

# THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday, 28 May/10 June 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Ascension.

On this feast, the Church in thanksgiving and mixed joy with sadness, commemorates that our Lord Jesus Christ was ascended into the heavens, forty days after His Resurrection, and after many appearances to His Disciples. He was ascended into the heavens in glory and sat at the right side of the Father, deifying the human flesh He had assumed and He is to come again, to judge both the living and the dead.

The Church of Jerusalem celebrated the feast at the very place of the Ascension, on the Mount of Olives, with Great Vespers on Wednesday afternoon, which was led by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, with the co-celebration of Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Deacons, and Arab-speaking Priests, with the attendance of faithful from Jerusalem. The chanting was delivered by Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos and the Patriarchal School Students on the right, and the choir of Saint James Cathedral under Mr Rimon Kamar on the left.

Vespers was followed by a Procession to the Monastery of the Men of Galilee, where His Beatitude was waiting to give His blessing according to the custom.

On the morning of the feast day, the bloodless Sacrifice was held at the same place, by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, with the co-celebration of the Hagiotaphite Archimandrites; Kallistos, Dionysios and Stephanos, Arab-speaking Priests, and the Hierodeacons Eulogios and Simeon. The chanting was delivered by the choirs who also chanted at Vespers, and the Service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras

and many faithful Christians.

During the Divine Liturgy, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Fathers-members of the Holy Synod came for veneration and then visited the adjacent to the Mosque Imam for reasons of goodwill. Then the Patriarchal Entourage visited Monk Achilios at the Holy Church of the Ascension opposite the Shrine, the Russian Monastery of the Ascension, where His Beatitude addressed the Head of the Monastery, Archimandrite Romanos as follows:

“Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Father Romanos,

Respected Clergy,

Beloved Monastics,

Sisters and Brothers,

On this glorious Feast of the Ascension, which is the seal of the resurrection, we join in the words of the ancient hymn:

O Christ our God,

upon fulfilling your dispensation for our sake,

you ascended in glory, uniting the earthly with the heavenly.

You were never separate but remained inseparable,

and cried out to those who love you,

“I am with you and no one is against you.”

Here we understand the profound meaning of the Ascension, that, though our Lord Jesus Christ has gone to the Father to prepare a place for us, even so, we are still intimately connected with Him. As the hymn says so clearly, we are

inseparable.

This unbreakable relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, which finds its greatest expression in this life in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, is the assurance of our final deification. This is the goal of every Christian, and this goal of complete union with God must be the daily focus of our spiritual lives. And this assurance is also our strength and consolation in times of suffering and difficulty.

Last year at this feast, we were not able to be with you. But this year our joy is full in our ability to be in this holy place on this day. And so we are reminded forcefully that the Holy Places, which the Divine Providence has placed under the guardianship and protection of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem are not just archaeological curiosities; on the contrary, they are living witnesses to our sacred history and are places of prayer, worship, and most especially places where we celebrate the Divine Eucharist.

It is in this action of the Divine Liturgy that the Mother Church of Jerusalem gathers all Orthodox faithful in the embrace of the true Orthodox ecumenical spirit. We are glad today to have with us the representatives from Orthodox national Churches, so that we may show to the world our united Orthodox faith and witness. This is a powerful visible sign of our unity, which is a precious gift that must be nurtured and sustained by all.

And yet, it is further the case that we have the responsibility to ensure that the Holy Places are open to all people of goodwill without distinction, for the true Orthodox ecumenical spirit welcomes all, so that all may know the spiritual refreshment of those places that are signs of the divine-human encounter. In this way, the Patriarchate guarantees the Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

We rejoice, therefore, on this great feast, and we pray that our crucified, risen, and ascended Lord Jesus may enlighten our hearts and strengthen us in our mission. Amen.”

His Beatitude offered Archimandrite Romanos an icon-painting of Jerusalem and received an icon of the Theotokos in return.

The Patriarchal visits concluded at the Monastery of the Men of Galilee, where the Hegoumen Archimandrite Anthimos offered breakfast, with milk and eggs.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **SPEECH OF HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III FOR THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES AT THE ELEONA MONASTERY**

Dear Father Romanos,

Respected Clergy,

Beloved Monastics,

Sisters and Brothers,

On this glorious Feast of the Ascension, which is the seal of the resurrection, we join in the words of the ancient hymn,

*O Christ our God,*

*Upon fulfilling your dispensation for our sake,*

*You ascended in glory, uniting the earthly with the heavenly,*

*You were never separate but remained inseparable,*

*And cried out to those who love you,*

*"I am with you and no one is against you,"*

Here we understand the profound meaning of the Ascension, that, though Our Lord Jesus Christ has gone to the Father to prepare a place for us, even so we are still intimately connected with him. As the hymn says so clearly, we are inseparable.

This unbreakable relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, which finds its greatest expression in this life in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, is the assurance of our final deification. This is the goal of every Christian, and this goal of complete union with God must be the daily focus of our spiritual lives. And this assurance is also our strength and consolation in times of suffering and difficulty.

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And yet it is further the case that we have the responsibility to ensure that the Holy Places are open to all people of good will without distinction, for the true Orthodox ecumenical spirit welcomed all, so that all may know the spiritual refreshment to those places that are signs of divine-human encounter. In this way the Patriarchate guarantees the character of Jerusalem and the holy land.

We rejoice therefore on this great feast, and we pray that our crucified, risen, and ascended Lord Jesus Christ may enlighten our hearts and strengthen us for our mission.

Amen.

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# **HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY IN TUR'AN OF GALILEE**

On Sunday 24 May /6 June 2021, Sunday of the blind man according to the book of Pentecostarion, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of Saint George the Great Martyr and Trophy-bearer, in the Rum Orthodox Arab-speaking Community of Tur'an, a small town near Cana which belongs to the Metropolis of Nazareth.

The Rum Orthodox Community has approximately 400 members and is supervised by Dean Priest Spyridon.

His Beatitude was warmly received by the Scouts, the Priests and the parish members.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences: Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Archimandrites; Parthenios, Hilarion and Artemios, Dean Priest Spyridon and other Arab-speaking and Russian-speaking Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the parish choir, as the service was attended by the people of this community.

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

“As Jesus passed by on His way from the temple, He found a man who was blind from his birth; and taking compassion on him, He put clay on his eyes and said unto him: Go wash in the pool of Siloam. And when he had washed, he received his sight, and sent up praise unto God” (Vespers, Sticheron 2).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The almighty grace of our Saviour Christ has gathered us today in your beautiful town Tur'an of south Galilee, to co-celebrate the miracle Christ worked on the man who was born blind.

“Jesus answered, I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way, therefore, and washed, and came seeing” (John 9:3-7).

