

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY MONASTERY OF HOZEVA AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday 8/21 January 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy Monastery of Hozeva, which is the commemoration of its founders, Saints John and George the Hozevites.

Saint John was a pillar and beacon of the Monastery, having come from Caesarea of Palestine, while Saint George came from Cyprus and rebuilt the Monastery after the total destruction by the Persian raid in AD 614, thus drawing to it a great number of monks and a multitude of Christians.

For their commemoration, the current Hegoumen and renovator of the Monastery, who has also restored its function as a Coenobium, Archimandrite Constantine, received His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the following address:

“Your Beatitude, Father and Master,

With Your reverend Entourage

The holy founders of the Hozeva Lavra, John and George lived in asceticism here, not at the same time but each according to his Fathers, in honesty, integrity, love and peace. To speak plainly, they lived in union and oneness. These are virtues for which Saint Makarios of Egypt notes:

“In this manner, a lot of unanimity and peace and concord in the bond of peace can sustain each other, and live with one another in integrity and simplicity and prosperity of God” (Saint Makarios of Egypt Vol.41, Hom. 3, 21,31, p.156).

And how much coveted such unity and solidarity and sympathy in

our Holy Orthodox Church is becoming nowadays, Your Beatitude, Father and Master!

We wish that by the prayers of the Saints John and George and Your Beatitude's this unity will prevail in the end. Amen!

As Your sons, we welcome Your Beatitude wishing you a Happy Feast!"

An All-night Vigil followed, officiated by His Beatitude, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Hieromonk of the Monastery Fr Chrysogonos, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios, as the chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Monks Clement and Daniel. The service was attended only by a few monks due to covid restrictions.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the Lord, and he answered them. He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them" (Psalm 99:6-7) the Psalmist says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Holy Fathers and brothers

The Holy Spirit who came down in the form of the dove in the river Jordan at the baptism of Jesus Christ and Son of God has gathered us in this holy Monastery of Hozeva to honour the sacred memory of our Holy Father George the Hozevite.

Joyful was the previous feast of Theophany of our Lord Jesus Christ, glorious is the present day of the Saints of God, and this because "God is marvellous in His saints" (Psalm 68:36) according to the psalmist.

Blessed George paid heed to the psalmist words: "I awaited Thy salvation, O Lord, and Thy commandments have I loved. My soul hath kept Thy testimonies and hath loved them exceedingly. I have kept Thy commandments and Thy testimonies, for all my ways are before Thee, O Lord" (Psalm 118: 166-168), and "I have longed for Thy salvation, O Lord, and Thy law is my meditation" (Psalm 118:174). He abandoned the place of his birth, Cyprus, and came to the place of the redeeming mystery of the divine providence; the place of the nativity, crucifixion and three-day burial and resurrection of our Saviour Christ, as his hymnographer says: "Sore didst thou desire to see and to worship the Tomb of Him Whoever is, O wise George; and coming thereto, thou didst deem it a holy thing to die through asceticism with Him that was slain for His compassion's sake" (Matins, Ode 7 Troparion 3).

In other words, blessed George sought the "immaculate and painless" life of Christ's friends, namely the continuing city of the Kingdom of Heaven (Hebrews 13:14). He sought to put on Christ, "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6:16), that is why he came to the Jordan desert, to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, according to Saint Paul's preaching: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

In interpreting these words of Paul, Saint Photios says: "We put on Christ and the Holy Spirit, not as a garment that surrounds us exteriorly, but in a manner that we fill our heart and mind with light and grace". The one who has filled his heart with the light and grace becomes a saint, according to the Holy One who has called us, and you have been born into holiness, because it is written: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16), Saint Peter preaches, referencing the book of Leviticus (Lev. 11:44) and the urging of our Lord Jesus Christ "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in

heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

It is noteworthy though, that the words "be ye holy and perfect" do not refer to the essence of God but to the good works and actions and to all virtues in general. "For we are not able to become similar to the essence of God, but we can only imitate God by improving in virtues", Saint Athanasios the Great says. "To become strangers to every malice as much as it can be possible, in both words and actions and in thought, cleansing yourselves from the impurity of malice, this is a true imitation of the divine perfection", Saint Gregory of Nyssa says.

Of this divine perfection and holiness did Saint George become an imitator through his ascetic striving, like another John the Baptist in the Jordan desert, in Hozeva, preaching by his own example the utmost humility of Christ and His perfect love. This is also testified by his hymnographer: "The Monastery of Hozeva hath found in thee a rule and most exact example for the pursuit of every form of virtuous works, O wise George, boast of the righteous. Therefore, those who have passed their lives in godliness leap for joy with thee unto the ages" (Matins, Ode 8, Troparion 3).

Indeed, my dear brethren, Saint George became the modest ornament of the monastics and his Monastery of Hozeva a place of sanctification and confession of his commemoration (Psalm 30:4) according to the psalmist, where the light and truth of Christ, Who was baptised in the Jordan led a multitude of righteous and saints, among whom is Saint John from Caesarea, who also lived in asceticism here, and Saint John the New from Romania, whose incorrupt and fragrant relic confesses the faith of the fishermen Apostles and testifies the luminous Resurrection of Christ; the victory of Christ's death over the death of corruption and sin.

Let us pray to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, so that we who celebrate the commemoration of Saint George, may gain the

redeeming light of Christ's glory. And let us say along with the hymnographer: "With one accord, let us faithful laud with hymns God the Word, Who came forth from God, and Who ineffably took on flesh from a pure Virgin for us and in wisdom past telling descended to make Adam new again, who by eating fell grievously down into corruption's pits" (Matins, Ode9, Heirmos). Amen. Many happy returns!"

After dismissal, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Constantine hosted a monastic meal.

On Saturday 9/22 January 2022 the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Monastery of the recently discovered Cemetery of the Hozevite holy martyrs. The church was built in their memory by the current Hegoumen Archimandrite Constantine. The icon of the holy martyrs is posted below with the chapel on the background.

From Secretariat-General

THE CUTTING OF THE NEW YEAR CAKE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday evening, 31 December 2021/ 13 January 2022, the cutting of the New Year cake took place at the Patriarchate main hall, on the commemoration of Saint Basil the Great and the beginning of the New Civil Year on Friday 1/14 January 2022.

The ceremony began with the following address of His Beatitude on the New Year:

"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need

that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:1-2), Saint Paul urges.

The Sun of Righteousness has shone again from the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Mary, born in in the Cave of Bethlehem, our God, Jesus Christ, showing the light of knowledge to all people; "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12), "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness" (John 12:46), the Lord says.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is "the true light" indeed, has gathered us all in this sanctified place of our venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem, to render glory and honour and thanksgiving to the Creator of the universe, our Lord God, in the changing of the year of His benevolence, our Lord Jesus Christ who said to His disciples: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1:7). Moreover, the grace of our Saviour Christ has gathered us on the sacred commemoration of the circumcision in the flesh of the Son of God, our Saviour Christ, as well as for the co-celebrated commemoration of our Father among the Saints Basil the Great, on whose honour we keep the ceremony of the cutting of the cake bearing his name, "Vasilopita".

