

H.H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY AT THE H. MONASTERY OF SAINT ONUPHRIUS

On Sunday, October 5/18, 2020, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Monastery of Saint Onuphrius, which is located opposite Siloam's pool, where the man who was born blind was sent by the Lord to wash his eyes and recover his vision. It is built on the rocky area with the carved rocks at the Potter's Field, which the Pharisees bought in order to bury the foreigners, with the thirty pieces of silver that Judas returned to them having regretted his betrayal.

The Patriarchate owns a Monastery there, dedicated to our Righteous Father Onuphrius the Egyptian.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, and the Archimandrites: Elder Dragoman Mattheos, Kallistos, the Hegoumen of the H. Monastery of Saint Charalambos, along with Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos and the Patriarchal School Students.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to the few Nuns and faithful who attended the service due to the COVID-19 restrictive measures:

“But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil” (Luke 6:35), the Lord says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The grace of the All-holy Spirit which was sent to the Holy Martyr Charitini has gathered us all in the Holy place, in order to celebrate the Great Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist on her commemoration.

The special characteristic of the Saints, and of course of the Martyrs of the Church is the Divine love, namely the love for Christ, which [love] made us sons and daughters of the Most-High.

“God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16). “We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:14-15) Saint John the Evangelist preaches.

Interpreting Saint John’s words, Saint Basil the Great says: “if God is love, it is absolutely necessary for hatred to belong to the devil. For as the one who has love has also God, likewise, the one who has hatred, feeds the devil in him”.

The infinite philanthropy of God, namely the infinite power of His love, was revealed in the mystery of the Divine Providence, with the Incarnation of the Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. And Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross for our sins is “the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge” (Eph. 3:19). Christ, Who, “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” Saint Paul preaches (Phil. 2:7-8).

In other words, God the Word was made human and suffered death on the Cross, in order to make powerless the one who had the power and the might of death, namely the devil, “that through

death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14), Saint Paul says. The devil is the enemy of every righteousness (Acts 13:10), and therefore the Father of resentment and the primary enemy of God's love. According to Saint John of the Ladder, resentment means among other things: hatred of righteousness, the poison of the soul, alienation of love, and a thorn pierced in the soul.

Behold therefore why the Lord commands: "But I say unto you which hear; love your enemies, do good to them which hate you" (Luke 6:27). Paying heed to the Lord's words, Saint Paul composed the hymn of love, which he placed above all knowledge and every degree of faith. "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing" (1 Cor. 13:2).

Saint Paul, who was "caught up to the third heaven" (2 Cor. 12:2), praises the steadfast bond between love and truth by saying: "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Cor. 13:6).

And to make it clearer, love does not rejoice in something unrighteous but rejoices when the truth prevails. In this case, "truth" is Christ, the Son and Word of God, Who proclaimed "I am the truth" (John 14:6). According to Saint John the Evangelist's testimony, "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16).

The love that was revealed in the mystery of the Divine Providence is, in itself, the mystery of God the Father. For this reason, love for others, and especially for our enemies, is not a virtue, but "the result of nature" as the interpreter Zigavinos says: "It is not a virtue for someone with love to love, but a result of nature". And according to Saint Anthony the Great, "life and death are from our neighbour", meaning that we will have life or death, depending on the way we

behave towards our neighbour, our fellow man.

Christ's love made today's honoured Saint Charitini, an adornment of the Martyrs, as the melodist of the Church says: "Loving the gladness of the things of the spirit and spurning all things seen, since they are inconstant, O maid, thou didst secure thy mind with godly hopes. Hence, thou rannest froth with joy, to the contest, O Martyr, fighting in the stadium, where thou slew the serpent; and thou didst plait a most majestic crown, O Charitini, adornment of martyred Saints" (Matins, Sessional hymn tone four).

As for us, my dear Brethren, let us entreat the God of Love to make us steadfast in His Love, paying heed to Saint Paul's advice: "Be ye, therefore, followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour"(Eph. 5:1-2). Amen. Many happy returns".

After the Divine Liturgy, the good keeper and renovator of the Monastery Reverend Abbess Paissia offered a hospitable reception.

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY AT THE PATRIARCHAL SCHOOL OF ZION

On Sunday, September 28 / October 11, 2020, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Holy Trinity on the hill of Zion, on the commemoration of Saint Chariton the Confessor and introducer of the monastic life, and of Saint Isaac the Syriac. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences; Metropolitans Isychios of Kapitolias and Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Managing Director of the School, Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, Archimandrite Dionysios and Hierodeacon Simeon. The chanting was delivered by Mr Gotsopoulos.

This Church was built by the Vice Sacristan of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Archimandrite Gerasimos between the years 1905-1911, and this is where the Patriarchal School is housed since 1970. The School operates as Highschool and Lyceum, following the program of the Ministry of Education of Greece, and the leaving certificate from it offers the graduates entrance to the Universities of Greece without taking the introductory examinations. At present, thirteen students study here, preparing by their free will to join the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, and serve the All-holy Shrines in the Holy Land, after their graduation.

After the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude held the Blessing of water, in order to bless the New School Year 2020-2021, and before the teachers, the school students, and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evaggelos Vlioras delivered the following Sermon:

“When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying; Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken...And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed him” (Luke 5:8-11).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Beloved Students of the Patriarchal School

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all today in this sacred place of the Holy Zion, at the Monastery of the Holy Trinity, where the Patriarchal School is based, in order to offer the Trinitarian God the bloodless sacrifice in Doxology; and entreat in prayer our Lord God to send down to us the sanctification and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

“And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men” (Luke 5: 10). Through these words, “Christ replaced the natural fishing with the noetic one”, Zigavinos says.

This noetic, or spiritual fishing which Christ bestowed to the Apostles is no other than the fishing which is accomplished by the enlightening power of the mind’s abilities. In other words, the Disciples were taught about this spiritual fishing by Christ. That is why Christ is called a Teacher, while the Apostles are called Disciples. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples” (John 13:35). And elsewhere; “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:19-20).

It is clear that studentship, namely, the education, is the armour and the weapons of God’s light (Eph. 6:11, Romans

13:12). Therefore, Saint Paul advises Timothy, his disciple thus: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:14-15).