Interpreting these words of the Gospel, Saint Cyril of Alexandria notes: firstly, that Christ is both physical and noetic light. “Without doubt, the Only-begotten Son is also noetic light, and knows and is able to illumine not only the things of this world but also the whole of the other creation above this world”.

Secondly: That He cured the blind man willingly and impulsively, while the healed man did not recognize Christ. “The Saviour made the decision to cure the blind man, out of His own will and impulse, without any petition, and without anyone's asking of Him to do so”.

Thirdly, Christ showed that He was the One who fashioned man out of clay (Gen. 2:7). “The Saviour does not do anything by chance. By anointing the blind man with the clay, He completed that which was lacking from the nature of the eye, and this way, He shows that He is the One who fashioned us from the beginning, the founder and creator of everything”.

It is noteworthy, that in Jesus' command, “Go, wash in the



pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent)", Saint Cyril distinguishes a hidden reason, as he says: "We consider that the 'Sent' is no other than the Only-begotten Son of God, Who was sent by the Father and visited us from above, to banish the sin and deception of the devil. Knowing that the Saviour invisibly swims in the waters of the Holy Pool, we are washed in faith, not for the cleansing of the impurity of the flesh, according to the scriptures (1 Peter 3:21), but for the washing of the infection and impurity of the noetic eyes, and having been cleansed, we may be able to gaze at the divine beauty clearly. This way we believe that Christ's body is life-giving, since it is both the temple and the dwelling place of the Living Word of God, and has the fulness of the energy of God. Likewise, we say that He is also the reason of illumination. Because it is the body of the One who is light both in nature and truth".

In other words, the sight the blind man received by Jesus' touch proved that Christ is the Son and Word of God, perfect man and perfect God. It also proved that not only through the divine power of His word, but also through the divine power of his body and hands, He raises the dead, as He did with the son of the widow in Nain (Luke 7: 13-14), and gives sight to the blind as in the case of this man.

To those who "turn away their ears from the truth" (2 Tim. 4:4), namely those who do not believe and refuse the wonders Jesus worked before them, Jesus says: "But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him" (John 10:38).

Christ, my dear brethren, is present, living and acting from within through the Church, especially at the Holy Eucharist Sacrament. Christ, we repeat, is the physician, the healer and the illuminator of our souls and bodies. This is testified by the words of Saint Luke the Evangelist: "Jesus cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits, and unto many that were blind he gave sight" (Luke 7:21). And He gave

this authority and power to His disciples, as Saint Matthew writes: "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease" (Matt. 10:1).

In other words, Christ, whose God-human body is the One Catholic and Apostolic Church, is the spiritual pool of Siloam, as Saint Chrysostom says: "Just as Christ was a spiritual rock, likewise, Siloam (which means Sent) is also spiritual".

We are called to seek this divine power of the spiritual pool of Siloam in faith, love and humility. And let us say along with the hymnographer: "Thou spiritual sun of righteousness, Who with Thine immaculate touch didst enlighten both the body and soul of him who from his mother's womb was deprived of sight, illuminate the eyes of our souls also, and show us to be sons of the day, that we might cry to Thee with faith: Great and ineffable is Thy compassion toward us, O Friend of man; glory be to Thee" (Vespers Stichera Pascha, Glory, tone 5).

Christ is risen! Many happy returns!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a reception and then a meal at noon, where His Beatitude addressed those present as follows:

"The Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places" (Psalm 135: 5-6).

Your Excellency Mr President of the Ecclesiastical Committee,  
Respected members of the Ecclesiastical Committee,

Dear Brethren in Christ,

Our meeting on this Paschal day, the sixth Sunday after Pascha

has a special meaning. Because by the ineffable mercy of our Holy Trinitarian God the forced obstacles of the covid-19 pandemic have been lifted.

Of course, we as members of the Holy Church of Jerusalem never ceased to serve in our ministry in Christ, both the liturgical and the pastoral. This spiritual ministry has always covered the physical distance between us.

The Church of Christ, which is the body of Christ, cannot be comprehended without its members. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, ... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:12-13) Saint Paul preaches.

The Church of Christ, as we mentioned in our Sermon, is the spiritual pool – according to Saint Chrysostom – and Christ is Siloam, which means the 'Sent' by God the Father, His Son and Word.

This means that we see our Lord Jesus Christ in the Church, as the physical and spiritual healer of our bodies and souls. In other words, my dear brethren, the Church of Christ is our secure refuge, the Ark of salvation and the Pool of our regeneration in the Holy Spirit. These words are not vague but true. These words become clear when our faith in Christ crucified and resurrected remains steadfast and increases. Christ is the Light of the world and especially the Light of those who love and believe in Him. And the Church of Christ is the sanatorium for all our infirmities. Therefore, as Saint Paul advises, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, ... Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work" (2 Thess. 2:15-17).

Christ is risen! Many Happy Returns!"

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF SAINTS CONSTANTINE AND HELEN AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Thursday, 21 May / 3 June 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy glorious God-crowned Sovereigns and Equal to the Apostles, Constantine and Helen.

This feast was celebrated as a feast of the Throne of the Patriarchate because Constantine the Great and his mother Saint Helen established the All-holy Shrines, the Horrendous Golgotha, the All-holy Sepulchre, and set the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood as their guardian.

This feast was celebrated at the Patriarchal and Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen at the heart of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, with Vespers on Wednesday afternoon, which was attended by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. The Service was observed by the ministering Priests of the Church and other Hagiotaphite Fathers, with the participation of the Archbishops, Hieromonks and Monks of the Brotherhood. The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine choir leader of the Church Archimandrite Eusevios and Hierodeacon Simeon. After Vespers, His Beatitude and the Fathers received the traditional boiled wheat with wine and dried bread outside the Epitropikon.

On the Feast Day, Matins and the Divine Liturgy were

officiated by His Beatitude, with the co-celebration of Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, according to the Typikon order of the Brotherhood. The Liturgy was attended by faithful Christians from Jerusalem and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

At the end of the Liturgy, His Beatitude and the other Fathers dressed in their liturgical vestments went up to the Reception Hall, followed by the congregation.

On the way to the Hall, Nun Seraphima, who is in charge of the Bakery, distributed the customary small loaves of bread to everybody.

At the Reception Hall, His Beatitude delivered the following address:

“He who was drawn up upon the Cross, the Creator of the sun and creation, drew thee near with stars from Heaven, since thou wast thyself a shining star, and He entrusted the royal dominion to thee first of all. Wherefore, we acclaim thee, O most pious King, Constantine, together with Helen thy Godly-minded mother” the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (Minaion Matins, Kathisma 2).

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

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Noble Christians

Our Holy Church of Christ rejoices mystically today on the commemoration of the Holy Glorious and Equal to the Apostles Sovereigns Constantine and Helen, who stopped the religion of idolatry and established the Precious Cross, in which the divine righteousness and the truth in Christ were revealed.

