

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY AT THE HOLY MONASTERY OF SAINT GERASIMOS

On Sunday, May 11/24, 2020, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Monastery of St. Gerasimos of the Jordan, which is located at the West Bank of the river Jordan before its estuary to the Dead Sea.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated in completion of the celebration of the commemoration of St. Gerasimos, which is on 4th/17th May, but at that time the feast was held without the participation of any external congregation due to the COVID-19.

On this occasion, His Beatitude read the following sermon:

“And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him” (John 9:1-3).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians

Today, the sixth Sunday since Easter, we celebrate the miracle of our Lord Jesus Christ to the blind man from birth, through which miracle, Christ revealed the works of His God and Father.

To the disciples' question, "who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2) Christ replied, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him" (John 9:3). Interpreting these words of the Lord, St. Cyril of Alexandria says that Jesus does not clarify His disciples' question, because this is a work of the Holy Spirit. "And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:7-8).

The miracle of giving sight to the man who was born blind is an irrefutable witness, that Christ, being the Son of God the Father, a perfect God and a perfect man, came to the world in order to enlighten and sanctify the world, as much through His teaching as also through His miracles. "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:8) the Lord says.

In other words, Christ is the spiritual and irreproachable light, "through which the enlightened ones should be illumined through faith", St. Ziganos says. And according to St. Theophylactos, "I am the light of the world", meaning that through the teaching and the working of the miracles Christ illumines the souls.

Worth of our attention in the miracle of the man who was born blind is the fact, as St. Cyril of Alexandria says, "that by His own Will and command, the Saviour wanted to heal the man". And according to St. Chrysostom, "Christ Himself saw the blind man, it was not the blind man that came to Him. This means that Jesus was not invited by the blind man to heal his eyes". It was not possible for this blind man to see Christ, but Christ saw him and restored his eyesight with the miraculous healing.

In other words my dear brethren, Christ is found and recognized by those who neither seek, nor see Him, as the prophet Isaiah says; "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not"(Isaiah 65:1). And if we know or become aware of anything regarding Christ, this is owed to the fact that we have been known by Him as St. Paul says. "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God"(Galatians 4:9) and "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus"(Phil. 3:12).

This teaching of St. Paul is confirmed by the preaching of repentance of St. John the Baptist, who in this context refers to prophet Isaiah by saying; "and every flesh shall see the salvation of God". Interpreting this verse, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "flesh here refers to man as a whole and every human flesh. In this manner every flesh shall see the salvation of God, namely of the Father, for He has sent our Saviour His Son."

Behold therefore why the hymn writer of the Church says "who can tell of Thy mighty works, O Christ, or who can number the multitudes of Thy wonders? For even as Thou, in Thy goodness, didst appear on earth twofold, of nature, so didst Thou grant twofold healings to the sick; for Thou didst open not only the bodily eyes of the man who was blind from the womb, but those of his soul also. Wherefore, he confessed to Thee, the hidden God, Who grantest great mercy unto all" (Pentecostarion, Sunday of the Blind man Matins, praises, Glory).

Indeed, not only the eyes of the body, but also those of the soul, did Christ open of the man who was born blind, as He "wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:4) according to St. Paul. This truth, namely the light of the truth, the God-man our Lord Jesus Christ, did the recovered eyes of the blind man see, and that is why at Jesus' question; "believest thou in the Son of God" (John 9:35) the blind man said "Lord I believe" and worshiped Him"

(John 9:38).

The spiritual worship He asks on our part, St. Cyril of Alexandria says, hearkening to Christ's words to the Samaritan woman: "a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth...God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24).

Amen. Christ is risen!"

And the hardworking and hospitable Hegoumen Archimandrite Chrysostom hosted them for a meal.

From Secretariat-General

SERMON OF H.H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III ON THE SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC MAN

"Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians

Today, the fourth Sunday after Easter, our Holy Church commemorates the healing of the paralytic man, whom the Lord miraculously healed at the Sheep's Pool as St. John the

Evangelist witnesses.

And the Hymn writer of the Church, referring to this wondrous healing, says: "At the sheep's Pool, a man lay in sickness; and when he saw Thee, O Lord, he cried: I have no man, that when the water is troubled, he might put me therein. But when I go, another anticipateth me and receiveth the healing, and I lie yet in mine infirmity. And straight away, taking compassion on him, the Saviour saith unto him: for thee I became man, for thee I am clothed in flesh, and sayest thou: I have no man? Take up thy bed and walk" (Pentecostarion, Sunday of the Paralytic, Vespers, Entreaty, Glory).

In these words, we see the deepest meaning of the mystery of the Divine Providence, namely of the immense compassion and philanthropy of the Almighty God. And this is so, because the meaning of sin, whose result is death, does not have a simple moral or theoretical interpretation, but it refers to the natural illness of the body and soul.

Interpreting these words of the Lord, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14), St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "The Lord teaches thus, that the sins of men are not only recorded for the future judgement, but He also flogs us in various ways, while we are still in our bodies, before the great and illustrious day of the Great Judgement. The wise Apostle Paul also confirms that we quite often are in fault and grieve God: "For this cause, many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:30-32).

Commenting on Paul's words, Zigavinos says: "[Paul] has taught us here that many of the bodily illnesses have their root in sin; not only illnesses though, but also many deaths. For he calls death as sleep".

It is undeniable, my dear brethren, that God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ who became incarnate receiving human flesh for us, “came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32). And God “granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18) according to St. Luke the Evangelist.

And the life that God gave is the salvation of man from sin, namely his illness and infirmity. Behold why Christ is also called the healer of our souls and bodies, as St. Luke the Evangelist witnesses for Him in his Gospel: “And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox (Herod), Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected” (Luke 13:32).

We also, my dear brethren, are called to this purpose, namely to our perfection in Christ our God the Resurrected from the dead, hearkening to our Saviour’s advice: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48).

And along with the hymn writer let us say: “As befit His goodness, the Almighty appeared on earth, having become man from thine immaculate virgin womb; and he hath deified us, O blessed, all-pure, all-immaculate Theotokos” [through His Resurrection] (Pentecostarion, Midnight Service of the Sunday of Paralytic, Ode 7, theotokion). Amen! Christ is risen!”

THE FEAST OF JOSEPH OF ARIMATHAEA AT THE

PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, April 20/ May 3, 2020, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearers according to Pentecostarion, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of Joseph of Arimathaea at his Holy Monastery in Remli, ancient town of Arimathaea, which was his hometown.

On this feast the Church commemorates that righteous Joseph went to Pilate and asked Jesus' body, and having received it, he buried it with the help of the myrrh-bearers near the place of His crucifixion.