The change of the year of the Lord's benevolence (cf. Luke 4:19, Isaiah 60:2), namely the ecclesiastical and liturgical year for us, is strongly joined with the historic time of the earthly life of man, whose "days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more" (Psalm 103:15-16), according to the psalmist.

We say this because the consideration of the meaning of time, as present, past and future is not "cunningly devised fables"

(1 Peter 1:16), but “according to the revelation of the mystery” (Romans 16:25), namely of the incarnation of God the Word and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

In other words, the definitions of the incomprehensible God are not sudden decisions but stem from His pre-eternal will. Whatever comes from God, was hidden in Him before all ages. “Who hath resisted his will?” (Romans 9:19) Saint Paul says. And Saint Cyril of Alexandria in his interpretation of the Lord’s words ““It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power” (Acts 1:7), says: “[Jesus] did not want to use the secret things hidden from God and He taught through them”.

This means that the meaning of the time can only be comprehended through the history of the Divine Revelation, during which time is distinguished in quantity and quality, according to Ammonius: “The season shows quality, while the time shows quantity”. It is precisely this “quality of season” that we experience in the Church of Christ, becoming members of His Body through baptism.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19, Isaiah 61:1-2).

Through the year of the Lord, the historic time is inaugurated in Christ through the cathode of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, on the day of Pentecost and is extended to the ages as the time of salvation, namely of remission of sins and the deification of man through the Church and its sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, in which we become of one body and one blood with Christ.

Let us hear the wise Paul saying: “Now we have received, not

the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God...For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? but we have the mind of Christ" (2 Cor. 2:12,16). And wise Solomon says: "the light of the righteous remains forever" (cf. Proverbs 13:9).

Today's festal changing of the year, during which the memory of the past becomes a memory in Christ, and the hope of the future becomes hope in Christ, marks the refreshment of God's Spirit that lives in us; "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16).

Therefore, my dear brethren, with the beginning of the new year of the Lord, we are called to renew ourselves according to Saint Paul's advice: "I beseech you therefore, brethren... be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

Putting into practice the will of God, and having before us the meaning of time in Christ who became incarnate from the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Theotokos Mary, let us entreat the Great Hierarch of Cappadocia, Saint Basil, who has adorned the ways of man, to pray for the salvation of our souls to our circumcised in the flesh Lord and God, our Saviour Jesus Christ, as well as for the peace of the whole world, especially for our tested Middle East, for the cessation of the schisms and the restoration of the unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church and for the deliverance of the humankind from the infectious variants of the covid virus.

And along with the hymnographer, let us say: "Thou who hast made all things in wisdom, O Word of the Father Who art from before all eternity, Who hast constituted the whole creation by Thine almighty word, bless the crown of the year with Thy goodness, and cast down the heresies, and the schisms through

the Theotokos, since Thou art good and the Friend of man” (Minaion, 1st September, Vespers, Aposticha 4). Moreover, Thou, pre-eternal Word of God, Who has unto Your power the times and the seasons, bless the crown of the year with Your goodness, keeping in peace and spiritual wellness our venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, our pious Christian flock, the Holy City of Jerusalem and the reverend royal nation of the Rum Orthodox. Amen!

Have a good, happy, blessed and healthy New Year 2022!

Many happy returns!”

The apolytikia of the Circumcision of the Lord and of Saint Basil followed before His Beatitude cut the cake and distributed the pieces to those present; the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, the Archbishops, Hieromonks, Monks and Nuns, the members of the Greek community, the Arab-speaking flock and the Patriarchal School Students, wishing a blessed New Year 2022, while the School students were singing the Christmas carols.

From Secretariat-General

CHURCH LEADERS EXTEND SEASON'S GREETING TO THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

The long-standing tradition of exchanging Christmas greeting by Heads of Churches in Jerusalem with His Beatitude Patriarch

Theophilos III and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate was carried out today, Monday January 10, in the main hall in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The first to arrive were the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, led by The Custos His Paternity Father Francesco Patton, who was warmly greeted by His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos and the Bishops attending. During the meeting, His Beatitude thanked the Franciscan Brotherhood for their visit and emphasized the importance of the ongoing collaboration between the churches caring for the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and the joint insistence for the autonomous status of the Holy Places, which "have been the foundation of our resolve confronting the challenges we are facing," which only led to further deepening the cooperation between the two Brotherhoods.

His Beatitude stressed the unwavering role Father Patton has been playing in articulating the Churches' position to the local governmental authorities, "the focus we have kept on the threat to the Christian presence in the Holy Land from radical groups has had remarkable exposure during this Christmas season not just here, but around the world. Our call for attention to the serious and growing threats has been answered by many religious and governmental leaders, and this is due in no small measure to our united voice," His Beatitude noted in his speech.

In return, Father Patton gave gratitude to the Patriarch of the Holy City for never abandoning the team spirit of the churches, and continuously putting the general interest first by gathering efforts to further protect the Holy Places and the Christian communities in Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

Following the departure of the Franciscan Brotherhood, His Beatitude Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, along with members of the Latin Patriarchate arrived at the main hall, followed by the Anglican Archbishop

His Eminence Hosam Naoum, who soon met his fellow Heads of Churches from the Coptic Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Lutheran and Melkite Greek Catholic churches.

After drinking a toast to the miracle of the Nativity, Patriarch Theophilos gave gratitude to his fellow brothers in Christ, and noted that thanks to the joint efforts of the Church Leaders the “struggle against the threats posed to the Christian communities of the Holy Land by radical groups is receiving attention both locally and internationally,” and that the Churches no longer find themselves as “a lonely voice in the wilderness”.

His Beatitude emphasized the impact that the joint statement of the last month had on a various governmental and religious leadership, and highlighted that it is a movement not only aimed at the protection of the Holy Sites as places of worship, but also the protection of the fundamental interests of the communities to be able to lead lives of dignity, respect, and safety.

“We have the attention of the world as never before in recent memory. And we have the chance to promote the resolution of our concerns in effective ways. There is still a great deal of crucial work to be done. It is therefore all the more important that we make a real commitment to dealing with our family problems in the Christian communities here among ourselves in effective dialogue, for our ability to join our efforts and our voices in a common cause in defence of the Christian presence, which has never been more urgent. Wisdom dictates that we must solve our problems among ourselves,” His Beatitude noted to the attendees.

In exchange, each of the Church Leaders took the opportunity to express, in their own words, Christmas greetings to the Patriarch and the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher, and shared common wishes for the new year hoping that the pandemic would come to an end and to see the Holy Land once again

filled with pilgrims and for life in the Holy City to flourish and prosper in a way that is respectful and safe for everyone.

News and photos by: Heba Hrimat.







THE FEAST OF THE FOREFATHERS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, 13/26 December 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Forefathers at their Holy Church in Beit Sahour, where the shepherds were keeping the night watch and they received the calling from heaven to go to Bethlehem and see the new-born infant, the Redeemer of the world.

