

# LAZARUS' SATURDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

1. At the place of the Ascension the Great Vespers was observed on Friday 2/15 April 2022, led by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias. Co-celebrants to His Eminence were the Archimandrites Makarios, Kallistos and Dionysios, Priest George Baramki, Hierodeacons Mihail and Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon with the Patriarchal School Students and Saint James' choir under the lead of Mr Rimon Kamar. Within the service of the Compline in the evening, there was a litany to the Church of Men of Galilee which was blessed by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. On Saturday morning the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias in the presence of Rum Orthodox Palestinian, Russian, Romanian and Greek pilgrims.

The Episcopal Entourage and the congregation were offered a reception by the Caretaker of the Shrine, Monk Achilios.

## 2. In Bethany

In remembrance of the resurrection of Lazarus, who came from Bethany, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated on Saturday morning, 3/16 April 2022 at the Monastery of Lazarus' sisters, Martha and Mary, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences the Archbishops, Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Philoumenos of Pella, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archimandrites Klaudios and Epiphanius, Palestinian and Russian Priests, as the chanting was delivered by Mr Gotsopoulos and the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, pilgrims and local faithful.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world” (John 11,25-27), Saint John the Evangelist says as an eye witness.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the brother of Martha and Mary and friend of our Lord Jesus Christ, Lazarus, has gathered us in this holy place of the biblical Bethany, to celebrate Lazarus rising from the dead on the one hand and the confirmation by Christ of our common resurrection before His passion on the Cross on the other.

The detailed narrative of Lazarus’ resurrection from the dead by Saint John the Evangelist is placed just before the triumphant entrance of Jesus Christ in the Holy City of Jerusalem with palm trees’ branches. That is why our Holy Church calls this day “the Saturday before Palm Sunday”, or the Saturday before the Passion Week of our Lord Jesus Christ. “Today Bethany proclaims beforehand the Resurrection of Christ the Giver of life, and it rejoices at the rising of Lazarus” (Matins, Ode one, Troparion 4).

The three-day burial and resurrection from the dead of Jesus Christ is the peak of the mystery of the Divine Providence, namely the incarnation of the Son and Word of our God the Father through the pure flesh of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, it testifies to our freedom from sin and the

corruption of death as well as the time of the last judgment, the divine righteousness. "For the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5,28-29) the Lord says. Likewise, the prophet Isaiah said through the Holy Spirit: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise" (Isaiah 26,19).

Saint Cyril of Alexandria interpreting the Lord's word in the Gospel "Loose him [Lazarus], and let him go" (John 11,44), says: "To our benefit, He did not untie him by His own hands, so that there would be no chance of slander, but all became witnesses of the miracle. And this is a sample of the catholic resurrection when each one shall be set free, loosened from the bondage of sin and the corruption of death".

And Saint Paul, showing the greatness of the resurrection of our Saviour Christ says: "But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. 15,13-14).

Anticipating the resurrection of the dead, my dear brethren, let us say along with the hymnographer: "Before Thine own death, O Christ, Thou hast raised from hell Lazarus that was four days dead, and hast shaken the dominion of death. Through this one man whom Thou hast loved, Thou hast foretold the deliverance of all men from corruption. We, therefore, worship Thine almighty power and cry; blessed art Thou, O Saviour, who comes in glory, have mercy upon us and save our souls" (Praises, troparia 2,3).

Have a blessed Holy Week and a good Easter! Amen!"

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday, 25 March / 7 April 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Nazareth.

On this feast, the Church commemorates that Archangel Gabriel visited the Most Holy Mary in Nazareth and announced to her that she was going to conceive from the Holy Spirit and give birth to the Incarnate Son of God for the rebirth and salvation of the humankind. When Mary said the words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38), then along with the bodiless voice of the Angel, the Bodiless One received a body, the Son and Word of God became incarnate and Mary became the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin.

For this feast the Divine Liturgy was celebrated:

1. At the Shrine of the Annunciation in Nazareth, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with their Eminences, the Metropolitans Kyriakos of Nazareth and Isychios of Kapitolias, the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina and Methodios of Tabor, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Arab-speaking Priests from the Holy Metropolis of Nazareth, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the Nazareth Community Byzantine choir and the service was attended by Rum Orthodox Arab-speaking faithful from Galilee,

Russian Orthodox Christians and some Greek pilgrims.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14, Matt. 1:23) the Prophet Isaiah exclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in this holy place, which has been sanctified by the body of our Lord, this city of Nazareth, to glorify in Eucharist the revelation of “the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ” (Eph. 3:9), the Son of God and Son of the Virgin.

And this Virgin, who had been foretold by the Prophet Isaiah is no other than the one witnessed by Luke the Evangelist, “a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary” (Luke 1:27). Coming to her, the messenger of God Archangel Gabriel said: “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women... And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus... The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore, also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:26-35).

Indeed, the Ever-Virgin Mary is what the hymnographer has said: “the capital of the salvation of the people”. And this is because “the mystery of Christ’s providence”, namely the faith in Christ, has become the fulfilment of the Law and the

Prophets of the Old Testament, as the wise Paul preaches: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4-5).

Interpreting the above words of Paul, Ecumenios on the one hand denotes: "he didn't say through a woman... but by a woman, showing the conceived body of the Lord in her essence, as He became the fruit of her womb". On the other hand, Eusebius says: "because sin was caused by a woman, it was by a woman that the Saviour came, namely Christ". That is why Saint Cyril of Alexandria also says in praise: "Rejoice Mary Theotokos, through Whom the unspeakable grace came forth, for which Saint Paul said: "the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). Rejoice, Mary Mother of God, through whom the true Light our Lord Jesus Christ came forth, who says in the Gospels: "I am the Light of the world" (John 8:12). Rejoice, Mary Theotokos, through whom the light shone to those sitting in the darkness and the shadow of death. "The people which sat in darkness saw great light" (Matt. 4:16). Who is that light, if not our Lord Jesus Christ, the true light, "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). Rejoice, Mary the heirloom of the whole world".

Truly, my dear brethren, the Virgin from Nazareth became the heirloom of the whole world. And this, because the annunciation of the full of grace and blessed among women Mary (Luke 1:28), has provided "a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us" (Hebrews 10:20). In other words, the annunciation of the Mother of God has inaugurated the way of salvation, that is the cure of man from sin, namely the infirmity and the corruption of death. "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26) the Lord says.

Referring to the resurrection, the wise Paul says: "But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. 15:13-14). This means that our resurrection in Christ necessarily predisposes the great mystery of the incarnation of God the Word and our Saviour Jesus Christ through the pure flesh of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit. Without the power of our faith, it is impossible to reason with or comprehend the mystery of the divine providence in Christ. "Behold, I lay in Sion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded; but on whomsoever, it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (1 Peter 2:6-7, Matt. 21:44) the Lord says.

