

# THE FEAST OF SAINT JAMES THE BROTHER OF GOD AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday 23 October / 5 November 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Throne, of Saint James the Brother of God, the First Hierarch of Jerusalem.

On this feast, the Church, and especially the Church of Jerusalem commemorates that Saint James was the Lord's brother according to the law, and "the Lord made him the first Hierarch and shepherd and teacher of the spiritual mysteries". He is the writer of the Catholic Letter to the expatriate Jews in the New Testament. He convened the first Apostolic Synod in Jerusalem, which through his election, opened the gates of the Church to accept the heathens in it. Saint Paul used to say about him: "But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1:19). He confessed Christ as the Son of God, for which reason the Jews forcedly pushed him over the wing of the Temple of Solomon to the ground and killed him.

In honour of his commemoration as an Apostle and Hieromartyr, Vespers on Thursday afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on Friday morning were officiated at Saint James' Cathedral by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude during Vespers were Hagiotaphite Hieromonks among whom the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archimandrites Stephen and Niphon, the ministering Priests of the Cathedral, Charalambos Bandour and George Baramki and others, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and his choir in Greek on the right, and by the Cathedral's choir in Arabic on the left. On Friday morning, co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the

Archbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina, Philoumenos of Pella and Aristovoulos of Madaba, the Archimandrites Nectarios and Klavdios, Priests Charalambos and George and other Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting for both services was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and his choir in Greek on the right, and by the Cathedral's choir in Arabic on the left. The services were attended by the parish members and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (James 1:25), Saint James preaches in his letter.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Apostle James “servant of God and Lord Jesus Christ” (James 1:1), has gathered us all today in his Holy Church, next to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, to celebrate his sacred commemoration in the place of his martyrdom, the Holy City of Jerusalem.

The Biblical Mother of Churches, the dwelling place of God, rejoices and is glad on the commemoration of Saint James, who became the first Hierarch, shepherd and teacher of Jerusalem, but also a faithful steward of the spiritual mysteries. He was called ‘righteous’, for his utmost holiness and righteousness. This is witnessed by his teaching on true wisdom: “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace” (James 3:17-18).

According to Eusebius of Caesarea of Palestine, the righteous James suffered a martyr's death for his preaching, that Jesus is sat at the right hand of the great power, that is, of God the Father, and is bound to come back again through the clouds in heaven. In this case, Eusebius references the relevant quote of Clement of Alexandria which reads: "The Lord handed over the knowledge to James the righteous, John and Peter, and they, in turn, gave it over to the other Apostles...two were those with the name James, one was the righteous James, who was pushed over from the wing of the Temple to the ground and beaten to death by a tanner's wood, and the other is the one who was cut in pieces" (Ecclesiastical History by Eusebius, 2, 23).

Righteous James preached boldly that the only perfect law is that of Christ, namely the Gospel of the New Testament as foretold by Prophet Jeremiah: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31).

This perfect law of the Gospel of Christ, or of the New Testament is distinguished for the freedom it grants to the followers of this law. For this reason, Saint James says: "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25).

Interpreting this word of the Brother of God, Ecumenios says: "By saying that the perfect law is that of freedom, he made freedom the distinguishing feature of this law. For the law according to Christ has set us free from every carnal feature of slavery... granting freedom and comfort to the one who draws nigh". In other words, the law of Christ is the one that liberates man from the slavery of sin.

Saint Paul repeatedly mentions "the freedom which we have in Christ" (Gal. 2:4), that is why he advises: "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). And the Chief of the Apostles Peter, says: "For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God" (1 Peter 2:15-16).

According to Saint James, free in God is the one who "is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work" (James 1:25). And according to the psalmist, the one who keeps the commandments of the Lord shall have a great reward; "...the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward" (Psalm 19:9-11). Saint Paul also says, "the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).

Noteworthy is the speech of Athanasius the Great against the Arians, that Christ the Son of the Living God is not of those who groan or are in need of freedom, but He is the One Who adopts and liberates everything. "And if all creation suffers having lost freedom due to the corruption of bondage, the Son is not among those who need freedom, but He is the One who adopts and liberates everything".

It is made clear from the above, my dear brethren, that "the perfect law of freedom" is no other than the Gospel of Christ, namely the law given by Himself, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, whose disciple, martyr of truth and apostle was the righteous James, who was called the brother of God, and who we honour today. For him the hymnographer of the Church exclaims: "As an Apostle truly great, the chief and foremost hierarch of the divine New Covenant; as an all-wise expounder, and as the truth's faithful witness, who didst abound above all with an especial dignity as the Lord's very Brother, thou now hast passed over unto Him, being slain by stoning"

(Matins, Exapostilarion).

Apostle of Christ and martyr, righteous James, set us who celebrate your sacred commemoration free from the ongoing sins, interceding with the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary to Christ our God. Amen! Many happy returns!"

After the Divine Liturgy, the Patriarchal Entourage returned to the Patriarchate Reception Hall, through the interior staircase of the Church and the main entrance of the Patriarchate, where the responsible for the bakery of the Patriarchate Nun Seraphima distributed small loaves of bread as a blessing.

At the Hall, His Beatitude addressed those present as follows:

"I have not hidden thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation" (Psalm 40:10), the Psalmist proclaims.

Your Excellency, Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Dear Brethren in Christ,

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem rejoices today on the holy commemoration of the Holy Hieromartyr and righteous Apostle, James the Brother of God.

And this, because our Lord Jesus Christ, "the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2), made James the first Hierarch and shepherd of the Church of Jerusalem, and also a teacher and faithful steward of the spiritual mysteries.

The contribution of the righteous James on the one hand in the organization of the Church in the world, with the convening of the Apostolic Synod in Jerusalem (Acts 15: 6), and on the

other hand in the evangelization of both his biological relatives (Romans 9: 3) and the nations, has been crucial. Therefore, Saint Paul mentions that when he went to Jerusalem "other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1,19).

He sealed his apostolic authority and the office of Presbyter, that is, the First Hierarch of the Church, his blood shed for the Gospel, and thus became a co-martyr of our God and Saviour Christ.