The holy scriptures to which Saint Paul refers, are those written in the Holy Bible, which entail the enlightening and redeeming truth of God, as it has been revealed to men by the Holy Prophets and Apostles. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free", the Lord says (John 8:32). And we wonder, what (or Who) is this truth? In this occasion, the truth is the incarnate God the Word, Christ, who said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

This truth, the righteousness that lives unto the ages, is being preached and evangelized to the world by the Holy Church of Christ; "He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth forever" (2 Cor. 9:9, Psalm 111:9). This truth of the Crucified and Resurrected Christ is witnessed and ministered by the Church of Jerusalem.

"Lay hold of instruction, lest at any time the Lord be angry and ye perish from the righteous way" (Psalm 2:12). "Goodness and discipline and knowledge teach Thou me, for in Thy commandments have I believed" (Psalm 118:66). And in more detail: teach me the common sense and the science to distinguish good from evil, namely, give me the ability of knowledge and discernment, the psalmist says. Behold, therefore, why Saint Paul preaches: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Needless to say that not only the God-inspired Scriptures, but also the discreet use of the Greek philosophy may contribute

so that "God's man be perfect and healthy" according to Saint Basil the Great, and especially according to the Holy Martyr and Philosopher Justine, who held the opinion that the seeds of the Word made the Gentile Philosophers able to "behold the beings dimly" and teach "seeds of truth", and he adds: "For those things said [by the Gentile Philosophers] well, [they] belong to us Christians".

And those "things said well" by the Gentile Philosophers, refer to the divine wisdom from above. "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17).

My dear Brethren and beloved students, the Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, known as the Order of the Studious Ones, according to Saint Paul's words: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19), has never ceased caring for the education in Christ of its flock's children, all over its jurisdiction. On the contrary, it has always striven for the education of its future force, namely of its new members, the graduates of this Patriarchal School, according to the command written in the Bible: "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction" (Proverbs 3:11) and "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding" (Proverbs 3:13).

Concluding, We wish that the grace of the Holy Spirit which came down from heaven like tongues of fire and sat upon the Holy Apostles and Disciples of Christ at the Upper Room of the Holy Zion, may enlighten your minds and guide your education to every good work, by the intercessions of our Most-Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and of all the Saints. Amen."

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HONOURED CROSS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

THE FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HONOURED CROSS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, September 14/27, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the Universal Exaltation of the Sacred Cross.

On this Feast, the Church commemorates the event that took place after the completion of the construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (326-336 A.D.) and after the Consecration Ceremony, on 13th September of the year 336 A.D., when St. Helen and Archbishop Makarios of Jerusalem exalted the Sacred Cross at the place of the Horrendous Golgotha. This was done for the crowds to see the Cross, who cried out "Lord have mercy" many times. Ever since this event has remained in our tradition, festively celebrated on 14th September every year.

For this commemoration, Great Vespers and the blessing of bread were held in the afternoon at the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection, after the welcoming and the veneration at the shrine of the Holy Deposition, at the Holy Sepulchre and the veneration at the Horrendous Golgotha by the members of the Holy Synod. This was followed by the incense procedure, and all preordained rituals according to the Typikon order and the Status Quo. The service was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the Hagiotaphite Fathers co-celebrating.

On Sunday, the main Feast day, the Divine Liturgy was held at

the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theohilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias and their Eminences the Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia, Philoumenos of Pella, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis and His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba. The chanting was delivered by the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod Hierodeacon Simeon on the right, and Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos on the left, as the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, and members of the Greek Consulate, along with only a few faithful due to COVID-19.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a Procession from the Catholicon through the Deposition area, down to the area of the Finding of the Sacred Cross, where the Exaltation service was held, while the Priests and the faithful were standing at the Armenian chapel of St. Helen, despite the irrational reactions of the Armenians which were against the Status Quo. From there the Procession continued left in front of the "Touch me not" shrine, marched three times around the Holy Sepulchre, and concluded up in the Horrendous Golgotha. There the Exaltation service of the Sacred Cross was held once more by His Beatitude, who held the Cross from the Holy Altar to the four points of the horizon.

Through this action, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was exalted on the Cross, was worshipped, and the commemoration of the first exaltation of the Sacred Cross by St. Helen was held. The second exaltation was held by Emperor Heraklios (629 A.D.). With these services, our senses and all universe were sanctified against the COVID-19 plague and every other opposing insult.

The return to the Patriarchate Headquarters followed, where His Beatitude addressed those present at the Reception Hall as follows;

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God”(1 Cor. 1:18). And in more detail, the preaching of the Cross seems to be foolishness to those who walk in the path of peril. However, to us who walk on the path of salvation, it is the power of God, St. Paul preaches.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras

Reverend Fathers and Brothers

Noble Christians

Today our Holy Orthodox Church celebrates the universal exaltation of the Holy and Life-giving Cross. Therefore, our Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood – despite the restrictive measures against COVID-19 – came down to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where in Parresia (boldness) we celebrated the Sacrament of the Eucharist and the ceremony of the Exaltation of the Sacred Cross, at the holy place of Its finding by St. Helen and at the Horrendous Golgotha, the place where It stood and where our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified.

Referring to the high theological significance of the Cross, St. John Damascene says: “Every action and miracle of Christ is great and wondrous, but nothing is more wondrous than His Sacred Cross. Death has been abolished by nothing else, the forefather’s sin was redeemed, Hades was put to shame, the resurrection was granted, we were given the power to defy the present and even the very death, our return to the ancient beatitude was given, the gates of heaven were opened, our nature sat at the right hand of God, we became children and heirs of God through nothing else but the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Everything has been accomplished through the Cross...Behold, Christ’s death, namely the Cross, has shielded us with the substantial wisdom and power of God”.

Indeed, as the means of Christ’s death, the Cross has surrounded us with the substantial power and wisdom of God, as

it is written in the Book of Proverbs of Solomon "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom... She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her"(Proverbs 3:13, 18). And this tree of life is no other than the wood of life in the centre of Paradise, which can distinguish between good and evil (Gen. 2:9, 3:22).