This is also phrased in his hymn by Saint John Damascene: "No tongue can speak of your wonderful childbearing, for the order of nature was overruled by God! You were revealed to be a mother above nature, for you remained a Virgin beyond reason and understanding! Your conception was most glorious, Theotokos! The manner of your giving birth was ineffable, Virgin! Knowing you to be the Mother of God, devoutly we pray to you: beseech Him to save our souls" (Octoechos, tone 7, Saturday Vespers Glory).

God's unsearchable judgments and ways past finding out (ref. Romans 11:33), became known, according to Saint Paul "unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3:10). And the Church of Christ claimed through the God-bearing Fathers who have been inspired by the Holy Spirit in the Ecumenical Synods, that the pure Virgin Mary should be called Theotokos (Mother of God). Let us hear the words of Saint Cyril of Alexandria: "it is, therefore, befitting to our correct and unchangeable confession of faith to say Theotokos and confess the Holy Theotokos... for the Holy Virgin did not give birth to divinity, but in flesh, she was in union with the Word of God...

and it is thus true that the Virgin became Theotokos, giving birth paradoxically to Christ, making us also partakers of flesh and blood (ref. Hebrews 2:14), and of one essence for her and for us according to the flesh, as he is flesh from the Theotokos Mary”.

Behold, therefore, my dear brethren, why our Holy Church magnifies in praise the Theotokos, to whom the Angel of God Gabriel announced “Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God” (Luke 1:30).

And let us say along with the hymnographer: “All-Holy Virgin, thou art greater in honour than the glorious cherubim. Unable to endure the divine splendour, they veil their faces with their wings as they perform their ministry; but thou dost gaze with thine own eyes upon the incarnate Word. Without ceasing pray to him for our souls” (Triodion Monday of the 5<sup>th</sup> week, KathismaTheotokion 4), as well as for the ceasefire, for peace in our region and in the whole world. Many happy returns and a blessed Pascha! Amen”.

At noon, His Eminence the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth hosted a meal for the Patriarchal Entourage, Mr Cezar Marjieh and others, where His Beatitude delivered the following address:

“And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” (Isaiah 40:5), the prophet Isaiah proclaims.

Your Eminence, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Your Excellency President Mr Bassim and respected members of the Ecclesiastical Council,

Dear associates,

Our Holy Church celebrates today the joyful and universal event of the Annunciation of the Theotokos, namely the appearance of “the salvation of God”, which took place in your historical and biblical city, Nazareth.

The presence of the Christians in the Holy Land throughout the centuries and of course in the city of Nazareth is proof that testifies to the sacred mission of the Church of Jerusalem which preaches love, peace and the righteousness of Christ. Moreover, it is proof that the Church as the body of Christ, while Christ is its head (ref. Eph. 1:22-23), is the blessed divine fruit of the womb of the pure full of grace Virgin Mary, which bestows the light of life and truth upon the world.

This true light of life and hope shines upon all the people, as another beacon in our historic world of the so-called “New World Order”, where war, disorder, lawlessness and disorder prevail. “For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work” (James 3:16), Saint James the Brother of God and first Hierarch of Jerusalem preaches.

We say this to show the exceeding magnitude of the power of the Church and in particular, of the Church of Jerusalem, the Rum-Orthodox Patriarchate, which is the guarantee of the New Testament according to Saint Paul who says: “By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament” (Hebrews 7:22), and in simple words, for as much as Christ became a High Priest, so much more He became a guarantor and broker of the high and eternal Testament.

As for us, my dear brethren, paying heed to the God-inspired voice of Saint Paul: “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:12-13), we are called to remain faithful in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of which the Mother of God became also Mother of the Church of our Lord and

God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Allow Us to announce the official approval of the funding of the renovation of the Holy Shrine of the Church of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Nazareth by the known Russian Foundation. We hope to start working on this project as soon as possible by the will of God.

Many happy returns and blessed Pascha”.

2. At the Theotokos’ Tomb in Gethsemane. The Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Eminence Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia, with the co-celebration of Archimandrite Klaudios, the ministering Priests of the Shrine, in the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, to who we convey our wished for many happy returns on his Name Day.

The Episcopal Entourage and the congregation were offered a reception by the recently appointed Hegoumen, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, to whom we wish the intercession of the Most-Holy Theotokos.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF THE ADORATION OF THE HOLY CROSS AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> /27<sup>th</sup> March 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Sunday of the Adoration of the Sacred Cross at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

This feast has been ordained by the Church to be celebrated in the middle of the Holy and Great Lent so that the faithful may receive strength from the protection of the Holy Cross in the struggle of the fast.

This feast was celebrated on Saturday afternoon with the Service of Great Vespers, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. The service included the welcoming reception and the veneration of the Holy Deposition slate, the Holy Sepulchre and then the bells, incense offering procedure, Great Entrance and Blessing of bread, with the co-prayer of High Priests and the co-celebration of the Hagiotaphite Hieromonks.

The feast concluded with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning at the Holy Sepulchre, which was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Metropolitan Ivan from the Patriarchate of Serbia, the Archbishops, Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Theodosios of Sebastia, Nectarios of Anthedona, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, and those from the Patriarchates of Moscow and Romania, Priests from other Orthodox Churches, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Gotsopoulos and the service was attended by members of the Jerusalem Community and some pilgrims, along with a group of Rum-Orthodox Arab-speaking faithful from Ai-Labun under the lead of Fr. Spyridon.

The Divine Liturgy concluded with a litany three times around the Holy Sepulchre and the shrines.

Finally, the congregation went to the Patriarchate Reception Hall where His Beatitude delivered the following address:

“In Paradise of old the tree stripped me bare; for by giving

me its fruit to eat the enemy brought in death. But now the Tree of the Cross that clothes men with the garment of life has been set up on earth and the whole world is filled with boundless joy. Beholding it venerated, O ye people, let us with one accord raise in faith our cry to God: His house is full of glory!" the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (Matins, Triodion, Troparion 1).

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Noble Christians,

Our Holy Church celebrates the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent, the day of the adoration of the Sacred Cross, in the middle of the period of the Holy Lent.

The wood which stripped us bare from paradise and brought in death, this very wood became the Cross of our Saviour Christ, bringing to us the garment of life. And this because according to Saint Theodore the Studite, "the Church has been revealed as a second Paradise, having within it, like the first Paradise of old, a tree of life, Thy Cross, O Lord. By touching it we share in immortality" (Triodion, Ode 5, Troparion 4). This immortality is no other than Christ Himself, "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Timothy 6:16), according to Saint Paul.

We also become participants of the energy of this light that no man can approach unto, my dear brethren, through the veneration of the Sacred Cross. And this because, as Saint Paul says, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:23-24).

Precisely because the life-giving Cross brings along with It the divine righteousness and power of the One Crucified on It, It has become a weapon against the devil, that is why Saint Paul preaches thus: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). And the hymnographer joyfully exclaims "Today the ranks of angels dance with gladness at the veneration of Thy Cross. For through the Cross, O Christ, Thou hast shattered the hosts of devils and saved mankind" (Triodion Ode 5, Troparion 3). According to Saint John Damascene, the sacred wood of the Cross is "truly sacred, where Christ brought Himself a sacrifice for us...and it has been sanctified by the touch of the Holy Body and Blood". That is why "we venerate the type of the Sacred and Life-giving Cross, even if it is made of a different material, not worshipping the material [let it not be so] but the type of as a symbol of Christ".