Therefore, we went to the Monastic Church dedicated to them and festively celebrated the Divine Liturgy surrounded by the

Hagiotaphite Fathers and our brethren, honouring thus their commemoration.

The God-pleasing work and the piety of Constantine the Great are praised by the Church Historian Eusebius of Caesarea, who writes: "Constantine is the only King of the Romans who has honoured with excessive piety to God the King of all, God Himself, and the only one who has preached boldly the Word of Christ, and the only one we can say that glorified more than anyone else His Church, and the only one who banished the fallacy of believing in many gods, and delivered us from idolatry in any way, and moreover, he is the only one who was deemed worthy both in this life and in that after death, for which no man was ever able to become participant".

Indeed, Constantine the Great excessively glorified the Church of Christ and in particular the Church of Jerusalem. We can say that, up to the present day, the presence of the Christians in the Holy Land and in the wider area of the Middle East is owed to Constantine the Great and his mother, Saint Helen, who established the all-holy shrines with the construction of magnificent monuments, such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Basilica Church of the Nativity of our Saviour Christ in Bethlehem.

Because of Constantine the Great, the Christians became the pious Royal nation of the Rum Orthodox and developed the insurmountable spiritual greatness of Romiosyne, as George Metalinos says: "Constantine the Great is the one who becomes Romios from Roman, who leads 'Christ's citizenship' to the Greek Orthodox universality and globalization". And according to Father George Florovsky, Constantine the Great significantly contributed to the integration of Hellenism into the Orthodox Christian tradition.

And we, my dear brethren, being grateful for the divine gifts of the Father of Lights, and of the great benefits of the Saints Constantine and Helen the Equals to the Apostles, let

us say along with the hymnographer: "Rejoice, O great and all-wise Constantine, thou fount of Orthodox Faith, that dost water continually all the lands beneath the sun with thy sweet and delightful streams. Rejoice, O root from the which there sprouted forth the fruit that nourisheth Christ's most holy Church. Rejoice, thou most glorious boast and fame of all the farthest ends of earth, first of Christian kings. Rejoice, thou joy of faithful men" (Minaion, Praises, Troparion 1). Christ is risen! Many Happy Returns!"

At noon there was a monastic meal for the Brotherhood.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF THE SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN**

On Sunday, 17/30 May 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman at the shrine of Jacob's well in Nablus of Samaria.

On this feast, the whole Church and especially the Church of Jerusalem commemorates the meeting and the conversation of the Samaritan Woman from town Sychar with our Lord Jesus Christ, at Jacob's well, when the Lord revealed her manner of living and told her He is the Messiah the Christ. He also told her that "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth", neither on Mount Gerizim nor in Jerusalem (John 4:5-42).

In commemoration of this redeeming Evangelical event, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the magnificent Church built

above the well by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Ioustinos. The Church is dedicated to the Samaritan Woman who believed in the Lord and suffered a martyr's death for Him and her family members, sisters Saints Anatoli, Foto, Fotida, Paraskevi Kyriaki and her two sons, Saints Foteinos and Iosis.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences; Metropolitan Timotheos of Bostra, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Arab-speaking Priests and Deacons, at the chanting of Doctor Yacubi and other Byzantine singers, from the neighbouring parishes, as the service was attended by many local faithful and pilgrims from Israel, and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"When the Lord came unto the well, the Samaritan Woman entreated Him Who is compassionate, saying: Grant me the water of faith, and I shall receive the streams of the font of baptism, unto exceeding gladness and redemption. O Giver of Life, Lord, glory be to Thee" the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (Vespers, Idiomelo 2 of the Saint).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

Christ our God, the fountain of life and immortality, has gathered us all in this holy shrine of Patriarch Jacob's well, where the Samaritan Woman met the Lord, to celebrate her feast in Paschal doxology and thanksgiving.

In His meeting with the Samaritan Woman by Jacob's well, when "Jesus, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well" (John 4:6), He said to the Woman: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I



shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw" (John 4:13-15).

Interpreting these words of the Lord, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "we should know that the Saviour calls the grace of the Holy Spirit 'water'. If anyone becomes a participant of this grace, then he will have in him the spring of the divine teachings, namely the power of the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. He will be able to admonish with blessings those who thirst for the divine and heavenly word. Such men were in their earthly life the Holy Prophets and the Apostles, and the heirs of their [apostolic] mission".

The Samaritan Woman became also a participant of this grace of the Holy Spirit, according to the Lord's word, "the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

It is also noteworthy, that the Samaritan woman was not in the position to fully understand the meaning of the Lord's words; however, Jesus revealed Himself to her, as Saint John the Evangelist testifies: "The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he comes, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He" (John 4:25-26).

Not only did Christ reveal Himself to her, but also taught her the truth that is preached in the Old Testament (3 Kings 8:27), that "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

We say this, because, as Saint Cyril of Alexandria points out, Christ does not reveal Himself to uneducated people such as the Apostles who were fishermen, nor to illiterate people who sinned in ignorance, such as the Samaritan woman, but also to people whose souls thirst for the truth, and the faith for the

knowledge of the perfect mysteries has been born in them (in their souls).

In other words, Christ “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4), challenges, somehow, the Samaritan Woman, not to remain in her introductory faith, but to proceed to the perfect faith, which leads to deification, namely to her enlightenment by the Holy Spirit; which is what happened, because she became equal to the Apostles and a martyr of the love of Christ.

The fervent desire of the perfect faith is brilliantly described by Saint Ignatios the God-bearer in his epistle to the Romans with the words: “The love [eros] of mine is crucified and there is no material fire in me; “living water” (John 4:10) is inside me, talking to me and saying: rush to the Father. I find no pleasure in the food of corruption, nor in the delights of this life. The bread of God I want, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, from the seed of David, and the drink I want is His Blood, which is love incorrupt”.

The Samaritan Woman, who was later on given the name Foteini by the Lord, who also received the crown of martyrdom by Roman Emperor Nero, is dancing with all the Saints in heaven.

Saint Foteini never ceased to preach the correct manner of “worshipping God the Father in Spirit and in truth” (John 4:14), as well as the fear of God in reverence, which means to live our Christian lives in Godly actions and vision.

And we say this because “not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21) the Lord says. Rebuking those who have distant to the Divine Will thoughts, desires and works, Jesus refers to the Prophet Isaiah’s words: “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for

doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:8-9 / Isaiah 29:13).

In other words, my dear Brethren, the Samaritan Woman whom we celebrate today, is an example to imitate, regarding our interest for the truths of our Orthodox Faith, and Tradition, and of the healthy worship of God.