The special honour given to the Sacred Cross by our Holy Church is clearly expressed by St. John Damascene: "This Sacred Cross was prototyped by the wood of life in Paradise, which was planted by God; from this wood, death came, and it was through the wood that life and resurrection should be granted".

In other words, the crucified Christ is the wood of life, namely the very Sacred Cross Itself, through which those who preach Christ crucified become communicants and participants of the power and wisdom of God, according to St. Paul: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God"(1 Cor. 1:23-24).

And God's power and wisdom, namely Christ, God the Word, the Saviour of the world, is the One who was made incarnate through the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Theotokos Mary through the Holy Spirit, as the hymnographer of the Church St. Cosmas theologically phrases: "O Theotokos, thou art a mystical paradise, which being untitled hath blossomed forth Christ, by Whom the life-bringing Tree of the Cross was planted in the earth. In worshipping Him now through its exaltation, thee do we magnify" (Katavasiae of the Cross, ode 9).

Through the exaltation of the Cross, therefore today, and "now", we, my dear brethren, venerate and glorify Christ Himself, Who was sacrificed on the Cross, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a

peculiar people, zealous of good works”(Titus 2:14). Amen.
Many happy returns!”

From Secretariat-General

COMMEMORATION OF THE BEHEADING OF THE HOLY FORERUNNER AND BAPTIST JOHN AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday, August 29/ September 11, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Beheading of St. John the Forerunner and Baptist.

On this day the Church, and especially the Church of Jerusalem where the Holy Forerunner lived, commemorates the Gospel narrative according to Saint Matthew 14: 1, 12, Mark 6: 16-17, and Luke 9:9, saying that Herod the tetrarch was scorned by John because he had a relationship with his brother Philip’s wife Herodias...he imprisoned John...in order to kill him; and when Herod celebrated his birthday, Herodias’ daughter danced for him, Herod liked this and promised to give her whatever she might ask of him, even the half of his kingdom. Following her mother’s advice, she asked John’s head on a plate; Herod was very sad but for his promise granted her wish, sent a guard, and beheaded John and offered her his head on a plate.

For this reason, the mourning hymns of the Church read among other words; “O loathsome banquet, full of desecration and

abominable murder!"(Vespers troparion1).

The Patriarchate honoured this event at ancient Sabastia, the area of St. John's prison, where there are the ruins of Churches from the time of Byzantium and of the Crusades.

There, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos participated in the prayer, and delivered the following Sermon:

"For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee"(Matt. 11:10). "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he"(Matt. 11:11) the Lord says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The grace of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist John has gathered us today by the ruins of this Holy Byzantine Church with his Tomb, in order to glorify in Eucharist the Sacred commemoration of his Beheading in Sebastia, the great city of old.

According to the witness of historian Josephus, the place of the imprisonment and beheading of John the Baptist by Herod the tetrarch of Galilee, is Machairus (Jud. Anc. 18,52), a mountain fortress east of the Dead Sea in present-day Jordan. And the body of John, according to the testimony of the Evangelist, was transported and placed by his disciples in a monument in Sebastia. "And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb"(Mark 6:29).

The Holy Forerunner holds a prominent place in the biblical history of human salvation. This is made evident by the fact

that Jesus Christ Himself stresses the character and the preaching of repentance of St. John on the one hand, and on the other, He calls him to baptize Him by the river Jordan. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him"(Matt. 3:13).

Moreover, John was called a prophet by the Messiah Jesus Christ. "But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet"(Luke 7:26). This is also the testimony of our Church which sings: "The memory of the just is celebrated with hymns of praise, but he Lord's testimony is sufficient for thee, O Forerunner; for thou hast proved to be truly even more venerable than the Prophets since thou wast granted to baptize in the running waters Him Whom they proclaimed. Wherefore, having contested for the truth, thou didst rejoice to announce the good tidings even to those in Hades: that God hath appeared in the flesh, taking away the sin of the world and granting us great mercy"(Aplytikion).

The Holy Forerunner did not only baptize "God [Who] hath appeared in the flesh", our Lord Jesus Christ, but also preached the good news about Him, as St. John the Evangelist testifies: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me"(John 1:29-30).

Saint John the Baptist is recognized as the last person of the Law, and of the Prophets, and also as the inaugurator of the New Testament era, as St. Luke the Evangelist says: "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it"(Luke 16:16). Interpreting these words, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "He calls Kingdom of Heaven, in this case, the justification of faith, the washing away of sin...the sanctification of the Holy Spirit...the gift of adoption, the hope of glory which is to be given to the saints". As for the

question, "how is the Kingdom of God being preached?" St. Cyril replies by saying: "When (the Lord) had passed by, the Baptist among the people said "prepare the way of the Lord" and pointed at the already present Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world".

Having been proclaimed to be the preacher of repentance, of the washing away of sin, of the righteousness in faith and of the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, since the time he was in his mother's womb, John could simply not ignore the illegal relationship of Herod Antipas with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, who was still alive. "For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not"(Mark 6:18-19). Herodias' murderous hatred convinced Herod to kill righteous John by beheading.

And St. Gregory Palamas, explaining the reason for John's beheading says: "[The Forerunner] was beheaded while striving for virtue, so that we also may be ready to oppose sin to the point of death, knowing that the one who defeats the passions with virtue, will receive the crown of martyrdom."

Moreover, our Holy Father Gregory recognizes the foretelling of Christ's death in the martyr's death John suffered, and says: "...even in the manner of his death, should [John] be the forerunner of Christ's death, so that according to his father's prophesy "for you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways, , to give knowledge of salvation to His people...to give light to those who sit in the darkness and in the shadow of death"(Luke 1:76, 79) so that they may also follow Him and receive the blessed and eternal life in Christ".

As for us, my dear Brethren, let us say along with the hymn writer, "As Martyr, Prophet, and Baptist, as the voice and lamp of the messenger, and as the greatest of Prophets according to the very testimony of God, O Forerunner, beseech

the Lord that they who keep thy light-bearing memorial with longing be delivered from all temptations and the harm of the adversary”(Matins, ode 9, second canon, Troparion 3). Amen.”

