

THE FEAST OF ST GEORGE THE GREAT MARTYR AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday 23 April/ 6 May 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy Great Martyr George the Trophy-bearer, in which the Church commemorates his martyrdom in Rome, in AD 303 during the reign of Diocletian.

His commemoration was celebrated as per below:

1. At the Holy Monastery dedicated to him in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, with Vespers on Wednesday afternoon, led by the Master of Ceremonies Archimandrite Bartholomew. The Divine Liturgy on Thursday morning was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archimandrite Kallistos and the Hierodeacons Eulogios and Simeon. The chanting was delivered by Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos and the Patriarchal School Students, as the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and many Nuns of the Patriarchate and faithful Christians.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“The all-glorious memorial of the servant hath shined upon us as a companion of the Resurrection of Christ, whereon let us gather, ye faithful, and joyfully keep the feast” (Minaion, Matins, Ode 3, Troparion 1).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The unwaning light of the Resurrection of our Saviour Christ has guided our footsteps to this Holy Monastery dedicated to Saint George the Great Martyr, to celebrate his holy commemoration in boldness.

Saint George became a great martyr of the love of Christ during the brutal persecutions of the Christians by the Roman Emperor Diocletian (AD 284-305). George was the son of a wealthy and noble family of Cappadocia and served as an officer at the Roman army. He confessed his faith in Christ and was seized, subjected to horrible tortures and finally his head was cut off. The Church of the first centuries canonized him among its Great Holy Martyrs. The pre-Christian city of Diospolis in Palestine, our later and modern city of Lydda, where the majestic Church of the Saint is located, erected above the cenotaph of the Saint, became the centre of the Martyr's honour. Saint George's honour was spread to all Roman Empire in both the West and the East.

We wonder, why the marvellous and glorious George sought the martyrdom for Christ; "For longing conquered nature, persuading the lover to pass through death to the Beloved, even Christ God, the Saviour of our souls" (Vespers, Aposticha Glory), his hymnographer says. And Prophet-King David says: "As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness" (Psalm 17:15).

Stephen the first-martyr became a viewer of this glory when he was stoned by those who hated him, according to Saint Luke the Evangelist: "being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55).

Both the murdered Prophets of the Old Testament, who foretold the light of the world, namely Christ, and the first-martyr Stephen contributed decisively to the embracing of the brave

athlete George of the word of Jesus: "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Interpreting these words, Cyril of Alexandria says: "God was known only in Judea, and His Name was great only in Israel, and a deep darkness covered the rest of the earth, as none other nation in the world had the divine and heavenly light, but Israel".

Indeed, the wise George lives and moves in times when the demonic darkness of idolatry reigns over the whole earth and the Roman Emperors deify themselves and demand worship from all their subjects, much more from the Christians, as his hymnographer says: "As thou manfully strovest in piety and didst cast down deluded impiety, O Martyr, thou troddest down the audacity of the foe; for thy mind being kindled like fire with godly zeal, thou didst quench the ungodly presumption of tyrant kings. Wherefore, as is fitting, in return for the torments thou now hast received the crown and dost grant healings unto all, O most valiant prize winner George" (Matins, Ode 3 Kathisma 1).

The wonderful George is in the chora of the great martyrs of the Church, because he was not ashamed of the martyrdom of our Lord, as Apostle Paul commands his disciple Timothy: "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim 1:8). In other words, Saint George became an apostle and a preacher of the redeeming truth of Christ's Gospel, being inspired by Saint Paul's preaching: "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come" (Hebrews 13:14).

And the continuing city is no other than the eternal life in the Kingdom of God, for which the Lord says: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33). "We must through many

tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22), Saint Paul preaches.

The martyrs of Christ's love are the boast and the glory of the Church, and for this reason, they have special honour. This is because the martyrs' relics bestow healings to those who honour and venerate them, and their incorruptibility testifies and confesses Christ's resurrection from the dead.

Moreover, the bloody martyrdom of the Holy Martyrs is a practical and unquestionable testimony of the sacrifice of the Son of God and our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross, for the salvation of our human race. That is why Saint Paul says: "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him" (Romans 6:8-9).

Today's honoured Saint George the Great Martyr and Trophy-bearer was clad in this very death of incorruptibility of Christ, namely the light of Christ's resurrection. The cultivator of reverence George longed for this Saviour of the world, Who bore our human flesh and was born from the Virgin Theotokos Mary. Therefore, as we honour his sacred commemoration in his Holy Monastery in the Old City of Jerusalem, let us entreat him along with the hymnographer and say: "As thou standest filled with light at the worshipful tribunal of the Sovereign of all, O George, thou crowned Martyr of Christ, preserve by thine entreaties and thy protection those who call on thee with most fervent faith and love" (Matins, Ode 2, Troparion 1). Amen. Christ is Risen!"

After the Divine Liturgy, the renovator of the Monastery Reverend Abbess Marianna hosted a reception for the Patriarchal Entourage and the Congregation at the Hegoumeneion and the courtyard of the Church.

2. At the Holy Church of Saint George in Acre-Ptolemais,

with Vespers on Wednesday afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on Thursday morning, by the Patriarchal Representative Archimandrite Philotheos.

3. At the Holy Monastery of Saint George of the Hospital in the Old City of Jerusalem, which is adjacent to the Holy Monastery of the Archangels, by Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, under the chanting of Archimandrite Eusevios, with the attendance of monks and laity from Jerusalem. The congregation was offered a reception by Nun Pansemni, who has renovated the Church and preserved the icons.
4. At the Holy Monastery of Saint George in Beitjalla, an area of Bethlehem and Hebron, in the middle of a Muslim village. His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa observed Vespers and the Divine Liturgy at the chanting of local Byzantine singers, with the attendance of monks, nuns and Palestinian faithful Christians from Bethlehem, Beit Jala, and Beit Sahour.
5. At the Holy Church of Saint George in Lydda, where the cenotaph of the Saint lies, with the Divine Liturgy in the morning by the Hegoumen Hieromonk Marcellus and the attendance of local faithful Christians.

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE'S SPEECH AT

KING ABDULLAH'S II RECEPTION IN JORDAN

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III met yesterday, April 27, with His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Al Hussein in Jordan, who invited Church leaders in Jerusalem and representatives from the Islamic Endowments to affirm their support for the Jerusalemites in their unwavering efforts to preserve the multicultural identity of the Holy City.

His Beatitude gave a speech at the reception, which reads as follow:

"Your Majesty,

Your Royal Highness,

We greet you, Your Majesty, on behalf of the Christian communities of the Holy Land at this time when we are celebrating the Easter season, and we thank you for your welcome and your good wishes to us.