Now let us thank our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who was born by the Virgin Theotokos, and worship Him in Spirit and in truth, in repentance and humility of heart and say along with the hymnographer: "Thou art the water of life, cried the Samaritan Woman unto Christ. Give me to drink, therefore, who always thirst for Thy divine grace, O Lord, that I may no longer be held by the drought of ignorance, but may proclaim Thy mighty acts, O Lord Jesus" (Matins, Ode 7, Troparion 4 of the Samaritan Woman). Amen! Christ is Risen!"

At the end of the feast the Hegoumen Archimandrite Ioustinos hosted a reception and then a meal, where His Beatitude addressed all present as follows:

"Thus saith the Lord unto the woman of Samaria: if thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee: Give Me water to drink, thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee to drink, that thou mightiest never thirst unto eternity, saith the Lord" (Matins, Praises, Stichera of the Samaritan Woman, Troparion 2).

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece,

Reverend Archimandrite Ioustinos,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Let us thank our God and Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Resurrected from the Tomb, Who deemed us worthy to celebrate in Paschal festivities the feast of the Samaritan Woman, at this place of Jacob's well, where she drank from the spiritual

waters of God's gift.

This gift of God is the Holy Spirit, Who brings together and unites the institution of the Church, namely the body of our God Jesus Christ. And the greatness of this divine gift cannot be put into words, as Saint Paul says: "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15).

My dear brethren in Christ, being members of the Precious Body of Christ, we become communicants and participants of the Holy Spirit, namely of the heavenly gift (Hebrews 6:4), through the Holy Baptism.

This heavenly gift is granted by our Holy Church, which testifies throughout the centuries the infinite love and philanthropy of God worldwide, especially in our region. We are called to appreciate this invaluable gift of our calling to Christ and His Church, especially at this time of disorder and apostasy, hearkening to Saint Paul's advice: "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:16-18).

Let us entreat the Samaritan Woman, whom we honour today, who became a martyr of the love of Christ, so that along with the new co-martyr of hers, Saint Philoumenos the Hagiotaphite, may intercede the Lord our God, for all of us, and for the peace in the Holy Land, and moreover, for the relief from the covid-19 plague.

Christ is Risen! Many Happy Returns!"

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **MEETING OF SPECIAL ENVOY AND CONSULS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION WITH LEADERS OF LOCAL CHURCHES AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Thursday 14/27 May 2021, a meeting was held at the Patriarchate under the care of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with Mr Sven Koopmans, Special Envoy of the European Union for the Middle East matters, and representatives of the local Churches of Jerusalem; the Custos of the Holy Land, as well as the representatives of the Lutheran, Anglican and Ethiopian Churches respectively.

In this meeting, Mr Sven Koopmans expressed the intention on behalf of the European Union to support the Churches in their difficulties and requested to be informed on the existing problems, especially after the recent hostilities in Jerusalem, Gaza and other regions.

Thanking Mr Sven, His Beatitude referred to the cooperation of the Churches with the European Union, and especially to the visit of the Heads of Primeval Churches to the European Union, when the latter offered funds with which the Patriarchate constructed a School in Birzeit, adding the Status Quo issue was also discussed. Moreover, His Beatitude raised the issue of the illegal rental of the Jaffa Gate Hotels by radical groups, as this Gate is the main and of vital importance entrance for the centuries-long Christians to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and also mentioned the problems created by the same groups in the Hill of Zion. Advocates to His Beatitude's words were the representatives of the Franciscans,

Fr. Patton, of the Anglicans, His Eminence Bishop Housam Naoum and of the Lutherans, His Eminence Bishop Azar.

Next to this meeting was that of the Head of the Delegation of the European Union, and the Head of the Delegations of the other member-countries of the European Union which are interested in the Status Quo of Jerusalem and at the presence of the aforementioned representatives of Churches, His Beatitude welcomed them with the following address:

“Respected Delegates of the European Union in Jerusalem and Ramallah,

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. On behalf of our fellow Heads of the Churches, please allow us to express our appreciation for your visit. You come to us at a crucial moment in the life of the peoples of this region, and we are heartened by your presence and commitment to our life and well-being.

The Christian community in the Holy Land has enjoyed deep historical connections and rich relationships with the peoples of Europe for almost two thousand years. In this place where the Church was revealed in all its fulness, we are mindful of Europe’s role in the development of Christian faith and culture. The centuries-long partnerships between leaders of Europe and the Holy Land have enabled the mission of the Gospel to reach every country and continent.

Equally for centuries pilgrims have come here to be refreshed at the Holy Places, which are oases of spiritual renewal for

all who visit them. When restrictions have been lifted and travel is possible, we look forward to welcoming many thousands of European visitors to Jerusalem once more.

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 to try to meet the great spiritual, physical, educational, and financial needs of our local communities by God's grace.

After this period of prolonged hardship, the conflicts of recent weeks 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.

Over the last weeks, the never-ending news cycle has brought global attention to our local suffering. Despite all this coverage, the true beginning of this most recent conflict remains largely untold. 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 of the Jewish groups, for the Holy City of Jerusalem, and other communities of our region.

The attacks range from verbal abuse to physical attacks against clergy and worshippers as we go about our daily business to the frequent desecration of Church property and Holy Sites. Just in the last few days, we have seen the 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, nor 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. We are simply dealing with harassment and could manage this. But the stakes are now too high. For we are face to face with radical groups which seek and are working systematically for our eviction from the Holy City, whether by the threat to seize Church properties, and especially Jaffa Gate – which is the entrance to the Christian Quarter and the pilgrimage route to the Holy Sepulchre – or in Sheikh Jarrah – where attempts to forcefully displace local citizens in recent days erupted into the violence that 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 all the three Abrahamic faiths have Holy Sites here, it is the Christian Holy Sites that guarantee a truly universal welcome to all people of goodwill without distinction. This unique character is now under serious threat as never before.

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. Furthermore, we will continue to welcome to the Holy Sites all who come here on pilgrimage.

However, we cannot resist the growing challenge to our very



existence from radical groups alone. We need our partners in the international community, and especially our traditional friends and allies in Europe to do this, and through you, we call on the leaders of Europe 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 and renew these European partnerships. 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.”

To this, the Diplomatic Representatives replied that the Churches in the Holy Land are the guarantee for maintaining the Status Quo of Jerusalem as the Holy City of the three monotheistic religions, as well as for the peaceful coexistence of the faithful people of these Churches, with respect for their religious beliefs, according to the Status Quo, and expressed their willingness to provide humanitarian assistance to those recently affected in Gaza.

The Representative of the European Union Mr Kühn von Burgsdorff replied in particular, saying that he has been aware of the religious background of the hostilities in the Middle East since his youth, as well as of the international role that the religious leaders are capable of displaying towards their mitigation and resolution.

