

# **SPEECH TO THE MEETING OF THE PRIMATES OF THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION IN AMMAN**

The following speech was read on behalf of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos at the meeting of the Primates of the Anglican Communion in Amman, on Wednesday January 2/15, 2020.

**“His Beatitude Theophilos III Patriarch of Jerusalem**

Your Grace, Archbishop Justin,

Your Grace, Archbishop Suheil,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Sisters and Brothers,

In this holy season during which Christians in both West and East have been celebrating the great feasts of our Lord’s Nativity and Theophany, we greet you and we welcome you warmly to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which is part of our ancient Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

We are especially happy to welcome you back once again, dear Archbishop Justin, to this region, and we wish to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to you for the help and support that you have given, and continue to give, to us and to the Heads of the Churches and Christian Communities of the Holy Land, in our united struggle to preserve our historic and sacred rights and privileges and to support a vibrant and secure Christian presence in the Holy Land.

We face unprecedented threats to our life here, especially

from radical groups who are seeking actively to undermine our multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious landscape. Even in the Old City of Jerusalem we see this activity, which, if unchecked, could well lead to fundamental disruptions in the ability of pilgrims and local Christians to have access to our administrative centre as well as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

These are very serious matters and in facing them we take great encouragement both from the unity of purpose that exists among the Heads of the Churches and Christian Communities of the Holy Land, as well as from the remarkable support that we are receiving from leaders in government and religion around the world. We cannot rest, for the pressures are great and relentless, and we know that an assault against one of our communities is an assault to us all.

In this regard, we would like to make special mention of the commitment of our dear friend Archbishop Suheil, to this work. Our Patriarchate and the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem have always enjoyed a good and close relationship over many years, and this long friendship is bearing considerable fruit at the present time as together we stand shoulder to shoulder in the face of our common difficulties. We wish also to mention Archbishop Suheil's tireless pastoral zeal for his communities and his work in renovation and restoration of congregations in his care. All of this work contributes to the strengthening of the Christian presence in our region.

We would also like to mention the recently established International Community of the Holy Sepulchre, which is an intentionally ecumenical society that is committed to enabling communities in the Holy Land to flourish. This society has the support of the Heads of the Churches, and seeks to gather Christians from all the Churches in effective support of the Christian presence in the Holy Land. It is our hope that ICoHS will grow to include members in every Province of the Anglican Communion, and indeed in just a couple of weeks there will be

important events in the Diocese of Southeast Florida in the Episcopal Church to promote the mission of ICoHS. This is a significant venture for us, and we so appreciate your support.

As you gather here in preparation for the Lambeth Conference next summer, we recall with deep joy our participation in the last Lambeth Conference twelve years ago. The Anglican Communion and the Orthodox Church have enjoyed a centuries-long relationship that is important to us both. We share so much in our common patristic heritage and over the generations we have been able to be of unique support to each other.

While it is true that both our Churches are facing complicated internal issues at the present time, we cannot let these matters distract us from our fundamental commitment to an ever-deepening dialogue and to travelling together on the road to unity. We must always resist the temptation to a narrow parochial focus that blinds us to the greater and primary mission of the Church, of being a beacon of the light of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in a world that is increasing bereft of hope, and where confusion and despair struggle with truth and joy for the souls of men and women.

This greater and primary mission must always be paramount in our ministry as those to whom the Divine Providence has entrusted the pastoral care of our respective Churches.

As you gather here in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, we pay tribute to the strong commitment of His Majesty King Abdullah II, who is the Custodian of Christian and Muslim Holy Sites in the Holy Land, to the well-being of the Christian communities here. Jordan remains a country in which faithful communities are protected, and where Christian leaders from all over this region are able to gather freely. We are delighted that you and your fellow Primates are able to enjoy this opportunity to gather and take counsel in this city where all are welcome.

MAY God bless you, dear Archbishop Justin, as you meet

together over these days, and MAY God guide you as you gather the bishops of the Anglican Communion at the Lambeth Conference in the summer.

Thank you.”