On behalf of our fellow Heads of the Churches and Christian Communities of the Holy Land, we wish also to extend to Your Majesty our sincere and heartfelt greetings during this holy season of Ramadan. During this time of fasting, spiritual reflection and prayer, we join with our fellow Muslim brethren in our commitment to the foundation of our common belief, which is a tradition of peace, justice, mutual respect and the

shared value of the dignity of human life.

All our traditions value the practice of fasting both for the individual believer and also for the wellbeing of the community as a whole; for fasting is conducive to soul searching which enables examination of one's thoughts and conscience as well as unites us in our complete dependence on Almighty God, reminding us that we share a common humanity and a common human destiny.

In this time, we are firmly reminded of our continuing gratitude to Your Majesty for your faithful custodianship of the Christian and Muslim Holy Places in our beloved Holy Land and particularly in the Holy City of Jerusalem. Your Majesty inherits and guards the Covenant of Omar ibn Al-Khattab to our predecessor Patriarch Sophronios with its' 1,400 years of guardianship of the rights of the churches.

This is the authentic example we have been living, under the Hashemite custodianship in Jerusalem and in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan; and is of great encouragement and support to us, especially at a time when the Christian presence in the Holy Land, so vital to the historic peaceful coexistence within our region, is facing new and serious challenges. It is precisely at this time of year, when Christians and Muslims are keeping their holiest seasons, that the Holy Places speak eloquently and provide spiritual refreshment to people of good will both near and far.

We wish you, Your Majesty, the Hashemite Royal Family, and all our Muslim brethren, a peaceful and blessed month of Ramadan. May Almighty God bless you, and all the people of our beloved Holy Land.

Ramadan Mubarak."

(Photos source: The Royal Hashemite Court Official Website)



THE FIRST SERVICE OF THE BRIDEGROOM AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Palm Sunday evening 12/25 April 2021, the 1st Service of the Bridegroom was held at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

On this Service of Holy Monday, as well as on Holy Tuesday and Holy Wednesday, the Church projects the Lord to the faithful as the Bridegroom of our souls, with Whom we are called in a mystical union so that with cleansed minds and mortified passions, experience the redeeming Passion of the Cross and the luminous and glorious Resurrection.

This contrite Service was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-prayer of the Hagiotaphite Fathers. The Service was attended by some local faithful Christians, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras but not any pilgrims due to the continuing covid-19 restrictions.

At the end of the Service His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Behold the Bridegroom comes in the middle of the night and blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching, but unworthy is he whom He shall find in slothfulness. Beware then, O my soul, and be not overcome by sleep, lest thou be given over to death and shut out from the Kingdom. But return to soberness and cry aloud: Holy, holy, holy art Thou, O God: through the Theotokos have mercy upon us” (Matins of Holy Monday, Troparion 1).

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The Holy and Great Week of the Passions of our Lord Jesus Christ begins with the commemoration of the blessed Joseph and of the fig tree which was cursed by the Lord and withered.

And this is so because Joseph depicts Christ. Joseph was Patriarch Jacob's eleventh son; his brothers were jealous of him, threw him in a pit and sold him to foreign merchants, he was sold again to others in Egypt, where he was slandered for his chastity, sent to prison, to be finally released from prison and receive great glory and honour by the King. Joseph became the Lord of all Egypt, distributing grain to all the people, and throughout his life course, he had imprinted in him the Passions and later on the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his Synaxarist.

As for the fig tree which was cursed by the Lord and withered, it depicts the synagogue, which did not have the appropriate fruits of virtue and reverence, and became bereft from every spiritual grace through Christ's curse.

And having Joseph in mind, who is according to the type of Jesus, the hymnographer blesses the vigilant for the salvation of his soul servant. On the contrary, he considers unworthy the lazy servant, who neglects the care of his soul. This negligent servant resembles the fruitless fig tree, therefore, he is condemned to lose his soul.

Our Holy Church, my dear ones, calls us through the hymnographer by saying, "return to soberness, O my soul, crying aloud: Holy, holy, holy art Thou, O God". Return to soberness, means to recover from the intoxication of the silly and harmful desires and actions, as well as from the darkness of the mind from the fallacy of the wrong teachings, according to Zigavinos and Ecumenios (Ref. 2 Tim. 2:26).

The calling of the Church to return to soberness and of course to be vigilant is in effect until the last hour, however, the

Lord is nigh, Saint Paul warns us (Phil. 4:5) and advises us: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil.4:8).

Let us hear, my dear ones the voice of Paul and of the Holy Fathers; “the Lord is nigh”, “Christ in His love hastens to His sufferings, He consents to be hung upon the Tree, that He may save mankind” (Matins, Troparion 2).

Let us say along with the hymnographer: “let us fear the punishment of the fig tree, withered because it was unfruitful; and let us bring worthy fruits of repentance unto Christ, who grants us His great mercy” (Aposticha idiomelo 3).

Have a blessed week of the Passions of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, and a Happy Easter. Amen.”

From Secretariat-General

LAZARUS’ SATURDAY IN BETHANY

On Saturday 11/24 April 2021, which is Lazarus’ Saturday according to the Triodion, the commemoration of the resurrection of the Lord’s friend Lazarus, who was dead for four days, was celebrated by the Patriarchate at the Holy Monastery of Martha and Mary.

On this day the Church as a whole and especially the Church of Jerusalem commemorates the narrative according to Saint John the Evangelist; the Lord came from the desert in Bethany and was welcomed by Lazarus’ sisters, Martha and Mary, we went to

his tomb and resurrected him saying "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11: 43).

This event, which "signifies the common resurrection" was celebrated on Friday afternoon with Vespers, by the ministering Archimandrite Epiphanius, and on Saturday morning with the Divine Liturgy which was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolas, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, and Arab-speaking Priests, at the chanting of Archimandrite Eusevios and Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos. The Service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and a few faithful. There were no pilgrims due to the continuing covid-19 restrictions.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

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

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

Having completed the forty days that profit to our soul, we are gathered today by the Grace of the Holy Spirit to the historic biblical town of Bethany, Lazarus' hometown, in order to celebrate his rising from the dead by his friend and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

This event, Lazarus' rising from the dead, was written in detail by Saint John the Evangelist. And this was done so that

it would be believed that Jesus is the Son of God and God and that He was risen, and also that there will be a resurrection of the dead. "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25-26) the Lord says.

