

THE FEAST OF THE CHIEFS OF THE APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, June 29/July 12, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy Glorious and Chiefs of the Apostles Peter and Paul at the Monastery dedicated to them in the seaside deserted town of Capernaum at the north-west bank of the sea of Tiberias.

The Church of this Monastery was erected by the memorable Patriarch of Jerusalem Damianos in 1935, it was then maintained by the memorable Metropolitan Germanos of Petra and finally the Monastery was renovated and projected by the current caretaker Monk Eirinarchos, who also decorated it with Byzantine frescoes and icons.

On this feast the Church honours Apostle Peter, brother of Apostle Andrew, who was born in Bethesda of Galilee and followed the Lord from the beginning. Apostle Peter denied the Lord on the night of His Passion, but repented at the rooster's crow and was again received by the Lord after the Resurrection with the words "Peter, lovest thou me?" He became an Apostle and witness and martyr of the Lord, preaching Him and His mission in places of Asia, Pontus, Cilicia and elsewhere.

The Church honours likewise Apostle Paul, as a former persecutor of the Church who was called by the Lord through a vision on his way to Damascus, and accepted the call, becoming a chosen vessel and preached Christ more than all other Apostles, in the Mediterranean, and as far as Rome, which is why he was distinguished as the Apostle of the nations.

In honour these Chiefs of the Apostles His Beatitude officiated the Divine Liturgy in the aforementioned Monastery

with co-celebrants their Eminences Metropolitans Kyriakos of Nazareth and Joachim of Helenoupolis, at the chanting of Monk Nickolaos, with the participation of only a few faithful due to the increase of the COVID-19 patients again.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Let us all praise with sacred hymns Peter and Paul, the men of God, the foremost of the Apostles, and the bright lights of the whole world; the preachers of the holy Faith, the trumpets of theology, revealers of divine decrees, the pillars of the august Church, and the destroyers of error” the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (Minaion June 29, exapostilarion of praises).

The sacred feast of the holy couple of Apostles Peter and Paul has gathered us today in this holy shrine of Capernaum, in order to honour their commemoration in Eucharist and doxology.

Having been filled with the Holy Spirit and the Divine Grace, both of these chiefs of the Apostles were excelled among the other Apostles for their extreme godly zeal and for their redeeming theological interpretation of the incarnation of God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us hear the words of the hymnographer: “Nor by flesh neither by blood did God inspire thee to speak theologically about Christ being the true Son of God, Apostle Peter”. And for Paul: “Now is Christ no more seen by thee in a dark saying, neither in a glass, but face to face, discovering to thee the perfect knowledge of the God-head”(Ode 9, Canon of Paul, troparion 3).

This event is witnessed by Matthew the Evangelist, where Christ says to Peter: “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven”(Matt. 16:17-18). And in the Book of Acts the Lord says to Paul: “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest...And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision... Go thy way: for he [Paul] is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel”(Acts 9:4-15).

The spiritual and moral grandeur of “the rock of faith”, namely of Peter, and of “the chosen vessel” namely of Paul, is made obvious by two things. Firstly, these Holy Apostles became eye-and-ear-witnesses of the invisible mysteries of the glory of the Trinitarian God, Who has been revealed in the form of Jesus Christ. “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty” Peter says (2 Peter 1:16). Secondly: “I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter”(2 Cor. 12:1-14, St. Paul confesses.

Moreover, the preaching of our Holy Apostles according to the Lord’s word: “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) is inspired by Christ, and by Christ’s light, as this is stated by St. Paul: “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”(Gal. 3:27). This denotes that the Apostolic preaching is one of repentance, righteousness and holiness, in Christ crucified and resurrected. The holy Church of Christ honours especially the chiefs of the Apostles in gratitude as it should, because they significantly contributed to the foundation of the “Churches of nations”, namely to the peoples who did not know

the moral Monotheistic religion which was revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai. Let us hear what Peter said to the Apostolic Synod in Jerusalem: "And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us" (Acts 15:7-8). As far as Paul is concerned, he was chosen by the Lord Himself, Who said: "he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles"(Acts 9:15). Paul writes in his Letter to the Romans along with the greetings to his accomplices: "Greet my helpers in Christ Jesus... unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles"(Romans 16:3-4).

In their letters both Peter and Paul theologically develop that the God-human institution of the Church is a spiritual house, with Christ being the chief corner stone according to Peter (1 Peter 2:4-5), and as the body of Christ, with Christ being the head of this body according to Paul: "and gave him [Christ] to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all"(Eph. 1:22-23). "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God"(Eph. 3:10).

It is also noteworthy that the distinction of the holy chiefs of the Apostles should by no means be considered as spiritual superiority over the other Apostles, because the gift of the Holy Spirit that was given by the Resurrected Christ to his disciples and Apostles was given "when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled"(John 20:19), without any quantitative or qualitative discrimination. Interpreting the words of Jesus to His disciples: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost"(John 20:22), St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "Christ did not give the Holy Spirit to some only, but to all the

disciples”.

To these great luminaries, Peter the rock of faith and Paul the true teacher who revealed the mysteries of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, let us pray and say along with the hymn writer: “Apostles of Christ our God, entreat God for the remission of our sins, as we celebrate your holy commemoration”. Amen. Many happy returns in good health. “

After the Divine Liturgy the hardworking caretaker of the Monastery Monk Eirinarchos hosted a meal for His Beatitude and His entourage.

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE D. LITURGY AT THE H. MONASTERY OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD ON MOUNT TABOR

On Sunday June 15/29, 2020, 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, where He read the following Sermon:

“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For

after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”(Matt. 6:31-33) the Lord says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

Preaching at the synagogues of Galilee (Luke 4:44) and healing the infirmities of the crowds following and asking Him not to depart from them (Luke 4:42), our Lord Jesus Christ said unto them: “I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent”(Luke 4:43). These words of the Lord are revealing because they denote in all clarity and precision the purpose of the Divine Providence, namely the coming of Christ, the Son of God, into the world.

The ineffable philanthropy of God could not abandon His creature made according to His image and likeness, and leave man in the darkness of ignorance and of sin. Therefore, He sent His Only Begotten Son made man, in order to save man as St. Paul preaches to the Christians: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”(Phil. 2:5-8).