The feast was held within the frame of the safety measures due to COVID-19, and was led by His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Joppa under the hospitality of the Hegoumen of the Monastery Reverend Archimandrite Niphon, with the participation of only a few faithful Christians.

His Beatitude sent the following Sermon to Remli Community;

“Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus” (Mark 15:43). “And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him” (Mark 16:1).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians

Our Lord Jesus Christ who has caused the light to rise and shine all over the universe, has gathered us all in the Biblical town of Arimathaea, the home town of Joseph, so that along with Nicodemus and the myrrh-bearers we may celebrate their feast.

In the detailed description of the three-day burial and resurrection of Christ, the Holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark,

Luke and John commemorate especially the myrrh-bearing women, Joseph and Nicodemus, the secret disciples of Christ. Because their immediate and noble care of the burial of Jesus' immaculate body is an irrefutable witness. The myrrh-bearing Women were the first true witnesses of the resurrection of the Lord, while Joseph and Nicodemus were the witnesses of His burial. "And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe", St. John the Evangelist writes (John 19:35).

And St. Cyril of Alexandria says regarding Jesus' burial; "in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matthew 18:16). "For two were those who buried Him, Joseph and Nicodemus, who had their mind and faith in God and did not prefer the earthly glory nor its honour...by their free faith they received the permission and were shown to be devoted and dear guardians of our Saviour's command". The resurrection, my dear brethren is the crown of the mystery of the Divine Providence, as St. John Damascene says; "Now the hidden mystery of the ages of old is being revealed; now the chapter of the Divine Providence is being fulfilled; now the crown of the Incarnation of God the Word is being put into place; now the abyss of the Divine Love is being published. For God the Word loved the world so much, so that by the providence of God the Father He came down and became incarnate, and took upon Himself our body while being bodiless, so that He might suffer by partaking in the passions and become passion to death, in order to cover with apathy, us, who suffer from the passions" (St. John Damascene, Sermon on Holy Saturday).

The extreme power of the Resurrection is due to this fact, that "by becoming a passion to death, [Christ] dressed us [the people] who suffer from the passions, with apathy". St. John Damascene formulates this clearly in his Paschal Hymn; "The only blessed and most glorious God of our Fathers, who hath redeemed the Children from the furnace, is become man, and as

a mortal doth suffer, and through suffering doth cloth mortality with the grace of incorruption" (Katavasia of Pascha, Ode 7).

In other words, He who took upon Himself our nature with all the passions except sin, suffers passions as a mortal and especially the death on the Cross. Through the passions and the resurrection, Christ renews the human nature that He took upon Himself, and clads it with the beauty of incorruption, as Prophet David says; "The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty" (Psalm 93:1).

This immense philanthropy and excessive goodness of God is being preached by St. Gregory the Theologian who says; "He that Is, becomes poor with my flesh so that I may become rich with His divinity; and He who is full is emptied; He is emptied from His glory for a short while, so that I may partake of His fullness. What is the richness of goodness? What is this mystery that concerns me? I partook from the image and did not keep it; He takes upon Himself my flesh, so that He may save the image and make the flesh immortal."

Here St. Gregory talks about the salvation of the image through the Incarnation of God the Word, namely of the soul and the immortality of the human body.

Moreover, interpreting the Lord's words, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth" (John 11:11) Cyril of Alexandria says that Jesus "calls sleep the departure of the soul from the body". And elsewhere the Father says; "the acquired corruption defiles the nature of man, and death shall prevail by evil hatred, having sin as a root."

In this the victory and the power of Christ resurrection is made obvious, namely in the abolishment of the death of the acquired corruption, namely of sin, through Christ's death. Let us therefore hear St. John Damascene saying; "For if the sacred soul of the life-giving and immaculate body was

divided, nevertheless the divinity of the Word after the conception in the womb of the Holy Virgin Theotokos Mary, remained inseparable, the two natures in one hypostasis, an undivided unity, of the soul and body; and thus the one hypostasis of Christ remained in this death, being God the Word in body and soul, and after death also this very one hypostasis. For this reason, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11).

Behold therefore, my dear ones, why Pascha, or better say, the Day of Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is recognized as the day of the inauguration of the unwaning Kingdom of God, to which we are called to participate by the hymn writer. And behold why today we honour the commemoration of Joseph and Nicodemus along with the myrrh-bearers. For they all were fervent preachers of Christ's resurrection.

As, for us, let us say along with the hymn writer; "When thy Son destroyed all the might of death, O Virgin, as the mighty God He exalted and deified us with Himself by His Resurrection. Wherefore, we sing His praise unto the ages" (Pentecostarion, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearers, Matins, Canon 8, 2nd troparion of the Theotokos). Christ is risen!"

On this Sunday the Patriarchate also celebrated the commemoration of the myrrh-bearing Women, who buried the Lord along with Joseph and were the first ones to hear that the Lord was risen from the dead by the angel who was sitting at the Tomb's stone, early at dawn of the first Saturday.

The commemoration of the myrrh-bearers was celebrated at their chapel in the courtyard of St. James the Brother of God Cathedral and at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The celebration was held by St. James' Cathedral parish, led

by the participation of His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, with only a few faithful Christians present, again due to the COVID-19 measures. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Monk Nikolaos on the right in Greek, and by Mr. Rimon Kamar on the left in Arabic.

A modest reception followed the service at the Cathedral's office.

Early in the morning of the same day, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the H. Monastery of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, where He read the following Sermon;

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The beyond comprehension condescension and philanthropy of our Lord and God towards us, has gathered us all in this holy place of Tabor where for the first time "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (Matt. 17:2), in order to celebrate the Paschal commemoration of the myrrh-bearing Women; and of the secret disciples Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus.

"For great is the mystery of the Divine Providence, which cannot be comprehended only through faith, but it needs purity of soul which is consistent with divine desire and fear. For there is no other way to work purification, but through divine fear and love. Also, it is not possible to receive the divine enlightenment, if the eyes of the soul are not cleansed beforehand. For every divine gift is unapproachable to the profane ones; for only the ones that are pure in heart shall see God, as Christ, the only truth indeed says" St. John Damascene preaches.

“Let us purify our senses and we shall behold Christ, radiant with the unapproachable light of the Resurrection, and we shall clearly hear Him say: Rejoice! As we sing the triumphant hymn”, the hymn writer of the Church proclaims (Canon of Pascha Ode 1 troparion 2).

Christ’s Resurrection is “the living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh” (Hebrews 10:20) according to St. Paul. And this way is the one which leads us to the eternal Kingdom as Ecumenios and Zigavinos interpret respectively; “He [Christ] has initiated it” and “He was the first one who walked on it”. And according to the hymn writer; “Christ is the Pascha that openeth the gates of Paradise for us”.