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE CUTTING OF THE NEW YEAR CAKE AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

At 6.00 p.m. of the last day of the year, December 31, 2019/January 13, 2020, the ceremony of the cutting of the New Year Cake was held at the Reception Hall of the Patriarchate.

Present at the ceremony were the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, Hagiotaphite Archbishops and other Hagiotaphite Fathers, Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Priests and Stewards of St. James' Cathedral, local members of the Community of Jerusalem, Monks and many pilgrims, who filled the Hall.

In the beginning of the ceremony, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem addressed those present as follows;

“But hath [God] in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour” (Titus 1:3), Saint Paul says. “In due times manifested it, meaning the eternal life; for the Gospel encompasses all things, what is given to us in the present time...and those of the future, which lead to eternal life” Saint Theophylaktos says, interpreting Paul's words.

The grace of the God-receiving Cave in Bethlehem, where we recently celebrated the great mystery of the Incarnation of God the Word and our Saviour Jesus Christ from the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Mary, has gathered us all in the Sacred Seat of our Venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem, in order to thank once more the Holy Trinitarian God for the beginning of the New Year of His Goodness.

We say "the entrance of the New Year, of His Goodness", because according to wise Paul, "according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:5-6).

This means that the Holy Church of Christ, which is His mystical God-human body, comprehends and interprets the meaning of the historic Time, which is in accordance to the earthly life of the man in Christ and for Christ, as St. Paul preaches: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4-5).

In other words, our historic Time as the completion, namely, the decision of the wisdom of God on the one hand, and as a reward – according to Ecumenios – of our adoption from on high and by promise, as it was owed on the other, becomes fully comprehensive as the beginning, the middle and the end. And this is because – according to Paul – "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

The Incarnate God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, being without beginning and through His Incarnation with a beginning, He is the present time in His Church, in Whom the past and the future of the current time is made obvious; "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2

Cor. 5:17).

Through these words of Paul, it is made clear that the Church introduces the eternity in Christ within our historic and worldly reality and is being expanded towards it. And within the Church, where as we mentioned before, the time becomes season (kairos), namely the quantity becomes quality, according to Ammonios, the memory of the past becomes memory in Christ. And the hope in the future becomes hope in Christ. For this reason St. Paul preaches and calls upon the words of Prophet Isaiah (49:8): "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

This "accepted time and the day of salvation" refers to both the liturgical time of the commemoration and condescension of our Saviour Jesus Christ in our humankind, namely in His circumcision in the flesh, which is held in the passing of the time in a circle, and to the commemoration of our Father among the Saints Basil the Great Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, to whose honour we have the tradition in the Church to cut the New Year Cake, which bears his name in Greek (Vasilopita).

This festal, modest and joyful reception calls us to hear St. Paul's advice: "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:23-24).

Behold, my dear brothers and sisters the way by which we are called to celebrate the entrance of the New Year, bearing in mind "that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13). "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

Considering the notion of time rotation in Christ our God, let

us entreat the Theotokos and Mother of God, the Ever-Virgin Mary, along with our Father among the Saints Basil, who beautified the morals of the people, to intercede to our Saviour and God Who was circumcised in the flesh, for the peace of the world and especially for the Middle East which has suffered much under the threat of war in our region. And with the hymn writer let us say: "all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord, God the Word, Who formed all things with ineffable wisdom, and brought them into being out of nothing" (Matins January 1<sup>st</sup>, Ode 8 Heirmos).

Have a good, happy, blessed and peaceful New Year 2020.

Many happy returns!"

Then, once the apolytikion of Christ's circumcision " Our human form hast Thou taken on Thyself without change..." and that of St. Basil "Thou sound hast gone forth into all the earth..." were chanted, His Beatitude cut the New Year Cake wishing "a blessed and peaceful New Year 2020", and distributed the pieces to those present.

At that time the Patriarchal School of Zion students were singing the Christmas and New Year carols.

After the ceremony the students went around the Patriarchate and the Monasteries to sing the carols.