On this feast, the Church commemorates the before and after the Law Righteous Forefathers of the Nativity in the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

In honour of the Forefathers, the Divine Liturgy in this

Church was officiated by the Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem, His Eminence Metropolitan Benedict of Diocaesarea with the co-celebration of the Hegoumen of the Monastery of the Shepherds Archimandrite Ignatios, the ministering Priests of this community, Fr Issa Mousleh, Fr Sabba Her, Fr Ioannis Rismawi and Fr George Banoura and Hierodeacon Athanasios. The chanting was delivered by the Beit Sahour community Byzantine choir as the service was attended by a large congregation and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and Mr Athanasios Abou Aeta.

Before the Holy Communion, the following Sermon of His Holy Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem was read on His behalf:

“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth...put off the old man and his bad habits...and put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all” (Col. 3:4-11).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

“Light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death” (Luke 1:79), the Sun of Righteousness our Lord Jesus Christ has risen and has gathered us in our Church to participate in His Eucharistic and Despotie supper, the supper of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Our Holy Church prepares us to celebrate the great and universal event of the Incarnation of God the Word through the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Mary, namely the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. “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), the Evangelist John says.

This Sunday is dedicated to our Forefathers, who are commemorated in the Old Testament in the Holy Bible. These Forefathers of ours are Christ's forefathers on His human side. And this, because the Son and Word of God, namely Christ, is without genealogy according to His divine nature. Saint Gregory Palamas says that "Christ's genealogy cannot be narrated according to His divinity; He has a genealogy though according to His human nature, as He became a descendant of men and Son of man in order to save the man".

God without beginning, the invisible, incomprehensible, indescribable and unchangeable cannot have a genealogy: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1), meaning Christ. Regarding these words of Saint John, the Evangelist, Saint Gregory Palamas says: "How would have a genealogy the One who was in the beginning, and was with God, and was God and God's Word and Son, and He did not have a Father before Him and His Name is by the Father, a name above all names (Phil. 2:9), and above every word?"

Referring to "the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25), which is the Nativity of Christ, Saint Paul says that the preaching, the gospel of the people's salvation, was long ago promised by God to Jesus' ancestors, who were the righteous and especially the prophets, who wrote all the prophecies in the God-inspired Scriptures. "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Romans 1:1-3).

Christ, my dear brethren, took upon himself all our human nature, with flesh, bones, blood and soul, but without sin,

and saved it, namely He glorified it, through the abolishment of the death of corruption and sin. He saved our human nature and glorified, or better say, deified it through His resurrection.

The salvation of man and his co-resurrection in Christ are achieved only through the Church, which is the body of Christ. And Christ is the head of the Church and He is the redeemer of the body (Eph. 5:23), Saint Paul preaches.

Behold, therefore, why our Host, namely the Lord has made a great supper and invited many, and sent His servant at the appointed time to call the guests, saying, Come, for I have prepared all things (ref. Luke 14:16-17). Interpreting this word of the Gospel, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "The Creator of all and Father of Glory set up a great supper, which means, He worked a universal feast."

In other words, my dear ones, Christ calls every man "living on earth, in the universe", to become a partaker of His body, the Church, and consequently a partaker of the Kingdom of God "Come; for all things are now ready" (Luke, 14:17), the Lord says.

To our question, "what were the things that the Host had prepared?" Saint Cyril replies they are the remission of sins, the adoption, the Kingdom of Heaven and the communion with the Holy Spirit.

"God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4), the wise Paul says. The knowledge of this truth did God reveal in the cave of Bethlehem, through the Nativity of His Only-begotten Son, Christ, in order to save us from the bondage of sin and of the law. "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).

Come, therefore, my brethren, let us prepare ourselves so that we may accommodate in the cave of our souls the Light of knowledge, the Sun of righteousness, our God and Saviour Christ. And let us say along with the hymnographer of the Church: "He that is full is emptied out in the flesh for our sakes, and a beginning doth He receive Who from before eternity is without beginning; He that is rich becometh poor, and though He is the Word of God, He reclineth in a manger of dumb beasts as an infant, working the refashioning of all men from the beginning of time" (Minaion, Sunday of the Forefathers, Ode 5 Theotokion). Amen. Many happy returns and blessed Christmas!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a meal, hosted by the Community.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT NIKOLAOS IN BEIT JALA

On Sunday, 6/19 December 2021, the feast of our Father among the Saints Nikolaos, Bishop of Myra in Lycia the wonder-worker was celebrated in the town of Beit Jala, near Bethlehem, and at the magnificent Church dedicated to him.

The Saint was celebrated as the patron Saint of this town, a Saint of the 4th century who was distinguished for his virtue and holiness, the helping of the poor, the orphans, the widows, those at sea, as "a rule of faith an icon of meekness and a teacher of temperance". Saint Nikolaos participated in

the 1st Ecumenical Synod in AD 325 and defended the doctrine of the one essence of the Son with the Father.

The Divine Liturgy in this town on the morning of the feast was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, who was festively welcomed by the Scouts. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, the Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, and Philoumenos of Pella, the Hegoumen of Beit Jala, Archimandrite Ignatios, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the ministering Priests of the parish, Fr Joseph, Fr Paul and Fr Elias and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the Church choir amidst a great multitude of the Orthodox faithful of the town, and the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

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

“Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart” (Psalm 15:1-2), the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

Again and again, we thank the Holy Trinitarian God who deemed us worthy to meet in this Holy Church dedicated to Saint Nikolaos, the Archbishop of Myra in Lycia the wonder-worker, to celebrate his commemoration.

Saint Nikolaos was distinguished in the firmament of the Saints of the Church because, according to the psalmist he “walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart” (Psalm 15:2). This is moreover confirmed by his hymnographer who says: “A fervent protector art thou of the whole Church of Christ, most boldly destroying

the ungodly teachings of all the impious heresies; and a rule of Orthodoxy wast thou to all men, interceding for all them that follow the teachings and godly admonitions" (Matins, Kathisma 5).

Indeed, our Father Nikolaos became a "rule of Orthodoxy", namely a defender of the redeeming Orthodox faith. And this, because he paid heed to the advice of Saint James the Brother of God: "be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22), as well as to the Lord's word: "whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19).

In other words, these biblical words became a work and manner of living of the spiritual shepherd of the Church Nikolaos the wonder-worker, whose fame was heard all over the world. Therefore, he dwells in the dwelling place of the Lord and in His Holy Mountain, which is the Kingdom of Heaven.

The characteristic feature of the Orthodox faith is distinguished in Saint Nikolaos. And we wonder, what is this characteristic feature? It is holiness, according to the words of Saint Paul: "dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). And according to the Chief of the Apostles Peter, the characteristic feature is again holiness, as he teaches, quoting the Holy Bible: "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16 / Leviticus 20:7), the Lord says.

Holiness means attachment to God, which means the keeping of God's commandments as it was written about Moses and Aaron and Samuel: "Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the Lord, and he answered them. He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies and the ordinance that he gave them" (Psalm 99:6-7). The testimonies in this case are the divine commandments of God.