Our Mediocrity, by the mercy of God, has settled a successor of the Apostolic Throne of James the Brother of God, went down to Saint James Cathedral, which is next to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and celebrated the Patriarchal Divine Liturgy, surrounded by the Holy Archbishops and Priests, the honourable members of our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood.

It is noteworthy, that today's feast of the commemoration of Saint James does not refer only to its Ecclesiastical institutional feature, but especially to the unceasing historical witness of the Primeval Church and the Jewish-Christian and Rum-Orthodox Community in Jerusalem.

For this reason, our Holy Church gratefully says: "Thee, Lord, did Thy brother proclaim with a freely speaking voice, and became an imitator of Thy Passion when he was put to death" (Matins, Ode 5, Troparion 2).

And we, boasting in the Lord, say along with the hymnographer: "Thy Church doth rejoice in Thee, O Christ our God, as she doth cry out in joy: Thou art my sole steadfastness; my strength and my refuge art Thou, O Lord" (Matins, Ode 3, Heirmos). Amen! Many happy returns!"

At the end of the reception, His Beatitude returned the keys of the Cathedral to its Caretakers and blessed everybody.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE NATIONAL HOLIDAY OF OCTOBER 28, 1940 AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Thursday morning, 15/28 October 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the national anniversary of 1940.

For this feast, there was a Doxology at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, to our Almighty God, who released our country from the Italian military attack of 1940 and the barbaric occupation of the Nazis, which followed (1945) and let it to freedom. The Service included also a prayer for the repose of the souls of our fathers who fought bravely and fell gloriously in this fight for freedom.

The Doxology was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of the Hagiotaphite Archbishops, Hieromonks and Deacons, with the participation in prayer of Monks, Nuns, members of the Greek community of Jerusalem, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and members of the Greek Consulate.

After the Doxology there was a reception at the Patriarchate Reception Hall, where His Beatitude addressed those present as follows:

“Today we honour the anniversary of 28<sup>th</sup> October 1940. This historical event is interwoven with the known “NO” of the Greeks to the boldest claim of the then fascist state of Italy, to occupy “through its armed forces strategic points of Greek territory”. Italy was in alliance with the demonic and brutal Nazi and Hitler regime of Germany.

The unbridled belligerence of the powerful forces of the Axis and their advance into the homeland was interrupted by the really strong resistance of the Greeks, who fought for the divine gifts of freedom and national independence, that is, territorial integrity.

Once again, the Greek nation in its glorious and multidimensional long history showed its unwavering faith in the ancestral legacy of the natural and moral values of patriotism, righteousness and freedom, as well as absolute respect for the human person. “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 “No” of 28<sup>th</sup> October 1940 should not be considered a simple landmark of global history, but rather a reminder of the ongoing battle in the world between the sons of light against the sons of darkness, and of the power of truth against the power of lie and arrogance. “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way” (2 Thess. 2:7) Saint Paul denotes.

In the dark night of the acting mystery of lawlessness but also of insanity in the so-called “Age of the New Order”, the epic of “No of 1940”, that is, the moral values it embodies, shines as a perpetual beacon to those in the sea of darkness, and for this, we are called to vigilance at the



urging of the wise Paul: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13).

Our Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, honouring as it should the epic of 1940 and joyfully participating in this commemoration of freedom and sacrificial victory, of the humiliating disaster and displacement of the hated Nazi occupying military forces, has come down to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where we offered a thanksgiving Doxology to our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who was crucified and resurrected for us.

Moreover, we rendered interceding prayers for the eternal memory and blessed repose of the souls of all our Fathers and Brethren who fought for our faith and country and fell gloriously in the battlefields.

For those allow Us to raise Our glass on a toast and exclaim:

Long live 28<sup>th</sup> October 1940!

Long live the "No"!

Long live Hellas!

Long live the noble nation of the Rum Orthodox!

Long live the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood!"

The Consul General of Greece, Mr Evangelos Vlioras, also addressed the following address:

"Your Beatitude,

Distinguished High Priests,

Dear Fathers,

Dear children,

Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

National anniversaries are milestones, occasions for reflection, which in the course of time bring back to our minds the events that have forged the collective historical memory of Greeks everywhere.

Today's anniversary of October 28, 1940, 81 years since that glorious moment that is a point of reference for Hellenism everywhere, gives us the opportunity to recall in our minds and hearts the generation of men, women and children who filled the collective our History with countless pages of heroism, self-denial and self-sacrifice.

In the mountains of Epirus, in the Forts of Macedonia, in the waters of the Aegean, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, in the Middle East, in occupied Greece, in all the "places where it had no daily life and feasts", to use the expression of Odysseus Elytis, the Greeks, gave what they had most valuable to preserve our national independence and integrity, timeless ideals of all the Struggles of the Nation from 1821 until today.

The letters, from the Front, of the Greek soldiers, show the self-denial, the original, primitive patriotism and the strong will of the Greeks, to fight for the freedom, independence and integrity of the homeland, knowing well that the price of freedom is always high.

At the beginning of November 1940, the soldier Spilios Latsinos wrote to his mother and brothers:

*"My beloved mother and my beloved brothers. As things are going, they look good for our army and I will be very happy since we were given the honour to go first from our regiment to take part in the battle. I address my whole family, that is, to all that I love in this world, and I will always ask*

*you to wish more to God that our army wins than to save myself. "*

*At the end of November, Athanasios Kourouklis sends the following letter to his son, who is serving in the Navy, informing him that his brother was killed.*

*"Andrea, we are fine. Our favourite child, Christos, was killed. My child, your mother gives you her blessing, not to be upset at all. Be faithful. "*

To these bastions of the homeland, who defended, "without death", our national independence, to those who fell in battle and to those who returned from the front with a soul full of bitterness and fear, to those who fought the ruthless beast of fascism and Nazism, setting a living example of hope to the peoples of fearful Europe, to the mothers and wives who waited or mourned, to the children who were orphaned, to these "few of our brothers", we pay tribute today.

October 28, 1940, marks the denial of totalitarianism, the resistance to fascism, our commitment to freedom and national dignity and summarizes, in a historic moment, the memories, experiences and values □□that have always guided our national life.