At the deserted Basilica, above the underground chapel, the Divine Liturgy was held by the Hegoumen of Jacob’s well Archimandrite Ioustinos with a few other Priests, Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos, Priest Touma from Zababde, Archimandrite Leontios, who also chanted along with the members of Rafidia choir. Quite a few faithful Christians attended the Service despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday, August 15/28, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God. This Feast was celebrated at the Shrine of the Dormition in Gethsemane where the Tomb of Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary lies, which was built by St. Helen in 326 A.D. and from the Sovereigns Markianos and Poulcheria in 417 A.D.

Vespers was held at 5.00 o’clock in the afternoon, led by His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, with the co-celebration of Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Arab-speaking Priests, Hierodeacon Sophronios and the participation of faithful who venerate the Most Holy Theotokos who was buried there and was translated into heavens by Her Son and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

On the morning of the Feast Day the Divine Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences Archbishops Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Philoumenos of Pella, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Arab-speaking Priests and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon in Greek and the members of St. James Cathedral in Arabic, as the Service was attended by many local faithful Christians, despite the restrictive measures. However, pilgrims are still unable to travel.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“The bounds of nature are overcome in thee, O immaculate Virgin; for thy childbirth is virginal, and thy death is the espousal of life. O thou who after childbirth art virgin, and who after death art living, do thou, O Theotokos, ever save thine inheritance” the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (Minaion, August 15, Ode 9, heirmos).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims,

Indeed, the Only One who contained beyond logic and nature the Word of God, our Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, has gathered us in this sacred place of Her Tomb, to honour Her Dormition along with the Holy Apostles who are gathered here in spirit.

“Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God”(Psalm 87:3), Prophet David chants. For which are we going to consider the city of the invisible and indescribable God, Who has everything under His own power, St. John Damascene wonders, but the Only One who indescribably contained the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. What is more glorious than accepting “the ancient true will of God”, Prophet Isaiah says (Isaiah 25:1).

In Theotokos Mary all the bounds of nature were overcome, as St. Kosmas the hymnographer says: "The bounds of nature are overcome in thee O immaculate Virgin; for thy childbirth is virginal, and thy death is the espousal of life"(Ode nine, heirmos). Both the conception by the Holy Spirit and the incarnation of Christ, the Word of God, from the pure flesh of the Virgin Mary are an excess of the bounds of nature. "The Virgin [Mary] who bore [God the Word] beyond any human logic did not lose any of the signs of virginity" St. Maximus the Confessor says.

The same is said by St. Kosmas the hymnographer regarding the overcoming of the bounds of nature at the Dormition of Theotokos:

"The King, the God of all, granteth thee things beyond nature. For even as He preserved thee a virgin in childbearing, so also in the grave He kept thy body incorrupt; and He glorified thee by a divine translation, giving thee honour as a Son to His Mother"(Ode six, troparion 2).

Being in awe before the mystery of the death of the fountain of life, of the Mother of God, St. John Damascene says: "What are we going to call this mystery of you? Death? But even if naturally your most sacred and blessed soul is separated from your most holy body and the body is given to the lawful burial, however it does not remain in the state of death, nor is it decomposed by corruption; for Her whose the virginity remained untouched through labour, Her body is also preserved incorrupt and is translated into a better and more divine tabernacle, which is not broken by death, but lives eternally throughout the ages".

For this reason, according to St. John Damascene, the blessed Virgin is "the acropolis of the Churches" and also "the Mother of all the Churches of the world". St. John also preaches that She "did not reach up to heaven like Prophet Elisha, She wasn't taken up to the third heaven, like St. Paul, but

reached and sat upon the very royal throne of Her Son, seeing Him face to face, and rejoicing along with the great boldness She has in Him”.

This reality, my dear brethren, that the Most Holy Theotokos is standing next to Her Son and God beholding Him face to face and having great boldness in Him, is what has made Her a refuge for all those who venerate and honour Her, as the hymnographer says: “Preserve and save, O Theotokos, thy servants from every danger; after God do all of us for refuge flee unto thee; a firm rampart art thou and our protection” (Horologion from the Canon of Theotokos).

As we stand today in this sacred Tomb of Theotokos in Gethsemane, celebrating Her Feast, let us hear our God-bearer Holy Father John Damascene in the salutation he wrote for the Mother of God and say along with him: “Let us rejoice in spirit along with David, for the tabernacle of the Lord finds rest today. With Gabriel, the chief of the Angels let us exclaim: “Rejoice the ineffable ocean of joy, Rejoice thou who alone drives away all sorrow. Rejoice, thou who art the medicine that heals all the pains of the heart. Rejoice, thou through whom death has passed away, while life is brought back”. In Christ the Son of God and our God, to Whom belongs all glory and the might, along with the Father without beginning and the All-holy and Life-giving Spirit, now and forever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen. Many happy returns”.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen, Most Reverend Archbishop Dorotheos of Avela hosted a reception for the Patriarchal entourage at the Hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, August 6/19, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On this day the Church following the Gospel narratives (Matt. 17: 1-3, Luke 9: 28-36, Mark 9: 2-13) commemorates the event when a little while before His Passion on the Cross, our Lord Jesus Christ appeared in His divine glory and light, when His raiment became white and brighter than the light and the voice of God the Father was heard saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him", before the chosen Disciples, Peter, James, and John, in order to show them and to us the former beauty that man lost, which those who believe in Him are able to restore being transfigured in Him and by Him.

This event was celebrated:

1. At Mount Tabor, in the Holy Church of the Holy Transfiguration of the Lord, where His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the All-night Vigil, with co-celebrants their Eminences; Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, and Deacons, with the participation of only a few faithful Christians due to COVID-19. The chanting was delivered by Archimandrite Demetrios Kavathas on the right in Greek and by Archimandrite Philotheos on the left in Arabic.

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

“Christ took Peter, James, and John into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And there appeared Moses and Elias talking with Him. And a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said: This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him” (Matins, end, glory) the hymnographer of the Church proclaims, using the wording of the narrative according to St. Matthew (Matt. 17:1-5).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

Today the Saviour of our souls, “Who wast transfigured making the nature that was darkened in Adam to shine like lightning again” (Vespers aposticha Troparion 2) has gathered us in this Holy Mount of Tabor in order to mystically see through the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, Christ, shining with the divine rays and hear the voice of God the Father proclaiming Him His Beloved Son, Who has redeemed us from our human illness.