The ceremony of the cutting of the New Year Cake was also held at the Epitropikon, after Matins and the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great on Tuesday morning, January 1/14, 2020, which is the first day of the New Year for the Hagiotaphite Fathers, as well as another cake was cut during lunch time at the refectory of the Patriarchate.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# VISITS OF THE CHURCHES AT THE PATRIARCHATE ON THE OCCASION OF CHRISTMAS

On Thursday morning, December 27, 2019/January 9, 2020, the members of the Christian Churches of Jerusalem visited the Patriarchate on the occasion of Christmas. The mutual festal visits have long been established, as they contribute to the creation of a peaceful atmosphere for the good co-operation in order to safeguard the All-holy Shrines and the protection of the Christians of the Holy Land.

The first visit was from the Custodia Terrae Sanctae, the Brotherhood of the Franciscans. Its Hegoumen Rev. Fr. Francesco Paton congratulated H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem for the excellent co-operation they keep in order to safeguard and preserve the Holy Shrines and because He raises His voice for the protection of the Christians of the Holy Land.

His Beatitude replied as follows;

*“Your Paternity, dear Father Francesco,*

*Your Eminences,*

*Your Graces,*



*Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,*

*Dear Fathers,*

*We welcome you, dear Father Francesco, and the members of your Brotherhood, to our Patriarchate, and we thank you for your kind greetings to us as we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our joy finds expression in our worship, as we sing;*

*Make glad, O ye righteous; greatly rejoice, O ye heavens; ye mountains dance of joy, Christ is born!*

*(Nativity Matins, Tone 4)*

*Our joy at this Christmas season is grounded in the faithfulness of God the Logos made flesh, "who has visited us from on high" (Exapostilarion from Nativity Matins). Our joy is made complete in this divine-human encounter, and it is in this joy that we seek to be faithful to the mission that has been entrusted to us by Divine Providence.*

*Our fraternal gathering in joy today, calls to mind the significance of our united witness that we have made in our diakonia in guarding and serving the Holy Places.*

*As it has been mentioned, we have accomplished much, and our working together has proved immensely effective. This has been demonstrated in our historic agreement to restore the foundation of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and to restore the Grotto of the Nativity. While to some these may seem simple the care of ancient monuments, we know full well that the significance of the Holy Places goes well beyond bricks and mortar.*

*In joining together to restore the foundation of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Grotto of the Nativity, we are declaring our absolute commitment to the essential spiritual character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, of which these two*

*magnificent Churches and all the Holy Places are living testimony. And they are a living testimony precisely because they are places of worship and sources of refreshment, nourishment, and consolation that strengthen the Christian faith of the believer, both near and far.*

*We have also borne collective witness to the historic and sacred rights and privileges of the Christian communities here. Our united voice in opposition to radical elements that threaten the fundamental character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land as a truly multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious society has sounded abroad, and we have the support of governmental and religious leaders around the world. We continue to face huge threats, especially to the Christian Quarter and access to many of our respective administrative centres, as well as to the Holy Sepulchre and the Churches and Monasteries in the Old City, but in our standing together we have sent a clear message that we shall be faithful in our God-given mission.*

*All this is a sign of great hope to the world. For we are charged in the Holy Land of keeping alive the flame of the Gospel and the values of the Bible in a world that is torn by confusion and destructive activity that is so contrary to the Christmas message of peace and reconciliation that we confess. As Saint Paul says in the First Letter to the Corinthians; "It is to peace that God has called you...for God is a God not of disorder but of peace" (1 Cor. 7:15, 14:33).*

*As we keep this joyous Christmas feast, let us pray for strength and inspiration from the true Light, who is the Sun of righteousness and the Prince of Peace who has come into the world, and assumed our common human nature from the pure flesh of the Virgin Mary. For "this Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (cf. John 1).*

*MAY God bless you, dear Father Francesco, the members of your Brotherhood, and the communities committed to your pastoral*

*and spiritual care.*

*Thank you.”*

Visits of the other Churches followed, from the Latin Patriarchate, Syrians, Ethiopians, Lutherans and others, who wished His Beatitude peaceful Christmas and a blessed New Year.