On this occasion, His Beatitude offered each of the attendees in the meeting His blessings from Jerusalem and the memorable John Tleel’s book “I am Jerusalem”.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY IN THE TOWN OF REINE**

On Sunday 10/23 May 2021, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos celebrated the Divine Liturgy for the feast of the Sunday of the Paralytic man at the Holy Church of Reine town, near the city of Nazareth.

On this Sunday the Church commemorates the Lord's healing of the man who suffered paralysis for thirty-eight years and had "no man, when the water is troubled, to put him into the sheep's pool" ... but with the Lord's word, he "took up his bed, and walked" (John 5:2-9).

For this festive event, having first visited the Metropolis of Nazareth, His Beatitude officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of Reine Community, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Metropolitans Isychios of Kapitolias and Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, among whom the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Lord in Tabor Archimandrite Hilarion, Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nektarios, Priest Nektarios and the Dean Priest of this Church Father Simeon. The chanting was delivered by the community Byzantine choir.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"At the Sheep's Pool, a man lay in sickness; and when he saw

Thee, O Lord, he cried: I have no man, that, when the water is troubled, he might put me therein. But when I go, another anticipateth me and receiveth the healing, and I lie yet in mine infirmity. And straightaway, taking compassion on him, the Saviour saith unto him: For thee, I became man, for thee, I am clothed in flesh, and sayest thou: I have no man? Take up thy bed and walk. All things are possible for Thee, all things are subject to Thee. Remember us all and have mercy on us. O Holy One, since Thou art the Friend of man" (Vespers, Entreaty, Glory).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The grace of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the One Who is the healer of the bodies and souls, our Lord Jesus Christ, has gathered us all in this holy place of your town, Reine, so that in Paschal joy, we may celebrate the miracle of the paralytic man's healing, who had been waiting for the healing of his infirmity for thirty-eight years.

The mystery of the Divine Providence in Christ had a sole purpose, the healing, meaning the salvation of the souls and the bodies of us men, from the infirmity, which is the sin, as the hymnographer clearly expresses: "For thee, I became man, for thee, I am clothed in flesh, and sayest thou: I have no man?" the Lord says.

In today's Gospel narrative of the healing of the paralytic man we distinguish and marvel at the power of patience and hope. The thirty-eight-years sick man was not overwhelmed by despair, because he was drawing power and hope from his faith in the merciful God. "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18;27) the Lord says. And we say this because the paralytic man was not healed by the Angel, who "went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water" (John 5:4), but by the Master of the Angels, Christ

Himself, as Saint Chrysostom notes: "The Angel went down to the pool and troubled the water, and one man was healed; the Master of the Angels went down to the [river] Jordan and troubled the water and healed the whole universe".

And according to Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, Christ's presence among men is redeeming, meaning it is therapeutic. Let us hear the words of the Holy Father: "Whenever Christ appears, there salvation lies; whether He sees the publican sitting at the receipt of custom, He makes him a Disciple and an Evangelist, whether He is buried with the dead, He raises the dead and makes the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and He passes by the pools, not seeking the buildings, but healing the sick".

If God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ in His Incarnation from the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Theotokos Mary, through the Holy Spirit, appeared in the heavens and on the earthly world; now through His three-day burial, the cathode into Hades and His glorious and victorious Resurrection, He appeared even to the nethermost depths, as the hymnographer Saint John Damascene says: "When Thou didst descend unto death, O Life Immortal, then didst Thou slay Hades with the lightning of Thy Divinity. And when Thou didst also raise the dead out of the nethermost depths, all the powers in the Heavens cried out: O life-giver, Christ our God, glory be to Thee" (Octoechos Apolytikion tone 2).

Christ's resurrection my dear Brethren, announced our transition from death into life, into the freedom from the bondage of sin, as Saint Paul preaches: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2). Interpreting this phrase, Saint Theodoritos says "law of sin means 'dynasty' of sin", while Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "he calls sin and law of death the carnal mindset which leads us to every evil deed".

According to Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, Jesus chose the bedridden paralytic man because he had a heavy load of sins

and long-term suffering due to his sickness ...he was sick in both body and soul", for this reason, He told him "Wilt thou be made whole?" (John 5:6). And our Holy Father Cyril adds: "Because salvation stems from faith, for this the paralytic heard the word 'wilt', so that his will would bring the reaction, and this happened only with Jesus' word, which is not comprehended by the physicians. Those who heal the infirmities of the soul cannot say to anyone; 'wilt thou be made whole?' However, Jesus grants the will and receives the faith, and offers the gift [of healing] for free".

This historic event of the paralytic man's healing manifested the excessive power of God-man Christ, because He healed an incurable disease, and also showed His philanthropy, because, as Saint Chrysostom says: "the one who was most worthy of His mercy and benevolence, [the paralytic man] did the guardian and philanthropist [Christ] see before all others".

Indeed, the paralytic man received the mercy and benevolence of Christ because he showed "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21), according to His preaching: "repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). In other words, repentance is considered true when it is accompanied by faith in the Resurrected Christ, as our Redeemer and Saviour, as the only way we are led to God in safety. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

We, my dear Brethren, are called to face all the trials in our lives but also our infirmities, having as an example the Paralytic man who endured his infirmity for thirty-eight years (John 5:5). And along with the hymnographer, let us entreat the physician of our souls and bodies, saying: "raise up my soul which is palsied by diverse sins and transgressions and by unseemly deeds and acts, that, being saved, I may also cry out: O Compassionate Redeemer, O Christ God, glory to Thy dominion and might" (Kontakion). Amen. Christ is Risen!"

After the Divine Liturgy there was a reception and then a meal, where His Beatitude addressed those present as follows:

“Come all peoples, and learn the power of the awesome mystery! For Christ our Saviour, who is the Word from the beginning, was crucified and freely suffered burial for our sake, rising from the dead that he might save all things: Come, let us worship Him” (Ochoechos, Praises tone 3, Troparion 1).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble President of the Church Committee,

Respected Members

We thank the Holy Trinitarian God Who deemed us worthy to co-celebrate with you, the feast of feasts, the Resurrection of Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, on the fourth Sunday since Pascha.

The event of the resurrection from the dead of our Lord Jesus Christ is being repeated in the Great Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, namely in the Divine Liturgy, during which we are called to participate in the Body and Blood of the resurrected Christ.

The Holy Church of Christ, and especially the Church of Jerusalem, has preserved throughout the centuries “the good thing which has been committed unto us” (2 Tim. 1:14), which is our Apostolic faith and tradition, along with the unity of the members of the body of the Church and the Rum-Orthodox identity, or better say, their “Al-Intima”.