It is therefore a special honour for the Consul General of Greece to address the Hellenism of the Holy Land on this special day of remembrance and pride.

As those who are in the Holy Land, we today reflect with emotion the contribution of the Greeks of Jerusalem to the Struggle of 1940.

More than 40 volunteers thickened the lines of the Armed Forces of Free Greece. When the fortunes of the War turned out to be negative for the Allied Struggle, Jerusalem and our Consulate General became, in 1942 for three months, the seat of the government of Free Greece.

On this historic day, we especially mention the Sailor Electrician Anestis Zografos, who gave his life in the sinking of the Katsoni Submarine in Skiathos on September 14, 1943, and the Sailor Engineer Emmanuel Mykonos, who was killed during the impact of a mine on Okrino 1943. The bones of the latter as well as 20 of his other comrades-in-arms, always loyal to duty, were transported from Turkey to Greece in 1947 and deposited in the ossuary of the Monument to the Fallen of our Navy.

Your Beatitude,

Distinguished High Priests,

Dear Fathers,

Dear children,

Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, as in our historical past, the ancient Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood testify and strengthen the dynamic presence of Hellenism in the Holy Land.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, as the pre-eminent exponent of our Orthodox faith and Hellenism in the Holy Land, has been and remains a living example of godly life, faith and hope and guardian of the moral and spiritual values of Greek and Orthodox witness.

In our time, as in any other, national unity and vigilance, adherence to the moral and spiritual values of our Orthodox faith and the ideals of freedom and democracy, are essential supplies for our effective response to every struggle.

The anniversary of October 28, 1940, reminds us that the solidarity, and the strong will of the Greek people to maintain their freedom and national pride, determined the

victorious outcome of this struggle.

This historic day is also a milestone between the present, the past and the future. By remembering the past, we guide our steps in the present and envision a better future for our country and for the whole world.

With feelings of pride for yesterday and optimism for today and tomorrow, let us renew our promise to stand on the ramparts of the struggle for freedom and our national independence and progress.

Long live the 28th of October 1940!

Long live Greece!"

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE HEADS OF CHURCHES HOST A DINNER FOR THE CONSULS OF JERUSALEM**

On Tuesday evening, 13/26 October 2021, the Heads of the Local Churches of Jerusalem as the Council of Churches hosted a dinner at the Anglican Church Restaurant in New East Jerusalem. The dinner was offered by the proposal and care of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras with the hospitality of the Archbishop of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem Mr Husam Naoum. Honoured guests were the Consuls of the countries that are in cooperation with the Status Quo (CORPS CONSULAIRE DE JERUSALEM), from Greece, France, Great Britain, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Sweden, Turkey and the

Vatican.

The honoured guests were welcomed at the dinner by the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem Mr Husam Naoum.

During the meal H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III addressed those present as follows:

“Your Excellencies,

Respected Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are grateful to be with you here in this distinguished gathering, and we wish to express our thanks to His Excellency the Consul General of Greece, Mr Vlioras, for his initiative in bringing us together, and to His Grace Archbishop Husam for his kind hospitality.

The mission of the Churches in the Holy Land is very specific. We have pastoral responsibility for the Christians who live here, and a moral obligation to support and sustain the Christian population so that Christians remain in the Holy Land.

It is also our duty to ensure that the Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land be maintained, for a Holy Land devoid of its Christian population would lose integrity. We have a further responsibility to accommodate and minister to the many thousands of pilgrims who, in normal times, come to the Holy City of Jerusalem and the Holy Land from around the world, many of them from the countries you represent. We are also called to the *diakonia* -the service- of the Holy Places, so that they may remain places of worship open to all without distinction.

As you are well aware, the Christian presence in Jerusalem and the Holy Land faces challenges unprecedented in our lifetime.

We live in a delicate balance that rests on ancient privileges and rights that history has confirmed, and there is now a concerted assault on these privileges and rights by radical groups who exercise a growing and considerable influence. Among these assaults are intrusion attempts on Church properties as well as proposed taxes on Church properties, moves which will diminish and cripple the ability of the Churches to carry out our charitable and educational mission. These matters are grave, and will require the attention of not the Churches alone, but also of the international community for their resolution.

We are appreciative that the Jerusalem diplomatic corps as well as the political leadership of many nations understand that religion plays an indispensable role in the life of our region, and we are pleased that the foreign ministries of so many countries recognise this role. There can be no sure path to a secure and peaceful future for all the people of the Holy Land and the Middle East unless we take this reality seriously.

The Churches do not wish to intrude into the proper role of diplomatic and political leadership. We are, however, ready and willing to be effective partners with you to do all in our power to find ways forward that ensure that the existing Status is respected. One should not underestimate that interfaith religious leadership has proven to be effective in opposing all forms of violence and in advancing peace. In this regard, we mention especially the countries of the European Union, which because of their long history in our region, and because of their involvement in the shaping of the Middle East, have a moral commitment to assist with this work. We remain committed to being in close contact with the European Union in their efforts to be peacemakers in our region.

Allow me to bring to your attention the establishment by the Churches of the NGO: ICoHS (the International Community of the Holy Sepulchre), which is seeking to be an advocate on behalf of the Christian communities of the Holy Land in global forums. A significant recent achievement of ICoHS is its new report on the positive impact of the Christian community in the coming days.

We wish to express our gratitude to each of you in your respective consular roles for the care and attention that you give to the serious concerns of our Christian communities. May God bless you as you carry out your duties on behalf of your own countries, and on behalf of all the people of our beloved City and Holy Land.

Thank you.”

**From Secretariat-General**

*Photos by: Heba Hrimat.*

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# **THE FEAST OF THE RETURN OF THE RELIC OF SAINT SAVVAS THE SANCTIFIED AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Tuesday 13/26 October 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the return of the relic of our Holy Father Savvas the Sanctified at the Holy Lavra he had founded.



The return of his relics was, as we elders remember, on 13/26 October 1965, after the request of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, which followed the visit of the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Pope in the Holy Land, the removal of the anathemas and the beginning of the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Church.

As a sign of goodwill, the Roman Catholic Church returned the relic that the Crusaders had transported to Venice. Ever since, the holy relic remains at its befitting place and reliquary, as an incorrupt heirloom of help for the Fathers of the Lavra and of healing of the infirmities of their infirmities, as well as of the pilgrims who visit it.