In this Holy high mountain, where Christ was transfigured before His disciples, and His face shone like the sun, and His raiment became white as light (Matt. 17:2), the irreproachable light of the glory of God the Father was foreshadowed. For this, the hymnographer says: “The darkness of the Law hath been superseded by the luminous cloud of the Transfiguration. Moses and Elias, being found therein and deemed worthy of the glory that transcendeth light, said unto God: Thou art our God, the King of ages”(Small Vespers glory, both now).

The only and absolute purpose of the mystery of the Divine Providence, namely of our faith to the incarnate Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, is for us to be deemed worthy of the glory of the transcendeth light of God. And what is this glory of God? It is written: “And the sight of the glory

of the Lord was like devouring fire" (Exodus 24:17). And elsewhere, the Lord said to Elisha the Thesbite: "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by... but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice" and the Lord was there (3 Kings 19:11-12).

And according to the witness of St. John the Evangelist, the Lord is the light of the world: "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, 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). And this light is no other than the glory of God, as St. Luke the Evangelist says, referring to the shepherds who kept watch at night: "And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them" (Luke 2:9), and at Stephen's stoning to death: "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55-56).

The event of the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ is the foreshadowing of His Resurrection, the preparation of the Disciples for it, who were going to be the eye-and-ear witnesses of the Passion, the death on the Cross, the three-day burial, and of course of the luminous Resurrection of Christ, as St. Matthew narrates: "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matt. 16:21). This is also witnessed by the hymn-writer of the Church by saying: "Before Thy Cross, O Lord, a mountain became like unto Heaven, and a cloud spread out like a tabernacle. When Thou wast transfigured and the Father bare witness to Thee, Peter with James and John were present, for they also were to be with Thee at the time of Thy betrayal; so

that having seen Thy wonders, they might not be afraid at Thy sufferings"... "to show them the splendour of the Resurrection"(Great Vespers troparia 1&2).

The theological depth, height, and width of the miracle of Christ's Transfiguration is centered in two things: Firstly that Christ: "was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (Matt. 17:2) and secondly: "a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him"(Matt. 17:5).

And we say this because the experience of both the vision of the glow of the light of the Transfiguration and the hearing of the voice in the cloud is not solely directed towards the present Disciples, but also to every single faithful Christian who loves God with all his clean mind and heart. Let us therefore hear the words of the established Church Father Gregory Palamas in his approved teaching by the great God-bearing and Theologian Fathers before him: "The chosen ones among the Disciples, as you hear the Church chanting, ..., saw the meaningful and eternal beauty of God in Tabor... the luminous brightness of the initial beauty, this divine beauty that has never been seen,, through which man becomes deified and deemed worthy of conversing with the Divine, this eternal and heirless Kingdom of God, this irreproachable light beyond comprehension, a boundless, timeless, eternal light, shining incorruptibility, God's light to the deified...for the grace of the Father and of the Son and of the Spirit was one, which was not visible to the human eyes, but it pierced through them as if opening the eyes of blind men, and made them able to see, according to St. John Damascene, this uncreated light, which in the age to come will only be visible to the saints, as Saints Dionysios and Maximus say".

This uncreated light of the Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ shone upon this Holy Mount of Tabor, and for this

reason, it is also called the light of Tabor. The Saints and the Righteous of God are worthy of this light as it is written: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"(Matt. 5:8). "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light"(Psalm 36:9) David chants.

As for us, my dear Brethren, let us entreat God the Word and God the Father of lights that by the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos we also may praise Him and say along with the Psalmist: "In the light of the glory of Thy face shall we walk unto the ages"(Psalm 88:15). Amen."

After the Divine Liturgy, the renovator of the Monastery and Hegoumen Archimandrite Ilarion offered a fish meal.

2. At Gethsemane and the Tomb of Theotokos, the Divine Liturgy was led by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias with the co-celebration of Hagiotaphite Fathers. After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen Archbishop Dorotheos of Avela offered a reception.
3. In Ramallah, at the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Lord, the Divine Liturgy was led by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Galaktion, with co-celebrant the Steward and Priest Yacub, with the participation of a few faithful only due to the virus pandemic.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF ST. IOANNIS THE

NEW HOZEVITE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, July 28/August 10, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of St. Ioannis the New Hozevite at the Holy Monastery of Hozeva, at the desert of brook Chorath, not far away from Jericho.

On this day the Church, and especially the Church of Jerusalem honours St. Ioannis from Romania, who came to the Holy Land and lived in strict fasting, silence and every virtue, becoming worthy of the gifts of clairvoyance and the working of miracles, as well as the incorrupt relics of his which is kept in this Holy Monastery.

He was canonized a Saint by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 2016.

An All-night Vigil was held to his honour, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with co-celebrants, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Constantine, Archimandrite Isidoros, other Priests and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod Hierodeacon Simeon and the Monastery Monks.

His Beatitude was welcomed by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Constantine. Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon;

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls”(Matt. 11:28-29) the Lord says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Our Holy Father Ioannis the New Hozevite, who became a vessel of the Holy Spirit and received by Him the working of miracles, has gathered us in the place of his asceticism to honour his sacred commemoration.

Our Holy Father Ioannis, toiling and burdened, retreated in the Holy Land and specifically in the river Jordan area, where our Lord Jesus Christ was baptized by St. John the Baptist "and the Holy Spirit confirmed the word" seeking his rest in Christ according to the Lord's words: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

Interpreting these words of the Lord the God-bearing Fathers of the Church say; St. Chrysostom: "But the righteous live forever, and their reward is with the Lord; the Most High takes care of them. Therefore they will receive a glorious crown and a beautiful diadem from the hand of the Lord, because with his right hand he will cover them, and with his arm he will shield them" (Wisdom of Solomon 5:15-16).