Today the Holy Church of Christ projects the Sacred Cross in adoration, which we, who live in the Holy City of Jerusalem "have worshipped at the place of His footstool" (Psalm 132:7), that is the Holy Church of the Resurrection, in order to receive grace and power to complete the struggle of the Holy Lent. Let us then say along with the hymnographer: "What shall we offer Thee, O Christ? For Thou hast given us Thy Precious Cross to venerate, on which Thy Holy Blood was shed, to which Thy flesh was fixed by nails. With love, we kiss it and give thanks to Thee" (Triodion, Ode 4, Troparion 4).

Amen. Many happy returns and a Happy Easter!"

**From Secretariat-General**

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# DOXOLOGY ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL FEAST OF 25TH MARCH 1821

On Thursday 11/24 March 2022 a Doxology was observed at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on the anniversary of the National feast of 25 March 1821.

The Doxology was observed primarily as an entreaty to God for the repose of the souls of the fighters of 1821, who fell fighting for the faith and country, and as thanks to God for His help to our nation, to be free from the Ottoman yoke and the establishment of the freedom in Christ.

The Doxology was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with the Hagiotaphite High Priests, Hieromonks and Deacons. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon on the right and Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos on the left, with the help of the Patriarchate School Students. The service was attended by the members of the Greek Community, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and Consulate members.

After the Doxology all congregation returned to the Patriarchate Reception Hall where His Beatitude addressed those present as follows:

**“Come in zeal at this time, to make an oath on the Cross...lift up the Cross on the banners and strike the enemy like thunder and lightning”**, Rigas Feraios exclaims at his revolutionary poem “Thurium”.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today's anniversary of the Greek Revolution of 25<sup>th</sup> March 1821 is a unique and unprecedented event in world history, and this is because the divine good of freedom is inextricably linked after Christ's conscious awareness of the self-sacrifice of the pious race of the Roman Orthodox Christians and our Blessed Greek Nation.

The Metropolitan of Palaion Patron Germanos raised the Holy Banner of the Resurrection on March 25, 1821, the day of the feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin, listening to your liberating sermon of wise Paul, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1).

The view of the idea of freedom that took shape in Christianity was the one that distinguished the Greek Revolution of '21 from contemporary revolutions of other peoples. This is also denounced by the nationalist slogan of the Elder of Moria Theodoros Kolokotronis: "now our fight is for the faith of Christ and the holy freedom of the country". This is also testified by the call of Rigas Feraios to his revolutionary play "Thurium": "Let us take the oath on the Cross".

The Greeks, whose patriotism and freedom are the special features of their long and varied history, were not possible to be reconciled with the kind of slavery of the Ottoman yoke, who insulted their cultural, spiritual and ethno-religious heritage, which contributed decisively to the elevation and decoration of the moral standards and also to the enlightenment of the minds of those people "that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Luke 1:79)

The greatness of the sacrifice of the revolutionary Greeks for freedom and the name of Christ is reflected so much in the slogan "freedom or death" as in the confession of the

established new martyrs of the Church, "I was born a Christian and as a Christian shall I die!"

The heroes and new martyrs of the revolution of '21 undoubtedly paid heed to the Gospel words: "fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).

And we say this because the contribution of the Church and the clergy to the national uprising of 1821 was indeed unparalleled and great. The Church as a spiritual institution became the primary leading force of the Roman people under the yoke. The Church is the one that represented the national and religious identity of the Greeks.

The feast of the national uprising of 1821 is not merely an even to historical memory but rather of a sacred consignment sealed with the heroic and martyr's blood "of the freedom which stems from the sacred bones of the Greeks". This sacred consignment we are called to preserve and hand over to the next generations.

The Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood of ours participates in the anniversary festivities of the sacred memory of the National Rebirth of the noble and royal nation of the Rum Orthodox and our Nation, and as it should it renders "tribute to whom tribute is due" (Romans 13:7), so we came down to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to offer thanksgiving praise and Doxology to our Lord Jesus Christ, who was Crucified and Resurrected from the dead for us. We also prayed for the eternal repose in the land of the living of the blessed souls of those who fell like martyrs while fighting for the faith and the country in the sacred battles of our nation.

For all these, let Us raise Our glass on a toast and as we should, cry out loud:

Long live 25<sup>th</sup> March 1821!

Long live the noble and royal nation of the Rum Orthodox!

Long live Hellas!

Long live our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood!"

After His Beatitude's address, Mr Vlioras also said the following:

"Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences, High Priests,

Reverend Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today, Ecumenical Hellenism proudly celebrates and honours the anniversary of the Revolution of 1821, the most glorious page in modern Greek history, a struggle for altars and hearths, a point of reference and a symbol for the Greek nation, which had as its happy ending the establishment of the modern Greek state and the rebirth of the Democracy in its cradle.

In every historical period, there is a pole, a historical event that marks it, and becomes a point of reference for all of us later. March 25, 1821, is this milestone in the modern history of Hellenism, marking the turning point when the Greeks made the heroic decision to rise, alone against many, against the Ottoman tyranny and to claim freedom with their blood. It was spring even then, almost two centuries ago, when Hellenism took up arms against the sanctuary to claim its freedom. This ideal that our people adored in the insurmountable greatness of the sacrifice of illiterate, ragged and hungry men, armed men and thieves, priests, women and children.

Our National Uprising is the greatest proof that, above any interests, difficulties and obstacles, the soul and spirit of a people with a high mindset, worthy of its historical mission, excels.

So, in those times, as in any difficult time, there were many who surpassed themselves and showed heroism, beyond what we call a well-meaning duty. Prominent personalities but also ordinary, everyday people, who suddenly found themselves in the forefront of history, responded to one, to the call of the struggle, without hesitating, without bowing, indelibly marking the history and life of Hellenism.

In cruciform temples and poor chapels, the desire for freedom ignited in the souls of enslaved Greeks. With meagre or non-existent means, with the courage to make up for the lack of armaments, they pushed for good the course of our historical course towards justice and freedom. In this struggle, everyone served the idea of freedom, with unique patriotism, self-sacrifice and self-denial. "And if we are few in the crowd of Braimis", observes General Makrygiannis, "we are comforted in a way, that our luck always has the Greeks few. That beginning and end, past and present, all the beasts fight to eat us and cannot. They eat from us and yeast remains. And when the few decide to die, a few times they lose and many win."

National anniversaries are useful for all of us when they are an opportunity to renew, with openness and determination, our commitment to the ideals for which the founders of our freedom fought and the realization that our justice, progress and prosperity are the result of our own effort and our own struggle, individual and collective. Let us listen to the words of General Makrygiannis, that "we all have this homeland together, and the wise and the ignorant, and the rich and the poor, and the politicians and the military, and the smallest people."