For the celebration of this event, an All-night Vigil was officiated at the Lavra by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias as the Bishop in charge of the feast this year, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Archbishop Methodios of Tabor and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Arab-speaking Priests. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Gotsopoulos on the right in Greek, and by Archimandrite Philotheos and his choir on the left in Arabic. The Vigil was attended by faithful Christians from Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, the Monks of the Lavra and other Monks.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek” (Psalm 27:8) the psalmist sings.

Beloved holy Fathers and Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The fragrance of the incorrupt relic of Savvas the Sanctified

has gathered us all in his great Lavra to celebrate in Eucharist the return of his relic from Venice in 1965.

This festive event is especially honoured by the Holy Church of Jerusalem. And this is because according to Athanasius the Great, today's feast is a type of heavenly joy. "Because if Moses had done everything according to the prototype he saw on the Mount, it is certain, that the worship held in the Tabernacle was a type of the mysteries in heaven, to which mysteries because Christ wants us to participate, He has prepared for us a new and enduring pathway. And just as all the old things were a type of the new, likewise, the present feast is a type of the joy up there".

Our Holy Father Savvas became a participant of this joy of high above, of "the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23) as, since his childhood, his loving soul and heart sought God and the dwelling in the Judea desert, hearkening to David's words: "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is" (Psalm 63:1).

This dry and uninhabited land did our Holy Father Savvas turn into a dwelling place of the divine grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, where a multitude of monks and ascetics "worked out their own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12); and they still do until the present day, as the hymnographer of the Church witnesses this by saying: "with the streams of thy tears, thou didst cultivate the bareness of the desert; and by thy sighings from the depths, thou didst bear fruit a hundredfold in labours; and thou becamest a luminary, shining with miracles upon the world, O Savvas our righteous Father. Intercede with Christ God that our souls be saved" (Apolytikion of the Saint).

Indeed, my dear brethren, Saint Savvas became a luminary shining with miracles upon the world. And this, because the

sanctified Savvas was strengthened with the power of the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ in the inner man, where Christ dwelt through the faith in his heart and was filled with all the fulness of God (Eph. 3:16-19).

The hymnographer of the Church calls God-receiving Savvas as the beauty of the monastics and the ascetics of the desert. And this, because our Holy Father Savvas, being under the protection of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, shone like the light of Christ in the darkness of ignorance, and as the light of Christ he continues to shine in our contemporary world of disorder and apostasy!

The presence of the incorrupt relic in our midst and its diffuse fragrance is the guarantee and the criterion of the mindset of our Orthodox faith and of the Apostolic tradition which the Holy Fathers of our Church kept as a consignment.

And today, we who keep this great festive event of the return of the relic of Savvas the Sanctified, are called through Paul's voice "that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:14-15).

Let us, therefore, entreat our Holy Father Savvas the blessed, who is near the throne of our God and Saviour Christ, to intercede with Him, that we may become worthy of the heavenly glory and Kingdom. Amen. Many happy returns!"

The Vigil was followed by a monastic meal and then the Patriarchal Entourage returned to Jerusalem through the Monastery of Abba Theodosios the Cenobiarch.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EPISCOPAL OFFICE OF METROPOLITAN KYRIAKOS OF NAZARETH**

On Sunday, 11/24 October 2021, Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the 7<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Synod (AD 787), who restored the holy icons, His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth celebrated the anniversary of thirty years of prosperous, fruitful and under good oath Episcopal Office in the Metropolis of Nazareth.

On this occasion, the Episcopal Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Shrine of the Holy Church of the Metropolis dedicated to the Annunciation of the Theotokos. The Liturgy was officiated by the celebrating Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth. His Holy Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos was represented by His Eminence Archbishop Methodios of Tabor, who came from Jerusalem, and co-celebrated at the Liturgy along with His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis. Co-celebrants also were, Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Hegoumen of Tiberias Archimandrite Parthenios and Hierodeacon Eulogios, the Hegoumens of the Holy Monasteries of Galilee, the Priests of the Shrine of Nazareth and other Priests from the neighbouring communities. The Service was attended by the President of the Nazareth Community, the caretakers of the Church, Mr Caesar Marjie and a large congregation.

During the service His Eminence Methodios read the address of His Beatitude as per below:

“To His Eminence, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, brother in Christ and co-celebrant to Our Mediocrity, a holy greeting in Christ Jesus.

Through this Patriarchal writing, we joyfully participate in the gleeful day of your dearly beloved holiness, on the completion of a prosperous thirty-year ministry in the Holy Shrine of the Annunciation of the Theotokos, and your God-pleasing pastoral care in the God-redeemed Holy Metropolis of Nazareth of our Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, congratulating you with all Our heart.

It is indeed right that our reverend flock in Nazareth honours your holiness, for which you have given yourself in your Episcopal Office in this Metropolis, defending as a genuine Hagiotaphite Father the irrefutable privileges and rights of the Patriarchate in the Holy Land and this is in praise and benefit of our Holy Congregation and our Rum Orthodox Patriarchate.

Congratulating again your dearly beloved holiness, and wishing many happy returns in health and strength, for the benefit you the flock that has been entrusted to you, we offer you the holy osculation from the All-holy and Life-giving Sepulchre and remain.”

At noon, His Eminence Metropolitan of Nazareth offered a meal and thanked His Beatitude and all who honoured him as follows:

“Your Eminence, Archbishop Methodios of Tabor, Representative of His Holy Beatitude,

Your Eminence, Holy brother Joachim, Metropolitan of Helenoupolis,

Reverend Archimandrites,

Beloved Fathers and Brethren,

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the intercessions of

our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and all the Saints, especially of my patron Saint our Holy glorious Father Kyriakos the Anchorite, have deemed us worthy to be present today in the gathering of the Eucharistic Doxology, on the occasion of the completion of thirty years since that blessed day of my entrance in the Holy city of Nazareth as a Metropolitan.