Interpreting the Lord's words, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "Fruit and honour of the faith in Christ is the eternal life, and there is no other way for a man's soul to acquire this. For if we are all risen through Christ, but this life is true, to live eternally in beatitude". And in more detail, eternal life is the fruit and the reward of faith in Christ, and there is no other way for a man's soul to acquire this fruit. Even if we are risen because of Christ. This is the true life, to live in eternal beatitude.

And when Jesus heard that Lazarus was gravely ill, He said to his sisters, Martha and Mary that this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby (ref. John 11:1-4). "Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it" (John 11:38). "Jesus cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes" (John 11:43-44).

Jesus did these things in front of the Disciples to introduce them to the faith of the resurrection from the dead and prepare them for that, as the hymnographer says: "O Lord, Thy voice destroyed the dominion of hell, and the word of Thy power raised from the tomb him that had been four days dead; and Lazarus became the saving first-fruits of the regeneration of the world". And elsewhere, "Lord, wishing to give to Thy Disciples the assurance of Thy Resurrection from the dead, Thou hast come to the tomb of Lazarus and called him by name. Then was hell despoiled, and it released the one that had been four days dead, as he called upon Thee: O blessed Lord, glory to Thee" (Lazarus Vespers, stichera 5,6).

It is a true fact that Christ worked marvels during His life on earth (Acts 6:8), namely miracles, such as the resurrection of Jairus' daughter, (Mark 5:22-43), and the resurrection of the woman's only son in the town Nain (Luke 7:11-17), in order to reveal the glory of Jesus Christ and the long-ago hidden mystery of the divine providence which was enacted in Him.

Lazarus' resurrection in this biblical town of Bethany a little while before Christ's Passion on the Cross was not only a "wondrous sign" revealing the glory of the Son and Word of God, but also "the salvation preface of the regeneration", namely the common resurrection of all people in the human body of Jesus Christ, as well as the assurance and reply to His disciples' question: "Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:27-28).

According to Zigavinos, "Christ calls regeneration the raising from the dead as a new life", meaning a second birth and reshaping and regeneration of the creation. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:20-21) Saint Paul preaches.

Behold, therefore, my dear brethren, why the raising from the dead of the four-days-dead Lazarus is the salvation preface of the common resurrection of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And the common resurrection of Christ does not only refer to the victory over death and corruption of sin, but also to the day and time of judgement according to the witness of Saint John the Evangelist, "the hour is coming, in the which all

that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29).

We, my dear brethren, having completed the forty days that profit to our soul, and drawing nigh to the Holy Week of the Passions and the three-day burial of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us say along with the hymnographer: "by the intercessions of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, deem us worthy to become viewers of Your Cross and Passion, O Lord, and of the luminous queen of days, the day of Your Resurrection, O friend of man".

Many happy returns and Happy Easter!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a Procession to Lazarus' tomb under the lead of His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, where the Gospel narrative of Lazarus' resurrection according to Saint John was read.

Finally, the Episcopal Entourage visited the Bethany Council and then the Elder Abbess Eupraxia hosted a meal for the Patriarchal Entourage at the Hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General

**HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH
OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE**

DIVINE LITURGY IN EIN KAREM

On Sunday morning, 5/18 April 2021, of the 5th Sunday of Lent, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Monastery of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist in Ein Karem, which is now adjacent to West Jerusalem, near the Jewish Hospital Hadassa.

This Monastery of Saint John the Baptist was built a long time ago, while the Church in it was built during the Office of the Patriarch of Jerusalem Cyril, around AD 1864. This area is known from the Gospel as “a Judean town in the hill country” where the Mother of God went “in haste and greeted Elizabeth” (Luke 1:39-50), and where “the greatest man born of a woman”, Saint John the Forerunner, was born.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences; Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Fathers, the Head of the Russian Community of the Patriarchate Fr Nikolaos Koulinsky, and Archdeacon Mark. The Service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, members of the Greek-speaking and Russian-speaking Communities of Jerusalem.

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

“But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be a servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:42-45).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

Today, the fifth Sunday of Lent, our Holy Church commemorates Saint Mary of Egypt, who became an example of humility and repentance for those who wish to be free from the bondage of the passions and sin, and especially from the carnal passions. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17) the Lord says.

These words of the Lord refer to the man who was created according to the image and likeness of God, and he is the grandeur of the logical creation, of the creation of the world.

As a gift of God, repentance gives the sinner the opportunity to come "to the knowledge of the truth" (2Tim. 2:24), namely to be guided to the full and correct knowledge of the truth, by which his salvation in Christ is achieved. According to Saint John of the Ladder, "repentance means the renewal of baptism. Repentance means an agreement with God for a new life. And the repentant is a buyer of humility".

In other words, repentance predisposes humility, of which Christ became an example, as Saint Paul preaches by saying: "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name" (Philip. 2:8-9).

Moreover, Christ Himself orders us: "And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be a servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Commenting on this phrase of the Lord, Saint Theophylaktos says: "The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many, which is greater than to minister; for when one does not only minister but also dies for the one he serves, what is greater than that or more

marvellous? However, this ministry and condensation [of Christ] became glory and elevation for Him and for all". And Saint Chrysostom says: "Because [Christ] humbled Himself, all creation was able to know Him".

Sin, namely the sickness of both soul and body, accompanies man throughout his life on earth, as King-Prophet David confesses: "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3). And this, because again according to David: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5).

Likewise, the infinite compassion and mercy of God "from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him" (Psalm 103:17) according to the psalmist. "And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation" (Luke 1:50) according to the testimony of Saint Luke the Evangelist. In other words, my dear brethren, God looks in favour and mercy upon those who turn to Him in fear and reverence, and with a repentant and humble heart.

Precisely this favour and mercy of God did Saint Mary receive when she came to herself and decided to change her life and invoke God's mercy through her repentance. Therefore, the hymnographer says: "The power of Thy Cross, O Christ, has worked wonders, for even the woman who was once a harlot chose to follow the ascetic way. Casting aside her weakness, bravely she opposed the devil; and having gained the prize of victory, she intercedes for our souls" (Vespers Sticheron).

Indeed, through repentance and of course, the power of the Sacred Cross, Saint Mary achieved the cleansing of her heart and the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in that heart, according to the words of David: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). "Right spirit in us, is not the one that gives us life, but the Spirit of God. This is 'within', namely in the very heart of the soul and wills to renew us" Isychios of Jerusalem interprets.

According to Origen, "at first the clean heart is formed, then immediately the Spirit is renewed within it".

Behold, therefore, why repentance is the renewal of baptism and an agreement with God for a new life. Let us hear Saint Paul saying: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:27-28). And in more detail, Christ will appear a second time, without carrying the sins of others. And He will appear then to those who are waiting for Him in hope and pain, in order to save them.