And Christ “became obedient, even unto the death of the cross”, because St. Paul preaches: “For therein [in Christ] is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith”(Romans 1:17). And God’s righteousness is no other than the way and the gate which enter the Kingdom of Heaven, namely to the vision, or rather to the view of the absolute beauty of the glory of God, to Whom all the Angelic forces along with all

the Saints cry out loud the hymn, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Sabaoth...hosanna in the highest.

The matter that is of priority is the man's soul, as the Lord says: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"(Matt. 16:26)."

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF PROPHET ELISHA AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, June 14/27, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy Prophet Elisha at the Holy Monastery dedicated to him in Jericho, next to the sycamore tree of Zacchaeus.

On this day the Church commemorates the Holy Prophet Elisha according to the testimony of the Old Testament, in the Books of Kings. He was called to the ministry of God by Prophet Elijah, and having been anointed a Prophet by God's command, he followed Elijah for the rest of his life-time and was deemed worthy by God of the gift to work miracles.

By the divine power given to him, he turned the bitter harmful waters by the foot of Sarantaron Mount "of Jericho into sweet and drinkable and worked many signs and marvels, finally gaining double the grace of Prophet Elijah, which was sent down to him from on high, when Elijah was lifted up in the fiery chariot. Elijah threw down his fleece to Elisha, and he received it along with the double grace, stepped on the fleece and walked on the waters of the river Jordan to cross to the

other side”.

In this Monastery, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences; Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Hagiotaphite Hieromonks; the Hegoumen of Beit Jala Archimandrite Ignatios, , the Hegoumen of Hozeva Archimandrite Constantine, Archimandrite Onuphrios of Sarantarion Mount, and the Hegoumen of Saint Gerasimos Archimandrite Chrysostomos. Participants in prayer were also the Hegoumen of the Monastery of St. John the Baptist Archimandrite Bartholomew, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacons Eulogios and Simeon. The service was attended by the members of the parish of Jericho.

His Beatitude read the following Sermon to those present:

“Since great Elijah, in his divine foresight, knew thee to be his own disciple, O wise Elisha, he made thee a Prophet set all ablaze with the Spirit’s light. Hence, today we honour thine all-holy remembrance and with pious mind revere both thee and Elijah, O glorious man of God” the hymnographer of the Church proclaims (Minaion, Matins, Sessional Hymn after Ode 3).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

Prophet Elisha who received double the grace of the Holy Spirit and was a disciple of the great prophet Elijah of Thesbes, has gathered us all today in his Holy Monastery in the historic town of Jericho of Palestine, in order to festively celebrate his sacred commemoration and thank the Holy Trinitarian God who made him a “wondrous vessel” (Wisdom Sirach 43:2).

“And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the

wilderness of Damascus...and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room... So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah,... and ministered unto him”(3 Kings 19:15-21) we read in the Book of Kings.

The personality and the prophetic gift of Prophet Elisha are clearly depicted at the book “Wisdom Sirach”: “When Elijah was enveloped in the whirlwind, Elisha was filled with his spirit; He worked twice as many marvels, and every utterance of his mouth was wonderful. During his lifetime he feared no one, nor was anyone able to intimidate his will. Nothing was beyond his power; and from where he lay buried, his body prophesied. In life he performed wonders, and after death, marvellous deeds (Wisdom Sirach 48:12-14).

Our Lord Jesus Christ refers to Prophet Elisha on His teaching to the Pharisees: “And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian”(Luke 4:27) according to the witness of Luke the Evangelist.

It is also noteworthy that Jesus does not refer only to the wondrous prophet Elisha, but to all the Prophets of the Law of Moses. And this is so because the Prophets foretold the earthly life of God the Word the Son of God and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and prepared His way, according to the witness of the Lord who said to His disciples on the way to Emmaus: “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory”(Luke 24: 13, 25-26). And elsewhere: “Then Peter opened his mouth, and said,.. that Christ is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of

sins”(Acts 10:34, 42-43).

And the Apostle of the Nations Paul in his preaching gives praise to the election and mission of both the holy Apostles and the Prophets, who are equally the foundation stone upon which the dwelling house of God has been built, with Christ being the chief corner stone: “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).

This is what distinguishes the true Prophets from the false ones, that they preach and foretell the workings of the Holy Spirit, the Nativity of Christ. “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel”(Isaiah 7:14), the Prophet Isaiah foretells. “Rejoice, O Elisha, who while on earth hast shown an example of a life-equal to the Angels’, and while in the flesh hast lived without a peer. Since thou didst preserve the eye of thy soul pure of all that is material, O Prophet, thou wast counted worthy to foresee things to come by the clear light of the Spirit” the hymnographer says (Matins, Ode 1, troparia 1-2).

In order to comfort and strengthen the Christians, Saint James the Brother of God says in his Letter: “ Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience”(James 5:10). This shows that both the Apostles and the Prophets, as chosen vessels of God, and acted according to the instruction of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1), namely the Spirit of Christ. The distinction of the prophetic and apostolic words is highlighted by St. Chrysostom, in his interpretation to the Lord’s words: “that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together”(John 4: 36). And the Holy Father wonders; “who is he that soweth, and who is he that reapeth? The prophets are the sowers; but they were not the ones who

sowed, the Apostles did”.

In other words, the will of the Prophets was the coming of Christ to the people. This is the will of today’s honoured holy Prophet Elisha, that Christ may come and dwell in our hearts.

Let us therefore my brethren in Christ our God and Saviour, entreat the holy and wondrous Prophet Elisha along with the Fathers who are co-celebrated with him, Methodios Archbishop of Constantinople and Hieromartyr Cyril, Bishop of Gortyna of Crete, and say along with the hymnographer: “O Elisha, ask that they who sincerely sing thy praise may receive from God healing of their maladies and the cleansing of their sins”(Matins Ode 1, troparion 3). And release us and the whole world from the pandemic of the coronavirus plague, so that the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit may be glorified in thee. Amen”.

After the Divine Liturgy, the prayer for the grapes was read, and there was a reception at the Hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF OUR HOLY FATHER ONUPHRIUS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday, June 12/25, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of our Holy Father Onuphrius the Egyptian at his Holy Monastery, which is located at the place of “the Potter’s field” which was bought by the Pharisees with the thirty silver coins Judas returned to them (Matt. 21:30), opposite

Siloam's pool.