The response of His Beatitude to all visitors follows below;

*“Beloved Fellow Heads of the Churches,*

*Your Excellences,*

*Your Eminences,*

*Your Graces,*

*Dear Fathers,*

*Brothers and Sisters,*

*Christ is born!*

*Let us glorify Him!*

*We welcome you warmly to our Patriarchate in this Christmas season, and we thank you for your greetings to us for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. We rejoice together in the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Divine Logos, as we say in one of our Orthodox services this time;*

*How shall I tell of this great mystery?*

*He who is without flesh becomes incarnate;*

*The Word puts on a body; the invisible is seen;*

*He whom no hand can touch is handled;*

*and He who knows no beginning now begins to be.*

*(Vespers of the Synaxis of the Theotokos)*

*Our gatherings on these occasions are more than casual acts of public courtesy. In this holy season, when we visit each other in celebration of the Nativity, and exchange greetings, we are actually doing two things.*

*First of all, we are showing to the world that, while we do not share a Eucharistic and doctrinal unity, we do share a Christian fellowship in the common mission of our martyria – our witness – to sacred history and to the life of the Christian communities of the Holy Land. As this common mission has drawn us closer, we have experienced the fruits of this in many ways. We have worked together successfully in the care and renovation of the Holy Places – especially the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. We have common cause in the preservation of the historic and sacred rights and privileges of the Churches. We are united in safeguarding our places of worship and sacred properties. We are committed together to ensure the well-being of the Christian presence in Jerusalem and the Holy Land. And we are never reluctant in affirming the Christian character of Jerusalem. For Jerusalem we shall not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake we shall not rest.*

*Our gatherings, however, have a deeper significance even than this. For when we come together in such fraternal ways, we are showing to the world the eternal truth that the Incarnation of the Divine Logos transcends all human categories. When we confess the name of our Lord Jesus, He is in the midst of us, as He promises. For our Lord Jesus Christ has assumed our common human nature and revealed our common human destiny, and this message of hope for the world is of paramount importance. Christ is the revelation of divine justice in all its fullness – justice that is united in mercy and love – that goes beyond our human reason. At this Christmas, with our hearts we cry out for justice and peace, and it is God's justice and peace we long for.*

*Our mission, dear brothers and sisters, is not for ourselves. Our rootedness in the Holy Land is not to promote narrowly parochial or confessional interests. Our rootedness ensure that the Christian presence in the Holy Land is a living and active community, and that the Holy Places are not just relics of the past, but sources of real spiritual nourishment and refreshment.*

*If we were not here, who would come here? When we think of other ancient Christian places, now bereft of a living Christian community, places like Cappadocia and Ephesus, for example, while the relics of these places remain, their soul is gone. It is because of our Christian presence here that Jerusalem and the Holy Land are a living place, and not simply a tourist attraction.*

*The Incarnation of the Divine Logos is our common ground, our shared identity as the Christian Churches and Communities of the Holy Land, and it is all this that we show to the world when we gather as we do today. Let us never, tire in building up this fellowship beyond these ceremonial occasions, so that we may continue to grow in faithfulness to our common mission in maintaining the Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land.*

*We wish to express our gratitude to you for our work together in the past, and we look forward to extending this work in the years to come.*

*May God bless you and the communities you serve, and may we all enjoy the blessings of this Holy Christmas season and the promises of the New Year.*

*Thank you."*

A delegation under Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina visited the Churches of the Syrians, Copts and Ethiopians.

# THE FEAST OF CHRISTMAS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On the night of Christmas Eve, December 24, 2019/ January 6, 2020, the Episcopal Entourage came down in the Basilica through the Baptisery Gate, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Methodios of Tabor, for the beginning of Christmas Matins.

During the Service of Matins, around 23.00 p.m. H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos came to the Altar from St. Nikolaos' chapel and started the procedure of "taking the blessing", the Priests followed, and they all put on their liturgical vestments.

Immediately afterward, as the kathisma "Come all ye faithful and see where Christ was born" the formal litany began to the Cave from the Main Gate of the Holy Altar, as His Beatitude was escorted on the right side by Dr. Mohammad Shtayyeh, Prime Minister of the Palestinian Autonomy and on the left by the Greek Consul General, by Mr. Sami Daud, Prime Minister of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and representative of His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan and other representatives of the Palestinian State.