In other words the rest of the righteous in Christ is no other than their entrance in the Kingdom of Heaven where "they reign along with the Lord...and Christ will crown those who believe in Him with unshakable Glory" St. Cyril of Alexandria says, commenting on Prophet Isaiah's words: "In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people" (Isaiah 28:5). This is also said by St. Paul in his 2nd letter to Timothy: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8). And Apostle Peter too: "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:4).

Our Holy Father Ioannis received this crown of righteousness and of glory of God becoming a citizen of the heavenly city,

the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22). And the crown of glory that fadeth not away and can be seen in St. Ioannis is his incorrupt fragrant relic, as St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "The good crown that fadeth not away is bestowed to the one who lives as he should; this blossom could not be contained by the earth."

Indeed, my brethren, the land of Hozeva could not contain this fragrant flower that fadeth not away, the corpse of our Holy Father Ioannis, because it has been clad with the incorrupt rest in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God the Word and our Saviour Christ. Behold therefore, the glory of our holy Church, behold the wealth of the Kingdom of God.

St. Ioannis accomplished his completeness because he was taught by Christ Himself the meekness and humility of the heart. "learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart"(Matt.11:29) the Lord says.

This very meekness and humility of the heart we are also called to acquire, my dear Brethren, imitating our Holy Father Ioannis, as he became an imitator of Christ and managed his deification, becoming like the Holy great monastics George and Ioannis the Hozevites.

Along with the hymnographer let us say: "Thou, in taking the Lord's Cross upon thyself, and in following after Him to the end, didst never return in mind to the world or the things thereof; and thou slowest the passions with labours and abstinence, so preparing thyself as a temple for Christ our Lord. Hence thou wast rewarded, O divinely-wise with grace to heal all ills and to drive unclean spirits out, O God-bearer divinely blest. Intercede with Christ our God that forgiveness of all their transgressions be granted to them that with longing keep thy holy memory". Amen.

After the All-night Vigil a meal was offered.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF PROPHET ELIJAH AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, July 20/August 2, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy Prophet Elijah the Thesbite at his old holy Monastery which is located midway on the central road between Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

On this feast Prophet Elijah is alive in the memory of the Church as referred to his apolytikion : “the incarnate Angel and the Prophets’ summit and boast, the second forerunner of the coming of Christ our God, Elijah the glorious...he doth cast out sickness and doth also cleanse lepers; and unto all that honour him he poureth forth streams of cures”. He was born in Thesbes that’s why he is called Thesbite, he lived an ascetic simple life, dressed in a fleece, full of Godly zeal and was a fervent defender of the Name and rights of the only true God, “ he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit”(James 5:17-18).

With his prayer, Prophet Elijah made fire from heaven come down on mount Carmel and burnt down the wood of the altar and confounded the priests of shame whom he later slaughtered at brook Kishon (3 Kings ch. 18).

It is believed that the Prophet slept under a juniper tree at the place of this Monastery, and an angel left food for him and told him “Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the

strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God." Persecuted by Jezebel he retreated to brook Chorath where God sent a crow to bring him bread in the morning and meat in the evening (3 Kings 17-19:).

In this monastery Vespers was held in the afternoon by His Eminence Archbishop Theophylaktos of Jordan and Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem. The Divine Liturgy in the morning was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with co-celebrants their Eminences the Archbishops: Aristarchos of Constantine, Methodios of Tabor, and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, only twelve Priests inside the Church with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, and around twenty faithful outside according to the Police instructions due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Some more came in the end to honour the "second forerunner of the coming of Christ, Elijah the glorious", under the chanting of His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba in Greek on the right and St. James Cathedral choir in Arabic on the left under the lead of Mr. Rimon Kamar.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude read the following Sermon:

"As a seer of God, the Thesbite with Moses beholdeth upon Tabor that which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which the heart of earthborn men hath not considered, even the Almighty Lord incarnate" the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (Minaion July 20, Matins, ode 9, troparion 3).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians,

The holy and reverend commemoration of the Holy glorious Prophet Elijah the Thesbite has gathered us today at his sacred Church, in order to honour his feast in Eucharist. The presence of Prophet Elijah and his active prophetic preaching take place at a crucial time, during which the people of God

who follow the Law of Moses, which was given to them on Mount Sinai, have distanced themselves from the healthy faith and worship of the revealed "religion" of the moral monotheism, and have joined the fallacy of idolatry and syncretism. The gloomy picture of the deviation of the Old Testament people from the path of the knowledge of God and the pure worship is described by St. Chrysostom by saying: "For it was night, which had covered the whole Universe; a thick cloud had covered the whole world. Everybody advanced in the works of evil; it was a universal wreck, not because of waters but because of lewdness (P.G. Minge 50, 729).

The Holy Prophet Elijah righteously received the name "zealot" as St. Chrysostom also says: "he was getting drunk by the zeal". Elijah acquired this excessive zeal for God paying heed to God's commandments: "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might"(Deuteronomy 6:5), and by David's words: "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour"(Psalm 15:1-3).

The self-willed and unconditional obedience of God-minded Elijah to God's will made him "a man of God" and that is why he was appointed with the divine mission of the awakening and the repentance of both the people and their religious-political leaders.

And this mission through the prophetic actions of zealot Elijah aimed at the preservation of the promises of God to Abraham and of the Covenant which God made available to their Fathers (Acts 3:25). In other words, the mission of Elijah the Thesbite aimed at the reminding "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath"(Hebrews 6:17) according to St. Paul. And we must consider as "heirs of the

promise" both the peoples of the Old and the New Testament, according to St. Paul's words: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"(Galatians 3:29). And according to Zigavinos the interpreter; "heirs of the promise are the old people by nature, and the new by spirit; because those who are close by nation are the natural seed of Abraham, but those who become similar to him according to faith are close to him through spirit."

It is made clear that the prominent character and the prophetic action of Elijah are owed to his words and actions as witnessed in both the Old and the New Testament.

And in the New Testament Elijah the Thesbite appears along with Prophet Moses next to Christ on His Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, becoming His witness and conversing with Him: "And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him"(Matthew 17:3). Moreover, St. James the Brother of God while praising the prayer of the righteous says about Elijah: "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months"(James 5:17).