I owe special whole-hearted thanksgiving to His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch Theophilos, for His Patriarchal support and care about the needs and the difficulties we face in the course of our humble Episcopal ministry in Nazareth, as well as for His Patriarchal blessing today, which is expressed through the presence of two dear brother Bishops, His Eminence Archbishop Methodios of Tabor and His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis.

I also thank warmly the President and the members of the Community Council for their good cooperation and precious help in the mission of the Metropolis, and also the President and the members of the Committee of the High Council.

Especially and gratefully, I thank for their love my beloved Priests, who unceasingly day and night serve our communities without complaint, these special and blessed people of Nazareth, and in this manner, we walk down the same path, in prayer, patience and love, in our feeble strength, but nevertheless, amidst God's Providence. To Him belongs all glory, honour and worship, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen."

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE GENERAL ABBOT OF THE FRANCISCANS VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday afternoon, 9/22 October 2021, the recently elected General Abbot of the Franciscans, Reverend Father Massimo Fusarelli Ofm, that is, the Abbot of the Order of the Franciscans all over the world visited the Patriarchate.

The Reverend Abbot was accompanied by the Custos of the Holy Land, Fr Francesco Patton, Fr Dobromiro, Fr Luke, Fr Sinesa and Fr Athanasios Makora, Fr Mark, Fr Faltas, as well as other Franciscans. They were received by His Beatitude, along with their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Geronda Secretary-General Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and other Hagiotaphite Fathers.

His Beatitude addressed all present as follows:

“Dear Father Massimo,

Dear Father Osauro,

Your Paternity, Father Francesco,

Beloved Members of our Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

As you make your pilgrimage to the Holy Land, we welcome you, dear Father Massimo, and your brothers, to our Patriarchate. Your pilgrimage to the Holy Land comes at a crucial time for the Christian communities of our region.

As we greet you today, we recall the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, that *where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them* (Matthew 18:20). We give thanks to our Lord,

because here in the Holy Land we have built a full and harmonious co-operation of the Sacred Edicule. With this first phase successfully completed, we are continuing with the second phase of the work, encouraged and strengthened by our relationship.

The restoration of the Sacred Edicule is a historic event of the utmost importance, precisely because it has been accomplished by the three Communities to whom the *diakonia* of the Holy Places has been entrusted by Divine Providence. But in this partnership, the relationship between our two Brotherhoods has grown, and now we anticipate the restoration of the Grotto of the Church of the Nativity.

However, our united front in restoring the Sacred Edicule has an even deeper significance than this. For we have also established an important partnership in facing the unprecedented challenges before the Christian communities due to the complicated political situation here. Our united front is all the more crucial because new difficulties are constantly arising.

In addition to our common task of maintaining the Christian character of the Holy City of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, we have a shared interest and commitment in accommodating the many pilgrims who come from around the world. We also have a shared interest and commitment in sustaining the Holy Places as places of worship and keeping them accessible to pilgrims without distinction. And we have a shared interest and moral and pastoral commitment to do everything that we can to support and sustain the Christian population so that Christians remain in the Holy Land. This is of obvious consequence, for a Holy Land devoid of its Christian presence would lose its integrity.

We pray that in our cooperation, mutual respect, and deeper understanding, we are advancing the cause of the unity of the followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, who prayed that His



disciples *might be one, even as he and the Father are one* (John, 17:22).

We wish to express our appreciation to you, Father Massimo, for all that you do to support Father Francesco and the work of the Custody in the Holy Land. MAY God bless you in your pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and MAY God bless you and your brethren as you begin your new ministry in service to the Order of the Friars Minor.

Thank you.”

Referring also to the very good cooperation of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood with the Order of the Franciscans in Jerusalem, His Beatitude stressed the recently renovated Sacred Edicule and the protection of the rights of the Shrines in the Holy Land.

Thanking for the welcoming reception, Reverend Fr Massimo Fusarelli Ofm expressed his satisfaction for the cooperation of the Franciscans with the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and wished for its continuation for a good Christian witness and protection of the Christian presence in the Holy Land.

**From Secretariat-General**

*Photos by: Heba Hrimat.*

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**THE FEAST OF THE UNIVERSAL**

# EXALTATION OF THE SACRED CROSS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, 14/27 September 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Universal Exaltation of the Sacred and Life-giving Cross.

On this feast, the Church commemorates that after the consecration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre the gathered crowd asked to see and venerated the Precious Cross and for this reason, the Archbishop of Jerusalem Saint Makarios and Saint Helen exalted the Cross to be seen by everyone. Then all people exclaimed "Kyrie Eleison" many times. Ever since, this event was established to be celebrated one day after the anniversary of the consecration of the Church, namely, on 14<sup>th</sup> September.

For this event, Great Vespers with the formal incense procedure and the blessing of bread was officiated on Saturday afternoon at the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of Hagiotaphite Fathers.

On Sunday morning the Divine Liturgy was officiated at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre by His Holy Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Theodosios of Sebastia, Demetrios of Lydda, Philoumenos of Pella, Aristovoulos of Madaba, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon as the Service was attended by many people and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by the Procession from the Catholicon through the Holy Deposition to Saint Helen's chapel. The Deacons offered incense there at the Holy Altar of the Armenians, and through the stairs of the chapel the Procession went down to the shrine of the finding of the Cross. His Beatitude observed the Exaltation of the Holy Cross to the four points of the horizon according to the Typikon, while the Hagiotaphite awarded with officialia and the congregation awaited at Saint Helen's chapel.

The Procession continued on the right from the Seven Pillars and went round the Holy Sepulchre three times.

From there it continued to the Horrendous Golgotha, the apolytikion of the feast was chanted three times, followed by a prayer and the Holy Cross was exalted again to the four points of the horizon, before the Holy Cross was placed on the rock of the Horrendous Golgotha. Under the chanting for the troparia of the feast, the Holy Cross was venerated by the Patriarch, the Archbishops, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and then the congregation, who also received basilic flowers for the sanctification of their houses, souls and bodies and to use for the making of the bread of Eucharist, instead of leaven, as witnessed by those who make this kind of bread.

From the Horrendous Golgotha the Patriarchal Entourage went down to the Altar of the Catholicon through the interior stairs and from there they marched to the Patriarchate Headquarters.