The completion of 201 years of our National Rebirth, invites

us to reflect on the successes and challenges of our National Life, but also the continuation of our collective course, since it is characteristic of our national identity to celebrate not the destination but the journey, full of discoveries, full of adventure, as Constantine Cavafy wrote, to try, to seek, to discover and not to give up as Tennyson wrote about Odysseus.

So let us stand with respect before the sacrifice of our ancestors, the heroes of '21, and let us be exemplified by their patriotism and self-denial so that we can vigorously respond to the challenges of our troubled times.

Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences, High Priests,

Reverend Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For the Holy Land and our presence in it, the venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, with its long and multifaceted offer and the highest pastoral work, is the guardian of the moral and spiritual values of our Orthodox faith.

Our patriarchate of Jerusalem testifies to the time of the dynamic presence of the Greek and Orthodox tradition in the Middle East. Its high mindset and struggles, under adverse conditions, until today, are for all of us an invaluable national capital and a source of inspiration and empowerment.

For all of us, March 25, 1821, is an exceptional occasion to reflect on our responsibilities and to renew our commitment to the ideals that constitute the quintessence of our Greek and Orthodox tradition and for which the protagonists of our freedom fought, "...never out of debt do not move". Ideals that nowadays we cannot take for granted and that we must preserve

with our own struggle.

With these thoughts, I call on all of us to exclaim

Long live the 25th of March 1821!

Long live Greece!”

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE NAME DAY OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III**

On Sunday 9/20 March 2022, on the commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs of the lake of Sebastia in Pontus during the reign of Licinius in AD 320, the Name Day of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos was celebrated, as one of these Holy Martyrs was named Theophilos.

This feast was celebrated as a ‘Parresia’. On Saturday afternoon the Great Vespers was observed at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, presided by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

On Sunday morning the bloodless sacrifice was observed at the Catholicon, led by His Beatitude again, with the co-celebration of their Eminences the Metropolitans Kyriakos of Nazareth and Isychios of Kapitolias, the Archbishops Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Theodosios of Sebastia, Isidoros of Hierapolis, Nectarios of Anthedon, Philoumenos of Pella and Aristovoulos

of Madaba, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks with first in rank the Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, at the chanting of Hierodeacon Simeon, Mr Gotsopoulos and the Patriarchal School students. The services were attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and the Consulate members, Monks, Nuns and local members of Jerusalem along with pilgrims.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a Doxology and finally, the Patriarchal entourage and all congregation returned to the Patriarchate Reception Hall, where Geronda Secretary-General addressed His Beatitude as follows:

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

As we ascend on the spiritual ladder of the Holy and Great Lent, awaiting the Holy Pascha, it is like the dew of Hermon that we receive from the Holy Church the comforting commemoration of the well-fought and crowned Holy Forty Martyrs of the lake of Sebastia of Pontus during the reign of Licinius in AD 320.

Their fervent faith in Christ, their patience and endurance that defied and overcame the freezing cold, strengthen and encourage us greatly for the continuation of the fasting struggle, not only as the abstinence from food but mainly as the alienation from the passions and the conquering of Christ’s virtues, so that we may be glorified along with Him.

The Church of Jerusalem attributes special honour to those victorious Martyrs who beautify the feasts of March because its Primate, Your Holy Beatitude bears the name of one of those, the Holy Martyr Theophilos. In honour of this martyr and Your Beatitude, we offered the bloodless sacrifice and the Doxology at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre according to the order of ‘Parresia’, with the attendance of the full body of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and the pious flock.

Having liturgically prayed for the health, stability and

longevity of Your Beatitude, now at this Hall of the Patriarchate we add those things that need to be remembered as worthy of praise and thanksgiving.

First of all, that Your Beatitude was willing to hear the petitions of the Rum-Orthodox Arab-speaking flock either for the financial support of its projects, especially through the support of the educational system operating in its schools, or for the Theological education of the youth, in order to serve as Priests, spiritual guides of the parishes of their Communities. At the same time, the Sunday journal "Nour Il Masih" that was founded by You, and its accompanying Ecclesiastical newspaper have been distributed free of charge, to serve in the educational spiritual training, to cultivate the preservation of the Rum Orthodox identity in the souls of the flock in their bond with the Patriarchate. An indication also of Your Beatitude's vivid interest in the preservation, projection and utilization of the educational and cultural inheritance of the Patriarchate is the over two-year-long preservation of the old prints and journals of the Central Library, the Library of the Theological School of the Cross and the reorganization of the precious material of the Archives by the special preserver Mr Stavros Andreou from Cyprus.

As far as the pilgrimage is concerned, Your Beatitude has shown special sensitivity in the defence and preservation of the rights of our nation on the one hand, and on the other, for the leader's role of the Patriarchate in its cooperation with the other Communities. Fruit of this spirit was the four years ago project of the National Technical University of Athens of the preservation and renovation of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre, and a continuation of this work is the project that began a few days ago by the University Sapienza of Rome, for the preservation of the tiles in the area of the north part of the rotunda floor, that of the seven arches, in front of the Sacred Edicule and the excavation of

the floor beneath those to secure the building. These works that beautify the house of God project a message of conciliation, cooperation and peace from the Holy Sepulchre to humanity all over the world, which is tested in divisions and wars. The Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem has likewise not been bereft from Your Beatitude's interest and care, as it is obvious from the completion of the preservation of the iconostasion by the ARTIS company and the forthcoming renovation of the God-receiving Cave solely by us and the Franciscans according to the Status Quo.

Out of these, the most memorable is Your Beatitude's initiative for the protection of the Christian presence in the Holy Land. Within this initiative, at the ceremony of the lighting of the Christmas tree at the Imperial Hotel, which is endangered by the illegal contracts, there was a condemnation of the Christians' oppression by the radical elements. Should these elements prevail, as we surely not wish so, the centuries-long entrance of the Heads of the Christian Churches through Jaffa Gate is at risk, as well as the entrance of the pilgrims and their route toward the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In this initiative, Your Beatitude summoned and received as cooperatives the Heads of the Christian Churches in the Holy Land. Through Your interview at the newspaper 'The Times' of London, You have enticed the interest of the Archbishop of Canterbury Mr John Welby and of His Beatitude the Patriarch Cyril of Moscow, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel showed interest in the dialogue of this matter, and the solution of this problem by the Government and not by Court.

With these successful and problem-solving actions of Your Beatitude, we the Hagiotaphite Fathers receive an example and are encouraged to carry out our Hagiotaphite ministry in zeal, each one separately and in group work, and add our part in the completion of the structure of the Patriarchate's body for its better projection to the world and richer contribution to the

community.

In the spirit of joy of Your Name Day, Your Beatitude, and of the hope that stems from Your works, I raise my glass on a toast, on behalf of the Holy and Sacred Synod, and all the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and I wish You many happy returns, peaceful, joyful, stable, creative and fruitful, for the praise of our venerable Patriarchate and our blessed nation and for the glory of our Trinitarian God. So be it.”