While in the Old Testament, glorious Elijah is shown as a chosen vessel of God, equal to the Apostle of the Nations Paul. The action of the power of faith of his godly zeal and wondrous works are precisely described by the holy writer of wisdom of Sirach as follows;

"Then the prophet Elijah arose like a fire, and his word burned like a torch. He brought a famine upon them, and by his zeal he made them few in number. By the word of the Lord he shut up the heavens, and also three times brought down fire. How glorious you were, O Elijah, in your wondrous deeds! And who has the right to boast which you have? You who raised a corpse from death and from Hades, by the word of the

Most High; who brought kings down to destruction, and famous men from their beds; who heard rebuke at Sinai and judgments of vengeance at Horeb; who anointed kings to inflict retribution, and prophets to succeed you. You who were taken up by a whirlwind of fire, in a chariot with horses of fire; you who are ready[b] at the appointed time, it is written, to calm the wrath of God before it breaks out in fury, to turn the heart of the father to the son, and to restore the tribes of Jacob. Blessed are those who saw you, and those who have been adorned[c] in love; for we also shall surely live”(Wisdom Sirach 48:1-11).

To this indeed befitting praise of prophet Elijah the Thesbite by the God-inspired Sirach, Father Joel Gianakopoulos says regarding the last sentence “for we also shall surely live”: “Here we should think about the righteous who will die during the last days of the world. Prepared by Elijah’s preaching, they will die peacefully and will be resurrected during the Judgment of the World which will take place at that time, and will live eternally”.

Today’s honoured God-seer Prophet Elijah the Thesbite had a peaceful death, he had the death of the righteous as the psalmist says: “God shall redeem my soul out of the hand of hades when he receiveth me”(Psalm 48:16) and “But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them”(Wisdom of Solomon 3:1).

My brethren, let us entreat Elijah who has great boldness to the Trinitarian God and along with the hymnographer say: “O Elijah, thou Prophet and herald of Christ, at no time art thou ever separated from the throne of majesty, yet thou art ever present at the side of every one in sickness; while ministering in the highest, thou dost bless the whole world and art every-where glorified. Ask thou forgiveness of our souls” (Vespers aposticha glory). Amen.”

After dismissal a simple reception was offered by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Paissios.

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM OFFICIATES THE DIVINE LITURGY AT THE HOLY MONASTERY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST BY THE RIVER JORDAN

On Sunday, July 13/26, 2020, Sunday of the Holy Fathers and of the Synaxis of Archangel Gabriel, as well as of the commemoration of St. Stephen of St. Savvas Lavra, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Monastery of St. John the Baptist at the West Bank of the River Jordan, conforming to the protective guidelines against COVID-19. This Monastery was half-destroyed during the six-day war in 1967, but it has been preserved, renovated and projected again as a marvellous shrine by the Patriarchate, with the funding of the memorable Hegoumen of Sarantaron Mount Archimandrite Gerasimos, under the supervision and intensive care of the Hegoumen and Master of Ceremonies Archimandrite Bartholomew.

In this first Patriarchal Liturgy at the Monastery, co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences; Metropolitan

Isychios of Kapitolias and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Archimandrite Meletios, Hieromonk Onuphrios, Hierodeacon Eulogios, while the Hegoumen of the H. Monastery of St. Gerasimos of the Jordan, Archimandrite Chrysostom also participated in the prayer. His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis delivered the chanting and the service was attended by some nuns of the desert and the Architect Mr. Theodosios Mitropoulos.

Before the Holy Communion there was a Memorial Service for the repose of the soul of the memorable Archimandrite Gerasimos and His Beatitude read the following Sermon;

The Lord said to His disciples: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house" (Matt. 5:14-15).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

Today the Holy Church of Christ honours and venerates the commemoration of the Holy six hundred and thirty Fathers of the Ecumenical Synod in Chalcedon. Therefore, we too, have gathered in this holy shrine, the Holy historic Monastery of St. John the Baptist of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the river Jordan, in order to celebrate the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist and glorify the great Name of the Holy Trinity.

Addressing His Disciples, the Lord calls them "the light of the world". "Ye are the light of the world"(Matt. 5:14). This designation does not apply only to the Twelve Disciples, but also to their descendants, who are the Holy Hierarchs and God-bearing Fathers of the Church, those who strengthened the one unblemished faith of the Gospel as the hymnographer says: "The preaching of the Apostles and the doctrines of the Fathers confirmed the one Faith in the Church. And wearing the garment

of truth, woven from the theology on high, she rightly divideth and glorifieth the great mystery of piety" (Minaion July 13 Kontakion of the Fathers).

The "great mystery of piety" is no other than the mystery of the Divine Providence, of the Incarnation of God the Word, our Saviour Christ, from the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Theotokos Mary, as it was foretold by the prophets: "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth"(Isaiah 49:6). Apostle Paul refers to these prophetic words of Isaiah in order to confirm his mission to the nations (Acts 13:47). And according to the witness of St. John the Evangelist, "Jesus again unto them, saying, 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).

Again, according to the witness of St. John the Evangelist, Christ "was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"(John 1:9). And according to St. Paul, through him, Jesus Christ became for the faithful, wisdom stemming from God with His teaching, and justification with His death and resurrection and sanctification with His ascension and with the sending down of the Holy Spirit, as well as a complete liberation with His glorious return in His Second Coming. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption"(1 Cor. 1:30).

Being the God-human body of Jesus Christ and he "dwelling place of the Lord in Spirit"(Eph. 2:22), the Church is in itself the living torch, whose light, which is the light of Christ, shines upon all Christ's friends. According to Zigavinos, Christ is the light which leads people from the darkness of fallacy to the truth, from sin to virtue, which illumines the mind of men. As it is written, "In him [Christ] was life; and the life was the light of men"(John 1:4).

God the Word, Christ, as the fountain of life “was life”(John 1:4) and is the One who creates and sustains every living thing. This truth was proclaimed by the Holy and God-bearing Fathers of the Church at the Ecumenical Synods, especially at the 4th Ecumenical Synod in Chalcedon which we honour today, in which the blasphemous teaching of the Heretic Monk Eutyches was condemned. Moreover, this Synod condemned Monophysitism and Nestorianism and formulated the eminent dogmatic term of Chalcedon, through which it established the Christological doctrine of the Orthodox Faith, accepting the two natures – divine and human – (two working powers and two wills) united unmistakably and indivisibly in the One Person, or the One Hypostasis of the Divine Word.