Behold therefore, why St. Paul advices us; “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:1-2). “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth...seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col. 3:5, 3:9-10). And in more detail; mortify your body parts that desire the earthly pleasures and delights, having first removed from yourselves the old corrupt man along with his actions and even more since you are dressed with the new man, who is continuously renewed.

The established Father of the Church St. John Damascene, says after St. Paul’s preaching; “Christ on the Cross; for ye are partakers of His sufferings (2 Cor. 1:7), “and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed” (1 Peter 5:1). Christ is among the dead; let us mortify our flesh to sin, in order to live in righteousness. Christ is wrapped up in clothes for the dead; let us cleanse ourselves of the old lump and become a new leaven (Gal. 5:9), in order to become the den of Christ. Christ is in Hades; let us go down along with Him to the

humility that elevates, in order to rise, and stand and be glorified along with Him, always beholding God, and being seen by Him.”

We, my dear ones, who have been vivified through the death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, let us say along with the myrrh-bearing women and the secret disciples Joseph and Nicodemus, who became preachers and witnesses of the three-day burial and resurrection from the dead of our Christ: Let no one fear death; Christ is risen! To Him belongs all glory and the power unto the ages of ages! Amen.”

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THOMAS' SUNDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

The Feast of Thomas' Sunday was celebrated by the Patriarchate on Sunday, April 13/26, 2020.

On this Sunday the Church commemorates the event of the first day after the Resurrection, “On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders ...” (John 20:19-29), when Jesus appeared to His disciples at the Upper room, Thomas was not with them, and when the disciples told him “we have seen the Lord”, he was not convinced, but said; ““Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe”. Then after eight days Jesus appeared to the disciples again and told Thomas ““Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

According to the typikon order of the Patriarchate, this feast was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, as a "parresia" with Vespers in the afternoon and the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Sepulchre in the morning, officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, with only a few co-celebrants, due to the safety measures. There was also a celebration in Cana of Galilee with the Divine Liturgy which was held according to the current restrictions by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Chrysostom.

His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos sent the following Sermon for the flock in Cana;

"Come on this auspicious day of the Resurrection let us partake of the new fruit of the vine of divine gladness and of the Kingdom of Christ, praising Him as God unto the ages" (Pentecostarion, Canon of Easter, Ode 8, troparion 2).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians

Christ our God, who "has endured the cross, voided death and risen from the dead" (Octoechos Sunday Matins praises tone 1, troparion 1), has gathered us all in this holy place of Cana of Galilee in order to celebrate the beginning of the marvels Jesus worked, and revealed His glory and His disciples believed in Him (John 2:11). Today's feast of the wedding in Cana and of the miracle of turning the water into wine on this Thomas' Sunday of the Renewal week has a special significance. Because, on the one hand, the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of our Christian faith as St. Paul preaches; "But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. 15:13-14). And on the other, Easter is the primary celebration of the Eastern Church, as St. Paul says; "For even Christ our

passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

Jesus chose the day of His friend Simon the Canaanite's wedding to begin the working of His divine signs, His miracles, at the presence of His Mother, the Ever-Virgin Theotokos Mary. And St. Paul regards marriage as sacred and great; "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32).

Interpreting these words, St. John Damascene says that St. Paul refers to the union of Christ with the teaching of His Church; "in this manner there is a sacrament of the concealed truth, as the union of the woman with the man depicts the union of Christ with the Church".

In other words, in the wedding of Cana there was a sacrament which depicted the hidden truth, namely the spiritual wedding of Christ with the Church, as very clearly St. Paul teaches by saying; "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25).

Moreover, St. Paul's teaching is confirmed by the witness of St. John the Evangelist in his book of Revelation by saying; "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7).

This prophesy of St. John refers to the joy of the partakers of the triumphant Church, namely of the Kingdom of God, which is represented as the lamb's wedding. "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven", the Lord preaches (Matt. 8:11). And St. Andrew of Caesarea of Cappadocia, interpreting the verse "the guests at the Lamb's wedding supper" says; "The supper of Christ is the gladness of those who are saved, and the harmonious gleefulness, and blessed are those who partake of it and enter the eternal bridal chamber along with the holy bridegroom of

the purified souls”.

During the Last Supper, namely the tradition of the Holy Eucharist, our Lord Jesus Christ “ took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament... But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matt. 26:26-29).

“The fruit of the vine”, namely the wine, which is an inseparable element of the wedding ceremony, here at the Last Supper depicts the foretaste of the sacred blood that was shed from the pierced side of our Lord Jesus Christ. Behold therefore, why Christ blessed the marriage on the one hand, and on the other, He projected the wine with the transformation of the water, by His perfect divine power in Cana of Galilee.

Behold therefore why St. John Damascene says rejoicing; ““Come on this auspicious day of the Resurrection let us partake of the new fruit of the vine of divine gladness and of the Kingdom of Christ, praising Him as God unto the ages” (Pentecostarion, Canon of Easter, Ode 8, troparion 2). In other words, through His blood that was shed from the cross, and through the day of the Resurrection, Christ renews our human nature which He had received, and dresses it with the beauty of His incorruption, thus making it partaker of His eternal Kingdom, as Prophet David says; “The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty” (Psalm 93:1); He also makes our human nature an accomplice of its [the eternal Kingdom’s] supper, as St. Luke the Evangelist says; “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God” (Luke 14:15).

My dear Brothers and Sisters, it is made clear that the divine grace given through the sacrament of the wedding held by the Church is sanctifying and strengthening, enabling the couple to live their union in Christ, with mutual love and devotion, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25), as well as their mystical partaking in the redeeming and incomprehensible mystery of the inseparable union of the bridegroom-Christ with the bride-Church.

For his good unfaithfulness, the Holy Apostle Thomas was a partaker of this incomprehensible and paschal and divine sacrament of the mystical wedding, as well as of its supper. St. Thomas asked to put his fingers in the print of the nails and thrust his hand into the Resurrected Lord's side, and by the Lord's philanthropy he was allowed to investigate the incorrupt deified body of Christ and cried out loud; "My Lord and my God" (John 20:19-31). Therefore, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, we, who have been enlightened by the unwaning Light of the Resurrection of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, cry aloud: "Christ is risen from the dead, by death he hath overcome death and to those in the graves He has bestowed life". Christ is Risen!"

His Beatitude officiated an All-night Vigil at the H. Monastery of Saints George and Ioannis the Hozevites and delivered the following Sermon;

"This chosen and holy day is the first of the sabbaths, the queen and lady, the feast of feasts, and the festival of festivals, wherein we bless Christ unto the ages" St. John Damascene declares in his hymn (Pentecostarion, Sunday of Pascha, Ode8, troparion 1).

Beloved Fathers in Christ,

The unwaning Light of our Lord Jesus Christ's Resurrection has gathered us in the holy and historic Hozeva Monastery in order

to celebrate the chosen and Holy day, the inauguration of our renewal in Christ. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" St. Paul preaches (2 Cor. 5:17).

"Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter...(John 10:22), "[the time] of unfaithfulness, and Jesus came, the God and temple, eternal God, recent temple, which could be destroyed in a day, and rebuilt in three days, and remain unto the ages, in order that I may be saved and be recalled from the old body of death, and become a new creation, redeemed [from death] through such a philanthropy" St. Gregory the Theologian says.

The three-day Resurrection of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ is the end of the mystery of the Divine Providence, namely of the incarnation of God the Word through the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Theotokos Mary. Behold why during this Paschal feast we bless Christ unto the ages.

On this second Sunday after Easter, we celebrate the inauguration of Christ's Resurrection and the placing of the hands of St. Thomas the Apostle: "A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:26-28).

Interpreting this witness of St. John, the Evangelist, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "righteously therefore we hold the gatherings in the Churches on the eighth day [on Sunday]. And in order to explain the meaning of what is held, we close the doors, but Christ comes and can be seen by all of us, visibly and invisibly; invisibly as God, and visibly again in the flesh, and He allows to touch His Holy Body. Let us therefore accept as reasonable the mystical blessing by participation,

receiving Christ in our hands, so that we also may have unshakable faith in that He raised His own body as a temple”.

In other words, the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ is the true confession of Christ’s Resurrection from the dead. For this reason, our Holy Father Cyril makes us pay heed by saying; “Let us thus abandon unfaithfulness as something destructive, but on the contrary, having touched Christ, we may find ourselves with steadfast mind”.

Let us, my brethren, renew our souls on the bright day of the Resurrection “our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:19). This truth is witnessed by the partakers and communicants of the incorruption, namely of Christ’s Resurrection, the Saints George, Ioannis and Ioannis the New, the Hozevites, and especially entreat the Mother of God, the evident glory and superior of all creation, in order to intercede to Her Son and God for all of us.

Christ is risen from the dead, by death hath He trampled down death, and on those in the graves hath He bestowed life. He is risen indeed!”

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION AT THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

The feast of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead was celebrated at midnight of Holy Saturday/ Easter Sunday, April 5/18, 2020.

On this feast the Church is glorifying in gratitude the divine and wondrous event that the crucified Son and Word of God, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, having been buried, conquered the power of the devil and the authority of Hades and was resurrected from the dead, raising also Adam and his descendants by His mighty Hand.

The Church of Jerusalem celebrated this feast at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, at the blessed and empty Holy Tomb, with the Service of Matins, the Canon of Holy Saturday and the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, with the sermon of the Saint. The Service was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba and only a few Archimandrites, less than ten in total, due to the safety precautions imposed by the Israeli Police due to the corona virus.

Before the Holy Communion, Geronda Secretary-General read the Patriarchal Easter message which follows below;

THEOPHILOS III

By the mercy of God Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem

and all Palestine

for all the congregation of the Church, grace, mercy and peace

from the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb

of the Resurrected Christ.

“We celebrate the death of death, the destruction of Hades, the beginning of an everlasting life. And with leaps of joy we praise the Cause thereof, the only blest and most glorious God of our Fathers”. (Troparion Ode Seven of the Canon of the Resurrection by St. John Damascene)

In unspeakable and absolute joy, with pure hearts and

undefiled lips, with unceasing merry voices and pious cheering, the Church proclaims during the night of the Resurrection, and during the whole Easter period, echoing the "Christ is risen from the dead, by death hath he trampled down death, and to those in the graves hath He bestowed life". In firmness of faith in the Crucified and Resurrected from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the hope of the Resurrection unto eternal life, the Church chants "It is the day of Resurrection; let us be radiant for the festival, and let us embrace one another. Let us say O brethren, even to those that hate us; let us forgive all things on the Resurrection".

This wondrous and joyful message of the victory of death is the fruit of Christ's crucifixion, for, "behold, through the cross, joy has come unto the whole world". Christ's victory over death came through His sacrifice on the Cross. Christ, the Only-begotten Son and Word of God, came down to earth from the bosom of the Father, became incarnate through the Holy Spirit and Virgin-Mary, willingly brought Himself on the Cross as an immaculate sacrifice for the remission of our sins. As Prophet Isaiah had foretold, "he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7), and just as St. John the Baptist pointed at Him in recognition, He became on the Cross "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The most wondrous of all in this mystery, which signifies the excessive love of God for us, is what the Apostle of nations also says: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8). Being without sin, Christ "being in the form of God...made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant: (Phil. 2:6-7), He humbled Himself, willingly came to the Cross and through His immaculate blood

“He that forgiveth the ancient debts, rent asunder the handwriting against them and wished to bestow His grace”(Akathist Hymn to the Theotokos, 4th Part).

Having suffered in the flesh for us and buried, Christ went down into Hades. In his greed, Hades was waiting to devour the Son of God. But because of the humility of His sacrifice, Hades was not able to have power over Him. Hades was deceived and embittered. Thinking that he had received a mortal being, he met God, God and man, the God-man Jesus Christ, Who by both the power of God the Father and His own, was risen from the dead, becoming the first-fruits of the dead, and led the way for all humans in flesh to the resurrection from the dead. He sought the lost sheep in Hades, just as He did on earth, , preached the Gospel of repentance and salvation to Adam and Eve and their descendants and as it is depicted on the Orthodox icon of the Resurrection, He drew them into Paradise along with Him. Since then, by the power and faith in the Resurrection, we humans die only in flesh, we dispose our earthly body, for, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 15:50), and live with Him in soul and spirit, “awaiting for the resurrection from the dead and life of the age to come” (The Creed).

Christ had foretold this mystery of the resurrection from the dead to His friends and disciples, while He still lived with them on earth, and after His Resurrection “he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:3), appearing to them in His crucified body with the nail signs, but radiant and glorified. Through His Disciples who were His eye-witnesses, He passed on this mystery to His body the Church, which He established with the Comforter Spirit, that He sent down to us from the Father, after His Ascension in Heaven on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after His Resurrection.

Ever since, the Church, which according to the true words of the Lord “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”

(Matt. 16:18), continues His mission on earth. It preaches Christ Incarnate , Crucified and Resurrected, and baptizes in His Name those who believe in Him, sanctifies them with its sacraments and prays for the reconciliation of humanity and for the whole world. It supports the suffering man with all its strength, prays to our Lord Jesus Christ, the healer of souls and bodies , for the cessation of the ongoing pandemic of the current virus, for the healing of those affected by it and for His mercy for those who died by the virus so mercilessly, in the certainty that “though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you” (2 Cor. 13:4).