These testimonies, the divine commandments did the God-inspired Father of ours Nikolaos keep, that is why he was deemed worthy "to become partaker of His Holiness" (ref. Hebrews 12:10), namely of the purity according to Saint Chrysostom, and to the piety of God, according to Ecumenios. Because of this, his hymnographer asks for Saint Nikolaos' help with the words: "O man of God and faithful servant, minister of the Lord and man of desires, vessel of election pillar and foundation of the Church and heir of the Kingdom, be not silent, but cry out in our behalf unto the Lord" (Great Vespers, Aposticha Glory).

The purity of heart, the hegemonic spirit and the virtues in Christ of the Bishop of Myra in Lycia made him not only preacher of the Orthodox faith against the abominable heresy of Arius, in the First Ecumenical Synod, which was convened during the reign of Constantine the Great in Nice of Asia Minor in AD 325 but also a wonder-worker, that's why he also took this name. Moreover, Saint Nikolaos is especially known as the protector of the poor, the orphans, the widows and a guide of the blind.

Like another Paul, Saint Nikolaos became a zealot of the Gospel of Christ saying: "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:7-8).

For this reason, our Holy Father is projected as a prototype of a shepherd and teacher but also of Christ's faith, praying and saying: "Cause me to know, O Lord, the way wherein I should walk, for unto Thee have I lifted up my soul" (Psalm 143:8); "Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God" (Psalm 143:10). "On Thee was I cast from the womb; from my mother's womb, Thou art my God" (Psalm 22:11). And he heard David saying: "if riches flow in, set not your hearts thereon" (Psalm 62:11). Moreover, the words of Wise Solomon: "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee" (Proverbs 3:3).

The love of our Father Nikolaos with all his mind, all his heart and all his soul to God led his footsteps to the Holy Land, the place of the Nativity, Crucifixion and the three-day burial and Resurrection of our Saviour Christ.

And we, my dear brethren, as the eye-witnesses of the All-holy Shrines of the mystery of the Divine Providence, are called to venerate at the Cave of Bethlehem the One Who was born from the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Mary, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the manner of the Church and not of the world, spiritually and not materially, "Setting our affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2), as Saint Paul advises. And as other Magi, let us offer Him (Christ who was born of the Holy Spirit) our gifts, namely the humility of our heart, the repentance and the forgiveness of one another, so that in pure heart, we may celebrate the metropolis of the feasts, praising God and saying "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill among men" (Luke 2:14). Many happy returns and blessed Christmas."

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a reception, followed by a meal.

During the meal His Beatitude addressed those present as follows:

"Both in thy life and after death, O Holy Hierarch Nikolas, thou hast been glorified greatly by God with manifold wonders; for who hath ever but called out upon thy blest and holy name with all his faith, and not straightway been hearkened to, having found thee to be a fervent protector?" (Matins, Exapostilarion 2).

Honourable Mr President and respected members of the Ecclesiastical Committee,

Dear Brethren in Christ

The great patron Saint of your historic town of Beit Jala,

Saint Nikolaos, Bishop of Myra in Lycia, has gathered all of us, both the clergy and the people to glorify the One who glorified him.

Today's brilliant feast of Saint Nikolaos who visited your town during his pilgrimage in the place of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ in the 4th century has special importance for the Church of Jerusalem and its congregation.

The Christian presence throughout the centuries and especially the presence of the Rum Orthodox in the Holy Land of Palestine is proven to be the salt of this land. And we say this because the Holy Church of Jerusalem and its reverend people testify with all their power, their unceasing historical course in the holy land from the time of the Saints Constantine and Helen the Equal to the Apostles until today.

The Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, namely the Church of Jerusalem and all Palestine remains the cornerstone of the guarantee of the cultural, religious and national identity of the Christians living here, as Saint Paul says: "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:19-20).

Indeed, my dear brethren, we have Saint Nikolaos as our fellow citizen and protector, that is why the hymnographer of the Church says: "who did not call upon your holy name in all faith and was not heard instantly, having found you as a fervent protector, O Nikolas?"

And Saint Nikolaos calls all of us to keep our faith whole and unblemished, the faith we have received from the Holy Apostles, hearkening to the urging of Saint Gregory the Theologian: "We theologize not in the manner of Aristotle [as philosophers] but as fishermen [in the manner of the fishermen Apostles]".

For all these, let us raise our glass in a toast and wish everybody, many happy returns, peaceful, healthy, and merry Christmas. Moreover, let us thank from the depths of our heart the local authorities, and especially the Police and His Excellency and our dear President of the Palestinian State Mr Mahmoud Abas, wishing him health and longevity and governmental power. Once again, many happy returns!"

From Secretariat-General

THE THREE-DAY FESTIVITIES AT SAINT SAVVAS' LAVRA

From Friday 4/17 December 2021 to Sunday 6/19 December 2021 the three-day festivities of our Holy Father John Damascene, our Holy Father Savvas the Sanctified and our Holy Father Nikolaos, Bishop of Myra of Lycia were observed at the Lavra of Saint Savvas, in the desert of Judea, on the right side of Brook Cedron, which leads to the Dead Sea.

The Lavra was founded by Saint Savvas, who came from Cappadocia in the Holy Land in AD 456 and for many years received his monastic training by Saint Euthymius the Great and his co-ascetic Saint Theoktistos. Beginning with this Lavra, Saint Savvas founded more Monasteries in Palestine and became the spiritual father and guide of thousands of monks, as well as a defender of the Orthodox Doctrine of the 4th Ecumenical Council in Chalcedon in AD 451, along with Saint Theodosios the Cenobiarch, as testified by the biographer of the Palestinian Saints, Cyril of Skythopolis.

In this famous Monastery, the commemoration of Saint John Damascene was observed on 4th December at the chapel dedicated to him, where his tomb also lies, by Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, who will stay at the Lavra until 6th December for the feast of Saint Nikolaos.

On Saturday 5/18 December 2021, an all-night Vigil was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos on the commemoration of Saint Savvas the Sanctified. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis and Hagiotaphite Hieromonks. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and his helpers in Greek on the right and by Archimandrite Philotheos in Arabic on the left. The Vigil was attended by many Orthodox faithful from Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, Beit Jala and northern Israel, at the honorary presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

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

“Make me go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way” (Psalm 119:35-37) the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved Fathers and brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The desert rejoices today along with the land of the river Jordan, on the commemoration of our Righteous and God-bearing Father Savvas the Sanctified, in his Lavra, the place of his asceticism.

Our Holy Father Savvas was a sanctified vessel and a dwelling

house of the Holy Spirit since he was in his mother's womb, that is why he became the top of the righteous and equal to the angels. He managed this hearkening to David's word: "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way" (Psalm 119:37).

Interpreting these words of David, Saint Athanasius the Great says: "Vanity is the obsession for the sightseeing, the vision of those not in need, and the misplaced imagination of the mind, which Paul explains by saying: "This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. 4:17-18). Vanity of the mind means for someone to have the logical mind and not use it for the vision of the true things, but to allow it to deliver him to Satan the jailer. Not wishing thus, he says: "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity". Because this also is an act of the grace of God".