For the second time this year, we celebrate Easter amidst challenges and sad episodes. Peoples and nations are tested by the fear, insecurity and wounds caused by the covid-19 pandemic and the fire of the warfare. Nevertheless, the hypostatic and unwaning Light of Christ’s Resurrection shines through. And this because “Jesus Christ the same yesterday,

and today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8), Saint Paul preaches. An undeniable testimony of this truth is the empty Tomb of the Resurrected Christ, our Saviour, but also our Holy Church, the Body of Christ in this world, which became the guardian of the empty Tomb, but also the herald of the joyous and hopeful message “Christ is Risen!”

This very message, “Christ is Risen!”, has given the Christians of the Holy Land the power and the courage to face death, destruction, the oppression of slavery and of fear, but also of the insecurity, always paying heed to Saint Paul’s advice: “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity” (1 Cor. 16:13-14).

This charity in Christ we proclaimed today, both the clergy and the people, in the Divine Liturgy, in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

In conclusion, we assure you, my dear brethren, that the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the spiritual and physical Ark that the Lord has created and no man, for the salvation of those who dwell in it.

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faith, and offers the gift [of healing] for free”.

This historic event of the paralytic man’s healing manifested the excessive power of God-man Christ, because He healed an incurable disease, and also showed His philanthropy, because, as Saint Chrysostom says: “the one who was most worthy of His mercy and benevolence, [the paralytic man] did the guardian and philanthropist [Christ] see before all others”.

Indeed, the paralytic man received the mercy and benevolence of Christ because he showed “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21), according to His preaching: “repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). In other words, repentance is considered true when it is accompanied by faith in the Resurrected Christ, as our Redeemer and Saviour, as the only way we are led to God in safety. “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

We, my dear Brethren, are called to face all the trials in our lives but also our infirmities, having as an example the Paralytic man who endured his infirmity for thirty-eight years (John 5:5). And along with the hymnographer, let us entreat the physician of our souls and bodies, saying: “raise up my soul which is palsied by diverse sins and transgressions and by unseemly deeds and acts, that, being saved, I may also cry out: O Compassionate Redeemer, O Christ God, glory to Thy dominion and might” (Kontakion). Amen. Christ is Risen!”

After the Divine Liturgy there was a reception and then a meal, where His Beatitude addressed those present as follows:

“Come all peoples, and learn the power of the awesome mystery! For Christ our Saviour, who is the Word from the beginning, was crucified and freely suffered burial for our sake, rising from the dead that he might save all things: Come, let us worship Him” (Ochoechos, Praises tone 3, Troparion 1).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,



Noble President of the Church Committee,

Respected Members

We thank the Holy Trinitarian God Who deemed us worthy to co-celebrate with you, the feast of feasts, the Resurrection of Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, on the fourth Sunday since Pascha.

The event of the resurrection from the dead of our Lord Jesus Christ is being repeated in the Great Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, namely in the Divine Liturgy, during which we are called to participate in the Body and Blood of the resurrected Christ.

The Holy Church of Christ, and especially the Church of Jerusalem, has preserved throughout the centuries "the good thing which has been committed unto us" (2 Tim. 1:14), which is our Apostolic faith and tradition, along with the unity of the members of the body of the Church and the Rum-Orthodox identity, or better say, their "Al-Intima".

For the second time this year, we celebrate Easter amidst challenges and sad episodes. Peoples and nations are tested by the fear, insecurity and wounds caused by the covid-19 pandemic and the fire of the warfare. Nevertheless, the hypostatic and unwaning Light of Christ's Resurrection shines through. And this because "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8), Saint Paul preaches. An undeniable testimony of this truth is the empty Tomb of the Resurrected Christ, our Saviour, but also our Holy Church, the Body of Christ in this world, which became the guardian of the empty Tomb, but also the herald of the joyous and hopeful message "Christ is Risen!"

This very message, "Christ is Risen!", has given the Christians of the Holy Land the power and the courage to face death, destruction, the oppression of slavery and of fear, but also of the insecurity, always paying heed to Saint Paul's

advice: “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity” (1 Cor. 16:13-14).

This charity in Christ we proclaimed today, both the clergy and the people, in the Divine Liturgy, in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

In conclusion, we assure you, my dear brethren, that the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the spiritual and physical Ark that the Lord has created and no man, for the salvation of those who dwell in it.

Christ is Risen! Many Happy Returns!”

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY IN RAMLE – ANCIENT ARIMATHAEA**

On Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women 3/16 May 2021, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of Ramle Monastery of the Patriarchate.

On this feast the Church commemorates Joseph of Arimathaea – present-day Ramle – who was a noble counsellor, accepting and longing for the Kingdom of God, who dared to go to Pilate and ask for the Body of our Lord, the Crucified Jesus Christ, and having received It, he buried It with the help of the Myrrh-

bearing Women at his new Tomb (John 19:38-42, Matt. 27:57-60).

For the commemoration and honour of Joseph of Arimathaea and the Lord's burial, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude, with the co-celebration of their Eminences the Archbishops: Damascene of Yaffo, Aristarchos of Constantina, Philoumenos of Pella and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, along with Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Deacons. The chanting was delivered by the Ramle Byzantine choir as the Service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangleos Vlioras and many faithful Christians with mixed feelings; joy for the end of the pandemic and intense prayer for the ceasefire between Israel and Gaza, and the episodes in the cities of Ramle and Lod.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"Let Joseph, the noble counsellor be praised, together with the Myrrh-bearers and the divine disciples, since he also is a herald of the Arising Christ", the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (Matins, Ode 9, Troparion 15).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians,

The grace of the hidden disciples of the Lord, Joseph of Arimathaea, the biblical city of Ramle, and Nicodemus, as well as of the Myrrh-bearing Women, have gathered us all in this holy place, to give glory to our Resurrected God, Jesus Christ, who has delivered us from the corruption of death and its darkness.

The undeniable fact of the Resurrection of the Son and Word of God, Christ, is characterized as the primary volcano, whose scorching lava and light have covered the whole creation, and this light is that of the mystery of the divine providence, namely the incarnation of God the Word and our Saviour Jesus

Christ.

“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:31-32) the Lord says. Interpreting these words of the Lord, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: “When the beast [the devil] was deposed, then Christ drew towards Himself the seduced nation, not only the Jews, but all the people, for their salvation, calling them to Him through faith; for with the Law, the call was limited, but with Christ it is general for all people”.

Their faith in the Resurrected Christ, of both the hidden disciples and the Myrrh bearers, does the Church honour and venerate today on the third Sunday after Pascha. Moreover, these disciples and the Myrrh bearers became witnesses and preachers of the resurrection of Christ. “And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him [Jesus]. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you” (Mark 16:1-7) Mark the Evangelist says.