In this Holy Church, which is mainly carved into a rock, dedicated to Saint Onuphrius, who lived in Egypt in the 4th century, in complete silence, prayer, fasting and strict asceticism, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy, with co-celebrants their Eminences Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina and Aristovoulos of Madaba, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon, and the service was attended by faithful Christians, monks, nuns and pilgrims from our Greek-speaking and Arab-speaking flock.

His Beatitude read the following Sermon to his congregation:

“Ye sought to behold the delight of the Lord, O God-bearer, and with Him alone did ye long to converse alone. Wherefore, ye abandoned the world, fleeing afar off to dwell in the wilderness and in mountains and putting on Christ, ye took no raiment, for ye had trafficked for the garment of incorruption, wherewith ye entered into the heavenly bridechamber, where ye rejoice eternally, O Onuphrius” (Menaion June 12, Glory of praises) the Church melodist proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians

The grace of the Holy Spirit which made our Holy Father Onuphrius a citizen of the desert, an Angel in the flesh and a wonderworker, has gathered us all in his Holy Monastery which is located at the “field of blood”(Matt. 27:8), in order to festively celebrate his commemoration.

Harkening to David's words, “Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day”(Psalm

25:4-5), he departed the Coenobion where he lived as a monk, in Hermoupolis of Thebes in Egypt and retreated in the desert, where he lived for sixty years without setting eyes on any human being, having as prototypes to imitate Prophet Elijah and St. John the Baptist.

The ascetic life of St. Onuphrius in the desert made him a vessel of the Holy Spirit, as his hymnographer says: "As angel in the flesh who dwelt with the hosts incorporeal, ye lit the desert like stars flashing in the night with your ascetic pains and toils Onuphrius, crying out loud: Alleluia"(Kontakion).

Our Holy Father Onuphrius managed his dwelling with the Angels because he sought the truth, the righteousness and the true light since his childhood, virtues that have been revealed to men by the Father through His Only-Begotten Son and Word and the Holy Spirit: "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), "seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness"(Matt. 6:33), "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"(John 8:32) the Lord says.

In other words, the God-inspired words of both the Old and the New Testament, of the Gospel, became a manner of living and of ascesis for Saint Onuphrius, who considered the Lord the source of life, according to the psalmist: "in thy light shall we see light"(Psalm 36:9). "For Christ is both the source of life and the light of light" Saint Athanasios the Great says.

Through the ascetic striving, our Father Onuphrius managed the desirable and perfect thing, to become communicant of the uncreated actions of God, namely someone who beheld and put on himself the uncreated divine light, and became a co-heir of the glory of Christ, as the hymnographer says: "offering thy mind as a whole-burnt offering, thou worthily becomest a partaker and joint heir in His glory"(Minaion Ode 5, troparion 1). And elsewhere, "Glory-wise Father Onuphrius...mortifying thy

members on the earth, thou didst attain to the life in Heaven's heights, where with great joy, O Saint, thou within the bridal chamber dost behold thy Creator's artless beauty, O most righteous one"(Vespers troparion 2).

The vision of the "artless beauty" was accomplished by Saint Onuphrius through the virtue of "the ineffable purity and chastity, which the corrupt men acquire after many hardships, striving and sweat" according to Saint John of the Ladder. "For conquering one's nature is beyond hope. In any case where the nature was defeated, there the incorruption of the supernatural was revealed" Saint John says again, "And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better"(Hebrews 7:7).

In other words, Saint Onuphrius is distinguished among the great ascetics of the desert in the Church, because he managed the perfect renewal of man in Christ, the perfect God and perfect man, and transformed his corrupt nature by mortifying his own will, subduing himself unto the will of Christ Who said: "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother"(Matt. 12:50). "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day"(John 6:40).

It is also noteworthy, that the renewal of man is impossible without Christ, because "without me ye can do nothing"(John 15:5) the Lord says. Because of this the hymnographer says: "the Word of God that came from God, seeking by His ineffable wisdom to renew Adam, who fell into corruption through food, and was incarnate in an unspeakable manner through the Holy Virgin for our sakes, let us all faithful magnify in praise" (Heirmos ode 9).

By the above, it is made clear that the spiritual struggle for the deification in Christ does not only refer to the human

nature, namely the soul, but also to the body; and this is so, because “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us”(John 1:14) according to the Scriptures.

The life in Christ of today’s honoured Saint Onuphrius who became an Angel in the flesh and a wonderworker, proves that our Lord Jesus Christ is the light of the redeeming truth. Let us thus say along with the hymnographer: “Blessed art thou, O Onuphrius, having worked for Christ and vanquished the power of the enemy, a co-citizen of the Angels, joint to the Righteous and Holy, with whom thou intercedeth to God to have mercy on our souls” (Minaion Glory of Vespers stichera). Amen.”

After the Dismissal there was a procession to the founders’ grave, the prayer of the fruit was read, and the Trisagion for Nun Seraphima who used to live in the monastery was also held.

Finally, the good keeper of the Monastery, Abbess Paissia hosted a reception for the Patriarchal entourage and all present at the courtyard of the Monastery and the Hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General

H.H.B. CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY AT THE BASILICA OF THE NATIVITY IN BETHLEHEM

On Sunday, June 8/21, 2020, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem on the

Feast of All the Saints of Palestine, Martyrs, Confessors and Righteous, which is being celebrated in the last decades by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem after the Sunday of All Saints.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem His Eminence Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan, their Eminences Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina and Aristovoulos of Madaba, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Arab-speaking Priests, who minister the Shrine of Bethlehem and Archdeacon Mark with Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos on the right in Greek and by the Basilica choir under Mr. Lawrence Samour on the left in Arabic, with the participation of only a few faithful due to the measures against COVID-19.

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

“And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him “(Matthew 4:18-20).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters,

Noble Christians

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem is especially celebrating today the Feast of the Saints of Palestine. Therefore, we also, by the grace of the Holy Spirit have gathered in this sacred place of the God-receiving Cave of the Nativity of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ in order to offer the bloodless Eucharist a sacrifice of praise to the Holy Trinitarian God, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

The geographical area of Palestine is the Biblical place where the heavenly met with the earthly, namely the revelation of

God to men, which was fulfilled in the great mystery of God's providence, of the incarnation of God the Word through the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Mary.

The Biblical Palestine in the primary place of the calling of Patriarch Abraham and of the Holy Apostles. "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee"(Genesis 12:1). And the Lord said to the fishermen: "And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him"(Matthew 4:19-20).