It is made clear that the source of repentance is humility, and the source of humility is the Life-giving Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. This path which leads to the source of humility, repentance and the power of the Life-giving Cross was followed and trod, both in words and actions, by today's honoured Saint Mary of Egypt, who became an example of the redeeming repentance. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24), Saint Paul preaches.

As for us, my dear Brethren, let us entreat the Mother of God along with the hymnographer and say: "All-pure Lady, who drivest off the assaults of the harsh calamity, give us help through thine intercessions" (Matins, Ode 3, Theotokion). And you, all-lauded Mary, as you stand in boldness before Christ, intercede for the salvation of our souls".

Many happy returns and blessed the remaining of Great Lent!"

After the Divine Liturgy, the good keeper of the Monastery Monk Hariton hosted a reception for His Beatitude, His Entourage and the congregation.

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY ON MOUNT TABOR

On Sunday 29 March/11 April 2021, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Lord on Mount Tabor, with the welcoming of the Hegoumen Archimandrite Ilarion and the Nuns under his obedience.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away on the ground, and wallowed foaming...And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:17-24).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

Today, on the fourth Sunday of the Great Lent, our Holy Church commemorates Saint John, the author of the Ladder and we read the Gospel narrative regarding the healing of a son, whose father asks for help for his disbelief. Moreover, Saint Mark, the Evangelist does not omit that Christ was preaching to His disciples, telling them that the Son of man will be “delivered into the hands of irreverent men, and they shall kill him; and after that, he is killed, he shall rise the third day” (Mark 9:31).

In His infinite mercy, Christ heals the “son who hath a dumb spirit”, meaning that He liberates him from the bondage and the tormenting captivity of the devil. “ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32) the Lord says. And we wonder, “what is the truth” (John 18:38). Christ is the truth, according to His own testimony: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). And how is the truth known? Through faith; What faith? That Christ is the Son of God (John 1:34), Who said, “I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matt. 9:13).

It was precisely to this faith to the Son of God, the faith which calls man to repentance, and which has the power to “make all things possible to those who believe” (Mark 9:23) that the father of the possessed son was called.

To the contradictory cry of the father, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24), the interpreters of this verse, Victor of Antioch and Cyril of Jerusalem distinguish two kinds of faith. Father Victor says: “if he believed, how did he say, help me in my disbelief? Faith is different. The first introductory, the second perfect. Beginning to believe, the father entreated the Lord Who had the power to add what was missing. Likewise, the disciples were saying to the Lord, “Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5).

And Cyril of Jerusalem says; “The name of faith is one, but divided into two. For there is one kind of faith, the

dogmatic, which has the consent of the soul; and it is beneficial to the soul, as the Lord says: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

The second kind of faith is that related to the grace which is granted by Christ. "For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:8-9). This faith, which is granted by the grace of the Spirit, is dogmatic and active for the sake of man. And the one who has this faith "shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matt. 17:20).

This faith "which is active for the sake of man" did today's honoured Saint John of the Ladder receive. According to Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, this faith, which is given by our Orthodox Church and established by the Holy Bible, is we called to acquire and keep, my dear brethren.

Our Holy Apostolic Church is guiding us to this faith, which is active and illumines the soul, through fasting, abstinence from the passions, repentance and prayer during the Great Lent, as Saint Paul says: "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. 6:16).

Let us entreat the Most Holy Theotokos that by Her intercessions and the supplications of our Holy Father John of the Ladder, we may be worthy to venerate the Holy Passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who was transfigured on Mount Tabor, and reach His Holy Resurrection. Amen! Many happy returns!"

From Secretariat-General

VISITS OF THE PATRIARCHATE FOR THE EASTER OF THE WESTERN CHURCHES

On Thursday, 26 March/ 8 April 2021, the Patriarchate visited the Western Churches on the occasion of Easter. The Hagiotaphite Brotherhood visited the Franciscan Fraternity in their Monastery the Custody of the Holy Land and the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

In the first visit, the Hegoumen of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed the Custos of the Holy Land Father Francesco Patton as follows:

“Your Paternity, dear Father Francesco,

Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

We greet you warmly, Your Paternity, and the members of your Brotherhood and all the communities that you serve as you keep the joyful feast of Easter. As we sing in our Orthodox tradition:

*Come, all who believe in Him, adore Christ's holy
resurrection.*

For, see through the Cross joy has come into the whole world.

Always blessing the Lord, we praise his resurrection.

For He suffered crucifixion and by death has killed death.

(Easter Canon, eighth Ode)

We are keeping the holiest season of the year this year, as those who have known the particular suffering of the pandemic that has so damaged the economic, social, and religious life of our communities, and that has robbed pilgrims from all over the world of the spiritual refreshment of the Holy Places. For us, this has been a season of trial and difficulty.

We have also experienced worsening attacks by radicals against the Christian presence in the Holy City of Jerusalem and in the region in general.

And so we greet the celebration of Easter this year with special joy, for we can see the possibility more clearly of a post-pandemic world.

As we congratulate you on your celebration of Easter, we look forward to our own celebration. Despite the fact that our Easter celebration does not coincide, for Jerusalem, it is important to maintain the festive spirit of Easter. For Jerusalem, where the very Tomb of Jesus Christ is located, is the true witness and has seen with her own eyes and heard with her own ears our sacred history.

We here in the Holy Land live a unique ecumenical spirit, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is a particular example of this, embracing as it does all our communities. In this regard, we wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank you for all that you do to continue and to deepen the path set by your predecessor to ensure the best possible cooperation between our communities and between all the Churches and Christian communities in the Holy Land.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is of universal significance.

As an important example, recently we had hoped to welcome His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, who desired to make a personal pilgrimage, and we hope that this visit may be re-scheduled soon and take place without hindrance. Here we see the universal mission of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the duty that lies on the shoulders of all of us to do all in our power to work for "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). In our common mission in the administration of the Holy Places, and especially of the Holy Sepulchre, our excellent and close relationships are of paramount importance; but we must never let go of the ultimate vocation of full and sacramental unity.

We wish you, dear Father Francesco, your Brotherhood, and the communities that you serve, the joy of this Easter Feast. MAY the light of the resurrection enlighten our hearts and minds so that Jerusalem may be a bright beacon of hope for all its inhabitants and all those who love it.

Christ is risen!

Thank you."

