

# THE FEAST OF SAINT MARY MAGDALENE & SAINT MARCELLA OF CHIOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday 22 July /4 August 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy Glorious Mary Magdalene the myrrh-bearer and equal to the Apostles, and the commemoration of Saint Marcella of Chios.

The commemoration of Saint Mary Magdalene, who according to the Gospels was healed from evil spirits by the Lord, and who saw Him and preached His resurrection, was celebrated at the Russian Holy Nunnery bearing her name in Gethsemane, with the Divine Liturgy that was officiated by Metropolitan Mark of Berlin from ROCOR (Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia), which was called "Diaspora" before its union with Moscow Patriarchate.

During the Divine Liturgy His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, accompanied by Hierodeacon Simeon, visited the Monastery. His Eminence read the greeting of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, who is currently in Jordan; the greeting is below:

*Greeting to the Community on the feast of Saint Mary Magdalene*

*Myrrh-bearer and Equal to the Apostles*

*at the Russian Church of Saint Mary Magdalene in Gethsemane*

*His Beatitude Theophilos III*

*Patriarch of Jerusalem*

4 August 2021

*Dear Archimandrite Roman,*

*Dear Mother Elizabeth,*

*Your Eminences,*

*Dear Fathers,*

*Beloved Monastics,*

*Sisters and Brothers in Christ,*

*Today on this blessed and glorious feast of your patron saint, we are reminded of these words:*

*Praise be to the God of the Christians,*

*For he has raised up both men and women to serve His Holy Church.*

*Among the first of them was Mary, born in Magdala,*

*who walked upon this earth with the blessed Theotokos,*

*the venerable Apostles, and the pious myrrh-bearing women.*

*She hath shown us, through her marvellous transformation,*

*the life-changing power of Christ's compassion and deliverance.*

*Let us, therefore, hasten to her and declare:*

*Rejoice, Mary Magdalene, holy myrrh-bearer and first proclaimer of the Resurrection.*

*(The Akathist)*

*The Gospels are eloquent testimony to Saint Mary Magdalene as*

*a preacher of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. She was the first to the tomb on that first Easter morning, and the Good News of the resurrection was spread from her.*

*We who celebrate her festal memory today with such joy are the Church of the resurrection, and our mission is to be a witness to the resurrection in our own day. This mission is all the more urgent in our present time and circumstance when the pandemic has spread both death and the fear of death all around the world. Here in the Holy City of Jerusalem, it is incumbent upon us to whom the Holy Places have been entrusted by Divine Providence, to remain steadfast in our proclamation of the resurrection. We are to be champions of Christ's resurrection, holding high, for all to see, the bright torch of the light and hope that come from the Holy Tomb.*

*We have experienced in our community the sting of death during this pandemic; today's feast is our consolation, for Saint Magdalene reminds us through her own tears at the empty Tomb, that eternal life triumphs over death. As we read in the Gospel of Saint Mark:*

*The angel said to them, "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. Look, see the place where they laid him.*

*(Mark 16:6)*

*Today, therefore, let us recommit ourselves to the message of the resurrection as we celebrate this joyous feast, and MAY Saint Mary Magdalene pray for us, that we MAY be faithful to our mission of proclaiming the resurrection.*

*Thank you.*

*The commemoration of Saint Magdalen was also celebrated at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with an All-night Vigil, led by His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, and a procession with the holy relics of the Saint.*

The feast was also celebrated in Magdala, the Saint's hometown by Tiberias Sea, at the chapel of Moscow Patriarchate. The Liturgy was officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, with the co-celebration of the Head of MISSIA, Archimandrite Alexander.

The commemoration of Saint Marcella was likewise celebrated at the chapel inside the Holy Church of Saint Spyridon in the Old City of Jerusalem, with the Divine Liturgy by the Hegoumen of the H. Monastery of Saint Nicodemus and ministering Priest of Megali Panagia, Archimandrite Makarios, with the hospitality of the Hegoumen Archimandrite Sergios.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF PROPHET ELIJAH AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Monday 20 July / 2 August 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the holy glorious Prophet Elijah (Elias) at the Holy Monastery bearing his name between south Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

On this day the Church commemorates that prophet Elias the Thesbite was full of godly zeal regarding the fact that the God of Israel is the only God. Such was his faith and holiness that God heard his prayer and did not send any rain for three years, and only with his prayer after that the He opened the heavens and gave rain again. With prophet Elias' prayer, God sent fire from heaven on Carmel mount and burnt the wood in the altar. For the Church, prophet Elias is an angel in the flesh, the summit and boast of the prophets, the second

forerunner of Christ's presence, who gave his grace to Elisha..."

Prophet Elias ascended in heaven in a fiery chariot and dropped his fleece down to his disciple Elisha, who used it to cross the River Jordan.

The Divine Liturgy in his Monastery 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, Philoumenos of Pella, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Master of Ceremonies Archimadrite Bartholomew, Archimandrites Makarios and Isidoros, the ministering Priest of Saint James' Cathedral Charalambos Bandour, Priest George Baramki, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Archimandrite Eusevios and Hierodeacon Simeon on the right in Greek and Saint James' choir under Mr Kamar on the left in Arabic, as the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and many faithful Christians.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon before the Holy Communion:

"Not in an earthquake, but in a light breeze didst thou behold the presence of the Lord God, which enlightened thee of old; and mounting on a swift four-horsed chariot, thou, o Elias inspirited of God didst strangely ride through the sky, O divinely blessed, being wondrous in the sight of all" (Vespers, sticheron 2) the hymnographer proclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The incarnate Angel and the Prophets' summit and boast, Elias the Thesbite, has gathered us all today in his holy Church to celebrate his sacred commemoration and praise in hymns Christ

Who glorified him.

Indeed, Elias was glorified by God the Father, becoming a vessel of the Holy Spirit, Who gave him the gift of prophecy and the power to work miracles "The Lord hath made wondrous His holy one" (Psalm 4:4).

Elias the Thesbite was correctly called "prophet of the highest and summit and boast of the prophets". Like another Moses, he saw God, like another Paul, he "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12:4). Behold what his hymnographer says: "As a seer of God, The Thesbite with Moses beholdeth upon Tabor that which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which the heart of earthborn men hath not considered, even the Almighty Lord incarnate" (Matins, Ode 9, Troparion 3).