On the bright day of the Resurrection, our Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of Churches, also prays from the Life-giving Tomb where Christ was buried and resurrected, for the unity of the Church and for peace in the Middle East, and wishes to its flock in the Holy Land and all over the world, the power and the blessing of the Resurrected Jesus Christ.

Christ is Risen!

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, PASCHA 2020

With Fatherly and Patriarchal blessings,

Fervent supplicant for all before God,

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem”

From Secretariat-General

PALM SUNDAY AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday March 30/April 12, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of Palm Sunday, as it is written in the contrite Triodion, as the commemoration of the triumphant entrance of our Lord Jesus Christ in Jerusalem before His Passion, seated on an ass, while the children of the Jews laid down their garments welcoming Him and crying out loud “Hosanna to the Son of David”.

Due to the security measures imposed by the Ministry of Health against the deadly virus, the feast was not celebrated with the usual festivities like the previous years. It was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with an all-night Vigil led by Geronda Sacristan His Eminence Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis and the Temple Fathers. This year the feast was also celebrated at the monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen with Vespers in the afternoon and the Divine Liturgy in the morning, with the participation in prayer of His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with Hagiotaphite Archbishops, Priests and Monks, and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos.

After the Divine Liturgy, holding palm branches, His Beatitude and the Fathers went to the Reception Hall of the Patriarchate, where His Beatitude read the following festal address;

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a

colt the foal of an ass” Prophet Zechariah says (Zechariah 9:9). And David again says about the children “out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast Thou perfected praise” (Psalm 8:3).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians,

The entrance of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy City of Jerusalem, riding upon an ass, and being praised by the children with the words “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest” (Matth. 21:9), proclaims the peak of the redeeming mission of the Divine Providence, namely of the excessive philanthropy of God the Father, which was materialized in the Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was crucified and resurrected from the dead for our sake.

Our Holy Church, being the mystical body of Christ, exists and acts in the world, by preaching the Gospel of the King of righteousness, as St. John the Evangelist witnesses by saying: “And when he is come [the Comforter], he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged” (John 16:8-11).

The Comforter, namely the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, will prove to the world that Jesus was “Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1), just like the centurion confessed by saying; “Certainly this was a righteous man” (Luke 23:47). And according to Apostle Peter, “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18).

The Holy Week, the Week of the Passions and of the Resurrection of Christ refers to nothing more than the

projection of the Divine Righteousness, namely to the comprehension of the path of salvation. "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Again, the Lord says; "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).

Especially during this period of the pandemic that mercilessly plagues all mankind, our Holy Church is calling us precisely to this, to the Light of the world and of life, with the words of the hymn writer who says; "Come forth, ye nations, come forth, ye peoples: look today upon the King of heaven, who enters Jerusalem seated upon a humble colt as though upon a lofty throne" (Palm Sunday Matins, praises troparion 3). "Therefore, we also, with our souls cleans and in spirit carrying branches, with faith let us sing Christ praises like the children, crying with a loud voice to the Master: Blessed art Thou, O Saviour, who hast come into the world to save Adam from the ancient curse" (Palm Sunday Matins 1st Kathisma). Amen. Many happy returns, free from every plague, and Happy Easter!"

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF OUR MOST BLESSED LADY

THEOTOKOS

On Tuesday, March 25/ April 7, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Annunciation of our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.

On this Feast the Church commemorates the event when Archangel Gabriel was sent by God the Father to announce to the Virgin Mary of Nazareth the good news, that she was to conceive and give birth to the Only Begotten Son of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit. When Mary replied, "behold the servant of God, let it be done unto me according to thy word", instantly "the Son of God, become Son of the Virgin" for the salvation of men.

This Feast was celebrated by the Patriarchate as follows;

1. At the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, with the lead in prayer of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.
2. In Nazareth, the town of the Annunciation, led by His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth. H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos sent the following Sermon to the celebrating flock;

"Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad; for the co-eternal and co-beginningless Son of the Father, Who is of one throne with Him, taking pity and filled with man-befriending mercy, condescended unto the emptying of Himself according to the good pleasure and Will of the Father, and He dwelt in the Virgin's womb, which was purified before by the Spirit. O wonder! God is among men, the Uncontainable is the womb, the Timeless One is in time; and wondrous it is that the conception is without seed, and the emptying ineffable, and the mystery so great! For God emptieth Himself, and becometh flesh, and is fashioned, the Angel having declared the

conception unto the pure Virgin: Rejoice, O Full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee, even He that hath great mercy" St. John Damascene proclaims. (Minaion March 25, sticheron at the end of Matins).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims.

Today the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church rejoices and is glad with the holy feast of the universal event that took place in Nazareth, namely of the Annunciation of our Lady Theotokos, the Most Blessed and Ever-Virgin Mary, by the Archangel Gabriel who greeted her with the words; "'Rejoice Thou who art full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1:28).

The hymn writer says; "Today is revealed the mystery that is from eternity, and the Son of God becometh the Son of man; that in partaking of what is worse, He may impart unto me of what is better. In ancient times Adam was cheated of his hopes, and he became not God as he desired. God becometh man, that He might make Adam God". (Matins praises, Glory both now).

In other words, the eternal mystery which was revealed to us men, is no other than the mystery of the divine Providence, which is the incarnation of God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, through the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Mary. This mystery was foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament, especially by Prophet Isaiah by saying; "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). Regarding this, St. John Damascene says in his praise to the Annunciation; "Rejoice, thou who have been foretold by the prophets of old. Rejoice the conclusion of the Old Testament!" And Prophet-King David chants; "O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing

unto the Lord, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day" (Psalm 96:1-2).

The salvation of the Lord refers to the incarnate God the Word, Christ the King of Heaven, as St. John Damascene denotes with the deepest theological meaning of the feast of the Annunciation with his hymn; "The King of Heaven, because of His love for mankind, appeared on earth and dwelt with men. He took flesh from the pure Virgin and after assuming it, He came forth from her. The Son is one, two natures yet one person. Proclaiming Him as perfect God and perfect man, we confess Christ our God! Entreat Him unwedded Mother to have mercy on our souls" (Octoechos, Theotokion tone 8).

On the one hand, it is undeniable that the fall of man which happened by his own free will through the working of the devil, introduced the world into death and corruption, namely into sin. On the other hand, the ineffable love and philanthropy of God the Father, did not forsake His creature, and therefore sent the pure and Virgin Mary and made her womb a paradise with the divine light, where Christ our Saviour dwelt. Christ is the new Adam who was born through the pure flesh of the Virgin without corruption, namely without sin, in contrast to the old Adam, who was made of earth, as the psalmist says; "For he [God] knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14).

Through the Full of Grace Virgin Mary, my dear ones, we have found the way, namely the gate of light, through the eyes of our hearts which have been opened. Through the Annunciation of Theotokos, our unwise and darkened mind has been lit up with the wondrous light of the Son of God who becomes Son of the Virgin.