Therein, His Beatitude addressed those present as follows:

"Today the death that came to man through the eating of the tree is abolished through the Cross. For the curse of our first mother Eve fell on all mankind is destroyed by the fruit of the pure Mother of God, whom all the powers of Heaven magnify", Saint Cosmas exclaims (Second troparion of

katavasias of the cross, ode 9).

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Noble Christians

The grace and power of the Sacred and Life-giving Cross have deemed us worthy to celebrate this year again Its Exaltation in the very place where It was found, and of course at the Horrendous Golgotha, with the celebration of the Patriarchal Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The Holy Church of Christ honours especially the Holy Cross because, according to Saint John Damascene, "the Cross is a trophy of Christ, once it was placed, but forever it drives away the demons".

In other words, the Holy Cross is a powerful symbol of the abolishment of the corruption of death. "By nothing else is death abolished, the forefather's curse freed, death put to shame... but by the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Anything is made possible through the Cross", Saint John Damascene says.

And according to Saint Paul, the Holy Cross is the incarnation of self-denial and utmost humility of Jesus Christ: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:6-8).

Just as through the wood of the first-created couple's disobedience "through envy of the devil came death into the world: and they that do hold of his side do find it" (Wisdom of Solomon 2:24), likewise, through the wood of obedience, namely the Cross, the eternal life in Christ through His

boundless philanthropy came to the world. "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25) the Lord says. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him" (Romans 6:9), Saint Paul preaches. And according to Saint Cyril of Alexandria, Christ's death in the flesh made the source of the renewal to immortality and the newness of life for us men.

The greatness of our Saviour Christ and the incomprehensible divine mystery of the Cross is clearly expressed by Saint Paul in his letter to the Colossians with the words: "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. 1:19-20).

"O Cross save us by thy power; sanctify us with thy brightness, O precious Cross, and make us strong by thine Exaltation; for thou hast been given unto us as the light and salvation of our souls" (Entreaty, troparion 7). Amen! Many happy returns!"

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday 6/19 September 2021, for pastoral reasons the Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos was celebrated earlier at the Holy Church of the Nativity of Theotokos in Beit Jala, near Bethlehem.

On this feast, the Church glorifies God because He granted Mary to the former baren Joachim and Anna, from whom our Lord Jesus Christ was born in the flesh. The Church joyfully chants "Joachim and Anna were freed from the corruption of death O immaculate one by thy Holy Nativity...the barren woman giveth birth to the Theotokos and nourisher of our life" (Kontakion).

For this joyful feast the Divine Liturgy in the beautiful Church of Beit Jala was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences; Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Priests of the Community, Paul, Joseph and Elias and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by Mr Nidal and his choir, as the service was attended by the whole parish and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"The ends of earth rejoice today upon thy birth, O blameless Maid, O Mary, God's hallowed Mother and bride who knewest not wedlock. Hereon is loosed the sorrowful reproach and pain of childlessness by which thy parents once were held; loosed is the curse in childbearing that fell on Eve, our first mother" the hymnographer of the Church proclaims. (Minaion, Matins,

Exapostilarion).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians,

The Holy Church of Christ rejoices today along with the Holy Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Righteous and Saints on the Holy Nativity of the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason, we are gathered in this holy Church to honour in Eucharist the Theotokos, the Mother of our God.

Let nature leap with joy because the sheep of God is being born and from her, the shepherd will be clad in a garment like a sheep and will tear apart the garments of the old deadening. Let virginity dance, because as Isaiah says, "the Virgin is born, she who will conceive and give birth to a Son, whose name will be Emanuel", meaning, "God is with us".

And the shepherd who will be clad in the sheep's form and will tear apart the garment of the old deadening is no one else by God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, who "for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9), Saint Paul preaches.

Interpreting these words of Paul, Saint Chrysostom says: "Here, Paul names 'wealth' the knowledge of the mystery of reverence, the purification of sins, righteousness, sanctification, the myriads of good things He has bestowed on us and those He will bestow in the future". And Zigavinos says: "The wealth of the deification by grace".

The nativity of the pure Theotokos Mary from Joachim and Anna reversed the curse that came from Adam and Eve to the human race when later on she bore Christ in the flesh. That is why Saint John Damascene says, "in thee Ever-Virgin Theotokos are both nature and time renewed".

This means that both human nature and the time are renewed in

Theotokos and Virgin Mary, because from her did the Light of Righteousness dawn in the world, namely, Christ, the salvation of the human race. "Behold now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2) the Lord says. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you" (1 Peter 1:10), Saint Peter says.

Indeed, the words of the Prophets were fulfilled to the righteous people of God, Joachim and Anna, whose prayer did the Lord hear, and gave them the Virgin Mary as a brilliant and great ransom for Eve, as Saint John Damascene says: "And the Lord heard their prayer, giving them Mary, who has the name of the Lord, such a brilliant and great ransom for Eve. The daughter will become the healing of the mother, the new dough of the divine rebirth, the root of the god-spoken branch, the rejoice of the forefather".

This holy event of the nativity of the Theotokos is especially honoured by our Holy Church. And this is because the Most Holy Mother of God is the beginning of the people in Christ, the Christians. From her pure flesh, the Word became incarnate, He was made flesh (John 1:14).

In other words, my dear brethren, the incarnation of God the Word in the Holy Spirit from her pure flesh became "the new leaven for the divine rebirth" as Saint Athanasios the Great teaches: "In Christ, the human nature is unspeakably united with the Divine nature of the Saviour and thus rejects all natural malformity that was inherited from Adam and is renewed from above into a new divine and eternal being, by the power of the Divine nature of the Word".

Behold, therefore, the contribution of the Most Pure and immaculate Virgin Mary to the great mystery of the salvation of us men. Behold again, why Saint Paul preaches; "For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches" (Romans 11:16). And behold why the



hymnographer of the Church cries out loud: "thy Nativity O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy to the whole world; for from thee hath dawned the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, annulling the curse and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting" (Apolytikion of the Feast).

And the Nativity of Theotokos proclaimed to the whole world the message of the joy of salvation, while the greeting from Archangel Gabriel, "Rejoice thou who art full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women" sealed the redeeming message of the absolution from the curse of the forefather and the curse of death and corruption, namely of sin, through Christ's death.