In the second visit, His Beatitude addressed the Latin Patriarch Pierre Battista Pizzaballa as follows:

"Your Beatitude, Dear Archbishop Pizzaballa,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers,

We greet you, with the Paschal greetings, dear Archbishop Pizzaballa, as you and your communities celebrate Easter. As the hymnographer says:

Come, all peoples, sing praise to Christ and worship Him:

Glorify His resurrection from the dead.

For He is our God, who has freed the universe from the enemy's deceit.

This is the second year in which our communities are keeping the holiest season in a pandemic, and while the situation is greatly improved for many in our region, the burden of the past year on our people has been great. Our local congregations have suffered terribly, both from the pestilential itself – that is to say, the virus – and from its economic and social consequences. As we all know, there have been no pilgrims for so much of this time, and restrictions on entry to the country are still strict. Many of our communities are still waiting to be vaccinated, and we are still a long way from a return to normal life. All of this is a terrible affliction for our people and a challenge to us.

In addition to the pandemic and its consequences, we have faced ongoing and increasingly worrying attacks by radicals against the Christian presence in the Holy Land.

But even in the face of all these challenges and difficulties, we have hope.

The relationships that we have built and developed over the years are so needed in order to help and protect our communities, the Holy Places, and of course, the special religious Character of Jerusalem. We firmly believe that this achievement is a positive step in furthering our cooperation to attain the full unity of the Churches, which is the will of our Lord Jesus Christ in his prayer to His Father, *that they may all be one* (John 17:21).

We cannot underestimate the crucial importance of this united effort, and we wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank you, Your Beatitude, for your sacrificial leadership and for your tireless work for the sake of Jerusalem. For we are aware of the pastoral challenges that you are facing. We

pray to our risen Lord to strengthen you and enlighten you with the light of the resurrection so that you will be able to bear your pastoral mission here in the Holy Land.

Christ is risen!

Thank you.”

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, 25 March/7 April 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Annunciation of our Most Holy Lady Theotokos in the city of Nazareth, at the holy shrine where this event took place.

On this feast, the whole Church and especially the Church of Jerusalem in joy and gratitude towards God, commemorates according to Saint Luke the Evangelist (Ch. 1:26-36), that Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to the Virgin Mary and announced that She was going to conceive by the Holy Spirit and bear in the flesh His Only Begotten Son. With Mariam's reply, "behold the maiden of the Lord, let it be done unto me according to Thy word", the Bodiless was made flesh, He became incarnate, for the sake of the rebirth, renovation and salvation of the humankind from the corruption of death.

This feast was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences:

Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Arab-speaking Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Simeon. The chanting was delivered by the choirs of Nazareth and Acre and the service was attended by as many faithful as possible within the covid-19 restrictions, and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day” (Psalm 95:1-2), Prophet-King David chants.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

“Today there is the true joy and gleefulness of the whole world,” Saint John Damascene says, praising the Annunciation to the Theotokos by Archangel Gabriel, in the holy place where the grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all to celebrate in Eucharist the annunciation of the “salvation of God”, the joyful message of the incarnation of God the Word by the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Mary in the city of Nazareth.

“Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (Luke 1:28) the Archangel Gabriel exclaimed. The interpreters of Evangelist Luke’s testimony on this say: “because God told Eve she was going to bear children in sorrows, Eva’s sorrow is dispelled through this joy”. “Through ‘Hail’, Christ came to dispel the sorrow”. “He called her ‘full of grace’, as she was granted the grace beyond logic”. And “because the snake brought Eve the sorrow, rejoice, because the Lord is with Thee”. “One should know that at the time of the annunciation the Virgin conceived

immediately paradoxically”.

This great and paradoxical mystery of the Virgin Mary’s conception is preached by Saint John the Theologian in his Gospel, saying: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1), and “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Interpreting these words, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: “The Evangelist appropriately said “and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). So, when you realise that this means two things, the dweller and the one in whom He dwells, then you will not think that He [the Word] was turned into flesh, but rather that He dwelt in the flesh, using His own body as a temple, which He received from the Holy Virgin. “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9), as Saint Paul says.

This theological truth is also testified by Saint John Damascene, referring to the Prophet Isaiah’s words: “Rejoice O Thou in whom dwelt in the flesh the One who told Isaiah: “I am God at first, and after these” (Isaiah 44:6 in Septuagint). Again, Saint John Damascene says: “We preach the Holy Virgin as Theotokos especially and truly...and we call her by that name. This name encompasses the whole mystery of the providence. For if the one who bears is Theotokos (Mother of God), perfect God is the One born from her and perfect man”.

The perfect God and perfect man Who was born from the Virgin is no other than the Son of God, as foretold by the Prophet Isaiah, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14). “Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day” (Psalm 95:2) the psalmist proclaims. And “the salvation of God the Father” is “the joy that has been announced to us with the Nativity of Jesus Christ” by the Virgin Mary.

The annunciation of this joy which is ceaseless until the end of time, and of the world, is the Church's confession of the unspeakable mystery of the hypostatic union of the divine with the human nature through the Holy Spirit, in Virgin Mary; "In this, without alteration union, we confess the Holy Virgin to be the Mother of God [Theotokos], for the fact that God the Word was made incarnate and became man through her conception, to unite Himself with the temple He received from her [the human body]", the established Holy Church Fathers teach.

This incomprehensible mystery of God the Word's incarnation by the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary refers to the whole humankind, as Saint Luke the Evangelist says, calling upon Prophet Isaiah: "And all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6, Isaiah 40:5).

Interpreting this verse, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "In these, the word 'flesh' refers to a perfect man, and this should be understood by all people. In this manner, every flesh shall see the salvation of God. Not only Israel but every flesh. For the Saviour and Lord of all, neither has His kindness within limits nor did He save only one nation; rather, He included everything under the sun". This very fact is chanted by David, Saint Cyril continues, by saying: "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name" (Psalm 86:9).

Through the Annunciation of Theotokos Mary "The Lord hath made known his salvation: His righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen" (Psalm 98:2). This knowledge of the salvation of the Lord and the revealing of His righteousness, through the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, is celebrated by the Church of Christ and especially the Church of the Martyrdom of the Cross and Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Christ. Therefore, along with Saint John Damascene, it says: "Rejoice, Thou who art full of grace, for none other than you has received by God such a name, nor has any other received such a glory".

“And prolong your mercy, Most Pure Lady, to those who know you, and look favourably upon your servants and the works of your hands, and guide everybody to the path of peace, for the eyes of all people are turned in hope to you, and we have received your conciliation and intercession to your Son and God, to who belongs all glory and the might, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit of the same nature, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.”