Behold therefore why St. John Damascene addresses the Mother of God praising her; Rejoice thou through whom the One who is full of mercy for man was made manifest to us, becoming a man. Rejoice, thou alone blessed among women, who has corrected the

fault of our foremother Eve.

The correction of Eve's fault does not have a mere theoretical and moral-logical character, but an essential meaning, referring to the very meaning of the mystery of the divine Providence, namely of the salvation of man through Christ. "I have not come to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32) says the Lord. "He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil" prophet Joel says (Joel 2:13).

The coming of the Holy Spirit and the overshadowing of the power of the Most High (Luke 1:35), have made the Full of Grace Virgin Mary of Nazareth the New Eve, "through whom we were redeemed from the curse" according to St. John Damascene. In other words, the New Eve, the Most Blessed Theotokos Mary, announced to the world of the curse and of sin the joy of repentance and of salvation; and this is so, because through Virgin Mary, the Lord God united Himself with the human nature, as St. Theodore of Studion says: "through thee incorrupt, unwedded Virgin Mother, God assumed my nature, He who created the time and united Himself with the human nature".

Through today's feast of the Annunciation, our Holy Church calls every single man to his own annunciation, namely to the fact that "God gave repentance to life" according to Apostle Peter (Acts 11:18), and "life" is our Lord Jesus Christ who became incarnate through the full of Grace Virgin Mary.

Let us entreat my brothers, the Theotokos Mother of God and our Mother, along with St. John Damascene and say; Prolong your mercy All-good Lady to those who know you and look down upon your servants and guide us all to the path of peace [and repentance] and deliver us and the whole world from the corona virus pandemic, as our eyes are turned to you in hope, and we have you to intercede to your Son and our God, to Whom belongs the glory and the power, along with the Father without

beginning, and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen. Many happy returns, blessed Great Lent and Happy Easter.”

3. At the Holy Church of Theotokos’ Tomb in Gethsemane, led by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba with the participation in prayer of the Hegoumen Most Reverend Archbishop Dorotheos of Avela.

4. At the Holy Church of Rafidia Community, by Jacob’s well, led by Archimandrite Leontios.

From Secretariat-General

THE NAME DAY OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS

On Saturday, March 15/28, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated in transference the Name Day of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the Feast of the Holy Forty Martyrs who martyred at the lake of Sebastia of Pontus during the reign of Licinius in 320 A.D., as the Holy Martyr Theophilos was one of them.

1. In the afternoon.

On the eve of the Feast, after the reading of the 9th Hour at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, the Patriarchal entourage went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

through the staircase of St. James Cathedral, and held the Service of Great Vespers as "Parresia". The Service with the Great Entrance and the Blessing of Bread was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and only a few clergy, Geronda Sacristan Most Reverend Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos and Deacons. Their entrance was allowed by the Israeli Police in cooperation with the Patriarchate, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, from whose consequences may the Lord our God protect us.

After the Service of Vespers the Canon of the Akathist followed, with the 4th Stasis of the Salutations to the Most Holy Theotokos, led by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda.

2. On the Feast Day

An All-night Vigil was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as the entrance was through St. James Cathedral and the Monastery of Abraham. The Service was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishops Isidoros of Hierapolis and Aristovoulos of Madaba, Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Patrikios, and the participation of the Temple Fathers.

At 11.00 am the following morning, the Doxology was chanted at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen with the participation of the Fathers of the Central Monastery.

Afterward, at the Reception Hall of the Patriarchate, Geronda Secretary-General Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina addressed His Beatitude as follows;

"Your Beatitude, Father and Master,

The commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs, who fought the good fight and were crowned at the lake of Sebastia of Pontus during the reign of Licinius in 320, is a feast we celebrate at the beginning of March and a stronghold of power and hope for the continuation of the spiritual fight of fasting, which concludes at the fair harbour of the bright day of the Resurrection.

If this feast is celebrated thus by the Church as a whole, it is especially celebrated by the Mother of Churches as it is also related to the fact that Your Beatitude bears the name of one of these martyrs.

Therefore, especially honouring the holy martyr Theophilos and Your Beatitude, this feast was celebrated as Parresia at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with an All-night Vigil and the Doxology in the morning at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, with the participation of Hagiotaphite Fathers, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and the Representative of the Moscow Patriarchate in MISSIA, Reverend Archimandrite Alexander, withing the limits of our ability to gather due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Having thanked the Lord in the Church and prayed for the health and stability of Your Beatitude, and now at the Reception Hall of the Patriarchate, we congratulate You for Your Name day, and offer You the righteous praise for all the good works You have accomplished for the benefit of the unity of Church of Christ in the bond of peace, of the Pilgrimage and territorial rights of our Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and of the instruction of our reverend flock.

First of all, regarding the unity of the Church, Your Beatitude has made many efforts and actions, continuously underlining the need of the beginning of cultivating a dialogue, in order to achieve reconciliation and peace. Recognizing this contribution for the year 2018, the Moscow

Patriarchate and His Holiness Patriarch Alexei II, has awarded You with the price for “outstanding activities in strengthening the unity of the Orthodox Christian nations” and “for upholding and promoting Christian values in the life of society”, at Your visit to Moscow last November after the personal invitation from the President of Russia Mr. Vladimir Putin.

As far as the works of spiritual enhancement and benefit of our flock are concerned, worth mentioning is the cooperation with the Palestinian Authorities for the renovation of the historic Church of St. Moses the Ethiopian in the Rafidia Community near Jacob’s well, the construction of the ikonostasion with the icons of the Sahnin Community in Ptolemaida-Acre district, and the activities of Your Beatitude, the founding of an Athletic Academy in Karak of Jordan and Your Beatitude’s local and international activities for the protection of the property of the Patriarchate in Jaffa Gate and the preservation of the long-term Biblical and internationally established Status Quo of the Old City of Jerusalem, for the benefit of our Brotherhood, of the flock and all the Christians and pilgrims of the Holy Land.

In order to succeed in these goals, You Beatitude has cultivated good co-operation relations with the Political Authorities. Regarding the relationship with Greece, this was made obvious with the recent President of the Greek Republic Mr. Prokopis Pavlopoulos at the Patriarchate and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, as well as that of the Minister of Tourism of Greece Mr. Haris Theoharous of the Secretary-General of the Public Diplomacy of Consulate and Religious Matters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Alexandris.