The great and undeniable significance of the holy Ecumenical Synods according to the established Professor Ioannis Karmiris is owed to the fact that they became the instrument that formulated the doctrines of the Church and permanently established around the world its common and uniform Tradition about the Faith and the manner of living, along with the combat of the various heresies and the guarding of the Ecclesiastical unity, which is mainly based on the dogmatic unity, of which the Ecumenical Synods were precisely both bearers and guarantors.

My dear Brethren, following unwaveringly the Apostolic Traditions and the Divine Doctrines that have been established at the Ecumenical Synods by the God-inspired Fathers and Teachers, we pay heed to St. Paul saying: “A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself”(Titus 3:10-11). And let us say along with the hymnographer; “While celebrating on this day the holy Fathers’ memory, O all compassionate Saviour, we ask that by their entreaties Thou rescue us, Thy flock, O Lord, from all the harm of heresies, vouchsafing unto all of us to glorify God the Father, the Word, and All-holy Spirit” (Matins

Exapostilarion). Amen.

After the Divine Liturgy Dismissal the Hegoumen Archimandrite Bartholomew hosted a reception.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE HOLY TWELVE APOSTLES AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, June 30/ July 13, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Synaxis of the Twelve Apostles.

Through this feast the Church gathers all faithful Christians in honour of the Holy Twelve Apostles who contributed greatly to the spreading of the preaching of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Who made the whole world marvel through them.

The Patriarchate celebrated this feast at the Holy Monastery dedicated to the Twelve Apostles downtown Tiberias city, at the north-west bank of the sea of Tiberias.

His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy, with co-celebrants their Eminences Metropolitans Kyriakos of Nazareth and Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod Hierodeacon Simeon, as the service was attended by a limited number of faithful due to COVID-19.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this small congregation;

“But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples; the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest. 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. 9:36-38, 10:1). “And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand”(Matt. 10:7).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The Holy and all-wise chorea of the Apostles of Christ has gathered us all today in their Monastery in this shrine, where Jesus appeared to His disciples by the sea of Tiberias (John 21:1), in order to celebrate their synaxis (gathering).

This synaxis refers to the Twelve Disciples to whom Jesus said: “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest”(Matt. 9:37-38). Interpreting this verse, St. Chrysostom writes: “By saying “pray of the harvest” when they had not prayed nor asked for anything yet, Jesus directly ordains them, reminding them ...that He is the farmer, the Lord of the harvest, as He also is the Master of the Prophets”. It is also clear, St. Chrysostom adds, that He did not send His disciples to harvest over some foreign labour, but to those which He sewed through His Prophets.

“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). And all these they could do before they had been given the Holy Spirit. Because, as St. John the Evangelist says: "they had not yet received the Holy Spirit". "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). How did they cast out the unclean spirits then, our Holy Father Chrysostom wonders. By the command and the authority of Jesus, St. Chrysostom answers to himself.

And the Day of Pentecost, when "they were all with one accord in one place... And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance"(Acts 2:1-4) St. Luke the Evangelist mentions in the Acts of the Apostles.

Interpreting these words, Ecumenios says: "By the tongue the marvels of God are being declared". And St. Gregory the Theologian says: "with tongues so that there is proximity to the words". Tongues were seen, because we have the word of God from the Holy Spirit and Christ was going to speak to the world through the Holy Spirit, and He gave His Spirit to the Disciples in order to transmit to them not only the knowledge, but also the power, to preach and convey to the world the knowledge of truth, which they had received. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"(Matt. 28:19), the Lord asks of His Disciples.

"The Lord says, not simply that they should baptize, but to teach beforehand, ...so that faith should become right through the teaching, and after the acquisition of faith, the baptism should be added to complete it" St. Athanasios explains. Indeed, the preaching of Christ's Disciples, or rather their Apostolic teaching according to the Lord's command; "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:

(Matt. 28:20) is the primary source of the healthy teaching (2 Tim. 4:3) of the Holy Church of Christ.

Preaching the unifying strength of the Church between the Jews and the Gentiles, St. Paul says: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:19-20).

In other words, my dear brethren, the Holy Apostles became the foundation of the Church by Christ through the Holy Spirit, in establishing faith and the local churches all over the world, which were led by the Apostles themselves, or by the Bishops they ordained. That is why St. Paul advises the Bishops by saying: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"(Acts 20:28).

The significance of the Apostolic succession is praised by St. Chrysostom: "The prophet is a lord...the shepherd and teacher is a spiritual lord; but above all those the apostolic succession is greater". This means that the apostolic character stems from the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is of One essence with the Father and the Son, Who puts together the whole constitution of the Church, according to St. Gregory the Theologian. Moreover, the Catholic and Apostolic Church is especially stressed in The Creed.

Needless to say, that the Apostolic character of the Church is inseparable to the Apostolic succession of the Shepherds, namely of the Bishops of the Church, as well as of the Apostolic Tradition according to St. Paul's teaching: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust"(1 Tim. 6:20), "That good thing which was committed unto thee keep"(2 Tim. 1:14), "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our

epistle”(2 Thess. 2:15).

“The Apostolic beginning” according to St. Chrysostom, which encompasses the Apostolic succession and the Apostolic Tradition, has its point of reference in the experience of the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, when “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance”(Acts 2:4).

Behold why our Holy Church especially honours the commemoration of the Holy Apostles. Let us therefore say along with the hymnographer: “O Good Saviour, Who by nature art the Friend of man and great in compassion, by the divine supplications of Thine all-hymned Virgin Mother, and the intercessions of Thine Apostles Peter and Paul, and of the Twelve Apostles, send unto us from Heaven Thy mercies and succour” (Minaion June 30, ode 9, theotokion). Amen.

After the Divine Liturgy the good caretaker of the Monastery Hegoumen Archimandrite Parthenios offered a meal to the Patriarchal entourage.

From Secretariat-General