Through Abraham's calling by the Lord, the group of the Holy people and the Prophets of the Old Testament is being formed. And through the calling of the fishermen by Christ, the group of the Holy Apostles is being established. Both the Prophets and the Apostles became the foundation stone, with Christ being the chief corner stone, upon which all the Saints of the Church were established, as 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"(Ephesians 2:19-20).

This means that through the without hesitation acceptance of their calling, the Prophets and the Apostles were made by God vessels of the Holy Spirit, a Spirit of Holiness, according to St. Peter's words: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy"(1 Peter 1:15-16).

In other words, the Holy Apostles who were called by our Lord Jesus Christ are the prototypes of holiness, namely of man's deification, and for this reason we are called to imitate them. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness"(Psalm 97:11-12)

David chants.

The special characteristic of the land of Palestine is that it was watered and therefore sanctified by the sacred blood of the fulfilment of the Law of Moses and of the Prophets, namely of Christ's blood. It was also watered with the blood of its Saints, as they became eye-and-ear witnesses of the teaching, the miracles, the Passion on the Cross and the Resurrection from the dead of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as St. John the Evangelist says: "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). And according to Peter the chief of the Apostles: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty"(2 Peter 1:16).

It is also noteworthy that the source of righteousness and holiness of all the Saints and of course of those in Palestine, is "the source of life" the Most Blessed Theotokos and Mother of our God, the Ever-Virgin Mary, who inaugurated the sanctification of the Biblical Palestine through Her Annunciation in Nazareth, by giving birth to God the Word in the Cave of Bethlehem, and through Her burial in Gethsemane in Jerusalem. All Saints owe their holiness and righteousness to the immaculate Lady Theotokos and Her obedience to the Will of God. "And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification"(Romans 5:16) St. Paul preaches.

The Saints, being "full of fruits of righteousness through Jesus Christ for the praise and glory of God" (Phil. 1:11), according to Paul, are a living example by which we are urged to imitate their godly zeal and perfect love for Christ. And we say this, because the innumerable chorea of the Saints of the Church of Christ proves beyond doubt that every single man has the calling and is able to join the Saints as it is

written: "become holy for I am holy"(1 Peter 1:16). This is precisely the command of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as it is also the purpose of His Church. "For the Saints are full of spiritual grace not only in their words but also in their bodies" St. Chrysostom says. "I venerate and respect the Saints, and I ask for their intercessions and prayers, for it is through their prayers that we are all saved" St. John Damascene says.

Today's honoured Saints of Palestine, my dear brethren, are distinguished for their irrefutable historic witness that, on the one hand, the revealed truth in Christ is not an ideologic nor a worldly theory of a religion, and on the other, the Church as the body of Christ is not a social institution, nor a charity, but the fact that God, the Creator of all beings rests in His Saints and in the Church, and this is confirmed by the psalmist by saying: "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it"(Psalms 132:13-14).

Let us entreat the Saints who have boldness toward God, so that along with the intercessions of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary we may find the holiness in Christ and the salvation of our souls. Amen."

After the Divine Liturgy His Beatitude consecrated a small private chapel-house of prayer at the house of the Rum Orthodox Michael Kanavati, with the blessing of the water and addressed the hosts during the fasting meal with fish to His honour as follows;

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it"(Psalm 127:1) Prophet David chants.

Dear Michael and family,

Reverend Fathers and brethren

Harkening to the Lord's words we say: "Peace unto this

house”(Luke 19:5) in which we have entered today, to bless it, and consecrate the small chapel dedicated to Archangels Michael and Gabriel.

All Angels, St. Paul says, are “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation”(Hebrews 1:14). God made them guardians of all nations and peoples and guides to what is of their benefit (Deuteronomy 32:8). They always behold the Face of God, crying out unto one another and saying the thrice holy hymn (Isaiah 6:3), and they intercede to Him for us, as they are glad for every single sinner that comes to repentance (Luke 15:10).

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”(Matt. 18:20) says the Lord. This is witnessed by today’s hospitable and with brotherly love invitation of Our Mediocrity, the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan and Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem and the Reverend clergy who minister our flock in love and devotion. We came to you, dear Michael, in the joy of the Lord, in order to rest in each other (Romans 15:32) as St. Paul writes to the Romans.

The mission of the Church, the faithful member of Christ, is shown in the commandment of the Gospel toward the Holy Disciples and Apostles of Christ: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”(Matt. 5:16).

We wish that the Lord our God, through the intercessions of our Lady the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and those of today’s celebrated Saints of Palestine may grant your most pious family strength from on high, health in soul and body and patience, and for your memorable father Nikolaos, the repose of his soul in the land of the living.

Finally, let us entreat our God and Saviour Jesus Christ Who was born in the flesh in the Cave of Bethlehem, and say in

prayer: "Compass us about with Thy Holy Angels that, guided and guarded by their array, we may attain to the unity of faith and the knowledge of Thine unapproachable glory; for blessed art Thou unto the ages of ages. Amen"(Horologion). Many happy returns, in peace and with the Lord's blessing."

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM ADDRESSES THE NEW ANGLICAN BISHOP IN JERUSALEM

On Sunday evening, June 1/14, 2020, the current Secretary of the Meetings of the Heads of the Christian Churches in Jerusalem, Hosam Elias Naoum was ordained a Bishop, in order to succeed the current Archbishop Suheil Dawani as Archbishop of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem.

H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos was the first among the distinguished guests, Anglican Bishops, and representatives of the Christian Churches in Jerusalem, in this ordination, and He delivered the following address:

"Your Grace, dear Bishop Hosam,

Your Grace, dear Archbishop Suheil,

Mr. Consul General

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Respected Members of the Clergy,

Beloved Faithful,

We are deeply honoured, dear Bishop Hosam, to be present on this blessed day of your ordination and consecration as a bishop. This celebration is the culmination of years of dedication to education, pastoral service, and leadership in your diocese and in the wider Church. You have proved yourself worthy of many responsibilities and today the greatest responsibility that the Church can bestow is now laid on your shoulders.

A Bishop is first and foremost a pastor after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Good Shepherd of his people. For the Lord says:

“I am the good shepherd I know my own and my own know me”.

You are called to the diakonia of the Church, of the sacraments, and of the clergy and the laity of your community without distinction, and you are called further to the diakonia even of those outside your flock, who may at any time turn to you for help.