Indeed, Saint Savvas received the grace of God, because, as Saint John of the Ladder says: "The schooling and the upbringing that we have had since our childhood play their role in virtue and the monastic life, and either help or incommode us respectively".

In other words, Saint Savvas renounced the vanities of this world since his childhood and sought the monastic life of the monks of the desert, as his biographer Cyril of Skythopolis confirms: "Savvas was predestined by God since he was in his mother's womb and foreseen before his body was formed, according to the great prophet Jeremiah (ref. Jer. 1:4-5). Having scorned all things related to worldly life, he surrendered himself to the Monastery called Flavianes... where he was trained in monastic life with precision and in a short while he learned the psalter and the rules of the coenobitic manner of living".

Our Father Savvas learned the manner and the ways of asceticism as a disciple of the great ascetics of the desert, Theodosios the Cenobiarch, Euthymius the Great, Theoktistos and Gerasimos. He became a teacher of the desert, a spiritual beacon shining in the dark. "And having been a little chastised, they shall be greatly rewarded: for God proved them, and found them worthy for himself. As gold in the furnace hath he tried them, and received them as a burnt offering" (Wisdom of Solomon 3:5-6), according to wise Solomon.

This precisely is witnessed by the present Lavra, which the Saint founded, as well as the complete, incorrupt and fragrant relic of his which lies here. Even more, this is testified by the presence of the Monks of Saint Savvas, who ceaselessly pray for their souls and for all of us, and safeguard the ever-burning light of the consignment given to them by Saint Savvas the Sanctified: "The light of the Monks are the Angels, and the light of all the people is the life of the monks", Saint John of the Ladder says.

These God-inspired words, my dear brethren, are the content of our Holy Father Savvas' consignment, to all the monks, and especially to those who strive in asceticism in his Lavra. And this is so, because the God-bearing Savvas himself "attained to the orders of the Angels, whose life he didst emulate without blame" (Matins, praises Glory), as his hymnographer says.

As for us, who honour the commemoration of the equal-to-the-angels Savvas, who has boldness before Christ God, let us entreat him so that along with the Theotokos the Mother of our God, will ceaselessly pray for the remission of our sins and for the dawn of the light of the knowledge of the Sun of Righteousness, our Lord Jesus Christ to shine in the cave of our souls.

And let us say with the psalmist: "the heavens shall praise

thy wonders, O Lord: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints" (Psalm 89:5). And in more detail; the heavens shall praise Thee with the angelic powers O Lord. The essence and power of God are worth admiration. In the Church of the Saints, namely those in heaven, unceasingly the Angels praise Thee. Amen. Many happy returns and blessed Christmas!"

A meal followed the dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, after which, His Beatitude thanked God for this spiritual feast and accompanied by the Fathers, returned to Jerusalem via the Monastery of Saint Theodosios the Cenobiarch.

From Secretariat-General

THE SIXTEENTH ENTHRONEMENT ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

On Monday, 9/22 November 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the sixteenth election and enthronement anniversary of His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos at the glorious throne of the Mother of Churches.

For this joyful and important event, there was a Doxology at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at 10.30 a.m. The Doxology was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with co-celebrants the Hagiotaphite High Priests, Hieromonks and Deacons, and the participation in prayer of Monks and Nuns from all areas of the Patriarchate's jurisdiction, along with laity faithful, and the Consul

General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

After the Doxology, bells tolling, everybody returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters.

At the Great Hall, Geronda Secretary-General, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina addressed His Beatitude on behalf of the Holy and Sacred Synod and the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood as follows:

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

A rather joyful and important event has gathered today the reverend members of our Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and the Christian congregation of the Church in a gathering of Doxology at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

This event is Your Beatitude’s election and enthronement at the glorious and martyr’s throne of the Mother of Churches, sixteen years ago, by the canonical and unanimous voting of the members of the Holy and Sacred Synod and the representatives of our Rum Orthodox Arab-speaking flock. This happened after a period of harsh testing which endangered but did not destroy the vessel of the Church. Then the Brotherhood stood up to its height and the demands of its mission, condemned and renounced the illegal agreements of deporting property of the Patriarchate of incalculable material and cultural value, undermining the Status Quo of the Old City of Jerusalem and placed Your Beatitude on the Patriarchal Throne, to guide the vessel of the Church from the stormy sea of foggy corruption in the prosperous port of honesty, justice and transparency.

Having received the order, Your Beatitude did not waste any time, nor hesitated on toils and pains and efforts, but on the contrary, rushed with all Your might to costly court trials and meetings with local and foreign people of authority and influence for the refutation of the illegal agreements which were signed without the approval of our Holy and Sacred Synod

and the knowledge of the Brotherhood. This interest You Beatitude extended to the utilization of the property of the Holy Sepulchre in Greece through a system of financial transparency, able to bring to the Patriarchate income corresponding to its heavy costs. With the same responsibility and sensitivity, Your Beatitude was also responded to the financial reports submitted by the Exarch of the Holy Sepulchre in the Church of Cyprus.

Your Beatitude exhibited also a lively, practical and effective interest in the preservation of the Pilgrimage rights of the Brotherhood and our nation in cooperation with the Custody of the Franciscans in the Holy Land, through the reverting of attempts to create permanent situations by the Armenians, such as the case of the placing of curtains by us at the God-receiving Cave in Bethlehem, the cathode of the Orthodox Icon in the Cave during our Vespers when our Feast of Epiphany coincides with the Armenian Christmas and it is a Sunday or a Monday. Moreover, the removing of the barriers the Armenians illegally placed on the façade of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the exercising of our right to offer incense inside the altar of the Armenian chapel of Saint Helen and our attitude regarding this matter on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the cessation of the Armenians' work at their chapel of Saint John the Theologian in the courtyard of the Holy Sepulchre until an agreement among the Three Major Communities is reached.

The actions and efforts of Your Beatitude for the preservation of the Church property and the Pilgrimage rights of the Patriarchate did not in the least divert You from exercising the pure Pastoral work through Your title as the Hegoumen of the Brotherhood or as the Patriarch of the Rum Orthodox Arab-speaking flock of ours. Over the past years and during the current one of the pandemic, Your Beatitude visited the celebrating Holy Monasteries and Communities and strengthened the mindset of the Monks and the faithful either by words or

by financial help. Similarly, You have received at the Patriarchate Priests and caretakers of the flock and guided them to the most convenient for them solution to their Communities' problems. However, the most tangible support of Your Beatitude and the Patriarchate to the flock has been the recent agreement between the Patriarchate and the international company Raouabi, after the gaining of the relevant licence by the Jerusalem Municipality, for the construction of the "Al-Quds Lana" in Bir Nabala Beit Hanina in East Jerusalem on property that belongs to the Patriarchate. This will include four hundred flats, a school, shops, offices, a mall, recreation areas and parking spaces and will offer great relief in the suffocating housing problem of the Community of Jerusalem.

The new radiographic machine donated to the clinic 'Saint Benedictos' by Mr Athanasios Martinos by Your Beatitude's actions and those of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras will contribute to the better medical care of the flock members and of every ill person, regardless of religion and nationality.