Referring to the power and the impact of the righteous man's prayer, Saint James the Brother of God names Elias the zealot as a tangible example, saying: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months" (James 5:16-17).

Through the power of the prayer of those "with an innocent heart and pure hands" (Psalm 23:4), Elias the Thesbite did not only "bind the heavens with his word", but also put to shame the idolatrous priests of Baal (see 3 Kings 18:22), resurrected the son of the woman from Zarephath which belonged to Sidon (see 3 Kings 17), ascended into the heavens in a fiery chariot, threw down to Elisha his mantle and gave his disciple twofold the grace he had (see 4 Kings 2).

It is written in the Book Wisdom of Sirach: "Then Elijah arose, a prophet like fire, and his word burned like a torch... How glorious you were, Elijah, in your wondrous deeds! Whose glory is equal to yours?" (Wisdom of Sirach 48:1-4). At this

point, this book's writer wonders: How much you were glorified O Elias, with your wondrous works! Who can boast of being like you? This refers to the experience of the vision of God Elias had while he found himself in a state of despair and hidden egoism.

"And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice" (3 Kings 19:10-12).

The strong wind, the earthquake and the fire Elias saw, as well as the thunder and lightning of God's vision Moses had, refer to the unbearable of the divine nature. However, the fourth element of "a still small voice" which is unique in Elias' vision of God, distinguishes his experience from that of Moses and strongly denotes "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7), the love and longsuffering of God.

In other words, the "breeze" – according to Father Joel Gianakopoulos –, is the symbol of God's love. This manner of God's appearance teaches the despondent and discouraged Prophet Elias due to triumph of evil that he should be thinking of the love and longsuffering of God, Who does not wish the death of the sinner until he repents". "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matt. 9:13) the Lord says. According to Saint Paul, God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

Interpreting Elias' vision of God on Mount Horeb allegorically, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "everyone who like Elias the great truly seeks God, will behave like a young man and experience and thrive in the toils and struggles of virtues, not only on Mount Horeb but also in the cave of Horeb; and I mean the secrecy of the knowledge that comes along with the habituation of virtues".

In other words, Saint Cyril considers Prophet Elias a prototype of the true spiritual work and seeking of God, namely of the mystical divine knowledge, being sure that every faithful in a practical struggle imitating Elias will be deemed worthy not only of the acquisition of virtues but also of the vision of God, namely the vision of the glory of God, which results from the cultivation of the virtues.

It is also noteworthy, my dear brethren, that God chooses natural phenomena like "a strong wind, an earthquake and fire" to reveal not only to the Prophets and the righteous but also to His deniers that He is the One who created the universe out of nought, the Creator of the visible and invisible creation. Therefore, referring to man's fall and consequently to the fall of the creation, Saint Paul says: "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope" (Romans 8:20).

Honouring his sacred commemoration, let us ask his intercessions to God the Father and say along with the hymnographer: "Beholding the great iniquity of men, and God's immeasurable love for man, the Prophet Elias was troubled, being wroth; and he uttered uncompassionate words unto Him that is compassionate, and cried out: Be Thou wroth with them that have set Thee as nought, O most righteous Judge. But the bowels of the Good One were in no wise stirred to punish them that set His at nought. For He ever awaiteth the repentance of all men, since He is the only Friend of man" (Matins, Oikos). To Him belongs all glory and honour and worship unto the ages. Amen.

Many happy returns!"

After the Divine Liturgy, the good caretaker of the Monastery Monk Achillios hosted a reception for all congregation and later on a meal for the Patriarchal Entourage and members of Saint James' parish.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS BLESSES THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Friday morning, 3/16 July 2021, the Divine Liturgy on the commemoration of Saint Yakinthos and Saint Anatolios Patriarch of Constantinople was celebrated at the Patriarchate's Holy Church of the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Lord in Ramallah. The Liturgy was officiated by the Priest of Beit Jala Fr Pavlos Alem and the Priest of Bethlehem Fr George Zakaman, and was attended mainly by the young people of the parishes of the Patriarchate from Jerusalem, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Taybe, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour.

The Liturgy was also attended by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, Who came from Jerusalem along with their Eminences, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Father Issa Mousleh and Archdeacon Mark. His Beatitude blessed the approximately 140 young boys and girls, who received the Holy

Communion, as the chanting was delivered by the Byzantine Choir of the young people of Ramallah.

After the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude addressed the young ones through Fr Issa in Arabic and gave each of them an icon as a blessing. His Beatitude's address is as per below:

**“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”** (Psalm 133:1) the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved children in Christ, young boys and girls.

Our presence with you in this brotherly gathering of the youths of the Rum-Orthodox communities urges us to cry aloud with the hymnographer: “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity”, and especially in the name of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20), the Lord says.

Indeed, my dear ones, this blessed gathering is in the name of our Saviour Christ and the Church, which is His body and He [Christ] is the head of this body, namely of the Church (Col. 1:18,24), as Saint Paul preaches. And the Church as another “hen gathereth her chickens under her wings” (Matt. 23:37).

Our gathering has special importance for the faithful members of the Church. And this, because the challenges, the signs of the times, are multiple; climatic, environmental, socio-political, economic and especially health issues.

The Prophets and the Holy Apostles also had this experience of this disorder in the world. That is why Christ would say to them: “Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven” (Luke 21:10-11).

As far as the correct Christian faith and teaching are concerned, Saint Paul sends his disciple Timothy saying: "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

We, our beloved children, who belong to the local Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of all Churches, boast in the Lord that the Holy Church of Jerusalem is founded upon Christ's blood on the Cross, and has its apostolic beginning by Saint James the Brother of God and First Hierarch of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Moreover, the Lord made all of us, both clergy and the people, who live in the Holy Land, ministers of His true witnesses, the All-holy Shrines, which testify the Nativity, the Passion on the Cross, the three-day burial and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also the redeeming work of the mystery of the Divine Providence.

We rend glory and thanksgiving to our Lord and God because He gave us His Holy Church, which as an oasis of the Holy Spirit, rises amidst a dry and arid land, amidst the worldly powers of this era. In this oasis, light shines upon them "that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Luke 1:79). "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Psalm 97:11) according to the psalmist.