Dear Bishop Hosam, you are known for your strong commitments. For you have been serving as the Secretary to the Council of the Jerusalem Church Committees, where you have demonstrated devotion to our ecumenical and interfaith work on behalf of all the communities of our beloved Holy Land. Your ability to work with in our multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious society is a crucial skill that you bring, and you remind us of the role of the bishop as “bridge-builder”, for many are the bridges for peace, justice, and reconciliation that you have already built. We have every confidence that your experience and gifts will be of genuine usefulness as you take your place among us as a bishop.

Allow us to honour His Grace, Archbishop Suheil, who has exercised oversight over the diocese for so many years in difficult circumstances with clarity, devotion, energy, and faithfulness, and who has exercised respected leadership in our region. Furthermore, we recognise the presence with us of the distinguished Consul General of Great Britain.

We are also pleased to welcome to the Holy City His Grace Archbishop Michael and His Grace Bishop Peter, who are well known to us and committed advocates of the Christian presence in the Holy Land and in the Middle East, and who have both travelled here during this pandemic that has brought confusion around the world in order to ensure that his crucial ordination could take place. We wish to express our collective gratitude to you both, dear Bishops, for the sacrifice that you have made to be here.

Just as no one could have foreseen the pandemic, nobody knows what the future will bring yet. By God's grace, we look to the future in hope, for as Saint Paul says, "Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer"(Romans 12:12).

In affirmatio of our joint commitment to the Church of Christ, and most specifically to the Jerusalem Church, allow to present to you this engolpion of the Theotokos, that you MAY be under her protection and that you MAY be a martyria of Christ's love and of our Christian ministry here in the Holy Land.

Congratulations, and MAY the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ guide your steps in the work of His commandments.

Thank you."

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY AT JACOB'S WELL

On Sunday, June 1/14, 2020, Feast of All Saints and day of commemoration of St. Ioustinos the philosopher and martyr, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Shrine of Jacob's well, making up for the lack of the festive celebration on the Sunday of the Samaritan woman due to the coronavirus. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences Metropolitans Kyriakos of Nazareth and Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the Hegoumen of the Shrine Archimandrite Ioustinos, and Archimandrites Ignatios, Leontios and Artemios. The chanting was delivered by Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos on the right and the Rafidia Community choir on the left in Arabic, with a quite a few faithful present, but not as many as in the past.

On this occasion, His Beatitude read the following Sermon:

"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven...And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me"(Matthew 10:32-38).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all, amidst the imposed restriction measures due to coronavirus pandemic, in this holy biblical shrine of Jacob's well and the place of the meeting of our Lord Jesus Christ with the Samaritan woman, in order to celebrate in Eucharist the feast of All the Saints of the world, and especially the commemoration of the Holy Martyr Ioustinos the philosopher, who was born in this place "the town Flaouia of Palestine".

The feast of All Saints is a projection of the great feast of Pentecost, namely of the Holy Spirit that came down from heaven like tongues of fire, upon the Holy Disciples and Apostles of the Lord.

And this is so , because those who compose the cloud of all the Saints, Prophets, who preached Christ around the world, Apostles who enchanted the nations and fishermen of men, Martyrs who suffered tortures and toil, God-bearing Fathers who established the doctrines by the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit and the healthy faith of the Church, the chorea of the holy and righteous and the chorea of the holy women and of all the saints who mortified their flesh so that they are rejoicing with the angels in the heavens now.

All these became communicants and partakers of the gifts of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, through Who – according to St. Paul – "have come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect"(Hebrews 12:22-23).

The city of the Living God is the famous Jerusalem; but the Heavenly Jerusalem, namely the Church of God's Saints, the heavenly Church, the Kingdom of heaven, according to Zigavinos. The earthly Jerusalem, the earthly Church, is the type and icon of the heavenly Church.

This means that the Church, being the body of Christ (Col. 4:24), and Christ being the head of the body of the Church (Col. 1:18), the Church is the place where the Holy Spirit essentially dwells and puts together and constitutes the whole institution of the Church. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"(Col. 2:9) St. Paul preaches.

In other words, Christ became an example to imitate for all people who want to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps", St. Peter teaches (1Peter2:21).

Indeed, all the Saints of the Church became imitators of Christ, each according to the gifts and the struggles they suffered, hearkening to the advice of St. Paul: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"(1 Cor. 11:1). And, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"(Philippians 1:21). Interpreting this phrase, St. Theophylactos says: "I live a new life, and Christ is everything to me, breath and life and light". And St. Gregory of Nyssa says: "Nothing of the human and material passions lives in me, neither pleasure, nor sorrow, nor anger, nor fear...nor any other thing of those who stain the soul, but He is the only One that exists in me, Who is nothing of the above. For having cast out everything that is foreign to His nature, I have nothing in me, which is not of Him; by Whose grace, Christ lives in me".

All the Saints of the Church are recognized as genuine ministers and workers of both the Old Testament of God the Father and especially of the New Testament in Christ the Son and God. St. Paul calls the preachers of the Gospel "a sweet savour of Christ" which is well-pleasing to God: "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish" (2 Cor. 2:15). This sweet savour of Christ is no other than the holiness of the friends, namely the Saints of Christ, according to the saying: "Because it is

written, Be ye holy; for I am holy”(1 Peter 1:16/ Leviticus 11:44). And the saints of God are those who praise and narrate His glory, as David chants: “One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works”(Psalm 145:4-5).

This is precisely what St. Ioustinos, the honoured among All the Saints today did, who was called “most marvellous” according to Tatian and “philosopher and witness” according to Tertullian. And according to Eusevius of Caesarea, having been condemned because of his Christian faith by the false accusations of [the idolatrous philosopher] Crescent, Ioustinos “is adorned with a death by a divine martyrdom” beheaded along with other Christians during the reign of the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, in Rome, approximately in the year 165 A.D. Not only his “divine martyrdom”, but also his defending of the Christian faith letters “speak of and proclaim the magnificence of the glory of the holiness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Saints of the Church became worthy of the name of Christ, because they did not refuse “to take His Cross and follow Him”(Matt. 10:38). Their benefit and repose and rest were to suffer for the sake of reverence according to Basil of Cicely (P.G. 85,464, B). And St. Ignatios the God-bearer calls Christ “my own love [eros]” just as St. Paul says: “ I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20). Having become communicants of God’s grace, they are recognized along with the holy Apostles as benefactors of the Church, just as St. Chrysostom says about the Apostles: “They were indeed doctors of the world, and farmers and captains; doctors because they healed the infirmities; farmers because they sew the word of reverence; and captains, because they stopped the rough waves of the fallacy”.