The Liturgy was followed by a procession and concluded with a meal by Metropolitan Kyriakos. There, His Beatitude addressed all present as follows:

“Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Your Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth,

Your Excellency President of the Church Council Mr Basim,

and reverend members,

Dear Associates,

The Feast of the Annunciation of the Ever-Virgin Theotokos Mary in this holy place announces to us people the infinite love and philanthropy of God.

The Holy Church of Jerusalem which was the first to receive this Annunciation of Archangel Gabriel’s joyous message: ““Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (Luke 1:28), is the true eye-and-ear witness of this universal and historic event which refers to the chapter of the salvation of the humankind.

This historic event of the Annunciation of the people’s salvation is testified throughout the centuries by the unceasing presence of the “noble remnant” (Romans 11:5) of Christians in the Holy Land and in Nazareth.

The Apostolic and Patriarchal institution of the Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of Churches, has become the natural and spiritual ark of the safeguarding and preservation of the Christian Rum Orthodox identity and tradition of old, for the noble remnant of Christians who live here. This is clearly depicted by the holy worship and liturgic work of our Church, where there is a strong projection of the God of love, philanthropy and infinite mercy. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another" (John 13:34). "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you" (Luke 6:22).

This redeeming word of God's love is evangelized to all of us today by the holy feast of the Annunciation of our Most-Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, "from whom Christ God, our Salvation hath assumed our nature, restoring it to Himself" (Vespers Glory; both now, end of service). Therefore, let us exclaim to the Theotokos; Rejoice, O Thou who art full of grace, the Lord is with Thee".

Many happy returns and Happy Easter!

Finally, we warmly thank all of you, especially His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and His Excellency, the President of the Church Council, Mr Basim, and the Council members, for the Abrahamic spiritual and material hospitality offered to Us, the hospitality of love, peace and synergy. Amen."

For this feast, the Divine Liturgy was also celebrated at the Holy Shrine of the Theotokos' Tomb in Gethsemane, by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, and at the Holy Church of the Annunciation in the town Rafeidia, near Jacob's well, led by the Hegoumen of the community, Archimandrite

Leontios.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE ADORATION OF THE PRECIOUS AND LIFE-GIVING CROSS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday 22 March/4 April 2021, the 3rd Sunday of the Great Lent, the whole Church and especially the Patriarchate of Jerusalem celebrated the Feast of the Veneration of the Precious Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Church has instituted this feast in the middle of fasting so that with the Holy Cross's adoration, the faithful are strengthened in their struggle towards the reception of Holy Easter. Due to this fact, this Sunday is known as the Sunday of the Adoration of the Cross.

The Feast was celebrated by the Patriarchate with Great Vespers on Saturday afternoon, according to the Status Quo order of "Parresias", led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-prayer of Archbishops and the co-celebration of Hieromonks and Hierodeacons, as the chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon.

On Sunday morning the Feast was celebrated as "Parresia" according to the Status Quo, however, the time was shifted to 10.30 a.m. this year, due to the celebration of Easter by the Roman Catholic Church.

The Divine Liturgy was officiated at the Holy Sepulchre by

H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with their Eminences' co-celebration; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia, Demetrios of Lydda and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, and Deacons. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Gotsopoulos, as the Service was attended by faithful Christians and His Excellency the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a procession, three times around the Sacred Edicule and then around the Shrines. The feast concluded with the return to the Patriarchate Reception Hall, where His Beatitude addressed those present as follows:

“The Cross is a trophy of Christ; It always drives away the demons. Where are the idols and the futile killings of animals? Where are the temples and the fire of irreverence? All fire was extinguished and everything collapsed due to one Holy Blood. Therefore, the Cross is a mighty power, an invisible arrow, an immaterial medicine, a source of healing any pain, an embarrassing glory”, Saint John Damascene says.

Today, on the 3rd Sunday of Lent, we celebrate the Adoration of the Precious and Life-giving Cross, therefore with the order of “Parresia”, we celebrated the bloodless sacrifice at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the very place of the Crucifixion and Resurrection of our Saviour Christ.

“Today the word of the Prophet is fulfilled: for seeing we worship at the place on which Thy feet have stood, O Lord: and tasting from the Tree of salvation, we have been delivered from our sinful passions at the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Thou who alone lovest mankind” (Triodion, 3rd Sunday, Matins, Ode 3, Kathisma 1).

Indeed, the Cross of Christ, as the tree of salvation, became the mighty power through which God the Father granted us the freedom in Christ. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1), Saint Paul orders.

Through the Cross, we were liberated from "the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:21). For this reason, the hymnographer says that as You were willingly hung on the Cross, Christ, for my sake, do not renounce me from adoption, but grant me forgiveness of my transgressions through Your Cross.

The Precious Cross, or the icon of the Cross, is not just a simple symbol of the Christian faith, but rather the incarnation of the Divine righteousness, namely God's conciliation with all creation on the one hand; on the other, it is the pacification through Christ's Blood on the Cross, either between the people and God, and of the people with each other, or between the people and the heavenly hosts, as Saint Paul preaches: "And, having made peace through the blood of his [Christ's] cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. 1:20).

Behold why our Holy Church, projects today in the middle of Great Lent, the joyous adoration of the Life-giving Cross.

As for us, let us say along with the hymnographer: "We mortals who died of old, through eating from the tree, are through Thy Cross restored to life, O merciful Lord. By its power, O loving Master, give us strength to pass through the season of abstinence with compunction, obedient to Thy will, and to see the day of Thy light-giving Resurrection" (Triodion, Friday of the 3rd week, Matins, Kathisma 1).

Many happy returns and Happy Easter!"

THE NAMEDAY OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III

On Saturday 14/27 March 2021, the Name Day of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III was celebrated by transference as “Parresia” (Boldness) according to the Status Quo at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

In the afternoon of the previous day, after the reading of the ninth Hour at the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, the Patriarchal Entourage marched in Procession to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where Vespers was officiated in the Catholicon by His Beatitude, with Hagiotaphite Archbishops praying inside the Altar and the co-celebration of the Service was held by Hagiotaphite Hieromonks.

On Feast Day, the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom was officiated by His Beatitude at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences; Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Archbishops; Damascene of Yaffo, Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia, Demetrios of Lydda, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis and Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Archdeacon Mark and other Deacons. The chanting was delivered by the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod Hierodeacon Simeon, the

Patriarchal Representative in Acre-Ptolemais Reverend Archimandrite Philotheos and Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras, Monks, Nuns and members of the Greek Community of the Patriarchate's flock.

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a Doxology for the commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs and the event of the celebration of His Beatitude's Name Day.