We do not exaggerate when we say that the Holy Church of Jerusalem, "the habitation of the incarnate God the Word and the Mother of the Churches", according to Saint John of Damascus, became and is proven to be, throughout the centuries, both the safe harbour of our souls and bodies and the safe harbour of our cultural inheritance and national-religious identity. It is noteworthy, that this identity was kept intact and unadulterated, despite the various adversities and insults of the opponents, as the psalmist says: "They

break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage" (Psalm 94:5). "Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place" (Psalm 66:12).

Therefore, dearest children in the Lord, we have a sacred obligation to preserve this consignment, the cultural inheritance and our national-religious identity, always paying heed to the words of Saint John of the Ladder who says: "it will be a pitiful spectacle to see those who were saved at sea, to end up shipwrecked in the harbour".

The present aeon (Gal. 1:4) in which we live, is the aeon of globalization, confusion, and disorientation, while its days are evil (Eph. 5:16). The Church of Christ, and specifically for us, the Rum-Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the primary place of our protection, our salvation: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28), the Lord says.

Because of this, Saint Paul exhorts us to a brave fight, saying: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:10-12).

Behold the time, my dear brethren and children of the Lord, to know the wealth and the depth of the glory of the mystery of the Church, of which Christ is its body and head (ref. Col. 1:27).

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

The hosts of this ceremony, Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery Archimandrite Galaktion and the Priest of the Church Fr

Iakovos thanked His Beatitude for His Fatherly interest.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE APOSTLES AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Tuesday, 30 June /13 July 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the Synaxis of the Holy Apostles.

By the word “Synaxis”, the Church does not mean the Gathering of the Apostles, but that of its faithful, in order to honour the twelve Apostles and Lord’s Disciples, for the mission they offered Christ and the Church, namely of the preaching about Christ and the spreading of the Gospel, through which they “didst draw the world into His net”.

The Church of Jerusalem was gathered for this feast at the Church of the Twelve Apostles in the centre of the city of Tiberias, on the northwest shore of Lake Gennesaret, the place of the appearance of the Lord after His Resurrection according to the 10<sup>th</sup> Matins Gospel (John 3:21).

There, on the feast day, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences: Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Archimandrites, Chrysostom, Artemios, Arab-speaking Priests from Nazareth district,

Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine choir of Acre under the lead of Archimandrite Philotheos, with the participation of Russian and Arab-speaking faithful Christians.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following sermon:

“Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world” (Psalm 19:4), the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The grace of the sacred chorea of the Holy glorious and all-lauded Twelve Apostles has gathered us today in this Holy place of the Tiberias Seashore, where Jesus stood (John 21:4) and where the Apostles' Monastery lies, to celebrate their commemoration.

In his “Revelation”, John calls the twelve Apostles the foundations of the Holy city of Jerusalem, which is the Church; “And I saw a new heaven and new earth...And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband [Jesus Christ] ... And the wall of the city had twelve foundations and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rev. 21: 1-2, 14).

Talking about the mystery of marriage between a man and a woman, Saint Paul says; “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32). It is noteworthy that Paul compares the union of marriage with the mysterious and unbreakable union of Christ with the bride Church. Therefore, he preaches that the Church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:23) and He is the head of the body of the Church (Col. 1:18). Paul also says in his teaching that God the Father united the gentiles and the Jews in one Church

through His Only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: "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. 2:20).

From the aforementioned Biblical testimonies, we see the unbreakable relationship of Christ with the Church and the fundamental relationship between the Apostles and the Church of Christ, His body. The Apostles received their calling from Jesus, not from the people: "Have not I chosen you twelve?" (John 6:70). "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matt. 10:16). The power given to the Apostles was gushing out from Jesus Christ Himself, Who said: "take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Matt. 10:19-20).

The great and wondrous day of Pentecost on which the Apostles received the uncreated energy of the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4), made them vessels of the gift of the Holy Spirit and preachers of the Word of the Gospel, and inaugurators of the Churches that were founded all over the world, along with the Bishops who were ordained and established by the Apostles.

"We are made as the filth of the world" (1 Cor. 4:13) as blessed Paul says about the Apostles, proven to "have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4:7), that they were "ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1), and that "this grace is given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:8-9), and

moreover, that they are “the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ” (2 Cor. 8:23).

Indeed, the Apostles are the “glory of Christ” and therefore, of His Church, because upon their calling they were given “power against unclean spirits” (Matt. 10:1) and “over all the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19). And before his separation from His disciples, the Lord said to them: “These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:25-26).

Interpreting these words, Cyril of Alexandria says: “the perfect and precise revelation of the mystery is given to us by the Comforter, namely of the Holy Spirit Who was sent by the Father in His Name, I say of the Son, [and our Lord, Jesus Christ]”.

This authority that the Apostles received by Christ upon their calling, as well as the perfect and precise revelation of the mystery of the Divine Providence, through the Comforter, namely the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, proves clearly the magnitude of the apostolic preaching on the one hand, and on the other, the extreme value of the Apostolic succession which brings together the institution of the divine-human body of the Church through the Holy Spirit.

Behold, therefore, why the Holy Apostles are the foundations of the Church of Christ and behold why the Holy God-bearing Fathers called the Church “Apostolic” in The Creed.

We, my dear brethren, who honour the commemoration of the Holy Apostles, would like to pray to our God and Saviour Jesus Christ and say along with the hymnographer: “Thou Who art Light that existed ere all ages, when Thou didst vouchsafe to come to me, the lowly man, through Thine ineffable love for

man... Thine Apostle and disciples didst Thou then reveal as second lights brightly glittering with the resplendence and the dread lightning that flasheth froth from Thee; and being sent forth, they illumined all of creation with Thy light divine, O Lord. And they ever beseech Thee to enlighten and to save our souls" (Matins, praises, Troparion 3). And let us say to the Theotokos: "Thee do we bring forward as an indestructible weapon against our enemies; thee, O Bride of God, do we possess as the anchor and hope of our salvation"(Matins, Ode five, Theotokion). Amen. Many happy returns!"

After the Divine Liturgy, the good carer of the Monastery Archimandrite Parthenios hosted a meal for the Patriarchal entourage.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF THE HOLY APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Monday, 29 June/12 July 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy glorious and chiefs of the Apostles Peter and Paul.