For the prosperity of the Christians in the Holy Land, the cooperation between the local Christian Churches was cultivated by the care of Your Beatitude at the Patriarchate. We have maintained the community in Christ among the brotherly Orthodox Churches, with Your Beatitude always stressing the necessity of continuation of the dialogue for the solving of pressing issues.

For the continuation, increase and enrichment of the God-pleasing work of Your Beatitude, the Holy and Sacred Synod and the whole Brotherhood stand by Your side and walk along with You, with each member offering his own qualifications, experience, education, love in Christ, obedience and respect to the Patriarchal institution and to You, its Primate, who "stands in type and place of Christ".

On behalf of the Holy and Sacred Synod and the Brotherhood, I raise my glass on a toast Your Beatitude, wishing You many happy returns, peaceful, joyful, stable and fruitful, in strong governmental power, by the Holy Spirit, and in jubilation of Your children, as fruitful newly planted olive trees, surrounding Your table, for the praise of our blessed nation and the glory of our Trinitarian God. So be it."

Then the Consul General of Greece Mr Vlioras addressed His Beatitude, followed by the representatives of the communities of the flock, the representative of the Russian Church and others.

Thanking all those, His Beatitude addressed all as follows:

"I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name forever and ever" (Psalm 145:1), King-Prophet David chants.

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

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved Christians,

The vineyard of the Lord, namely the Holy Church of Jerusalem, "which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself" (Psalm 80:15-16), celebrates today the sixteenth anniversary of the settlement of Our Mediocrity at the Apostolic Throne of the Holy and righteous James the Brother of God and its First Hierarch.

This festal anniversary does not refer to Our unworthiness, but to the God-founded and Apostolic institution of the Church "and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28), according to the Evangelist Luke.

That is why, along with the Reverend members of the Venerable

Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, we went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where we rendered a thanksgiving Doxology to our Holy Trinitarian God, "which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13) according to Paul.

Our care and ministry so far of the Patriarch, Hegoumen, Monastic and Shepherd "on the throne of grace of the High Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, who came from Heavens, from Whom we receive mercy and grace" (ref. Hebrews 4:14-15), that is the throne of the Mother of Churches and the Holy Zion, the dwelling place of God, has only one purpose; the keeping of the God-given Apostolic tradition and the consignment of the healthy faith and the keeping the word of truth right, through Jesus Christ, according to the witness of Saint John the Evangelist; "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).

Moreover, to the preservation of the All-holy Shrines which are the tangible and true witnesses of the great mystery of reverence (1 Tim. 3:16), but also to the holy places of the logical worship as well as the defence of the irrefutable and sovereign rights of the noble and royal nation of the Rum Orthodox Christians.

Nevertheless, hearkening to the Lord's command: "that you should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me" (Acts 1:4), we have not ceased raising our voice toward all directions in this country and internationally in favour of the non-alteration of the multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic character of the Holy City of Jerusalem, which is the spiritual capital of the whole world, especially for the moral and material strengthening of the Christians living in the Holy Land.

This is what we do under the care of the Holy Presence, the leading institutional role of our Venerable Patriarchate of

Jerusalem, the internationally recognized, in the exercise of its spiritual and religious mission, but also in the care for the preservation of the existing Status Quo, both in its pilgrimage and demographic character in the Holy City of Jerusalem, threatened by those who lurk for its deterioration. "Casting all your care upon him; for He careth for you", Saint Peter advises (1 Peter 5:7).

This sixteenth enthronement anniversary of Our Mediocrity calls us not to boasting, but to vigilance. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8), the Chief of the Apostles Peter says. "For our boast is in Christ", Saint Paul preaches, "the testimony of our conscience" (ref. 2 Cor. 1:12).

Keeping "this rule" (Gal. 6:16), namely Paul's word, "the testimony of our conscience" we are called to complete our ministry, to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5), in the contemporary world of globalization through which "the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (2 Thess. 2:7), namely, "blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:22).

In Our ministry as a Patriarch and Hegoumen at the Apostolic and martyr's throne of Saint James the Brother of God, We have as colleagues and co-celebrants our reverend and dear in Christ Fathers and Hagiotaphite brothers, the High Priests, Priests, Hieromonks, Deacons and Monks, distinguished for their Godly zeal and sacrificial Hagiotaphite self-sacrifice, who hear to the words of the Holy Hieromartyr Ignatios of Antioch: "Let us love one another in unity, and let no one see his fellow man according to the flesh, but in Christ Jesus. Let there be nothing among us able to divide us; but be united with the Bishop, submitting to God through him in Christ".

Truly we say that our struggle is a struggle against the craftiness of deception (Eph. 4:14) and division, namely the schism of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of the

Ecumenical Orthodoxy. "... every city or house divided against itself shall not stand" (Matt. 12:25) the Lord says. That is why we who serve in the holy places of the Nativity, Crucifixion and Resurrection of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, "by whom we have now received the atonement" (Romans 5:11), do not cease praying for the keeping of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

These methods of delusion, division and falsehood of the devil are recorded in the sacred history of the past, but also of the present era, of the Church in general and of the Church of Jerusalem in particular, that is, of the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which is calumniated but not vanquished by the sons of the darkness of this century (Luke 18: 8).

Let us entreat our God the Father of lights and truth, "to guide our steps to the working of his commandments" through the intercessions of our Most-Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and of our Father among the Saints Nectarios of Pentapolis. May the grace of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb of our Saviour Christ fortify all of us in the ministry of the All-holy Shrines, the true witnesses of our faith, and of the shepherding of our Christian flock which is tested by the pandemic plague of coronavirus.

For all these, we call upon all who prayed along with Us and honoured with their presence this enthronement anniversary of Ours, wishing them strength from on high, the enlightening power of the Holy Sepulchre, patience and every blessing from God, expressing also Our warm thanks to all who addressed Us; Geronda Secretary-General, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, who spoke on behalf of the Holy Synod and our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras, Reverend Archimandrite Alexander the representative of the Brotherly Holy Church of Russia, who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril, His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth who

spoke on behalf of our flock in Nazareth, His Eminence the Archbishop Damascene of Yaffo who spoke on behalf of our flock in Yaffo, Reverend Father Charalambos Bandour who spoke on behalf of Saint James Cathedral, Reverend Archimandrite Philotheos who spoke on behalf of the Community of Acre-Ptolemais, the Principal of Saint Demetrios School of the Patriarchate Mr Samir Zananir and the teachers Mrs Kafetzi and Mr Kongos, Mr Moris Sabela who spoke on behalf of the polyclinic 'Saint Benedictos', His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba who spoke on behalf of the Russian-speaking community in Ashdod, Mr Athanasios Abu Eta and Ode Issa, the Hagiographer Gabriel and all who participated in the celebration of this enthronement anniversary."

After the ceremony at the Patriarchate's Hall, there was a monastic meal at the refectory of the Patriarchate.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE ARCHANGELS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, 8/21 November 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Synaxis of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel and all the heavenly hosts.