As for us, my dear brethren, praising the commemoration of All

the Saints, and especially of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, let us say along with the hymnographer: “Let us now worthily extol the haven of salvation, the Baptist; the apostles, the prophets and martyrs; the ascetics, the divine teachers, the priests; the assembly of the patriarchs, the glorious hieromartyrs, the women beloved of God, and the righteous and the just” (Pentecostarion, Feast of All Saints, Matins, Ode 9 of the Saints, troparion 2). Amen! Many happy returns!”

After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen and renovator of this Shrine and of the Church of St. Foteini the Great Martyr the Samaritan woman, Archimandrite Ioustinos hosted a meal for the Patriarchal entourage.

From Secretariat-General

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

On Monday, May 26/ June 8, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Monday of the Holy Spirit as it is ordained by the book of Pentecostarion, a day especially dedicated in honour of the Holy Spirit, Who came from the Father through the Son and enlightened the illiterate Disciples at the Upper Room and made them luminaries and teachers of the whole world.

This feast is celebrated at the Holy Church of the Russian MISSIA of the Moscow Patriarchate in New Jerusalem, which is dedicated to the Holy Trinity.

The Festal Divine Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Archbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina and Theodosios of Sebastia, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks among whom the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Head of the Russian MISSIA Archimandrite Alexander and other Priests of the Russian Church, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacons of the Russian MISSIA, as the chanting was delivered by the Nuns of the MISSIA and the service was attended by Russian faithful Christians.

After the Holy Communion, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos delivered the following Sermon;

“Reverend Archimandrite Alexander,

Representative of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia in the Holy City of Jerusalem

“Once when He descended and confounded the tongues, the Most High divided the nations; and when He divided the tongues of fire, He called all men into unity; and with one accord we glorify the All-holy Spirit” (Kontakion of the Feast). The hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

The All-holy Trinity has gathered us all in this Holy Church, in the joyful day of Holy Pentecost, in order to celebrate in Eucharist the All-holy, life-giving and almighty Spirit, the One God of the Holy Trinity, Who is equally honoured, glorified and is of one essence with the Father and the Son.

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”(John 4:24). “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you”(John 14:26). “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide

you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you”(John 16:13-14), our Lord Jesus Christ says.

Behold therefore, why the hymnographer also says: “The Holy Spirit provideth all things; He gusheth forth prophecy; He perfecteth the priesthood; He hath taught wisdom to the illiterate. He hath shown forth the firshermen as theologians. He holdeth together the whole institution of the Church. Wherefore, O Comforter, one is essence and throne with the Father and the Son, glory to Thee” (Great Vespers of Pentecost, 3rd sticheron).

The Holy Spirit, Who holds together the whole constitution of the Church, was foretold by the Prophets; “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke” (Joel 2:28, 30), Joel says, and Ezekiel adds; “Thus says the Lord: Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Ezekiel 36-25-27).

This “new spirit”, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, did God the Father send down and gave to His Holy Disciples and Apostles, after the request of the gloriously ascended into heaven Son and Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. To these Disciples and Apostles, – according to St. Paul – , “whom Christ set first in the Church (1 Cor. 12:28) and “is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20), did the Lord “pour out His

Spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28), and consequently to their descendants, namely the Shepherds and great initiators to the mysteries of the Church, as St. Cyril of Alexandria teaches by saying: "The initiators to the mysteries of the Church and those who are teaching under the sun, before all other things, should enrich their knowledge with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and those who from the beginning are called through faith into sanctification, should become adorned like gold by the divine and heavenly grace".

Moreover, the hymnographer says: "the All-holy Spirit, Who in truth divideth the gifts to all hath descended upon the earth, not as He had formerly, shining in the Prophets through Law's dark shadow, but now is given in all truth to us through Christ's mediation for our sakes. Thus let us purify our hearts with virtues and so receive His true visitation and blest descent, being mystically lit in mind" (Thursday after Pentecost, Vespers, troparion 1).

And St. Paul advises the people in Ephesus thus: "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). It is made clear that this advice is directly referred to the initiators to the mysteries and Bishops of the whole Church of our time, a piece of advice distinguished by the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. "Christ Who has the Spirit has been given to the Church, acting according to the Spirit as God" St. Maximus says. And according to St. Chrysostom, "the fulness of Christ is the Church, and the fulness of the head is the body, and the fulness of the body is the head". "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" St. John the Evangelist says (John 1:16).

The "grace for grace" (John 1:16) which we have received, as well as the way it is manifested, is clearly described by the hymnographer of the Church by saying: "Thou didst wholly take me upon Thee past all telling, and with Thine divine nature

full wast blended with me, though suff'ring no confusion, no division, no change, O Christ,. Glory to Thy terrible Descent, and Passion, and holy Resurrection, and Ascent on high, whereby our nature, cast to earth, is raised to the heights again"(Thursday of the 7th week, Matins, praises, troparion 1).

In other words, taking upon Himself the whole man, Christ "was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"(John 1:9). Interpreting this verse, the established God-bearing Fathers say: St. Cyril of Alexandria; "[Christ] is light in essence, He does not partake of it". St. Gregory the Theologian says: "He was the true light..."the Father. "He was the true light..."the Son. "He was the true light..."the Comforter; He was and He was and He was; but they were one. Light and light and light, but one light, one God.

This very light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world (John 1:9) is being evangelized and preached by the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of the Orthodox Christians, hearkening to the Lord's words: "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"(Matthew 28:19-20).

This enlightening and redeeming teaching of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ we owe to keep, and that is why St. Paul urges us all in agony, to prove worthy of our vocation wherewith we are called, "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling"(Eph. 4:1-4).

This very unity of faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit do we the Brotherly Churches of the Orthodox Christians declare, through our participation in the Eucharistic

gathering of the body and blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; where there is His glory and might unto the ages of ages. Amen.”

After the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy the Head of the MISSIA Archimandrite Alexander offered a monastic meal. At the meal His Beatitude read the following address, at the presence of the Ambassador of Russia and the Ambassador of Bella Russe:

“Dear Archimandrite Alexander,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Monastics,

Sisters and Brothers in Christ

“If we walk in the light as He Himself is the light,

we have fellowship with one another,

and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 6).