The Doxology was followed by the return to the Patriarchate Headquarters, where Geronda Secretary-General addressed His Beatitude as follows:

"Your Beatitude Father and Master,

The commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs, who confessed the Name of Christ and were brutally tortured, suffering martyrdom at the glacier of the lake Sabastia of Pontus during the reign of Licinious in AD 320, projects the 9th March as a bright station of spiritual supply of courage and hope for the faithful, in order to continue the fasting and every other virtue in their course towards the experience of the Holy Pascha.

These Martyrs, who fought well and received the crown of victory are festively honoured by the whole Church today because they considered death as nought, and through death, they exchanged the earthly life with the unending eternal one. "They lost their souls, their lives for the sake of Christ and found it again in Him" (Matt. 10:39). They are more festively celebrated by the Mother of Churches and the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood because Your Beatitude bears the name of one of them. Honouring these Saints today, and as a Martyr, the Church of Jerusalem offers its deep respect to Your Beatitude, the owned honour and the monastic and Hagiotaphite obedience in Christ. Following the Status Quo, we celebrated the Divine Eucharist with a Doxology at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre,

the Body and Blood of Christ were united, and by this power, there was intercession for the unity of faith and the communion in Christ in its bosom and among the Orthodox Churches of God. We firstly prayed for the health and stability of our Father and Shepherd. We asked God that He may "grant Your Beatitude to the holy Churches in peace, sound, righteous, healthy, in long life and keep the word of truth right".

By the dwelling in us of the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth from the divine Eucharist, we truly address Your Beatitude in this historic hall of the Patriarchate, remembering all things of good fame, zeal and tireless Pastoral care You have accomplished for our Patriarchate.

Initially, it is mentioned that Your Beatitude has made every effort so that the holy Shrines, which suffer unprecedented consequences in their long history due to the lack of pilgrims within the covid-19 pandemic, still function as places of worship with the keeping of all Liturgical Services according to the Status Quo, with few or more Monks, Nuns or local faithful Christians, after the agreement with the Health Authorities of each area of the Patriarchate's jurisdiction.

The unavoidably influenced by the pandemic spiritual and administrative communication has been conducted through the internet with the well-known by now "zoom", either for the resumption of the dialogue to strengthen the unity between the Orthodox Churches, or for the activation of issues of participation of the Patriarchate at the World Council of Churches or the Middle East Council of Churches, or for the meetings of the Heads of the Christian Churches in Jerusalem under the care of the Patriarchate, or for the operation of the Synodical institution, enabling thus the participation of the members of the Holy and Sacred Synod who live in Greece and Jordan.

As far as the financial issue is concerned, yes, there have

been delays in the payment of the monthly blessing of the Hagiotaphite Fathers, the clergy and teachers' salaries, as well as of other employees of the Patriarchate, mainly due to the pandemic, resulting in difficulties of money transactions by the banks, however, there have not in any case been any pay cuts nor layoffs. Relevant to this, we should mention in gratitude that the granted financial aid to Monks and Clergy by the Greek General Consulate in Jerusalem, through a noble source a few months ago, came like the dew of Hermon in the existing financial draught.

For the needs of the Holy Churches of our Rum-Orthodox Arab-speaking flock, our Patriarchate responded through the aid of donors, as in the case of the iconostasis and the icons of the Holy Church of Saints Constantine and Helen in Kufr Smea and of the Holy Church of the Dormition in Sahnin Community of Acre-Ptolemais area in northern Israel.

The care and persistence You showed from the beginning for the securing of the real estate of the Patriarchate continued with the recent payment of City Hall tax, known as "arnona" of 2.000.000 Nis, for the securing of Petra hotel by Jaffa Gate, which has unjustly been involved in the opaque illegal and catastrophic for the finances of the Patriarchate agreement of 2003.

All these, Your Beatitude, are recalled, not for boasting and rest, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14), but in order to strengthen the mindset of hope and cooperation among us as members of the honoured venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, and our cooperation, the members, with our Spiritual Head of Yours, as our Hegoumen, so that we may find ourselves keeping the advice of Saint Basil the Great, "to have the love of one another in our nature" and "to prefer the social and united than the schismatic and peculiar" (Speech 8, EPE 4, p.328). Acting thus, behaving thus, living thus, we become worthy and

continuator of our ancestors who spent their lives in fights, deprivations and sacrifices in order to sustain Orthodoxy and the inheritance of the nation of the Byzantine Romans in the Holy Land, who also contributed in the liberation of our nation from the bitter slavery of the four hundred years, of which we celebrate the 200th anniversary.

Raising my glass to toast, Your Beatitude Father and Master, I wish You on behalf of the Brotherhood and the Holy and Sacred Synod, many happy returns, in peace, joy, stability, in full governmental power of the Holy Spirit, in order to guide the vessel of the Church of Jerusalem and of the Brotherhood enlightened by the good works of the Gospel, to harbours of fair life and of salvation, for the praise of our blessed nation and the glory of our God in one Trinity. So be it.”

After His Eminence, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras addressed His Beatitude as follows:

“Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences,

Reverend Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today’s celebration has special importance for all of us, the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and the pious flock, among them those serving in the Consulate General of Greece, as we honour the name day of the Primate of the Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of Churches, His Holy Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III.

It is a great pleasure for me to attend this celebration for the first time since taking office in Jerusalem.

Your Beatitude, on this occasion, allow me, on behalf of the Greek State, to express to you the respect, love and gratitude

of Greece for Your great pastoral work, for the important and national work of preserving and promoting the Holy Shrines to the Holy Land and for the defence and promotion of the universal values of Orthodoxy in it.

Through a series of Your initiatives, You have been promoting the restoration and promotion of the Holy Shrines of Christianity, while taking care of the maintenance of the Status Quo in the Holy Land and the spiritual guidance and prosperity of a flock that is undergoing significant trials.

Your devotion to these sacred duties, Your dedication to this multidimensional work, Your tireless efforts, Your insight and integrity, with which You carry out Your high mission, are recognized by all, establishing the Patriarchate of Jerusalem as a leading factor of peace, reconciliation and moderation, in a troubled region that still faces great challenges and where many declare their desire for a peaceful future, but few work honestly and effectively to achieve it.

The sincere disposition of concert, reconciliation, and tranquillity that You display and systematically cultivate, not only in Your relations with other doctrines and other religions, in the particular environment of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, but also in the context of the wider effort of reconciliation and peace-making in this multi-tested area, steels the moral stature and prestige of our Patriarchate, making it a factor of moderation and stability, in an era of liquidity, instability and reorganization that seem to favour fanaticism, intolerance and controversy.