Indeed, my dear brethren, through His luminous resurrection, our Lord Jesus Christ, who said: “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), abolished the kingdom of darkness and ignorance and completely overthrew the tyrannical power of the devil over men, as Saint John Damascene says: “Thou didst descend into the deepest parts of the earth, and didst shatter the everlasting bars that held fast those that were fettered, O Christ. And on the third day, like Jonas from the sea monster, Thou didst arise for the grave” (Pascha

Canon, Ode 6 Heirmos). And according to Saint Gregory of Nice, through the resurrection of Christ, the power of the death of sin was abolished, and there was a transmutation of our human nature. "The kingdom of life came and the power of death was abolished, and another birth happened, another life, another kind of life, the transmutation – recast of our nature".

This transmutation or recast of our nature happened through Christ, when He received our human nature through the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Theotokos Mary, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and He absolved it [our human nature] from the corruption and from sin.

And now, through His resurrection, Christ highlighted the human nature as victorious over the bodily death, while through His Ascension to God the Father, He deified the human body "the whole substance" He had assumed, as Saint Simeon the translator says.

Behold, therefore, why Saint Chrysostom triumphantly proclaims: "The Lord's death mortified death". And according to Saint John Damascene: "we celebrate the mortification of death", namely the abolishment of our primary enemy, as Saint Paul says: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15"26).

Saint Gregory Palamas says that the Lord's resurrection is the renewal of the human nature, it is the reviving and reshaping and restoration to the eternal life of the first Adam, who was devoured by death because of his sin, and through death, [it is] a retrogression towards the earth from which he was created.

As mentioned above, true witnesses of Christ's resurrection were the Myrrh-bearing Women and especially the Theotokos Maria, the Mother of God, who was the first to see the Lord-risen from the dead, as Saint Gregory Palamas says: "The Theotokos was the first to receive the good news of the Lord's

resurrection, as it was befitting and just, and she was the first to see Him resurrected and delighted in His divine words”.

Commenting on the presence of the Myrrh bearers at the burial and resurrection of Christ, Saint Theophylaktos of Bulgaria notes characteristically: “the condemned nation was the first to receive the vision of the goodness and while the disciples run away, the women endure and wait”. This means that the condemned nation of the women, due to Eve’s disobedience in paradise, was the first to enjoy the vision of the Lord. And this was because Christ’s disciples ran away to hide in fear, but the women persevered.

This very delight of the vision of Christ’s resurrection are we also called to seek, my dear brethren, imitating the hidden disciples, Joseph and Nicodemus and especially the Myrrh-bearing Women. Let us say along with the hymnographer: “Let us arise in the deep dawn and instead of myrrh, offer praise to the Master; and we shall see Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, Who causeth life to dawn for all” (Canon of Pascha, Ode 5).

“Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all” (2 Thess. 3:16).

Christ is risen! Many happy returns!”

At noon, Archimandrite Niphon hosted a meal for the Patriarchal Entourage and the Consul General, and His Beatitude addressed all present as follows:

“Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Our Holy Church is called the Church of the Resurrection, namely of the light of truth and of the hope of God’s Kingdom. “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20).

We comprehend these words of Saint Paul within the Church,

especially through our participation in the Divine Liturgy, where we become communicants of the Body and Blood of the resurrected God, our Saviour Christ.

We say this because the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is the heart of the body of the Church, and the protection wall for us Christians, who preach the peace and love of Christ.

The Church of Christ, and especially the Rum Orthodox is the lighthouse that illumines the world with the holy light of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb, namely the light of Christ's resurrection.

We celebrate today the three-day burial and resurrection of our Saviour Christ, however, we are not hidden, like His disciples, Joseph and Nicodemus, but like the Myrrh-bearing Women, who dismissed fear, and ran to the Tomb, seeking Christ.

We are called to do this very thing, my dear brethren, and do this not only for ourselves but for all our fellow men, indiscriminately. We are called to always hearken to the Lord's command: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Humanity and especially our region are tested by both the coronavirus pandemic and the difficult political situation and the eruption of violence.

Having our hope in the resurrected Christ, "we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4), praying for the ceasefire and the rule of peace, which is so much needed in the world and in the Holy Land. "For He is our peace", namely Christ, as Saint Paul preaches (Eph. 2:14).

Christ is risen!"

The feast of the Sunday of the Myrrh bearing Women was also celebrated at the Chapel of the Myrrh bearing Women of Saint James Cathedral, with Vespers on Saturday afternoon and and the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning. The Services were officiated by His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, with the co-celebration of the ministering Priests of the Cathedral, Fr Farah/ Haralambos Bandour and George Baramki at the chanting of the Cathedral's choir under the lead of Mr Rimon Kamar. The Services were attended by the members of the 'Myrrh bearing Women' s association and the representative of the Greek General Consulate Mrs Christina Zaharioudaki.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS ADDRESSES THE NEW ANGLICAN BISHOP IN JERUSALEM**

On Thursday afternoon, 30 April / 13 May 2021, the enthronement ceremony of the newly-elect Most Reverend Archbishop Hosam Elias Naoum took place at the Holy Cathedral of Saint George of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem. Present at the ceremony were; the new Archbishop's predecessor, Most Reverend Suheil Dawani, the British Consul in Jerusalem Mr Philip Hall, clergy and laity-members of this Church and representatives of the Churches of Jerusalem, among whom His



Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, His Beatitude the Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem Pierre Battista Pizzaballa and the Custos of the Holy Land, His Grace Father Francesco Patton.

H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, who was accompanied by His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, addressed the new Anglican Archbishop Hosam Elias Naoum, underlining his contribution while he was the Secretary of the Meetings of the Heads of Churches of Jerusalem. His Beatitude's full address follows below:

"Your Grace, dear Archbishop Hosam,

Dear Mrs Naoum,

Your Grace, Archbishop Michael,

Your Graces,

Reverend Clergy,

Faithful Members of the Anglican Church,

Respected Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We greet you warmly, dear Archbishop Hosam, and your wife and family, on this blessed occasion when you are celebrating both the Feast of the Ascension and your enthronement with the formal beginning of your ministry as the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem. You are the fifteenth bishop to serve the Anglican Community in Jerusalem, and with your clergy and people, we give thanks to Almighty God that you have been chosen for this responsibility.

As you know full well, you come to your new role at a time of great challenge and a great opportunity. This is a difficult time for our city and for this region. We are still living

with the pandemic and its profound social, economic, and spiritual consequences. There is disturbing political and social unrest, and the Christian presence in Jerusalem and the Holy Land face new and growing threats from radical elements who seek to undermine the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious landscape here, in which we have lived for centuries. The Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land is under threat as never before in our lifetime.