Our Eucharistic celebration this morning is a manifestation that we walk together in the light, and so we share in this koinonia – this fellowship – that demonstrates our unity and oneness in the Name of the Holy Trinity.

In this time of crisis and confusion for the world, our shared Orthodox martyria, which flows from our union in Christ, is of the utmost importance not just to the Orthodox world, but to the whole of Christianity, and indeed to all the nations. From this martyria countless people are sustained in hope, and draw strength to live their lives in the face of many dangers and temptation. We cannot ever underestimate the power of our unity in a divided and conflicted world.

It is not for nothing that the great Church Fathers regarded

schism as the most serious of sins. For schism, by fracturing the visible unity of the Church, weakens the Church's martyrdom, and diminishes the Church's mission to be the true light and leaven. At this holy season of Pentecost we celebrate that, in the words of the Gospel of Saint John, "from His fulness we have received grace upon grace" (John 1:16), and this grace is divinely-appointed to us to share with all who come to us seeking the truth of the Gospel.

The unity of the Church has been under threat from the very beginning, as we read in the Second Epistle of Saint John, "many deceivers have gone out into the world" (2 John 7). And yet, the Orthodox Church has maintained the apostolic unity that was the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This unity we must strive to maintain at all costs, for if schism is the greatest sin against the Church, the guarding and deepening of her unity is the greatest good.

The Orthodox Churches are those on whom Divine Providence has placed the mantle of our Lord Jesus Christ, His seamless tunic, the tunic that He bore on His passion (cf. John 19:23). We must, in the words of the Epistle to Jude, "build ourselves up on our most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit" (cf. Jude 20), lest we trade the seamless tunic of our Lord Jesus Christ for the defiled tunic of those who are causing divisions (cf. Jude 23:19).

We pray and humbly ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten our hearts and minds, that we MAY remain firm with joy in our blessed unity in Christ, despite our human frailty, and labour without ceasing to restore the damage to the mantle of our Lord.

Please allow us now to propose a toast, first to our brother and co-celebrant in Christ, His Holiness Patriarch Cyril of Moscow and All Russia, and also to His Excellency Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, the President of the Russian Republic.

Chronia polla.

Thank you.”

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINTS CONSTANTINE AND HELEN AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, May 21/ June 3, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy glorious God-crowned sovereigns and equal to the Apostles, Constantine and Helen, as a feast of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, since St. Constantine accepted the request of the Archbishop of Jerusalem Makarios at the First Ecumenical Synod in 325 A.D., sent his mother St. Helen to the Holy Land and especially in Jerusalem, and revealed under the idolatrous monuments the places of the Horrendous Golgotha and the Life-giving Tomb of the Lord. St. Helen built the Church of the Holy Sepulchre around them and the worship of the true God started immediately in that place. The Order of the Studious ones, namely of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, was settled at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and its mission is being continued throughout the ages, which is no other than the witness of the Orthodox faith and the preservation-safeguarding of the Holy Places.

This feast was celebrated in the afternoon with Vespers led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the participation in the prayer of all the Hagiotaphite Fathers.

After Vespers, everybody was offered boiled wheat and dry bread with wine at the courtyard of the Holy Church.

On the Feast Day, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the ministering Priests of the Church, the Typikon keeper of the Church Archimandrite Alexios and others, at the chanting of the Choir Leader of the Church Archimandrite Eusevios and Hierodeacon Simeon, as the service was attended by Archbishops and other Hagiotaphite Fathers, and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Christos Sophianopoulos.

After Dismissal, a procession to the Patriarchate followed, while Abbess Seraphima distributed the small loaves of bread as a blessing at the main gate of the Central Monastery.

At the Patriarchate Reception Hall, His Beatitude addressed those present as follows;

“Not from man did great Constantine with his blest mother Helen receive the royal sovereignty but by God’s grace from Heaven. For he beheld the divine Cross as a bright flashing trophy. With it was he victorious over all who opposed him, and he destroyed the deceit and error of all the idols while making strong throughout the world Orthodox faith and practice”(Matins, exapostilarion).

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Christos Sophianopoulos,

Reverend Fathers and Brethren,

Noble Christians

Our Holy Orthodox Church, and especially the Church of Jerusalem honours and venerates today the sacred commemoration of the Holy glorious God-crowned and equal to the Apostles Great sovereigns Constantine and Helen.

For this reason, Our Mediocrity, surrounded by the reverend members of the Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, went to the Holy Church of Saints Constantine and Helen at the Central Monastery, and rendered glory and thanksgiving to the Holy Trinitarian God, with the celebration of the Mystery of the bloodless sacrifice, namely the Divine Liturgy.

Just like St. Paul, having been enlightened by the rays of the Holy Spirit, King Constantine became equal to the Apostles and a preacher of the truth of the Gospel of Christ according to his word: "Having kept the holy faith, I partake of the light of truth. Guided by the light of truth, I comprehend the Divine Faith" as Eusebius of Caesarea mentions in his history.

The priceless contribution of blessed Constantine to the Church of Christ is not only confined to the marvellous publication of the Royal Decree, of 13th June 313, through which the Christians enjoy the freedom of exercising their worship, but also to the fact that Constantine summoned the First Ecumenical Synod of the Church in Nicaea, and honoured it with his presence. Moreover, he sent his mother, Augusta Helen to the Holy Land, where she found the Precious and Life-giving Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and erected the magnificent Church of the Holy Resurrection of Christ in the Holy City of Jerusalem, and that of the Nativity of Christ in Bethlehem.

For this reason, the hymn writer says: "As is due, we celebrate thy memory, O Constantine, thou equal to the Apostles, foundation and boast of all sovereigns. For being enlightened with the rays of the Spirit, thou didst brighten the whole Church of Christ, when thou broughtest the assemblies of the faithful from all parts, gathering them in the illustrious city of Nicaea" (Minaion May 21st, 1st troparion of the Entreaty). "Thou wast the first of all the Christian kings to receive the sceptre from God; for His saving sign, which was hidden in the earth, was shown to thee, O blessed

Constantine. By its might thou didst subjugate all nations and peoples underneath the Christians' feet, since thou didst truly have Christ's life-giving Cross as a weapon which no adverse power could conquer, and thereby thou also wast brought to our God"(Vespers, 1st troparion of stichera aposticha).