As far as the Patriarchate’s relations with the State of Israel are concerned, according to the Gospel’s words “give Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God”, Your Beatitude received at the Patriarchate the New Mayor of Jerusalem, and before the Heads of the local

Christian Churches, mentioned the issue of the prominent unjust taxes on the Church properties, and at the ceremony of the Ministry of Tourism of Israel, You stressed the problem of the lack of water in the Christian Monasteries in Mount Tabor. Moreover, at the annual New Year meeting at the Presidential Residence, You asked the President Mr. Rouven Rivlin for the righteous solution of the unsolved issued of the properties of the Patriarchate at Jaffa Gate, with the cancellation of the illegal agreements singed a few years ago.

Regarding the relations of the Patriarchate with Jordan, they were good, taking into consideration the bonds of the Royal family with the Patriarchate, the Jordanian law of the Patriarchate in 1957 and the custody Jordan exercises over the Christian and Muslim shrines in Jerusalem.

Within these relations, Your Beatitude was warmly welcomed in New Year's by the whole Mayoralty of Fhes town and His Royal Highness the King of Jordan Abdullah Ibn-Housein Althani hosted a special ceremony for our Christmas Feast, at the Baptism Site of the river Jordan, and received the Heads of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, who were guests of our Patriarchate in the brotherly meeting in Amman, for the beginning of the dialogue for the unity in the Orthodox Church, in respect of the "Primate's honour" of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and all its privileges under our Orthodox tradition.

Your Beatitude has also protected and safeguarded like "the pupil of the eye" the rights of our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and our nation, every time they were questioned, as was the case at the recent event at the Feast of Epiphany, when the Armenians unsuccessfully tried to prevent the placement of the Orthodox icon at the God-receiving Cave in Bethlehem, a right that has been established with the Status Quo for many years.

Encouraged by these, the Hagiotaphite Fathers stand by Your Beatitude's side in a common honest fight for the continuing

protection of the heritage of our venerable Patriarchate and of our nation in the Holy Land, and the support of our Rum-Orthodox Arab-speaking flock, for the preservation of its identity and its development and increase towards works of common good.

Raising my glass in a toast, Your Beatitude, on behalf of the members of our Holy and Sacred Synod, and all the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, I wish You health and unshakable stability for many more years, in fruition and abundance of good works, for the praise of our blessed nation and the glory of our Trinitarian God."

The Archbishop's address was followed by addresses from the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, and the Representative of the Moscow Patriarchate, Head of the Russian MISSIA, Archimandrite Alexander.

His Beatitude thanked those present with the following address:

"Nobly enduring things present, and rejoicing in things hoped for, the holy Martyrs said one to another: Shall we not indeed strip off this garment? Yea rather, let us cast off the old man. Bitter is winter, but sweet is Paradise; painful is this freezing, but pleasant shall be that enjoyment. Let us not waver, O fellow soldiers. Let us endure for a little while, that we may put on the crowns of victory given by Christ God, the Saviour of our souls", Basil the Great says on his sermon on the Forty Martyrs through the mouth fo the hymn writer of the Church. (Minaion March 9, Vespers, first idiomelon).

Your Excellency, Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“God is life, and light and those in the hands of God exist is life and light” St. John Damascene says about the souls of the saints, of the righteous ones, according to the Biblical words: “But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them” (Wisdom of Solomon 3:1) and “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His people” (Psalm 115:5).

Indeed, precious in the sight of the Lord was the death of today’s honoured Holy Forty Martyrs and their co-martyr Theophilos, who martyred at the lake of Sebastia. These saints were not afraid of the threats of the tyrants, nor did they flinch by the insults of the torments, as they had the Cross of Christ their divine weapon, as the hymn writer of the Church says; we stand in awe before the struggles of the Holy Martyrs, as being in a mortal body they defeated the bodiless enemies; they were not afraid of the threats of the tyrants, nor were they intimidated by the insults of the torments; they were indeed worthy to be glorified by Christ, and that our souls may receive the great mercy.

The holy forty Martyrs were righteously glorified by Christ, because they sought the glory of God the Father rather than that of the people, 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). For His sake, the Forty soldiers left every army of the world and entered the martyrdom of their blood, preaching not themselves, but the redeeming truth of Christ, Who shone into their hearts the light of knowledge of the glory of God the Father in Him (Christ), (2 Cor. 4:6).

The martyrdom of the glory of God the Father in His Only Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, Whom all martyrs along with those honoured today imitated, is witnessed and proclaimed continuously at the place of His Passion on the Cross and the three-day burial of our Lord, at the Church of

the Holy Sepulchre, where we celebrated the sacrament of the Eucharist, of the bloodless sacrifice and praised in Doxology our All-merciful God.

The God-bearing Father of the Church Basil, praising the undefeated mind of the forty martyrs, who gladly rejected their last garments, urges us to hear their unity of faith: "We are not being undressed from our clothes, they said, but we denounce the old man in us, the corrupt by the desires of treachery. We thank Thee Lord, that we expel sin along with this garment. Because of the snake we got dressed, but for Christ's sake we get undressed".

The sacred commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs is calling us, my dear Brothers and Sisters, in the middle of the Great Lent, in order to become imitators of their Christ-like mind, as St. Basil the Great says: "For God is their common Father and everybody is their brother, as they were not born by a man and a woman, but by the adoption of the Spirit, adjusting in the unity through love with each other".

Our Mediocrity, bearing the name of Theophilus, the co-martyr of the Holy Forty Martyrs, rend glory and thanksgiving to the Holy Trinitarian God on this Holy Feast, in which "we celebrate our salvation" but also our calling in this institutional mission, namely of the Shepherd of the Most Holy Church of Jerusalem, and of the Hegoumen of the Monastic Order of our Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood.

Every virtue and praise is owed to the Saints! They shed their blood, for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Who emptied Himself, taking upon Himself the form of a servant; these holy Martyrs of Christ, fighting on earth stepped upon the enemy and banished the falsehood of the idols, therefore they received the grace to heal the illnesses of the sick and while still in life and after death they work miracles, according to the hymn writer of the Church who speaks about the Lord's words: "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).

Let us therefore pray to the Holy Forty Martyrs and their co-martyr Theophilos, who have boldness in heaven, so that by their intercessions and those of the Ever-Virgin Mary we may preach Christ Crucified, healer of our souls and bodies, and being free from the the Coronavirus epidemic, we may celebrate the bright Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For all these, we wish to all who prayed with us, those present and the absent ones (due to the COVID-19 lockdown), strength from on high, the grace of the All-Holy and Life-giving Tomb, patience, and every blessing from God, expressing warm thanks to those who addressed US, Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, who spoke on behalf of our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, Reverend Archimandrite Alexander, Head of the Russian MISSIA and representative of the brotherly Holy Church of Russia, who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril and all others who joined Us in this celebration.

To the health of all of you!”

From Secretariat-General

THE NATIONAL FEAST OF 25TH MARCH 1821 AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, March 12/25, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the national feast of 25th March 1821 at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The feast was celebrated with a Doxology as a thanksgiving to God for His help for the liberation of our nation from the Ottoman yoke of slavery and as a prayer for the repose of the souls of our Forefathers, national martyrs, clergy and laity who fought gloriously and fell for their country and faith.