Even so, as Saint Paul says, *we do not lose heart*. In this joyful Eastertide, we are renewed in our hope of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Places, of which the Divine Providence has made us guardians and servants, remain sources of spiritual refreshment both for the local Christian community and for the countless pilgrims. As the new Archbishop of the Anglican Diocese, you bring considerable experience, especially in your highly respected role over many years as the Secretary of the Heads of Churches, among whom you now take your rightful place as the Anglican Archbishop. We also know of the new hope that your new ministry brings to your community.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Anglican Church in the Holy Land have had a long and close history of mutual respect and affection and common purpose in the good state of the Christian presence in the Holy Land. We look forward to deepening our relationship over the years of your leadership and finding fresh ways of journeying on the path of unity. We must never give up our commitment to the full, sacramental unity in Christ that is His will for all who call themselves Christians. The Orthodox Church and the Anglican Community share a special bond, not the least in our common patristic heritage, and this is a foundation on which we can build even closer relations here in our region.

We would like to take this opportunity to mention once again our respect and admiration for your predecessor, Archbishop Suheil, for his committed pastoral ministry and for his

attentive collaboration among the Heads of Churches, and we wish him and his wife, Saffeeqa, a happy and healthy retirement.

We would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the role of His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury in his unwavering support for us and for the Christian presence in Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Archbishop Justin, like his predecessors, continues to be a good friend and ally to us here, and for this, we are extremely grateful.

May God bless you, dear Archbishop Hosam, your wife, Rafa, and your family, and all the clergy and people committed to your charge, and may our risen and ascended Lord Jesus Christ enlighten your heart and your mind as you assume this new trust and responsibility.

Thank you.”

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM OFFICIATES THE DIVINE LITURGY IN CANA OF GALILEE**

On Sunday of Thomas, 26 April/9 May 2021, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of the Shrine in Cana of Galilee.

The Divine Liturgy was observed in commemoration that Thomas

touched the Lord's side and the miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences: Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and the Hagiotaphite Fathers from the Cana neighbouring districts, Archimandrite Parthenios from Tiberias, and Archimandrite Hilarion from Tabor, along with the Hierodeacons Eulogios and Simeon. The changing was delivered by the Cana Byzantine choir, and the Service was attended by the Orthodox laity from Cana, in joy for the Resurrection of the Lord and for the pandemic almost coming to an end.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"It is the day of Resurrection, let us be radiant, O ye peoples; Pascha, the Lord's Pascha; for Christ God hath brought us from death unto life, and from earth, unto Heaven, as we sing the triumphal hymn" Saint John Damascene says (Pentekostarion, Easter Sunday, Ode 1, Troparion 1).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in this holy shrine, at the place where our Lord Jesus Christ blessed the marriage and marked the start of His miracles, in order to celebrate the touching of the Lord's side by Apostle Thomas and the inauguration of Christ's Resurrection, namely the Pascha, as well as the commemoration of the Wedding in Cana of Galilee.

Today, all of us who participate in this Divine Liturgy, participate in Christ's Resurrection, in Pascha, as Saint Chrysostom says: "Pascha is not the fasting, but the offering and the sacrifice, the daily observed synaxis [the officiated

Holy Eucharist]”.

In other words, “Pascha” is the very Resurrected Christ, therefore, Saint John Damascene calls Christ “Pascha” in his hymns: “O great and most sacred Pascha, Christ; O Wisdom and Word and Power of God”. “...a new and holy Pascha, a mystic Pascha, an all-venerable Pascha, a Pascha that is Christ the Redeemer...a Pascha that hath opened to us the gates of paradise” (Easter Sunday, Ode 9, Troparion 3, Sticheron 1). In essence, Saint Damascene interprets Saint Paul’s words: “For even Christ, our Passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7). Behold, therefore, why Saint John the hymnographer says: “Pascha the Lord’s Pascha; for Christ God hath brought us from earth unto life, and from earth unto Heaven”.

If Jerusalem became the place of the martyrdom and the testimony of the peak of the signs Christ performed on earth, namely of His sacrifice on the Cross and the victory over death through His Resurrection, according to the foretold: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Cor. 15:54-55 / Isaiah 25:8), also this blessed place of Cana became the testimony of the beginning of the signs and the revelation of the glory of Jesus Christ with the changing of the water into wine here (John 2:1-11).

According to Saint Cyril of Alexandria, the Lord honoured with His presence the Wedding in order to sanctify the beginning of the birth of man, and change the old sadness regarding childbearing, as Saint Paul says: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). And the glory of our Saviour shone like the sun rays and His Disciples marvelled at it and were made steadfast in their faith.

According to Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, with the changing of the water into wine in Cana, our Lord Jesus Christ confessed [promised] to the sons of the bridal chamber, namely to the

baptized members of the body of the Church, the gift of enjoying His body and blood. And our Holy Father continues: "So, in all detail as body and blood we partake of Christ, in this type the body is given, and in this type the blood is given, so that by receiving this communion, the body and blood of Christ, one becomes of one body and blood with Christ. In this manner, we become bearers of Christ, of His body and blood in our body parts. In this manner, we become partakers of the divine nature, according to blessed Peter" (ref. 2 Peter 1:4).

The Lord is One, "and many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book" (John 20:30), Saint John the Evangelist says, testifying the touching of the Resurrected Lord's side by Apostle Thomas.

The impulsive unfaithfulness of Apostle Thomas, as well as the chance he was given to touch the wounded side of the deified body of the resurrected Christ happened – according to Saint Cyril of Alexandria – "so that we can also securely believe that He resurrected His Temple and that the confession of the communion of the mystical blessing (the Holy Communion) is a confession of Christ's Resurrection". Moreover, it is to this cause that we are called, according to Saint John Damascene: "let us partake of the vine of divine gladness and of the Kingdom of Christ, praising Him as God unto the ages" (Easter Sunday, Ode 8, Troparion 2).

In other words, through our participation in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, we are called to become "partakers of the Resurrection and the Kingdom of Christ. And the Kingdom of God is within us" (Luke 17:21).

Interpreting these words, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "it is our option and within our power to receive it; for it is possible for every single man to enrich himself with the righteousness in Christ through faith, and having become illumined with every virtue, gain the Kingdom of Heaven. (In

more detail: For every man who acquires righteousness through the faith in Christ and is decorated with all virtues, is also worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven). "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men" (Romans 14:17-18) Saint Paul preaches.

Through His signs, in Cana here and throughout His earthly life, as well as by His appearance to His Disciples when Thomas touched His immaculate deified side, after His Resurrection, our Lord Jesus Christ revealed His Kingdom to the world, through His enlisted Church, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

This treasure, namely the Church, the resurrected from the dead body of Christ let us love with all our heart and mind, my dear ones, and along with the hymnographer say: "Christ is risen from the dead, by death He hath overcome death, and to those in the graves, hath He given life".

Chris is risen! Many happy and blessed returns!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a litany around the Church and the reading of the Gospel narrative regarding the miracle at the wedding in Cana by the Lord.

At noon the good keeper and Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Chrysostom hosted a meal.

**From Secretariat-General**