Mr Vlioras as follows:

“Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences,

Reverend Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen

The participation in today’s celebration is a special honour and joy for all of us, as the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and the pious Flock, among them those who serve at the Consulate General of Greece in Jerusalem, honour the Name Day of the Primate of the Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of Churches, His Holy Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III.

On this occasion, Your Beatitude, we express on behalf of the Greek State, the respect and gratitude to You for your pastoral work, for the important work of preserving and promoting the Holy Places of our Faith in the Holy Land, for the defence of the righteous and the rights of our Patriarchate and for the preservation of the Greek and Rum-Orthodox presence in the Holy Land.

With your own initiatives, the restoration and elevation of the Holy Places are promoted, while you take care of the maintenance of the Status Quo in the Holy Land and for the spiritual guidance and prosperity of a flock that faces important and multifaceted challenges.

In an age plagued by conflict, reshuffle and the search for new balances, where fanaticism and intolerance grow stronger, your sincere disposition for communication, appeasement and reconciliation, both in relation to the other Doctrines and other religions in the particular environment of Jerusalem and of the Holy Land, as well as in the context of the wider effort for peace in this long-suffering area, highlights the prestige of the Holy See, making it a factor of moderation and stability.

On the occasion of your current Nomenclatures, I would like to assure once again both you and the members of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood that the support and assistance of the Greek State and our compatriots to our Patriarchate, to the Brotherhood and to You is and also remains steadfast and substantial, and to express to you our recognition and admiration for the multifaceted work you perform with unparalleled dedication, zeal and self-sacrifice.

On this occasion, allow us to express, from the bottom of our hearts, our gratitude for the unparalleled hospitality we have enjoyed, both myself and the staff of our Authority during our visits to the Holy Shrines, where we have the opportunity to see the particularly emotional toil of concern and caring for the Holy Places, especially in the conditions created by the current pandemic.

Your Beatitude,

The defence of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, of its rights, is a very important priority for our Homeland, as it is said at every opportunity, given the offer of the Church of Jerusalem to Orthodoxy and Hellenism, as a long-standing witness and custodian of a precious religious and historic consignment.

Allow me, on this festive day, to express our most sincere and heartfelt wishes for health, longevity, and support from the

Lord, so that you can continue to accomplish Your high mission, for the benefit of the Patriarchate, the Brotherhood, the Rum-Orthodox flock of Yours and the continuous Orthodox witness in the Holy Land.”

The Representatives of the Patriarchates of Moscow and Romania and the Hagiotaphite Fathers.

His Beatitude thanked them all with the following address:

“How exceedingly radiant and majestic is the power of the Cross, O Christ, which placeth crowns for the Forty Martyrs by means of their adversaries! For having passed through fire and water, they cry out in incorruption: Blessed art Thou, the God of our Fathers”, the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (Matins, Ode 7, Troparion 5).

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

“O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles” (Psalm 43:3) the reverend chorea of the Forty Martyrs in Sebastia cries out, whose annual commemoration we observe today.

These holy Forty Martyrs, “struggled on earth, were patient in the wind, were given over to the fire, the water welcomed them. Theirs is the voice “we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place” (Psalm 66:12), Saint Basil the Great says. The holy Martyrs managed this, paying heed to Saint Paul’s words: “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Philippians

3:8).

According to Saint Gregory of Nice, "to those great fighters, not even the sun seemed to be sweet; but they distanced themselves even from the sun, not to be drifted away from the true light...for them, everything was of the enemy, everything was foreign. Only one thing was good, Christ. They refused everything, to gain Him".

This is proven by the indeed great love of the Martyrs towards our God and Saviour Christ, "who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). These God-called Martyrs dared to die for the only "good", namely the righteous Christ of God, as Saint Paul preaches: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die" (Romans 5:7).

The Holy chorea, who were equal in the fight, equal in their mind and they equally received the crowns, the full of God Forty Martyrs, just like other three children in the fiery furnace, in one mouth praised and glorified and blessed God (ref. Daniel 3:23, Prayer 27), saying: "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection... Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him" (Romans 6:5,8,9).

Having their faith steadfast, that "if we be dead with Christ, we shall also live in Him", the Holy Martyrs did not lose heart, nor were they afraid, but on the contrary, moved by the Holy Spirit, they sought the "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7).

The annual feast of the Holy Forty Martyrs, and especially of their co-martyr Theophilos, whose the Holy Name Our Mediocrity bears, is "a memorial before God" (Acts 10:4). And this

because the Holy Forty Martyrs who “made the earth a heaven and illumined everything” became the true witnesses and preachers all over the world about Christ’s passions and His resurrection, but also, according to Saint Gregory of Nice, – satellites of Christ and builders of His Churches. According to Saint Paul, “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20).

The Holy Forty Martyrs became builders of the Church because according to Saint Basil the Great, they were “made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men” (1 Cor. 4:9), “they raised up the fallen ones, secured those in doubt, increased twofold the desire of the pious”. And according to their hymnographer, “in the splendid firmament of the august Church, ye at all times brightly shine like unto great and lustrous stars and ye illuminate faithful men, O Forty Martyrs of Christ, sacred and divine” (Matins, Troparion1).

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem honours the commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs who struggled for the love of Christ in gleefulness and joy, as well as of their co-martyr Theophilos, by celebrating the Great Sacrament of the Eucharist at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, officiated by Our Mediocrity and surrounded by the reverend members of our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, the High Priests, Priests and Hierodeacons, with the participation in prayer of the noble Christians from our flock, glorifying thus the “One who is wondrous in His saints”.

Moreover, we have rendered a thanksgiving Doxology to the Holy Trinitarian God on our Holy Name Day, owed to the Holy Martyr Theophilos. And we blessed, according to Saint Polykarpos of Smyrna, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of our souls and governor of our bodies and Shepherd of the Ecumenical Church around the world”.

Referring to the meaning of the honour we attribute to the

Saints, Saint John Damascene calls upon the witness of Saint John the Evangelist and Theologian and of the wise Saint Paul, according to whom, the Saints in general, and the Martyrs in particular, are friends of Christ, children and heirs of God; "But as many as received him, to them gave He the power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4:7).

And we say this because the feast of the Holy Forty Martyrs and especially of their co-martyr Theophilus does not refer to our mediocrity only, but primarily to the Apostolic and Patriarchal institution of the Church, through which "we become able to participate in the lot of the Saints in the light...of the Son of His [God's] love (rf. Col. 1:12-13). "And he is before all things, and by him, all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:17-18), "which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). The Holy Forty Martyrs became communicants of this blood of Christ.

Harkening to Saint Paul's preaching, "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), the Holy Martyrs who loved Christ, ignored the things of the temporary life in order to glorify God in their body parts", Saint Basil the Great says. Therefore, their commemoration, of those Martyrs and friends of God projects like the lightning of the noetic illumination of Christ to a divine ray that guides all of us.