With the word "Synaxis", we mean the gathering of us faithful, to honour the Marshals of the Angels and all the Angels who joined them when Archangel Michael said "Let us stand firm" and did not follow the fallen Lucifer and the angels that fell

with him.

The feast was celebrated:

1. In the seaside town of Yaffo at the Holy Monastery of Archangel Michael which was renovated a few decades ago by its Hegoumen Most Reverend Damascene of Yaffo, when it was destroyed by a fire.

There, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Archbishop Damascene of Yaffo, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks among whom the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archimandrites of the neighbouring Parishes, Niphon, Marcellus and Artemios, and Archdeacon Mark, at the chanting of the Community Byzantine choir in Arabic. The Liturgy was attended by a congregation of Palestinians, Russians and Romanians, the Ambassador of Greece in Israel Mr Kyriakos Loukakis.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation:

“The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all. Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure” (Psalm 103:19-21), the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in the holy monastic Church of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel to

celebrate and honour their synaxis in Eucharist.

The Angels, as the Scripture says, are the heavenly hosts and the ministers of God, that do His will (Psalm 103:21). God makes His Angels fast and thin like the wind, and the ministers that serve Him, bright and energetic like the flame of the fire, Saint Paul preaches: "Who maketh His Angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire" (Hebrews 1:7). These Angels are greater than the feeble men in power and strength. "Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might..." (2 Peter 2:11), Saint Peter says.

According to Saint John Damascene, "God is the maker and creator of the Angels since He brought them from non-being into being and created them according to the image that is closer to Him, as a bodiless nature, something like a spirit or an immaterial fire, as Holy David says; "Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire" (Psalm 104:5). An Angel, therefore, is a noetic substance, malleable, autonomous, bodiless minister of God, who has received immortality in his nature by grace, of which substance only the Creator knows the kind and the make. However, the Angel is called bodiless and immaterial when compared to us humans; because everything that is compared to God, the Only incomparable, is found to be thick and material; truly immaterial and bodiless is only the divine".

The heavenly hosts, namely the Angels, are distinguished in nine orders within three groups according to Theologian Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, to whom Saint John Damascene refers by saying: "Just as Saint Dionysius the Areopagite says: 'All theology, namely the Holy Bible, calls the heavenly hosts nine, and Saint Dionysius separates these in three groups of three. And he says that the first is the one near God and in close and immediate union with God, according to the tradition the one that has the six-winged Seraphim and the many-eyed Cherubim and the All-holy Thrones, while the second is that of the Dominions, Virtues and the Powers and the third and last

is that of the Principalities, the Archangels and the Angels”.

It is noteworthy that according to Saint John Damascene, who again quotes Saint Gregory the Theologian, the angels were created before all other creation. “At first [the Creator] thinks of the angelic hosts and the heavenly and the thought becomes action”.

In today’s celebration of the synaxis of the bodiless hosts, and especially of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, the Archangel Michael has a prominent position, because as a Marshal, in both the Old and the New Testament, he has displayed many benedictions to the humankind, according to his synaxarist.

Archangel Michael, my dear brethren, is the one who having seen the renegade angel, namely satan, fallen, he gathered all the orders of the Angels and saying ‘Let us give heed’, he praised the Lord of all in a loud voice as if saying; Let us all [the angles] who are created be careful and pay attention to what has happened to those who had been light with us and now they have turned into darkness.

This event, of the gathering of the orders of the Angels by Archangel Michael, was called Synaxis of the Angels, that is attention and concord and union. That is why the hymnographer says: “O Marshal passing glorious, O divine leader Michael, thou wast appointed by God’s will to be the chief and foremost of the Authorities, Powers, Dominions, Thrones, and Angels, Archangels, Principalities, wherefore as thou now standest at that dread Throne, guard and keep and save and protect and shelter all them that honour thee with faith, who art the world’s defender” (Matins, Exapostilarion 3).

The Marshal Michael’s command ‘Let us give heed’ is timely and is addressed to us who live in the modern age of globalization and the so-called “New Order”, that is, in the age of “will worship” (Col. 2:23) which consists in resisting the truth by

people with a corrupt mind and untested in faith as Saint Paul says (ref. 2 Timothy, 3:8).

We, my dear brethren, hearkening to the words of our Lord: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18), let us say along with the Archangel Michael the angelic victorious hymn, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord Sabaoth, the earth is filled with His glory" (Isaiah 6:3). Moreover, let us proclaim with the hymnographer: "Wherever thy grace casteth its shadow, O Archangel, thence is the power of the devil driven away, for fallen Lucifer cannot bear to stand before thy light. Wherefore, we implore thee to extinguish his fiery darts that are cast against us, and by thy mediation deliver us from his stumbling-blocks, O praiseworthy Archangel Michael" (Matins, Praises, Glory). Amen. Many happy returns!"

At noon His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Yaffo hosted a meal for the Patriarchal Entourage.

2. At the Holy Monastery of the Archangels in Jerusalem

On Saturday afternoon, Vespers was observed by the Hegoumen and renovator of the Holy Church, His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, and on Sunday morning the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, with co-celebrants the Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, Archimandrite Makarios and Hierodeacon Simeon. The chanting was delivered by the Hegoumen Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, Monk Dositheos and Nun Kyriaki as the service was attended by a large congregation of Nuns and faithful from Jerusalem and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

The Hegoumen Most Reverend Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda offered a reception to the Episcopal Entourage and the faithful.

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY IN BUQEI'A OF NORTHERN ISRAEL

On Saturday, 30 October / 13 November 2021, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos was very warmly welcomed and officiated the Divine Liturgy at the old Church of Saint George in the Rum Orthodox Arab-speaking Community of Buqei'a, the Biblical Peqi'in, in the Acre-Ptolemais district of northern Israel.

This Liturgy aimed for the Orthodox education and the sanctification of the Orthodox faithful of this Community.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Dean Priest of this church Father Ioannis and the Dean Priest of the other Church of this town Father Netarios, other Priests of the neighbouring towns, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered in Arabic by the Byzantine choir of Acre-Ptolemais under the lead of Archimandrite Philotheos, and the service was attended by the faithful of this Community.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to them:

“Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press. And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. And he answered and said unto them, My

mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it" (Luke 8:19-21), the Lord says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in your historical town of Bugei'a, to celebrate the Divine Liturgy and glorify the Name of our Trinitarian God in Eucharist, praising Him with the words of the psalmist: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" (Psalm 116:12). The psalmist says, so great is his gratitude that he doesn't know what to render unto the Lord for this great benefit.

And we wonder, what is this great benefit of the Lord? It is His philanthropy, namely His infinite love toward man. This very love did Jesus teach to the crowds, saying that "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it" (Luke 8:21).

And what is the word of God? "... the word of the truth of the gospel" (Col. 1:5), Saint Paul preaches. And what is the truth of the gospel? "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). And the true light is our Lord Jesus Christ: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12), the Lord says.