On this feast, the Church commemorates these two Apostles and their missionary work for Christ. The Church commemorates that Apostle Peter preached Christ Crucified and Resurrected, to the circumcision, namely to the Jews, while Apostle Paul preached to the nations and both of them became pillars of the

Church, with the cooperation of the other Apostles.

The Church of Jerusalem celebrated this feast in Capernaum near the sea, on the northwest side of the river Jordan, where it meets the sea of Tiberias and in the Holy Apostles' holy Church, which was built by the Patriarch of Jerusalem Damian in 1935.

The Divine Liturgy on the feast day was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences; Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark, Hierodeacon Eulogios and Arab-speaking Priests from the neighbouring areas of the Holy Metropolis of Nazareth. The chanting was delivered by the children's Byzantine choir of Beer Sheva under the lead of His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba in Greek, and the Byzantine choir of Acre under the lead of Archimandrite Philotheos in Arabic, with the participation of our flock from Galilee and elsewhere.

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

"The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen" (Psalm 98:2), the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath" (1 Peter 1:3) gathered us in this holy place of Biblical Capernaum to celebrate the commemoration of the Holy Glorious and all-lauded Chiefs of the Apostles, Peter and Paul "who after the body were far

apart, yet in the Spirit were bound as one" (Vespers, Troparion 1).

Peter and Paul are called chiefs of the Apostles because they were ear-witnesses of the Lord's calling, Who said to Peter: "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:17-18), and to Paul: "I am Jesus whom thou persecute...And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision...Arise, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus...for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel...Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God" (Acts 9:5-20).

The special characteristic of Peter and Paul is the undeniable fact that they both confessed, by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, of course, that "Jesus is the Son of the Living God" (Matt. 16:16, Acts 9:19-20). Moreover, Peter explicitly received the order by the Lord: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?... Feed my lambs... Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17).

Interpreting these words, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "with the triple confession of blessed Peter, the offence of the triple denial was abolished; and through the Lord's words 'feed my sheep' there is a renewal of the mission that was already given to him, by which he solved the shame of sins and wiped out the cowardice which stems from the human inability".

As for Saint Paul, he "knew a man in Christ ...such a one caught up to the third heaven...How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12:2-4). Referring to this

remarkable experience of Paul, Saint Chrysostom wonders; “for which reason was he caught up? So that he would not think himself inferior to the rest of the apostles. Because they were with Christ, but he was not, for this, he also was caught up in glory”.

Saint Paul was glorified by God because he became the primary Apostle of nations, according to his own witness: “inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office” (Romans 11:13). Moreover, he honoured his apostolic office not only through the redeeming preaching but also through his mission, namely his personal care and sleepless daily concern for all the holy churches, according to his own words: “In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:27-28).

Likewise, blessed Peter was glorified, honoured, by the Lord’s words: “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:19). This gift of the power to bind and loose was equally received by all the Apostles, with, of course, Peter being the first, as Zigavinos comments: “This gift was given to the other Apostles, but Peter was the first one to receive it; because he was the first to confess Christ as the Son of God”.

Praising the apostolic mission of Peter and Paul, Saint Gregory Palamas says: “You see how brilliant and equals Peter and Paul are and how the church of Christ is supported? For this reason [the church] now gives one and the same honour to both of them, co-celebrating them equally today”.

Calling upon the holy and God-pleasing end of the life and apostolic behaviour of these two Holy Apostles, our Father Gregory urges us to imitate them in their humility and

correctness through repentance. Therefore, we say along with the hymnographer: “Rejoice, O Peter, Apostle and true friend of thy Teacher, Christ our God. Rejoice, most dearly beloved Paul, preacher of the Faith and teacher of the whole world. O holy and elect yoke-fellows, since ye have boldness, entreat Christ our God [along with the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos Mary] that our souls be saved” (Vespers, Aposticha Glory). Amen. Many happy and blessed returns!”

After the Divine Liturgy, the good keeper and renovator of the Monastery Monk Eirinarchos hosted a meal for the Patriarchal Entourage and the congregation at the beachfront.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE AMERICAN CONGRESSMAN MR. FRENCH HILL VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Thursday, June 25th / July 8th, 2021, the distinguished and honoured American Congressman French Hill, accompanied by his associates, visited the Patriarchate.

Mr French Hill was received by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers and representatives of the other Christian Churches in Jerusalem, Fr. Dobromir Jasztal on behalf of the Franciscans Brotherhood, Fr. Don Binder from the Anglican Church, and Fr. Antonios from the Coptic Church, addressing him as follows:

“Mr Chairman,

Representative Hill,

Respected Members of your Delegation,

Your Beatitudes,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is our joy and privilege to welcome you to the Holy City of Jerusalem and to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. You make your visit to us at a crucial time in the life of the peoples of this region, and we are encouraged that by your meeting with this gathering of the Heads of the Churches you understand the supreme importance of the role of religion in our life here, and we know of your concern for our life and well-being.

The United States has a particular and unique relationship with our region. Not only are there long-standing governmental, economic, and political relationships, as well as relationships with a host of non-governmental agencies; there are also religious ties. Jews, Christians and Muslims, both here and in the United States share historic family and spiritual connections. Indeed, many families have members living both here and in your country. And of course, from the United States, many thousands of pilgrims from all the Abrahamic traditions come here every year on pilgrimage to the Holy Places. By choosing to come to our Patriarchate, you number yourselves among those who are true pilgrims, whatever other purposes their trip may have. It is even said that President Lincoln had wanted to visit Jerusalem on pilgrimage, and we look forward to welcoming back pilgrims from the United States when international travel becomes easier.

As in every corner of the world, the last months have been extremely challenging for us in the Holy Land. Because of the

pandemic, our churches and Holy Sites have suffered significant restrictions and prolonged closure. We have been unable to share hospitality with pilgrims and tourists from around the world and our own communities have suffered significant hardship and deprivation. While COVID-19 has radically diminished our economic resources, we have continued, by God's grace, to try to meet the great spiritual, physical, educational, and financial needs of our local communities.

After this period of prolonged hardship, the conflicts of recent months in the Holy Land have proven extremely difficult and devastating. The violent outbreaks have served only to deepen the problems that the pandemic has caused. For many in our communities, a crisis has become a catastrophe.

