mr Pierre Batista Pizabala. During this visit His Beatitude delivered the following address:

"Your Beatitude, dear Archbishop Pizzaballa,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers,

We greet you, Your Beatitude, on the occasion of your celebration of the Easter Feast with the joyful words of the hymnographer:

*Rejoice, O peoples, and be glad.*

*An angel sat upon the stone of the tomb;*

*He himself proclaimed the glad tidings to us, saying:*

*Christ is risen from the dead,*

*the Saviour of the world,*

*and he has filled all things with fragrance.*

*Rejoice, O peoples and be glad.*

(Matins of Bright Week)

We keep this joyful Paschal season at a time of great difficulty. Around the world, in our region, and in this Holy City, the human family faces a tremendous challenge. There are wars and conflicts abroad, and here at home, the Christian communities are enduring unprecedented threats to our very existence and to the integrity of the true character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

And yet, we keep the Paschal Feast with joy and confidence. We are bound together in our common mission here, and we have shown our united witness in the face of those who would undermine both our way of life as well as the historic and universally recognised basis of our rights and privileges as those who have lived and worshipped here for centuries. We are the living witness that Jerusalem and the Holy Land belong to

one community exclusively; this is a home to peoples of diverse faiths and traditions, and our mission is to ensure that all may live and worship in Jerusalem and the Holy Land safely and in harmony.

We wish to take this opportunity to commend you, Your Beatitude, for your ongoing commitment to your own pastoral work and mission. In times like the present, when our people are living under such tremendous pressure, the pastoral vocation of the Church is of the utmost importance. We have the responsibility to do all that is in our power – morally, spiritually and practically – to support and help our communities so that Christians are able to remain here in their homes and with their livelihoods. At no other time in recent history has the health and strength of the Christian presence here been more vital.

The good relations that we share and the common witness in the face of challenges that we show are of crucial importance in maintaining the Christian presence here. We are committed to deepening these relations and strengthening our common witness so that the world may know and understand the seriousness of our mission.

Among these commitments is the defence of the rights of Christians to worship at the Holy Places and especially in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre during this holiest of seasons in the face of the attempts by the authorities to restrict the numbers of worshipers. Also, we stand together to protect the Christian Quarter against increasing threats from Israeli radical groups at Jaffa Gate and at New Gate, which have now found a new extreme in the trespass into the Little Petra Hostel. And we continue to raise our collective voice in the face of increased daily insults and intimidation to which our clergy and people are subjected.

Our shared commitment to defend and preserve the Christian presence here gives us joy and confidence in this Paschal

season, and this is why we can rejoice, even in the face of all that is happening in our world and in our region. For in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead we have been given the assurance of the ultimate victory of life over death. As Saint Paul reminds us,

*I am convinced that neither death,*

*nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present,*

*nor things to come, nor powers,*

*nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,*

*will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

(Romans 8:38-39)

We wish you, Your Beatitude, and your communities, the joy of this Easter Feast, and the confidence that is our in the resurrection. MAY God bless you and you care for those who are entrusted to your pastoral oversight.

Christ is risen!

Thank you."

Finally, His Beatitude, accompanied by the Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos and Geronda Secretary-General, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina visited the Apostolic Delegate, representative of the Vatican in Jerusalem and the Archbishop of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem Most Reverend Naoum Housam.

**From Secretariat-General**