The Doxology was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrant Hagiotaphite Archbishops and Hieromonks, the participation of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and members of the Greek community.

At the Patriarchate Reception Hall, after the Doxology the Consul General and His Beatitude addressed those present. His Beatitude's address follows below;

“Rigas Feraios writes in “Thurios” one of his poems; it is better to live for one hour a free life, rather than live for forty years under slavery and imprisonment...come at this time with just one word to place our vow on the cross...

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Today the Rum Orthodox nation, celebrates the anniversary of 21st March 1821, the day of the Annunciation of the rebirth from the Ottoman yoke of slavery.

The historic event of the Greek revelation of 1821 does not only refer to the freedom from the Ottoman yoke, but it primarily refers to the irreversible and God-given right of the national liberty, as St. Paul preaches; "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:26).

The faith in the living God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who liberated us from the bondage of the enemy and the strong desire for the freedom of the country were the inexhaustible source of power of the leaders of the revolution as well as of the enslaved Greeks.

The zeal for the divine gift of freedom and of the country justified fully the sacrificial and martyr's fight of the enslaved Greeks, whose vow "was made on the Cross of Christ" as Rigas Feraios said. And according to St. Peter, "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (1 Peter 3:13).

And we say this, because the motives of the 1821 fighters were primary, namely, pure and impulsive, with no external influences. This is also testified by the revolutionary slogan of the Elder of Moria, Theodoros Kolokotronis "now the fight is for the faith of Christ and for the freedom of the country".

The collective national consciousness of the Greeks, forged by the high values of classical cultural heritage and the indefinable lifelong principles of the Patriarchal Orthodox tradition, opposed "the fashion of this world (which) passeth

away" (1 Cor. 7:31) to the spiritual freedom of the soul and to the "continuing city" (Hebrews 13:14) or rather, country, of the resurrected Christ.

In other words, the annual celebration of the anniversary of the 1821 national rebirth is not only a fact of historical commemoration, but also of a moral message, for the present and the future of the contemporary so called developed world, which being trapped in its material and financial bliss, whether conscious or unaware, promotes the intellectual and psychosomatic suicide of its citizens.

And the contribution of the Church, through its holy clergy, including members of our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, was decisive. Countless Hierarchs, among whom Palaion Patron Germanos who raised the banner of the revolution, Priests, like Cosmas Aitolos and simple Monks, all shed their blood and became martyrs of the national-religious freedom, which "is born from the sacred bones of the Greeks" according to our national poet Dionysios Solomos.

Our venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, in accordance to St. Paul's words; "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1), and rendering as it should "honour to whom honour [is due]" (Romans 13:7), and also participating at the sacred commemoration of the rebirth of the noble nation of the Greeks, went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where we prayed in Doxology and praise for "the blood of His Cross" (Col. 1:20) and the resurrected from the dead, our Lord, Jesus Christ.

We also prayed for the repose of the souls of those who fought heroically for the faith and the country and martyred for the nation of the Rum Orthodox.

On this occasion therefore, let Us make a toast and exclaim as we should;

Long live 25th March 1821!

Long live the noble and royal nation of the Rum Orthodox!

Long live Hellas!

Long live our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood!"

From Secretariat-General

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

The 3rd Sunday of Great Lent, March 9/22, 2020 was celebrated by the Patriarchate as Sunday of the Adoration of the Precious and Life-giving Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church has designated for this Sunday the veneration of the Holy Cross with a special service, so that the faithful may be strengthened by its protection for the remaining of the fasting during Great Lent.

At the Patriarchate of Jerusalem this feast was celebrated as Parresia with Great Vespers at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the afternoon, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

On the day of the Feast, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the All-Holy Tomb, again led by His Beatitude, with the co-celebration of their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitlias, the Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Theodosios

of Sebastia, Demetrios of Lydda, Aristovoulos of Madaba, and His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and deacons, as the chanting was delivered by the Byzantine choir leader Hierodeacon Simeon on the right and Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos on the left. The service was attended by monks and nuns of the Patriarchate, members of the Greek Consulate in Jerusalem and only a few faithful of the city of Jerusalem, due to the restriction measures for the protection against COVID-19 virus.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by the Litany three times around the Holy Sepulchre and the shrines. After the Litany, His Beatitude read a prayer against infectious disease before the Holy Tomb.

Concluding the Services, the congregation returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters, where His Beatitude briefly addressed the few Fathers and faithful present, wishing the strength of the Precious and Life-giving Cross may help the tackling and eliminating of every disease and infliction of the evil one.

His Beatitude's address follows below;

"Today the words of the Prophet are fulfilled: for see, we worship at the place on which Thy feet have stood, O Lord; and tasting from the Tree of salvation, we have been delivered from our sinful passions at the intercessions of the Theotokos, o Thou who alone lovest mankind", the hymn writer of the Church proclaims (Triodion, Third Sunday of Lent, Matins, Canon 3, hymns of the Cross).

Today my dear brothers and sisters our Holy Church celebrates the Veneration of the Precious and Life-giving Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is for our comfort and strengthening in order to go through Great Lent in fasting and repentance.

Christ's Cross is not only a symbol of victory and triumph against the devil, it is also the incarnation of the righteousness in Christ and of our redemption from the corruption of death, namely of sin, as St. Paul proclaims by saying: "And you, being dead in your sins... hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Colossians 2:13-15).

Interpreting these words, St. Chrysostom says: "With His death on the Cross, Christ stripped the powers and principalities on the one hand; and on the other, He humiliated the evil powers and put them in shame". In this sense, Christ's Cross is the means "by whom we have now received the atonement" (Romans 5:11) according to Paul.

In other words the Precious Cross is the means of the divine mystery of atonement and reconciliation of us humans with God, as St. Paul preaches: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10).

Behold therefore, why the Cross is the source of the power of the Church, but also its boast, St. Paul confesses, by saying: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). And according to St. Cyril of Alexandria, the Cross of the Saviour stands for the life of the world and its incorruption" (Sofon. 621.20).

This means that through the Cross and by the Cross, life in Christ is made understood, according to the Lord's word: "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34). In other words, the

word of the Cross is God's power just as the Gospel of Christ is God's power, leading to the salvation of anyone who believes, according to Paul (1Cor. 1:18, Romans 1:16).

Our Holy Church has called us to the communion of this power of the Cross, through the veneration of the Precious and Life-giving Cross in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre today, the third Sunday of Great Lent, so that we may be deemed worthy to celebrate also the Life-giving Resurrection of our God and Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Whose mercy and the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit may be with all of us. Amen."

From Secretariat-General