This word of the Lord was heard and acted upon by all the saints of the Church, who became brothers of Christ according to the Holy Bible which reads: "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause, he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee" (Hebrews 2:11-12). In other words, there is a strong bond between our Saviour Jesus Christ and those who are saved by Him, and this, because, both Jesus

Who sanctifies us, and we, who are sanctified and saved, come from One Father, our Creator God. For this reason, Jesus is not ashamed to call them His brethren, saying; “, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee”.

The interpreters' comments on this are noteworthy: “God is the common Father between Him [Christ] and them [the people], as the Creator; the Creator of Christ for His human nature” Zigavinos says. “He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Hebrews 2:11), he showed the difference; for He is not a brother to us according to the nature, namely the substance, but according to His philanthropy”, Saint Photios the Great says. “He is not ashamed to say and that shows that he was not of the same nature, but that he was not ashamed due to His caring” Theophylaktos says.

In Christ's words: “My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it” (Luke 8:21), my dear Brethren, we distinguish the incomprehensible to the unfaithful man mystery of the Incarnation of God the Word through the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Theotokos Mary. And we say this, according to Saint Paul's preaching: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tim. 3:16).

Indeed, great is the “mystery of godliness”, namely the mystery of the incarnation of God the Word, who appeared in the flesh. This is precisely the magnificent feature of the Christian religion, that “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), according to the true witness of Saint John the Theologian.

Interpreting these words, Saint Athanasius says: “Hearing that the Word became flesh, we do not think of the Word as flesh,

but that He put on flesh upon Him and became man". And Saint Chrysostom says: "Because there are some who say that all things related to the Providence are a fantasy and a hypocrisy and a suspicion... the word 'became' was not a change of nature, but His will to receive the true flesh upon Himself".

In other words, the only and ultimate purpose of the Christian religion is the unity of man with God in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. We foretaste this mystical union through our participation in the Sacrament of the Divine Liturgy, that is, the bloodless sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist.

This very union of God with man was accomplished by the Saints we honour today, the Apostles of the seventy, Stachys, Apelles, Ablious, Ourvanos, Aristovoulos and Narcissus and their co-martyr Epimachus. They became brothers of Christ because they not only heard but also preached and followed the word of Christ.

Let us endeavour, my brethren, to keep our calling to Christ steadfast through our good words and deeds. "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14). For it is in this manner that the entrance to the kingdom of heaven will be kept open and free and be granted to us, according to Saint Peter's advice: "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11). To Him belongs the glory, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen. Many happy returns!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a reception, where His Beatitude addressed all present as follows:

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Honourable Members of the Ecclesiastical Committee,

Respected Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Brethren

Blessed is the God of our Fathers, Who has gathered us all in your historical town of Bugei'a, where after the deadly trial of the corona plague, we have been deemed worthy to celebrate the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1), the Prophet David chants. "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king" (1 Peter 2:17), the Apostle Peter commands.

And we say this because our Primeval Rum Orthodox Community co-exists with the other religious communities here, and with the Druze tribe, in unity, love and peace, which are the fruit of the Holy Spirit, that is of God, as the Apostle Paul preaches: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22-23).

This very witness of love, peace and unity is irrefutably testified to the world by the Holy Church of Christ in the Middle East and in the Holy Land throughout the centuries. Our Church of Jerusalem does that through its spiritual mission and pastoral work; "For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:15).

We have visited you today, not as strangers and foreigners, but as Brothers and Shepherds, in order to proclaim "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3) between us. Moreover, in order to convey the blessing of the Holy City of Jerusalem, the place of meeting of the heavenly with the earthly, of God with the people, but also the place where God "hath broken down the middle wall of partition...of the enmity" (Eph. 2:14-15).

We would like to reassure all of you, my dear brethren,

through the words of the wise Paul, that we “do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:9-10). Amen.

Many happy returns, free from the Corona plague!”

Finally, His Beatitude visited the new Holy Church which He consecrated a few years ago, and participated at the meal hosted by the Parish at the Church where the Divine Liturgy was celebrated.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY GREAT MARTYR DEMETRIOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, 26 October / 8 November 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy Great Martyr Demetrios the

Myrrh-gusher.

On this feast, the Church, and especially the Church of Thessaloniki commemorates that Saint Demetrios was born in Thessaloniki and martyred for Christ during the reign of Maximian in AD 306. The reason was the revealing of his Christian faith and he also encouraged Nestor to win the battle in the arena. For this reason, the Church honours Saint Nestor the next day after Saint Demetrios' feast, who also suffered a martyr's death.

The Patriarchate celebrated this feast at Saint Demetrios' chapel in the Central Monastery, near which there is also the School with the Saint's name.

Vespers on Sunday afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on Monday morning were officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, with the co-celebration of the Archimandrites, Alexios, Makarios and Stephen, Priest George Baramki and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Mr Gotsopoulos and the Patriarchal School Students, as the Service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Vlioras and many Nuns and pilgrims.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a ceremony at the reception hall of the Patriarchal School of Saint Demetrios. The school ceremony included a video presentation regarding Saint Demetrios' martyrdom and the school's history, which used to be Greek-speaking but at present, it has become Arab-speaking for the Patriarchate's flock in Jerusalem.

His Holy Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos honoured the ceremony with His presence and addressed those present as follows:

"Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments" (Psalm 119:66) the Psalmist sings.

Respected Principal, Mr Zananiri,

Dear children,

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Patriarchal School of Saint Demetrios in Jerusalem honours its patron Saint Demetrios today.

As known, he lived during the reign of the Roman Emperors Diocletian and Maximian and was born in Thessaloniki. He was distinguished for his reverence, that is his great Christian faith, and became a co-martyr of Christ's blood, and for his education, as he became a teacher and educator in Christ. He managed this because he paid heed to the Biblical words: "Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments" (Psalm 119:66).

The love of young Demetrios for the knowledge of truth was not confined only to the education of Greek philosophy but was specially extended to the study of the Holy Scriptures through the Gospel of Christ. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32), the Lord says.

Education is that which educates the person morally and spiritually. And this, because knowledge leads to the enlightenment of the mind, and the enlightened mind leads to the truth of things, that is, to science. However, the education in Christ exceeds the limits of human reason and promotes the pious and righteous disciple of Christ to the utmost beauty, that is, to the vision of the glory of God.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2), Saint Paul preaches, and he adds: "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:6).

Inspired by the God-inspired words of Saint Paul, the great friend of Christ Demetrios sought his freedom from the bondage of the carnal mind and the bondage of the law of corruption,

namely of sin and death. That is why he was deemed worthy to receive the Kingdom of God (2 Thess. 1:5), as his hymnographer says: "The All-highest Word of God, seeing thee victorious over the falsehood of impiety, crowned thee with glory, O Demetrius, as thou didst chant: Glory to Thy power, O Lord" (Matins, Ode four, Canon of the Saint, Troparion 1).

As we are under the protection of the Holy Church of Christ, in the Venerable Rum-Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, we are called to become imitators of the Holy Great Martyr Demetrios. In other words, we are called to become preachers of the Gospel of love and philanthropy of God, namely, of the freedom of Christ. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12), the Lord says. Many happy returns and good progress in learning the knowledge of the truth. Amen."

From Secretariat-General