According to Clement of Alexandria: "completion of the martyrdom we call not the end of the life any man received like the others, but that he completed the work of love". Precisely this "perfect, complete work of love", which is the unity of the various Orthodox Churches is what the Holy Forty

Martyrs call us to show, as Saint Basil the Great phrased the example of the Martyrs that we need to imitate with the words: "There was not one country for the saints, each of them came from a different part of the world...the human nation of each of them was different, but the spiritual was one for all. For their common Father was God, and they were all brethren, not born of a man and a woman, but from the adoption of the Spirit, becoming one in the unity of the love for each other". In other words, Saint Paul's words, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3) has found its practice in these Martyrs.

We are also called to obey this order, namely the unity, peace, conciliation and love of the Gospel of God and our Saviour Christ, my dear brethren, especially during this blessed period of the fasting of the Holy and Great Lent, "that we might be fellow helpers to the truth" (3 John 8). And this because as Saint Paul says, this very God in Christ committed unto us the preaching of conciliation. "...and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:19)

Having, therefore, companions and helpers the holy Forty Martyrs and their co-martyr and our protector Theophilos and the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, let us entreat them to reach the luminous Resurrection of our God and Saviour of our souls in peace, humility and repentance.

For all these, we call upon all those who prayed with Us and honoured the festal commemoration of the Holy Martyrs, wishing them strength from on high, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Grace of the Holy Sepulchre and every blessing coming from God, expressing our warmest thanks also to those who addressed Us."

There was a monastic meal at noon.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday 28 February/13 March 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the Sunday of Orthodoxy as the triumph of the truth of Orthodox Faith through the restoration of the holy icons by the pious Empress Theodora and the Patriarch Methodios of Constantinople; the holy icons testify to the incarnate presence of the Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

This feast was celebrated with Great Vespers on Saturday afternoon as ordained by the Typikon and the Status Quo of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, and with the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Services were officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Archbishops, Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia and Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Deacons and Archdeacon Mark. The Liturgy was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, members of the Greek Consulate and many faithful, Greeks, Palestinians, Russians living locally, without pilgrims as there are still some covid-19 restrictions.

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a litany three times around the Sacred Edicule and around the shrines, which concluded in front of the Holy Sepulchre.

There His Beatitude read the "Synodicon of Orthodoxy" as it is written in the Book of Triodion, blessing the reverend

Patriarchs, High Priests, Emperors and Priests who fought in favour of the holy icons and anathematizing, or delivering to God those who refused the holy icons and preached other heretic teachings.

Bells tolling, the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters, where His Beatitude addressed all present as follows:

“We also depict in icons and reverently venerate the shape of our human form that He has taken, which we have felt and seen, and the One who bore Him whilst keeping her virginity, and those who have utterly pleased Him. The symbols of His passions and especially the Cross we hold and venerate as divine trophies against the enemy”, the God-bearing Father of the Church Saint Gregory Palamas preaches and confesses.

Your Excellency, Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

Today, the first Sunday of the Great Lent, we commemorate the historical event of the restoration of the sacred icons, which was done by the blessed Sovereigns of Constantinople, Mihail and his mother Theodora, during the Patriarchal Office of Saint Methodios the Confessor.

The victorious power of the Church against the iconoclasts was recognized as the triumph of the healthy faith of the Orthodox Christians against their enemies. We say this because the established doctrines by the Ecumenical Synods and the great Fathers of the Church about the precision of our Orthodox Faith has preserved and safeguarded the sacred consignment which we have received by the Disciples and Apostles of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem, being fortified and founded by the divine power of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb of our Lord Jesus pays heed to the Lord's words: "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28); it has been the safe harbour of the unity of our Orthodox Faith, not only on the doctrines' side but also on the part of the bestowed grace, as Saint Cyril of Jerusalem teaches.

Behold, therefore, why the Holy Church of Jerusalem calls upon all those who want to venerate the Holy Sepulchre and the other sacred shrines of our Saviour Jesus Christ and His Most Holy Mother, to receive their grace. "The honour to the icon is attributed to the prototype", Saint Basil the Great says. In the same manner, the veneration of the holy shrines is attributed to Christ, the Theotokos and the Saints. "By kneeling down we venerate not the material but the image depicted," Saint John Damascene says (just as we do not venerate the material of the Gospel, nor of the cross, but the image of the Lord).

We, both clergy and the people, who are gathered here at the place of the passion on the Cross, of the burial and the resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ, namely at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, have celebrated the great sacrament of the Divine Liturgy, rendering thus thanksgiving praise and doxology to the Trinitarian God.

Let us say along with the hymnographer, celebrate, feast, the people of God bearing His name, seeing the Church again shining forth the beauty of the divine image, which God received as a man to save us. Many happy returns and a blessed Lent. Amen".

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE FIRST STASIS OF THE AKATHIST AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday evening, 26 February / 11 March 2022, the Service of the First Stasis of the Akathist was observed at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. At this service, as the Typikon orders, the First Stasis of the Akathist was read within the Service of the Small Compline.

Before ending the service, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos who presided in the prayer delivered the following beneficial words to the faithful:

“An Angel and the chiefest among them was sent from Heaven to cry: Rejoice! To the Mother of God. And beholding Thee, O Lord, taking bodily form, he stood in awe, and with his bodiless voice he cried aloud to her such things as these: Rejoice, though through whom joy shall shine forth. Rejoice, thou through whom the curse shall be blotted out”.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians,

Behold, the fasting has arrived, the mother of chastity, the accuser of sin and the advocate of repentance, the Angels' manner of living and the salvation of the people, the hymnographer of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church announces.

The Church of Christ rejoices and is gleeful with our entrance into the fasting period of the Holy Lent. And this, because fasting, which was dictated to us by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who “fasted forty days and forty nights” (Matt. 4:2),

is indeed the salvation of the people.

And why is fasting the salvation of the people? Because according to Saint Basil the Great, "we fell from paradise because we did not fast; let us fast, therefore, so that we may return to it". Our God the Word and Saviour Christ, who became incarnate from the pure flesh of the Virgin, is the new Adam, while the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is the new Eve, through whom "for our sake, the bodiless receives a body, and the One without beginning receives a beginning, and the uncontainable One is contained", according to Saint John Damascene. While the hymnographer of the Church also says that the Theotokos became "the restoration of the fallen Adam, the redemption of the tears of Eve".

The Church of Christ which has been revealed to us men on earth, is the visible paradise, while Christ is the "wood of life". Therefore, Saint John the Theologian says in his Book of Revelation: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7). And in more detail, to the one who will be victorious over Satan and the struggle against sin, will I give him to eat the wood of life. Meaning, that I will deem him worthy to enjoy the eternal goods in my Father's Paradise, who according to my human nature is also my God.

The Holy God-bearing Fathers of the Church have established the service of the "Salutations to the Theotokos" during the blessed period of the Great Lent, because according to Saint John Damascene, "it is through Her that we have become citizens of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church". This means that through the Holy Baptism and the Seal of the Holy Spirit, we have been enlisted as citizens of the invisible and heavenly Church, namely of the eternal city of God, as Saint Paul says: "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Hebrews 13:14).