For this reason, the Gospel of joy, blessing and sanctification, as well as the grace of the Holy Spirit, these divine and marvellous gifts that our Holy Church possesses, we are called to keep as treasures in our hearts, through the prayers of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.

Along with Saint John Damascene, let us exclaim to the Theotokos: "Rejoice lamp, the deep-rooted and golden vessel, whose wick is the grace of the Holy Spirit and olive oil the holy body which Christ took from your pure flesh, the Light that never sets, thou who brought the light of eternal life to those who were sitting in the darkness and the shadow of death". Amen. Many happy returns, with many blessings and in good health!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a meal at lunchtime, which was offered by the Community Council. During the meal His Beatitude addressed those present as follows:

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in

Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39), Saint Paul preaches.

Dear Brethren,

Today's feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos is in essence a feast of the infinite love of God toward His creature, the man, whom He made according to His image and likeness.

This divine love is witnessed and confessed by the Holy Church of Christ during its liturgical sacrament of the Eucharist when both the clergy and the people become communicants of the body and blood of our God and Saviour Christ, united in His Spirit.

This unity has been preserved throughout the centuries by the Holy Church of Jerusalem, namely the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, according to Saint Paul's advice: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

This bond of peace between God and the people was inaugurated by the great event of the Nativity of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, whom we gratefully honour today and in great reverence entreat to protect and comfort all who magnify and praise Her.

The Most Holy Virgin and Theotokos Mary is the hope of the whole world, and especially of the Christians. "Unto Thee do I commit mine every hope. O Mother of God, guard me under thine shelter", the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (end of Small Compline). And the psalmist says: "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help" (Psalm 146:3).

We, my dear brethren, are called to "Look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2), the Son and God of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. Amen. To the good health of all of us!"

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, 15/28 August 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Gethsemane at the Holy Church with the Tomb of the Mother of God.

On this feast, the Church reminds the faithful of our faith that the Theotokos conceived from the Holy Spirit and bore in the flesh our Lord Jesus Christ, she died and was buried in Gethsemane, but was translated by the hands of her Son in the heavens and her immaculate body was preserved. She stands on His right side, interceding unceasingly for the life and salvation of those who genuinely revere her as the Mother of God.

The Dormition of the Theotokos is characterized as 'deathless' by the Church, for this, it sings: "On thy deathless Dormition, all the heavens are jubilant, and the hosts of Angels exceedingly rejoice, clouds caught the Apostles high into the air; and although dispersed throughout the world, they were brought to stand in one choir before thine immaculate body" (Matins, praises, troparia 1,3). And Saint John of Damascus says about this, "oh, best departure, through which life in God is granted".

For the feast of the Dormition, Vespers was officiated at the Theotokos' Tomb on Friday afternoon by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda. The Divine Liturgy on Saturday morning was 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, Demetrios of Lydda, Makarios of Qatar, and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, along with Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, and the Archimandrites, Isidoros, Meletios and Dionysios, Priest Farah, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and the Patriarchal School Students, as the Service was attended by many local faithful Christians and the Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

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

"O strange wonder, great and marvellous! For the fount of life is laid within a sepulchre; a ladder to heaven's heights doth the small grave become" (Vespers, Troparion 1), the Church hymnographer says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

By the Grace of God, we are here at the Tomb of Gethsemane, where the glorious body of our Most glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary was placed to honour her sacred metastasis (translation).

The Dormition of the Mother of God is indeed a wondrous mystery, as the hymnographer says: "Thou didst conceive and bear without the seed of man; and thou didst fall asleep, yet incorrupt in death, as wonder met together with great wonder, O Theotokos. How thou, who didst not know man, being pure yet didst nurse a babe; how the Mother of our God, clothed in death, yet doth breath froth myrrh. For this, we cry to thee

with the Angel: Rejoice, O Full of Grace" (Matins, Kathisma 3).

Rejoice, O Full of Grace, we cry again with the Angel, because in Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary we praise the divine and marvellous plan of God's Providence, the Incarnation of God the Word and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

The multitudes of the Angels in heaven and the people on earth bless the sacred Dormition of the Most Holy Virgin because she became Mother of the Creator of all things on the one hand, and the cause of our deification on the other, as the hymnographer says; "For she that is of David's seed, she through whom we have been made Godlike, hath beyond all telling been translated with glory into the hands of her own Son and Master" (Vespers, Aposticha troparion 3).

"Oh, how the fount of life is translated into life through death! Oh, how the One who surpassed the limits of nature by giving birth now keeps the laws and succumbs to death while she has an immortal body. Because this body has to lay down mortality and be clothed in incorruptibility since the sovereign of nature did not refuse to suffer death".

Theotokos Mary is called 'the fount of life, because she became the Mother of God. And Christ is life, "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6), the Lord says. Saint John the Evangelist preaches that the cause and the fount of life is Christ, the Son and Word of God: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4).

This means that due to the relation and union of the people with the old Adam, all his descendants die, so through their relation and union with the New Adam, the Resurrected Christ, all will be vivified, as Saint Paul preaches: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22).

The Mother of God, who received the Holy Spirit and the power

of the Highest overshadowed her (Luke 1:35), is the beginning of those who are brought back to life. For this reason, the Dormition of Theotokos goes beyond the meaning of natural death, as this is proven by her Tomb, which is preserved and venerated to this day, while "it is empty, without a body in it". This event, which is beyond logic, the Dormition and translation of Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is phrased by the hymnographer of the Church with the words: "The bounds of nature are overcome in thee, O Immaculate Virgin; for thy childbirth is virginal, and thy death is the espousal of life. O thou who after childbirth art virgin, and who after death art living, do thou, O Theotokos, ever save thine inheritance" (Matins, Ode 9, troparion 1).

The Most Holy and most blessed Theotokos Mary, the Mother of our God and Saviour Christ, has become the Mother of all people, and especially of the Christians, as the psalmist says: "Blessed is the [Christian] nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance" (Psalm 33:12).

And we, my dear brethren, being grateful for the endless benefits we have received from the Most Holy Theotokos, let us thank and entreat her to intercede to her Son and our God for the salvation of our souls.