It is certain that the Holy Institution draws strength from the long history and tradition, from the unity, the deep faith and devotion of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and from its leadership, which with conscious knowledge and perception of the circumstances, with vigour and determination, cares for the present and its future.

Let me address to You our most sincere and heartfelt wishes for health, longevity and support from the Lord so that You can continue to carry out Your high mission.

I would also like to assure You and the members of the Brotherhood that our solidarity and support to our Patriarchate, to the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and to You personally is and remains complete and essential, and to express our recognition and admiration for the significant work performed here, as well as for the devotion of the Members of the Brotherhood for the protection, with zeal and self-denial, of the Holy Shrines, which we encounter in all our visits here and which is particularly moving, especially when it is encountered in the aftermath of the current infectious disease. On this occasion, let me express our gratitude for the unparalleled hospitality we have received during our visits here.

Your Beatitude,

The great contribution of the Patriarchate and You personally to Orthodoxy and Hellenism, as a long-term custodian of a valuable religious and historical tradition, is widely known. Therefore, for Greece, the defence of the Institution of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, its rights and entitlements, is a very important priority, as recently emphasized by His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs of our country, Mr Nikolaos Dendias.

The Greek State and the Greek faithful surround with love and devotion Your work and the work of the Holy Fathers and we pray that You may have health, strength, and longevity for the good of the Patriarchate, the Brotherhood, Your Rum Orthodox Flock, the uninterrupted Orthodox Matyria (testimony) in the Holy Land and for the peace in the area.

Many happy and blessed returns!"

His Beatitude thanked all who addressed Him with the

following:

“We are not going to admire only one, not even only two...but forty men, who have shown one soul in separate bodies, in one accord and unity of faith, one endurance in the sufferings and boldness for the truth,” Saint Basil says, praising the Forty Martyrs.

Your Excellency, Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

“O Lord of hosts, who is like unto Thee? Mighty art Thou, O Lord, and Thy truth is round about Thee” (Psalm 88:8) the Holy Church of Christ cries out loud through the psalmist, on the sacred commemoration of the godly chorea of the Holy Forty Martyrs, who suffered their martyrdom in the city of Sebastia.

These Forty Martyrs, as if having one soul in separate bodies, “courageously entered the water of the lake, and while being contracted by the cold, sent up a song unto the Lord: Be not wroth with us in the rivers O Lord; be not wroth with us in the rivers O Friend of man. Lighten the burden and the bitterness of the air; for with our own blood have our feet been dyed, and Thou, O God, hast led us into Thine everlasting tabernacles, that the bosom of the Patriarch Abraham may warm us” (Minaion, March 9, Matins, Praises Troparion of 2nd Tone), their hymnographer exclaims.

The Holy Forty Martyrs said to the Lord as if having one mouth, “with our own blood have our feet been dyed”, following the true witness of Saint John the Theologian: “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). In this faith in Christ did the holy Martyrs see the true light, “the peace of God, which

passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7) and the "unspeakable joy" (1 Peter 1:8), for these, they zealously sought the cleansing of their sins through their martyrs' blood.

Today's celebrated commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs and especially of their co-martyr Theophilos, as Our Mediocrity bears his name, is a blessed action by God. And this, because the Martyrs who turned the earth into heaven, became luminaries of the universe, namely preachers of the Passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on the Cross, and His Resurrection, saying along with Saint Paul: "in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (Phil. 1:20).

This distinctive characteristic is noted by Saint Basil the Great, by saying that the Holy Forty Martyrs "have shown one accord and unity of faith, one endurance in the sufferings and boldness for the truth".

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem, as an eye-and-ear witness of the death on the Cross and the three-day burial and Resurrection of our Lord, honouring the sacred commemoration of the Holy athletes and Martyrs, and especially of their co-martyr Theophilos, held the "mystical blessing", that is the great Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, officiated by Our Mediocrity, surrounded by the members of our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, Archbishops, Priests and Hierodeacons, with the participation in prayer of noble Christians of our flock, glorifying thus the One who has glorified His Saints.

Moreover, we offered a Doxology to the Holy God in one Trinity for Our name day, with the celebration of the Holy athlete and Martyr Theophilos. "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:20), Saint Paul orders.

The celebrated commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs and especially of their co-martyr Theophilus in the liturgic time of the Church, does not only refer to Our Mediocrity, but especially and primarily to the Apostolic Patriarchal institution, through which it is shown that Christ "is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:17-18), "which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). The Holy Forty Martyrs became communicants and shared this very blood, the blood of Christ.

Amidst the current test of humanity by the deadly Corona disease, the honoured Holy Forty Martyrs "speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (1 Cor. 14:3). And this, because according to Saint Basil, "they are common guardians of the humankind, benign, care participants, prayer accomplices, mighty strong ambassadors, stars of the universe, flowers of the Churches". "Theirs is the voice; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place" (Psalm 66:12).

The Holy Martyrs again talk to us about "the one mind and unity of the faith", namely the unity of the local Orthodox Churches. "There was not one homeland for the Saints", Saint Basil says, "for each one retreated to a different place... As for their human nation, it was different for each of them, while the spiritual [nation] was one for all. For their common Father is God, and all are brethren, not born from one man and one woman, but from the adoption of the Spirit they have been interlocked in the concord of love with one another". In other words, theirs is the voice, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

To this calling of the testimony of unity, peace and the love of the Gospel of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ we are called, my dear brethren, especially during this blessed period of the Great Lent, having the Holy Forty Martyrs

helpers, along with their co-martyr Theophilos, and the Most Blessed Mother of God, the Ever-Virgin Mary. Let us entreat them, that in peace, humility and repentance, we may be granted the luminous Resurrection of our God and Saviour of our souls.

For these, we call upon all who prayed along with Us, and honoured Us in this commemoration of the Saints, to have strength from on high, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the grace of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb, patience, and every blessing from God, expressing also warm thanks to all who addressed Us; Geronda Secretary-General, Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, who spoke on behalf of the members of the Holy and Sacred Synod and the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras, Reverend Archimandrite Alexander, representative of the Brotherly Church of Russia, who read the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril, His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Nazareth, His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Yaffo, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Yaffo, His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, who spoke on behalf of the newly-established Beersheba Community, Reverend Father Farah Bandour, who spoke on behalf of Saint James' Cathedral, Reverend Archimandrite Philotheos, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Acre-Ptolemais, Reverend Archimandrite Niphon, on behalf of the Community of Remla, and all who attended this celebration.

To the health of all of you!"

From Secretariat-General