The broad media coverage and the recent violence has brought global attention to our local suffering. Despite all this coverage, the true beginnings of this most recent conflict remain largely untold. We think that it is incumbent upon us to be clear that these tragic events are the direct result of years of the growth of extremist ideologies and attacks by a growing number of radical groups which have gone unchecked and unpunished. These radical groups are intent on driving out Christians, Muslims and even some Jewish groups from the Holy City of Jerusalem and other communities of our region.

The attacks range from the verbal abuse of and physical assaults against clergy, and worshippers as we go about our daily business to the frequent vandalism and desecration of church property and Holy Sites. Just a few weeks ago we saw a vicious assault of two Armenian clergy right outside their monastery in the Armenian Quarter and an intrusion into our School on Mount Sion by radicals. Sadly, and worryingly, these kinds of incidents are no longer exceptions; they are a regular part of our life. And it is intolerable.

As spiritual leaders, we have no desire to enter into politics

or to make political statements. Our only concern is the safety and continuing flourishing of the Christian community in Jerusalem and the Holy Land. As Churches, we have stood strong and united in the face of ongoing violence and vandalism. But the situation has changed significantly. Were we simply dealing with harassment, we could manage this. But the stakes are now too high. For we are face-to-face with radical groups who seek and are working systematically for our eviction from the Holy City, whether in the threat to seize church properties and specifically at the Jaffa Gate – which is the entrance to the Christian Quarter and the route of pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre – or in Sheikh Jarrah – where attempts forcefully to displace local citizens in recent days erupted into the violence and even death which we have seen on our TV screens.

The Christian presence in the Holy City and in the Holy Land is vital for the well-being and integrity of this region. For centuries we have inhabited a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious landscape that has given this region its unique character as the land of the divine-human encounter. And while the three Abrahamic faiths all have Holy Sites here, it is the Christian Holy Sites that guarantee a truly universal welcome to all people of goodwill, without distinction. In other words, the Holy Sepulchre is the main destination of all pilgrims and visitors of Jerusalem. This unique character is now under serious threat as never before.

This is another aspect of our lives here that unites us in a common understanding, for both your great country and this region alike live in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious national life. One must understand that this region, however, because of its historical and religious significance, does not belong just to one group. It is connected with sacred history and with moral values which are of universal significance, and we are both well aware of the importance to our mutual flourishing of protecting and

defending this diversity of human, cultural, and spiritual experience.

The Churches and Christian Communities of the Holy Land remain firmly committed even in the face of unprecedented opposition and attack, to act as peacemakers and to carry out our spiritual mission. The mission of the Church has been fundamental in guaranteeing the sacredness of the rich cultural heritage of the Holy Land. Furthermore, we will continue to preserve the Holy Sites as places of worship and to keep them accessible to all who come here on pilgrimage.

However, we cannot remain silent to the reality that we are facing from the growing challenge to our very existence from radical groups. Nor can we do this on our own. We need our partners in the international community, and especially our friends and allies in the United States, and particularly in the government, who espouse respect for human dignity, to do this and through you, we call on the leaders of the Congress to a robust defence of the Christian presence in the Holy Land, against those who would work to undo our life here.

May God grant success to your mission. Through you, we seek to extend our partnerships in the United States. We look forward to working together, with the conviction that, with your support, we can continue to enable peoples of all faiths to thrive together in our beloved Holy Land.

Thank you."

The address underlined the vital problems faced by the Churches of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, the place of worship of the three Abrahamic religions but also of the current political instability and quarrels.

Replying, Mr French Hill said that one of the basic principles of The USA is the freedom of religion, which is also used by the US for the peaceful coexistence of the religions in the Holy Land and the support of the Christian identity.

On this visit, Mr French Hill offered His Beatitude an album with the title "Congregational Testimonies of Faith", while His Beatitude offered him in return an icon of the Theotokos and a silver painting of Jerusalem, along with memorable dentist John Tleel's book "I am Jerusalem", and blessing from Jerusalem to his companions.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE SYRIAC-CATHOLIC PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Monday morning, 22 June/5 July 2021, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Antioch of the Syriac-Catholic Church, Mar Ignatius Youssef III Younan and his entourage visited the Patriarchate.

This visit was a continuation of his visit in Israel from Lebanon to settle His Eminence Mar Yacoub Ephraim Semaan as the Representative-Exarch of the Syriac-Catholic Church in Jerusalem. In this enthronement ceremony, the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem was represented by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitlias.

While at the Patriarchate's Reception Hall, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Antioch of the Syriac-Catholic Church Mar Ignatius Youssef III Younan was received by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and Hagiotaphite Fathers. His Beatitude addressed the visitors and referred to

their cooperation at the Middle East Church Council. His Beatitude's address follows below:

"Your Beatitude,

Your Excellency,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers,

It is a joy to welcome you, Your Beatitude, to the Holy City of Jerusalem, and especially for the blessed occasion of the enthronement of His Excellency Bishop Yacoub Ephraim Semaan as your Exarch in Jerusalem. We wish to express our formal congratulations to him as he assumes his responsibilities and joins us among the Heads of the Churches and Christian Communities of the Holy Land.

By the presence of your Exarch in Jerusalem, Your Beatitude, you affirm the spiritual significance of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is both the spiritual capital of Christianity and the spiritual capital of the whole world. And it is, therefore, the spiritual home of all people of goodwill. Here we live a truly ecumenical life. For we inhabit a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious landscape that has embraced many peoples for millennia. It is important that Jerusalem is the host of all our Christian traditions as part of this essential diversity of our experience in this region.

Your Beatitude is well known for your advocacy on behalf of Christians in our region, and you know well that our mission here is one of peace, mutual respect and co-existence., and reconciliation. We are called to the martyrria of the love of God that is made known in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray that you will have a pleasant stay among us while you are in the Holy City, and we pray also for your new Exarch.

May the light of the Holy Tomb enlighten him as he leads his community in the path of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May God bless all the peoples of Lebanon, Syria, and our beloved Holy Land.

Thank you.”

During this visit, there was also mention of issues related to the Middle East Christians.

His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos offered His Beatitude the Patriarch of the Syriac-Catholic Church of Antioch a silver painting depicting Jerusalem, and an icon of the Theotokos, while to His companions He offered blessings from Jerusalem. His Eminence Ignatius offered His Beatitude an icon of the Theotokos.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF PROPHET ELISHA AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Sunday, 14/27 June 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of Holy Prophet Elisha in Jericho, the main place of his life and action.