May the grace of the Sacred Tomb of the Mother of God be with you all. Amen".

After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen of the Shrine Archbishop Dorotheos of Avela hosted a reception for the Patriarchal Entourage, the Consul General and others.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE FEAST OF SAINT JOHN THE NEW HOZEVITE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, 28 July/ 10 August 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of Saint John the new Hozevite, who came from Romania and lived in asceticism at the Brook of Chorath in the Holy Monastery of Hozeva in the 20th century. He was canonized a Saint by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 2015. His holy relic is kept incorrupt in the Monastery of his repentance.

In honour of this Saint, an all-night Vigil was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Hieromonks Chrysogonos and Marcellus, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Patrikios, while the chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and the Monastery Monks.

His Beatitude was welcomed by the renovator of the Monastery Hegoumen Archimandrite Constantine with the following words:

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

Along with Your Reverend Entourage,

We celebrate again the commemoration of Saint John the new Hozevite, whose incorrupt relic is treasured in the Holy Monastery of Hozeva. Our heart is full of joy and sadness at the same time!

Joy, because we celebrate the victory of one of us against the

passions and the “world”. The victory of one man just like us, a Hieromonk of Hozeva who reached the height of holiness by the Divine Grace; Saint John the new Hozevite, who came from Romania.

Sadness because we march along a period of unbearable and significant testing. In the midst of an incredible unleashing of morals and unrepentant life worldwide, for a year and a half, the terrible pandemic of COVID plagues humanity, and millions of victims fall every day. And recently, high and greedy flames engulf houses, forests, the lungs of oxygen ...

Difficult years and we all ask for consolation.

And where else will we find refuge, if not in God, the Theotokos and all the Saints?

In a letter of Saint John, we read the following words of consolation which, dissolving sorrow, give strong hope and firm optimism to all of us:

“Therefore, we are not strangers at all, although we live far away. The spiritual bond between us is very close, even if we do not realize it. I am neither a teacher nor an Abbot, and the Lord knows that I do not want such a thing. Your situation, however, is not indifferent to me. H modesty of your life is also for me an honour, an occasion of consolation...

Think that we are living in the most challenging years and the most dangerous for the soul’s salvation. Think that we have all been left as orphans, far removed from our homeland and deprived of spiritual food. Think that the enemies of our faith have multiplied more than ever, and our salvation is in greater danger. If we have a wounded soul, there is no one to heal us, and if we fall, there is no one to lift us up. Now there is a need for more unity and brotherly support. Now there is a need for more unity and brotherly support. Although we are not all together, at least spiritually to be united and



to bear the weaknesses of each other with mercy...

Let us stand well; let us stand after fear in the Holy Faith and show mercy with peace to all, by the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

Your Beatitude, Father and Master,

Pray that the Good Lord, through the intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos of Hozeva, and our Holy Father John the new Hozevite, will lead all the people and us to a safe harbour and path of repentance and salvation. Amen.”

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

“Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious and full of compassion, and righteous” (Psalm 112:4), the psalmist exclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

The light of the Lord dawned today with the holy memory of our Holy Father John of the new Hozevite in the shadow of death caused both by the incurable infectious corona disease and by the ongoing earthquakes, disasters, fires, and other signs of the divine rage.

Therefore, we are gathered in this biblical place of our Holy Father John’s asceticism, to honour in eucharist the holy man of God according to the words of the psalmist: “O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts” (Psalm 96: 1,8). “It is not of the ungodly but of the righteous to sing praises unto the Lord”, Theodoret the interpreter says.

Saint John is classified among the many sons of God, who has elevated them to the status of Christ’s glory, as Saint Paul says: “For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom

are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 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" (Hebrews 2:10-11)

Interpreting these words of Saint Paul, Saint Theophylactos says: "The Father made it worthy of His philanthropy that the firstborn of all the future sons would enjoy His glory more brightly than the rest, proving his worth through his sufferings, to show to the rest in which way they should strive".

Our Father John, as his biographer mentions, endured many sufferings since his early youth and many temptations during his monastic life in the surroundings of the River Jordan and in the desert of Hozeva, where he became a faithful witness of the passions and the striving of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Martyrs are not only those who receive death for their faith in Christ but also those who die for the keeping of His commandments," Saint John of the Ladder says. And Saint Paul says: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35).

Interpreting these words, Saint Chrysostom says: "When Paul talks about tribulation, he talks about prison cells, and bondage, and slander and exile and all other afflictions; and he refers to all the human sufferings with a single word".

These "all the human sufferings" did the Hieromonk of obedience and patience John endure, for the love of the Chief of men's salvation, our Lord Jesus Christ. Being guarded by the power of his faith in God, the humble in heart John also had the certainty of the guarantee that his hope would not be dashed, and he became a participant of the inheritance which is kept in heaven, as the Chief of the Apostles Peter preaches: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-4).

We have before our eyes the guarantee of the heritage in the heavens that is incorruptible and immaculate and does not wither. And that guarantee is no other than the incorrupt and fragrant relics of our Holy and wonder-worker Father John the new Hozevite from Romania.

In other words, the body of our Holy Father John, which became incorrupt and fragrant by the Holy Spirit, is an indisputable and irrefutable testimony of the resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ, but also our living hope.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15), the psalmist says. This means, my dear Brethren, that we did not come here today in the feast of Saint John to honour him, but rather to participate in the honour the Lord does to him, who is His Saint. Moreover, we came to be taught the ordinances of the true life in Christ by him, Holy John the new Hozevite and the multitude of the Saints of Hozeva before him.

Our Holy Father John indulged unceasingly in the holy scriptures according to the word "I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways" (Psalm 119:15) and became a faithful disciple of Saint Paul, applying in both words and actions his redeeming advice: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And 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).

This Paul's advice, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2), is what Saint John says to all of us, as he has boldness before God along with all the Saints and our Most-Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. Saint John gives this advice to us, my dear brethren, "that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7). Amen. Many happy returns!"

During the Vigil, His Beatitude prayed for the salvation of our fellow men, the fire victims in Evvoia of Greece.

A monastic meal followed the Divine Liturgy.

**From Secretariat-General**