It is also noteworthy that the Saints Constantine and Helen are those who made us heirs of the spiritual and redeeming chapter of Romiosyni, according to St. Paul's words: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"(Gal. 3:27-28).

Therefore, being grateful, we also say along with the hymn writer: "Rejoice, O great and all-wise Constantine (along with your mother Helen), thou fount of Orthodox Faith, that dost water continually all the lands beneath the sun with thy sweet and delightful streams. Rejoice, O root from which there sprouted forth the fruit that nourisheth Christ's most holy Church. Rejoice, thou most glorious boast and fame of all the fartherst ends of earth, first of Christian kings. Rejoice, thou joy of faithful men" (Matins, praises, troparion 1).

At noon there was a festal meal for the Fathers at the Patriarchate.

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY IN BETHANY

On Sunday, May 18/31, 2020, Sunday of the commemoration of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Synod, who condemned Arius and established the doctrine of the one essence of the Son with the Father, and formulated the first eight canons of the Creed, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, in place of the cancelled due to COVID-19 virus festive celebration of Lazarus' Saturday, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Monastery of Lazarus' sisters Martha and Mary. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archimandrite Epiphaniios, who is the ministering Priest of the Holy Monastery, Archimandrite Demetrios and Archdeacon Mark, at the chanting of Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos.

On this occasion, His Beatitude read the following Sermon:

“O ye assemblies of the Orthodox, let us celebrate today with faith and piety the annual memorial of the God-bearing Fathers who, in the illustrious city of Nicaea, came together from the whole inhabited world. For with pious mind, they refuted the godless dogma of the grievous Arius, and by synodical decree banished him from the Catholic Church. And they instructed all to openly confess the consubstantial and co-eternal Son of God, Who existed before the ages. This inexactness and piety did they set forth in the Symbol of Faith. Wherefore, following their divine doctrines and believing with assurance, we worship, in one Godhead, the Father, the Son and All-holy Spirit, the Trinity one in essence” the hymn-writer of the Church proclaims (Vespers of the Holy Fathers, Stichera,

Glory).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians

Today, the seventh Sunday since Easter, we celebrate the First Ecumenical Synod in Nicaea of the three hundred and eighteen God-bearing Fathers, who gathered there from all over the earth after the inspired by the Holy Spirit decision of the Emperor St. Constantine the Great, in the twentieth year of his reign. And we offer this bloodless sacrifice in Eucharist to our Trinitarian God in this Holy place of His sanctification.

The Holy Fathers of the Church are the descendants of the Holy Apostles and the guardians of the Holy Apostolic tradition, namely of the redeeming teaching of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle", St. Paul urges us (2 Thess. 2:15).

And the Fathers, who are called "God-bearing", namely bearers of the Holy Spirit, are those who on the one hand were ordained by the Church (2 Cor. 8:19), and on the other, through their mission and teaching were established Spiritual Fathers of the faithful members of the body of the Church, as St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel"(1 Cor. 4:15).

In other words, the God-inspired Fathers of the Church are the bearers of the unadulterated and healthy teaching of the faith, which they formulated in the doctrines and entrenched through the holy canons in the various Ecumenical and local Synods. For this reason, they are recognized as ecumenical teachers and luminaries as their hymn writer says: "When the choir of the Holy Fathers flocked from the ends of the

inhabited world, they proclaimed the doctrine of the One Essence and One Nature of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thereby delivering plainly to the Church the mystery of theology. As we acclaim them in faith, let us call them blessed, saying: O divine array, ye God-proclaiming hoplites of the Lord's company, most brilliant stars of the spiritual firmament, impregnable towers of the mystical Sion, ye fragrant flowers of Paradise, ye all-golden mouths of the Word, the boast of Nicaea and adornment of the whole world: Intercede ye fervently in behalf of our souls" (Matins, praises, Glory).

Here the hymn writer calls the Holy Fathers "all-golden mouths of God the Word". And this is so because they established the doctrine of the mystery of theology, which refers to the one essence and one nature of the persons of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Moreover, they formed the doctrine of the Divine Providence, which refers to the incarnation of God the Word, Christ, from the pure flesh of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. And according to St. Gregory the Theologian, they accomplished this, thinking "not in the manner of Aristotle, but in that of the fishermen". And according to the hymn writer: "Since Christ's heralds had received all of the spiritual brightness of the Holy Spirit's light and had been inspired of God, they proclaimed to all that divine oracle filled with wondrous wisdom, which though few in words is great in breadth"(Matins praises, stichera of the Fathers, Troparion 2).

In other words, the formation of the holy doctrines of our faith by the Church Fathers has its source of inspiration in the revealed truth in Jesus Christ, namely this very revelation of God toward men, in the incarnate Son of His and Word, which was made complete and is eternally unchangeable, and for which it is said: "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away"(Mark 13:31).

On the contrary, the heretics' formation of the faith in

Christ has their own mind as its source, namely the “cunningly devised fables”(2 Peter 1:16), and their distorted thoughts, according to what has been foretold by St. Paul: “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them”(Acts 20: 29-30).

Such “men speaking perverse things” were the unrepentant heretics, Arius, who denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, Macedonius, the fighter of the Spirit, and Nestorius, who introduced the division of God-man Christ. And the teachings of the other false teachers, old and new alike, is connected directly or indirectly with the aforementioned heretics.

Behold my brethren why, our Holy Church festively honours its “all-golden mouths”, namely the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Synod in Nicaea in 325 A.D. As direct descendants of the Apostles, “being reviled, buffeted and persecuted, and driven into exile”(1 Cor. 4-11-13), the Holy Fathers became “true servants of Christ and venerable initiates and seers of the divine preaching from on high” according to the hymn writer (Matins, praises, Troparion 3).

Along with the Holy God-bearing Fathers, who proclaimed the Ever-Virgin and Most Blessed Mary as Theotokos and Mother of God, and the hymn writer, let us say: “Beholding Thine ascents on the holy mountains, O Christ, Thou Effulgence of the Father’s glory, we praise the radiant form of Thy countenance. We worship Thy Passion, we honour Thy Resurrection, and we glorify Thy glorious Ascension. Have mercy on us” (Sunday of the Holy Fathers Vespers, both now).

And deliver Your world from the plague of the COVID-19 virus. Amen. Many Happy returns and health in Christ!”

At noon, the elder and devoted Abbess Nun Eupraxia and the nuns under her offered a meal to His Beatitude and His

entourage.

From Secretariat-General