On this feast, the Church commemorates that Prophet Elisha, son of Safat from the town Avel Meoul in the land of Manasi, was a farmer by profession and was called by Prophet Elijah to follow him. In the Books of the Old Testament and especially in 4 Kings there are many signs of God's gifts to him.

In Jericho, he turned the bitter into drinking waters with his

prayer. He saw his teacher Prophet Elijah being lifted up into the heavens in a fiery chariot and this was the sign that he was going to receive double the Prophet's grace. Prophet Elijah threw down on Elisha his fleece and he placed it on the surface of the River Jordan and crossed on the other side.

In honour of this prophet, "who drove away sicknesses and healed the leppers", the Divine Liturgy was officiated at the Church bearing his name in Jericho, by the sycamore tree of Zacchaeus, 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 Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Saint Gerasimos, Archimandrite Chrysostom, the Hegoumen of Beit Jala and Beit Sahour, Archimandrite Ignatios, the Hegoumen of Sarantarion Mount, Hieromonk Onuphrius, Father Gabriel and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by Archimandrite Chrysostom in Greek on the right, and the Jericho Byzantine Choir on the left in Arabic, at the attendance of faithful from Jericho and other towns.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"But the righteous live for evermore; their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the Most High. Therefore, shall they receive a glorious kingdom, and a beautiful crown from the Lord's hand: for with his right hand shall he cover them, and with his arm shall he protect them", we read in the Holy book of the Wisdom of Solomon (Wisdom of Solomon 5:15-16).

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in this biblical place of the ancient city of Jericho today, on this Sunday after Pentecost, to celebrate the feast of All the

Saints, and especially honour the commemoration of Prophet Elisha, in his Monastic Church.

“The righteous live for evermore; their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the Most High” the holy writer says (Wisdom of Solomon 5:15). To the question, who are righteous? Our Lord Jesus answers by saying: “Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, he will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, he will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32-33).

In other words, if one confesses God on this earthly life, Christ will confess for him before the Father in the eternal heavenly life, namely in His Kingdom. And if someone denies Jesus Christ as God-man and Saviour before the people in this world, Christ will also deny him before the people and the holy angels in eternal life.

The “Righteous”, in essence, are those who confess Christ as perfect God and perfect man, having received flesh from the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin and Theotokos Mary through the Holy Spirit. These Righteous are, according to Saint Paul, the ones who make “the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven” (Hebrews 12:23), and they are the ones who pleased God of old, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Ascetics, Hierarchs, Teachers, Righteous and the chorea of the Holy Women. That is why the hymnographer says: “They that have borne witness in all the earth and have transferred their dwellings to the Heavens, who have imitated Christ’s Passion and take away our passions, are assembled here today, showing that the Church of the first-born furnisheth a figure of the Church above as she crieth out to Christ: Thou art my God; preserve me through the pure Theotokos, O Thou Who art greatly merciful” (Pentecostarion, Feast of All Saints, Matins, Oikos).

“Therefore, shall they receive a glorious kingdom, and a

beautiful crown from the Lord's hand: for with his right hand shall he cover them, and with his arm shall he protect them" (Wisdom of Solomon 5:15-16). This means that God the Father, Who has undertaken the care of the righteous, will reward them in His Kingdom. All Saints, namely the Righteous, will be crowned with a glorious crown in the Kingdom of Heaven.

All the Saints, or the Righteous, include the Holy Prophets of the Law of Moses, among whom Prophet Elisha, who we honour today is distinguished. Blessed Paul refers to the innumerable crowd of the martyrs of truth and projects them to the temporary Christians as an example to imitate, with the words: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2). [And in more detail: therefore, as we are surrounded by such a great cloud of people who suffered a martyr's death for the sake of the truth of faith, let us free ourselves from the weight of any worldly cares, moreover of sin, to which one can be easily drawn, and let us run patiently the race that the enemy puts in front of us. And let us not turn our eyes and attention to no other but Jesus Christ, Who is the Chief and founder of our faith, and makes us perfect in it].

Interpreting these words of Paul, "we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1), Saint Chrysostom denotes that the Apostle is not only referring to those who preached the truth in the New Testament but also in the Old; "as they also martyred the majesty of God".

And what is God's majesty? It is the mystery of the Divine revelation, the Divine Providence, which was dimly revealed to the Prophets, but in full essence in God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. And we say this, because Christ is the fullness

of the Law of Moses and of the Prophets, as the Lord Himself says: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17).

Our Holy Church honours and venerates the commemoration of Holy Prophet Elisha, because he acquired the deepest knowledge of the beyond-our-mind mystery of God, prophesied about the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ and many wonders did God make through Elisha, who was a disciple of prophet Elijah.

As for us, my dear ones, let us entreat the holy prophet Elisha and say along with the hymnographer: "With hymns let us the faithful honour Elias and Elisseus, the pinnacles of the Prophets, those brightly shining luminaries of the whole world; and let us cry out in harmony unto Christ: O compassionate Lord, by the entreaties of Thy Prophets, [the also celebrated today, Saint Methodios, Archbishop of Constantinople, Holy Hieromartyr Cyril, Bishop of Gortyna of Crete, along with the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary] grant Thy people forgiveness of sins and great mercy. Amen. Many happy returns, free from the corona plague!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a small reception and then a meal, hosted by the good keeper of the Monastery Archimandrite Philoumenos and Archimandrite Chrysostom. His Beatitude thanked them for their Hagiotaphite care and later on visited the neighbouring Monastery of the Life-giving Spring and the newly constructed buildings by Archimandrite Chrysostom.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE FEAST OF SAINT ONUPHRIUS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday 12/25 June 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of our Holy Father Onuphrius the Egyptian. The Church commemorates Saint Onuphrius from Egypt, who left the Coenobitic life, retreated in the desert for sixty years in strict asceticism and solitude, and became known to the Fathers when Saint Paphnutius found him.

The commemoration of the Saint was observed at the Holy Monastery dedicated to him, near the pool of Siloam, at the Potter's field, which the Sanhedrin bought to bury the foreigners with the thirty pieces of silver that Judas returned to them (Matt. 27:1-11).