Precisely because it is not a continuing city in this world, for it has the fashion of this world (1 Cor. 7:31), "we owe to leave behind this world and run toward the future city, which is the heaven", Saint Theophylaktos says. In other words, fasting is the safe ladder, through which we ascend for the earth to heaven.

True fasting is alienation from evil. Fasting is the beginning of repentance, Saint Basil the Great says. And according to Saint Luke the Evangelist: "God granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" Saint John the Evangelist preaches (1 John 5:11-12).

Behold again why we salute and magnify the Most Blessed Theotokos, because she became the Mother of Life, namely of the Son and Word of God, our Saviour Christ.

Therefore, let us entreat her, my dear brethren, so that by her motherly intercessions we may be deemed worthy to venerate the luminous Resurrection of the victor over death and corruption and sin, our God and Saviour Christ.

And let us say along with Saint John, the hymnographer of the Mother of God: "prolong your mercy Most-Pure Lady, to those who know you, and look favourably upon your servants and their works, and guide us all to the path of peace, for we have all set our eyes to you in hope, and we have your intercession to your Son and our Saviour and God, to whom belongs all glory, along with His Father without beginning, and the Holy Spirit, who is of One Essence with them, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen". Have a blessed Great Lent".

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **STATEMENT ON SITUATION IN UKRAINE BY HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III**

**27th February, 2022**

With heartfelt regard, we follow the distressing crisis in Ukraine in the last days and we stand deeply concerned for the human suffering of all our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The strongest power of the Christian is prayer. With other Christian leaders around the world, we therefore call upon all Christian people to join in prayer for our world and for the people of Ukraine.

Here in Jerusalem, we raise our prayers in the place of the Crucifixion and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ that God would grant wisdom and courage to all Leaders and parties concerned. May He enlighten their minds so that dialogue and unity would be sought, and lasting peace would prevail.

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# THE FEAST OF SAINT SIMEON THE GOD-RECEIVER AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday 3/16 February 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of Saint Simeon the God-receiver at the Holy Monastery dedicated to him, also known as Monastery of Katamon at the West New Jerusalem.

On this feast, the Church according to the Gospel narrative (Luke 2:22-40) commemorates Saint Simeon the God-receiver as the primary person in the event of the Lord's presence in the Temple on the fortieth day after His Nativity.

The Church commemorates that the Holy Spirit had informed Simeon that he was not going to face death before seeing the Christ of the Lord. This happened when Simeon received the Lord in his arms and recognized Him, saying ““Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:29-32).

In honour of the events of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple and of Saint Simeon, at this Monastery Vespers was held on Tuesday afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on Wednesday morning. The Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences the Metropolitans Kyriakos of Nazareth and Isychios of Kapitolias, the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina, Aristovoulos of Madaba and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Arab and Russian-speaking Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Simeon. The chanting was delivered by Mr Gotsopoulos and Hierodeacon Dositheos, as the Service was attended by many faithful from

the Katamon Greek Community, Arab-speaking, Russians, Romanians, as well as the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever” (Psalm 145:21), the psalmist cries out.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in the Holy Monastery of Saint Simeon the God-receiver and righteous, where his tomb lies, to celebrate his holy commemoration, in praise and doxology of the Holy Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, saying: “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:29-32).

The feast of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple of Solomon, which was the entrance of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple brought by His immaculate Mother and the righteous Joseph, according to the custom of the Law of Moses, is linked with today’s synaxis of the Holy and righteous Simeon the God-receiver and the prophetess Anna. We observe their synaxis today, we confess the unspeakable God’s condescension to us, humans.

This unspeakable condescension of God toward the human race through the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, is confirmed and testified on the one hand by the embracing of God the Word, Who had become flesh and was a baby, by Elder Simeon; on the other, the confession of both Simeon and Anna that the Son

of God, namely Christ, is the salvation God had prepared “before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:29-32, 2:38).

This Divine condescension is proclaimed also by the hymnographer, saying: “He that made Adam is carried as a babe; the Uncontainable is held in the arms of the Elder; He that abideth uncircumscribed in the bosom of His Father is willingly circumscribed in the flesh, not in His Godhead, even the only Friend of man” (Minaion, Matins, Oikos).

And God’s condescension refers to the work of the salvation of man by Christ the Messiah and the revelation of his righteousness as light before all peoples and nations as the Prophet David foretold: “The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen” (Psalm 98:2). The universal nature of the redeeming mission of the Messiah, namely of the Divine Providence, is evangelized by Saint Luke, who refers to the Prophet Isaiah: “And all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:6, Isaiah 40:5).

Interpreting these words of Isaiah, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: “the mystery of Christ had been prepared before the beginning of the world; it was though revealed at the end of times, and became the light to those sitting in the darkness who had fallen into fallacy, fallen by evil hand”. These words of our Father Cyril find their origin in those of the Apostles Peter (1 Peter 1:20) and Paul, according to which the people, having been led astray by the devil, “changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator” (Romans 1:25).

Indeed, Christ became the light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of His people. As for the phrase “and the glory of thy people Israel”, according to Saint Cyril is “a remnant according to the election of grace” (Romans 11:5) of the

people of God. "Even if some of them [of the people of God] became abusive and disobedient, having their minds filled with imprudence, however, the 'remnant' is saved and is glorified by Christ. The beginning of this remnant was the Holy Disciples and Apostles, whose merriment of goodness illumines all under the sky" Saint Cyril notes.

"And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against" (Luke 2:34). Being brought by the Holy Spirit, the Elder Simeon blessed the Virgin because she conceived not by a man but by the Holy Spirit, and he blessed Christ saying: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against" (Luke 2:34).

Interpreting Simeon's prophetic words, Saint Cyril of Alexandria quotes the words spoken by the Prophet Isaiah "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isaiah 28:16, Romans 9:33); "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever, it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Matt. 21:44).

In other words, God the Father has placed at the foundations of Sion a precious and righteous cornerstone, that is Christ, and those who believed in Him were not put to shame; while those who did not believe nor understood the great mystery of salvation of God in Christ, stumbled upon that rock and fell and were ground into powder; on the contrary, those who believed in Him were raised up.

"The sign that shall be spoken against" (Luke 2:3) according to Saint Paul is the Cross; "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:23). This very Cross and the shameful

and martyr's death of Christ on it, did righteous Simeon mean when he told the Virgin: "a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also" (Luke 2:35).

Christ, whom the Elder Simeon received in his arms, is the cornerstone of the Church, and its members "are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Therefore we, my dear brethren, are called to receive in our spiritual arms, namely in our minds and hearts, the marvellous light of Christ. And say along with the psalmist: "Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness" (Psalm 119:123). Amen. Many happy returns in health!"

After the Divine Liturgy the elder Hegoumen and renovator of the Monastery, reverend Archimandrite Theodoritos hosted a reception for His Beatitude and all congregation at the Hegoumeneion and the courtyard of the Monastery.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF SAINT THEODOSIOS THE CENOBIARCH AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Monday 11/24 January 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of Saint Theodosios the Cenobiarch at the Holy Monastery dedicated to him in the Judea desert, between Beit Sahour and the Lavra of Saint Savvas.