Among the many carved tombs in the Monastery lies the tomb of Saint Iouvenalios, the first Patriarch of Jerusalem (AD 451).

At the Holy Church of this Monastery, which is inside a carved rock, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitans Kyriakos of Nazareth and Isychios of Kapitolias and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, Archimandrite Makarios, Priest Yusef, Priest Elias and Priest Simeon, Archimandrite Isidoros, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Mr Gotsopoulos and Archimandrite Eusevios, as the Service was attended by Monks, Nuns, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and many faithful Christians.

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

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to

the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:"16-17), Saint Paul says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The strengthening grace of the Holy Spirit, Who came in the form of tongues of fire upon the Holy Apostles and Disciples of the Lord, has gathered us in this place of "the potter's field", which is also called "the field of blood" (Matt. 27:7-8), to celebrate the holy commemoration of our Righteous Father Onuphrius the Egyptian, at the Monastery dedicated to him, which was founded by the reverend Hagiotaphite Fathers.

Our Holy Father Onuphrius envied the manner of living of Saint John the Baptist and of Prophet Elijah, and of his fellow countryman Saint Anthony and retreated in the desert "where he lived for sixty years having seen no man" according to his synaxarist.

His truly ascetic and angelic life made Saint Onuphrius worthy of the crown of righteousness, which the Lord prepared for him, as the hymnographer says. And what is the crown of righteousness that our Holy Father Onuphrius received by the Lord?

We hear Saint Paul saying: "And if a man also strives for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strives lawfully" (2 Tim 2:5). Again, referring to himself, Saint Paul says: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim 4:7-8).

Interpreting this word of Paul, Saint Chrysostom says: "the

one who loves [the righteous Judge, the Lord's] presence, does all things so that before the Second Coming, it will be done unto him to live within him the personal coming, according to Saint John the Evangelist: "if a man loves me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23).

Interpreting these words, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "Those whose mind is excessively enlightened by every kind of virtue, and thus they have become able to comprehend the divine and hidden mysteries, they will carry the torch of the Holy Spirit and behold the Lord with their mind's eyes, as He has dwelled within them. Therefore, the knowledge of the Saints is not common to all, but it is something special and marvellous and differs greatly from the knowledge of the rest of the faithful".

It is made clear, that the crown of righteousness that our Holy Father Onuphrius received is "the special and marvellous and very different knowledge". And this knowledge is the one that enlightens the mind through the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit. Christ, Saint Cyril says, is the One who helps us in every word and manner. Firstly, Christ is the One who determines precisely who is the one that loves Him, and who is worthy to receive the power of the gift, namely the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit. The one who can "boast" (Romans 4:2) on the genuine relationship with Christ, through the keeping of His commandments.

Behold, therefore, my dear brethren, why our Holy Church of Christ honours and projects the commemoration of the Saints on the one hand, and calls every one of us through the Chief of the Apostles Peter's mouth on the other, with the words: "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" (A Peter 1:15-16).

God the Father Who has called us, is undefiled, so He is Holy

and no one can come near Him, because he will be burnt, "For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29), "God cannot be tempted with evil" (James 1:13) and is "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6:16).

Through his strict ascetic life, our Holy Father Onuphrius managed to cleanse his heart according to the Lord's command: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8), and ascend the ladder of righteousness, sanctification and deification, becoming thus "partaker of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).

Let us entreat our Lord Jesus Christ, who crowned our Holy Father Onuphrius with the crown of glory and righteousness and say along with the hymnographer: "We the multitudes of the monastics, honour thee, our teacher, Onuphrius; for through thee have we learned to walk the truly straight path. Blessed art thou, who hast laboured for Christ, and hast triumphed over the might of the enemy, O companion of the angels, and co-dweller of the righteous and the just. Together with them, [and the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary] intercede with the Lord that He may have mercy on our souls" (Minaion, June 12, Vespers, Glory, tone plagal of fourth). Amen."

After the dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, there was a memorial service at the owner's grave and at that of Nun Seraphima and the prayer for the figs and grapes was read.

The Patriarchal Entourage was offered a reception by the good keeper and renovator of the Monastery Reverend Nun Paissia.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE FEAST OF THE MONDAY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AT THE RUSSIAN MISSIA

On Monday 8/21 June 2021, the feast of the Monday of the Holy Spirit was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Trinity of the Russian MISSIA of the Russian Patriarchate, which is located in new Jerusalem, not very far from the northwest side of New Gate.

The Divine Liturgy 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 Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis and Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the Head of the Russian MISSIA Archimandrite Alexander and other Priests and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by the choir of the MISSIA and the Service was attended by many faithful Christians, the Russian Ambassador in Israel and Palestine and the representative of the Latin Patriarchate and the Custody of the Holy Land.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“O Holy Sion, thou Mother of all the Churches of God, in thee in fiery likeness did the Comforter Spirit come down on the Apostles with awesome descent. So rejoice now and celebrate this day of Pentecost longed-for by all the world, and keep festival with us in joy” (Pentecostarion, Friday of Pentecost, Matins, Praises, Troparion 3).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians,

The grace of the Holy and Life-giving Spirit has gathered us all in this Holy Church of the Holy Trinity, to co-celebrate in Doxology and Eucharist the life-giving and all-mighty Spirit, the One Person of the God of Trinity, Who is of the same honour, essence and glory with the Father and the Son.

The Mother of all the Churches, the Holy Zion, rejoices today because it was here that the Comforter Spirit came down to the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire, as the hymnographer says: "On this day the working of Thy Holy Spirit the Comforter came upon Thine Apostles' choir, O Lord; and He showed them forth wise in divine knowledge. For, behold, He filled them completely and abundantly with that most blessed of doctrines taught by Thee. We, therefore, glorify Thy saving dispensation, O Friend of man, O my Jesus, Al-mighty Lord, Thou divine Saviour of our souls" (Tuesday of Pentecost, Vespers, Aposticha 1).

The power of the All-holy Spirit, which is common in all three Persons of the Holy Trinity, is no other than the grace, which the Apostles received, from the fulness of God the Word, our Saviour Jesus Christ, as Saint John the Evangelist says: "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:16-17).

Christ set the Apostles first in His Church (1 Cor. 12:28). And having become the vessels of the shedding of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles became the foundation stone of the structure of the Church, while Christ is its cornerstone. And the Church is the dwelling place of God in the Holy Spirit, as Saint Paul preaches: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:20-22).

It is noteworthy that the Lord promised to the Apostles the sending of the Holy Spirit, both before His Passion on the Cross and after His Resurrection. According to the testimony of Saint John the Evangelist, Jesus told His Disciples right after the Last Supper: "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever" (John 14:16). And after His Resurrection, the Lord said to the Apostles: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

The Promise of God the Father is no other than the Comforter, namely the Holy Spirit, Whose divine power was going to be given as armour to the Apostles.

Precisely this divine power from on high, namely the power of the Comforter Spirit is the one Who "holdeth together the whole institution of the Church", as the hymnographer says. "The Holy Spirit provideth all things; He gusheth forth prophesy; He perfecteth the priesthood; He hath taught wisdom to the illiterate. He hath shown forth the fishermen as theologians. He holdeth together the whole institution of the Church. Wherefore, O Comforter, one in essence and throne with the Father and the Son, glory be to Thee" (Saturday Vespers of Pentecost, Troparion 3).

And according to Saint John Damascene, the Holy Spirit makes "luminous the children of the Church". And this is so, because, as Saint Gregory, the Theologian says, "the enlightenment, is the brightness of the souls...denaturation of light, and abolishment of darkness". "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.

And being the body of Christ (Col. 1:24), the Church has the light of life, while its members are called by Saint Paul, in order to walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8). And this, because the members of the Church, namely of the body of

Christ, are according to Apostle Peter “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

This “marvellous light” is the Grace of the Spirit of our Saviour Christ, which was foretold by the Prophets and shone forth through the Apostles. “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17), Saint Paul preaches. This liberty, which we have “in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 2:4) is the mindset of the Church.

And this mindset is the power of the Holy Spirit, which gathers together and sustains the unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of ours, namely the brotherly Orthodox Churches of the same doctrines.

This witness of unity we testify along with the brotherly Orthodox Churches through this festive Holy Eucharistic gathering, on this joyful day of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit at the Upper Room of Jerusalem, hearkening to Saint Paul’s advice:

“I beseech you...with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1-3).

The All-holy Spirit – according to the hymnographer – “Filleth with tranquillity man’s heart and spirit” (Matins, Ode 1, Iambic Canon, Troparion 3). Therefore, in David’s words, we chant: “take not thy Holy Spirit from me” (Psalm 51:11), we beseech Thee, Lord, Friend of man.

And along with the hymnographer, let us say: “Of old, the tongues were confounded because of the audacity in the building of the tower, but now the tongues are made wise for the sake of the glory of the Divine knowledge. There, God condemned the impious because of their offence; and here,

Christ hath enlightened the fishermen by the Spirit. At that time the confusion of tongues was wrought for punishment, but now the concord of tongues hath been inaugurated for the salvation of our souls” (Saturday Vespers of Pentecost, Aposticha Glory; both now).

By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, through the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and of Your Apostles, Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen. Many Happy returns!”

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a small reception at the MISSIA office, which was followed by a meal, at the presence of the Russian Ambassador in Ramallah and other officials. During the meal His Beatitude delivered the following address:

“Dear Father Alexander,

Respected Members of the Russian Diplomatic Service,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers,

Beloved Monastics,

Sisters and Brothers,

As we join you today for this blessed feast, we recall the words that we sing at this time:

When the Most High came down  
and confounded tongues of men at Babel,  
he divided the nations.

When He dispensed the tongues of fire,  
He called all to unity,

and with one voice we glorify the Most Holy Spirit.

(Kontakion of the Feast of Pentecost)

We have just demonstrated in a tangible way the oneness of our Orthodox Church in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. This oneness that finds its expression in the sharing of the common Chalice is the gift of the Holy Spirit, who is the Comforter, and who governs the whole life of the Church. In this way, we live in our own day the same unbroken unity that was given to the Church at Pentecost.

We see in our world the phenomenon of economic, technological, and entrepreneurial globalization. So much activity on which our life depends is exercised at an international level. But we Christians cannot forget that we live our own universal life. We too occupy the oikumene. We are truly global. This is because the Church lives the life of the Holy Spirit, and this life is the universal gift to humankind. It is available to all, open to all, a free gift to all.

We know this because as Christians generally and as Orthodox, in particular, we have a mission to the whole world – a global mission if you like – to be living martyria to the truth of God and the light of the Holy Spirit which we have received from the Apostles. This truth is the wellspring of eternal life and salvation for all humankind, and this truth is of ultimate importance for all peoples.

This is why our unity – the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost – is crucial, for our unity is itself both a fruit and a witness to the truth of God. In all things, we must endeavour to overcome our human weaknesses and temptations that threaten our unity, and allow the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and dwell in our hearts. Before we can show this to anyone else, we must live this in the life of the Church, and we are called to do everything in our power to

overcome any anomalies of Church life that our human weakness and sinfulness can so easily cause.

It is incumbent upon us all, the Orthodox faithful, as well as the leaders of our Orthodox Churches, to place ourselves under the obedience of the unity of the Holy Spirit. In a world that is torn apart by human divisions, fear, prejudice, and selfishness, the Church must live a different life if we are to be able to carry out our mission.

This is important for Churches in traditionally Orthodox countries as it is for Orthodox Churches in multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic societies. We all have the unique and challenging responsibility to follow faithfully in the footsteps of the Apostles by the living truth that has been given to us by God and expressed in our own unity. May God continue to bestow His grace upon us that we may be faithful to this vocation, so that we may make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

We take this opportunity to wish His Excellency Vladimir Putin, the President of the Russian Federation, health, happiness, and strength in his leadership. We acknowledge with deep gratitude his commitment to the support of the Christian presence in the Holy Land.

We would also like to express our fraternal love in Christ for our brother His Holiness Patriarch Kyrill of Moscow and All Russia and wish Him many years in His primatial ministry. The country of Russia and its peoples have had a long and close relationship with the Holy Land for centuries, and we cherish the bond of unity that we enjoy.

Thank you."

The feast of the Holy Spirit was also celebrated at the Church of the Holy Trinity in Toubas of north Samaria, led by His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, with the

participation of many faithful Christians.

**From Secretariat-General**