On this feast, the Church and especially the Church of Jerusalem commemorates that Saint Theodosios was born in Mogarissos of Cappadocia and came to the Holy Land in AD 451. He initially became a monk in a Monastery of the Jerusalem district, named after Ikelia. He lived in strict ascetic striving, in silence, prayer and fasting in the Judea desert, until the desert monks recognized the virtuous and illumined man and asked him to undertake their spiritual guidance in a Holy Monastery.

Seeking the place to establish the Monastery, God revealed to him the area from which the Magi returned to their homeland, after worshipping the newly-born infant, Christ born in the flesh. The Saint founded a Monastery there, which gradually became a Coenobium, including four Churches and four hundred monks, who lived according to the coenobitic rules; common worship, common work, common meals, obedience to the Hegoumen, until they would be ready to enter a more difficult monastic style, that of the Lavra monks. In this Monastery, work was essential obedience, by which the monks sustained a home for the poor and a home for the elderly and weak. Therefore, the Monastery had a social role, and it also kept a school to educate the monks. This was the Monastery of the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, Saints Modestos and Sophrohios and of the Leimonarion writer, John Moschos.

Saint Theodosios was of the same place, co-worker and supporter of Saint Savvas. These two great Fathers worked in unison to establish the Christological Doctrine of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Synod in Chalcedon (AD 451), according to which Christ has one hypostasis and two natures, the divine and the human. This was against the doctrine of the Monophysites who distorted the teaching of the Church.

Under the lead of Saint Theodosios in the Coenobitic life, the Monastery had a significant role along with the Lavra of Saint Savvas for the development of monasticism and the prevailing

of the Orthodox Doctrine between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Some years in between there was a decline due to the raids. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Cretan monks Galaktion and Leontios came to live there. Around the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the blessed Metropolitan Bartholomew of Madaba, who came from Krini of Asia Minor, constructed a new Church above the ruins of the previous one in the centre of the Monastery. He was succeeded by the blessed Archimandrite Yakinthos and around 1965 by the current Hegoumen, Archimandrite Ierotheos, who has been serving there for more than 40 years. Archimandrite Ierotheos has done much work in the renovation of the Monastery, building a new wing and has protected its property with many toils and pains.

At this historic Monastery, His Beatitude officiated a night-vigil with the co-celebration of their Eminences the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia and Philoumenos of Pella, the Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Eudokimos, Ignatios and Yusef, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios, under the chanting of Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Gotsopoulos.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God” (Isaiah 35:1-2), the Prophet Isaiah says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians

The true Light, the Holy Spirit, which was seen in the form of a dove at the river Jordan has gathered us all in this holy place of asceticism of our Holy Father Theodosios the Cenobiarch, the place of the Magi's cave, to celebrate his commemoration.

During these holy and festive days of the Nativity of our Saviour Christ in Bethlehem, of the shepherds who kept the night watch in their fields, the Magi that came here with their gifts and the holy Theophany by the river Jordan, the deserts of Judea and Jordan are rejoicing indeed.

And the Jordan desert rejoices as the hymnographer says: "The true Light hath appeared, and He giveth enlightenment to all. Christ, Who surpasseth all purity is baptized with us; He bringeth sanctification into the water, and it becometh a place of cleansing for our souls. That which is visible is earthly, that which is perceived with the understanding is higher than the Heavens. Through washing cometh salvation and through water, the Spirit. By descending into the water, we ascend to God. Wondrous are Thy works, O Lord; Glory to Thee" (Menaion January 7, Praises, troparion 4). And the desert of Judea rejoices because, the similar to the angels' manner of living of the God-bearing monastics, Euthymius the Great, Savvas the Sanctified, Theoktistos and Saint Theodosios the Cenobiarch, among many others, of whom I cannot say, "for the time would fail me" (Hebrews 11:32) was founded in it.

Our Holy Father Theodosios was a fervent zealot of the angelic city of heaven, and having left his hometown Mogarissos of Cappadocia, came to the Holy Land, to tread in the natural and spiritual footsteps of Christ our God, who came here in the flesh for the universal salvation. Once in Jerusalem and having venerated the life-giving Tomb of the Resurrected Christ, like another thirsty deer, he retreated to the great teachers of Christ and of the desert of Palestine, and at the feet of Saint Symeon the Stylite from Antioch, by whom he was taught his future virtues.

The light-bearing Theodosios did this according to the psalmist's words: "It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places. He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip" (Psalm 18:32-36).

Indeed, my dear ones, the education in Christ and the learning through an educational system, fatherly councils and trials from the traps and the cunning manners of the devil (cf. Eph. 6:11), strengthened Saint Theodosios and made him communicant of the unspeakable mysteries of God, an imitator of Saint Paul, "caught up to the third heaven...and heard unspeakable words" (2 Cor. 12:2,4). This is also confirmed by his hymnographer who says: "Thou didst secretly enter into the noetic darkness of the Divine Light, O all-blessed Theodosios; and having the doctrines of piety written on the tablets of thy heart by the finger of God, thou gavest them to thy disciples as a book of life" (Minaion Jan. 11, Matins, Ode 8, Troparion 4).

According to the established historian Cyril of Skythopolis, the blessed Theodosios was a defender of the healthy Orthodox faith, of the "doctrines of reverence" which were twisted by "men corrupt in mind and deprived of the truth" (1 Tim. 6:5), according to Saint Paul.

These were the "schismatic monks of the desert who did not have communion with the Catholic Church, but were under the quarrel and fallacy of Eutychus and Dioscorus".

It is noteworthy that when the blessed Theodosios came to Jerusalem, during the reign of the God-pleasing Emperor Marcianus (AD 396-457), "he received the hospitality of some Logginos and old man of Cappadocia, of the Order of the

Studious of the Holy Resurrection of Christ God", which is the current Hagiotaphite Brotherhood. This old man, Logginos, received Theodosios and put him under the care of blessed Ikelia, who was building at the time the Church of the Old Kathisma of Theotokos...Ikelia took this young man Theodosios, as he was an intelligent singer and accepted him in the Order of the Studious [monks], who were very reverend; when the blessed Ikelia died, Theodosios undertook the leadership of the place.

Our Holy Father Theodosios was named Cenobiarch because, in this Monastery, which bears his name, he established a Coenobium, and "ever since, many retreated to him, asking to live with him and having accepted them [as monks], he guided them to the perfect will of God and God was always with him" and he was "a successful man" like Joseph (Gen. 39:2). In other words, Theodosios knew that God was with him and that all the things he does are blessed by God.

Let us entreat this great citizen of the desert and luminary of the world that by his prayers and those of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, he may guide our mind and heart to the perfect will of God and our Saviour Christ. And along with the hymnographer, let us say: "Do not forsake your flock, most blessed Theodosios, but by your intercessions to the Lord [Who was baptized in the Jordan by John], pray that we may be saved". Many happy and blessed returns. Amen".

After dismissal, the elderly Hegoumen Archimandrite Ierotheos offered a monastic reception.

**From Secretariat-General**