In the Cave, the Gospel of the Nativity was read according to St. Luke: "In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus..." (Luke 2:1-20) by His Beatitude in Greek and by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias in Arabic.

This was followed by a prayer and then His Eminence the

Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina read His Beatitude's Christmas message in Greek as per below;

*"Heaven and earth are made one today,  
for Christ is born.*

*Today God is come upon the earth,  
and man is gone up into the Heavens.*

*Today He Who by nature is invisible,  
for man's sake is seen in the flesh."*

(Sticheron Idiomelo 2 – Christmas Entreaty)

Today the Church all over the world celebrates the Metropolis of the Feasts, the feast of the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ from the Virgin, in fullness of joy, gleefulness, thanksgiving and doxology.

On this feast the Church gives thanks to God, because being faithful, He fulfilled the promises He made to man through the Prophets. "He sent redemption unto his people" (Psalm 111:9). Being merciful and a philanthropist, "the times of ignorance God winked at" (Acts 17:30) and the times of man's apostasy, and "became an emigrant to the land of those who had emigrated from His grace". God sought the runaway man, the man who had run away from His communion according to St. Cyril of Alexandria (P.G. 75 908 C), found him as a lost sheep, which He reformed, regenerated, vivified, "transformed its elements" and rehabilitated in its former communion with Him in Paradise at the time of creation.

God the Father made this manifest through His Only Begotten Son. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4-5). The Father found it pleasing

that "the Word was made flesh" (John 1:14). According to Saint Cyril of Alexandria; "God the Word Who was from the beginning in the bosom of the Father, suffered willingly kenosis for us and was made flesh, namely a man, humbled Himself for our sakes and became son of man, so that we might be rich in God the Father through Him, He received a body from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, not a soulless body, but a body with a logical soul (On incarnation, PG 77, 989D & 1092C), in order to make man "a communicant of the Divine Nature" (2 Peter 1:4). What He received by His Incarnation, namely the whole of humanity, the Lord sanctified with His life, and through the Cross, the Resurrection and His Ascension He raised it to heaven and put it on the right side of God. What a philanthropy! What a favour! What a gift! God came down to earth through Christ and raised man to heaven.

This mystery beyond nature and word took place in a specific time and place, during the reign of Caesar Octavius Augustus in Bethlehem of Judea, in the humble cave therein, with the cooperation and witness of the elements of nature and the Bodiless Hosts. These, according to the, Patriarch of Jerusalem Saint Sophronios, the theologian of the one hypostasis of Christ our God in two natures, wills and actions, were; "the motivated by the stars coming of the Wise Men, the heavenly initiation of the shepherds, the bringing of gifts and the worship" (Synodical Letter PG87, 3176D). Wise Men Kings of Persia guided by a star and shepherds keeping the night watch, invited by Angels with the "Glory to God in the Highest and to earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14), met and fell down in astonishment and worshiped, "for they saw The One without Beginning lying down as a babe in the cave".

This very beginning of Christ's mysteries has been received from the eye and ear witnesses and kept intact throughout the centuries by the Church. Through this mystery, the Church educates, shapes, grants peace, vivifies and sanctifies its members. This is proclaimed to those near and afar, to the



ends of the universe. For this reason, the Church exercises its peace-making mission all over the world, "the ministry of reconciliation" which was given to us by God (2 Cor. 5:18), "reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19) through the Incarnation of His Son.

This transcendental and salvific mystery is being preached by the Church of Jerusalem, the First Church of Christianity, at the place where it happened, the God-receiving Cave and the Basilica above it, which was constructed by the Byzantine Emperors Constantine and Justine, blessing its flock in the Holy Land and at all places around the world, merrily receiving all the pious pilgrims who honour Holy Bethlehem and worship the manger, "where the Uncontainable One hath reclined", and prays for the prosperity, peace and the good state of the whole world.

And for His Excellency the President of the Palestinian State Mr. Mahmoud Abas Abu-Mazen, who honours the Feast, we wish health, strength and longevity, in order to lead His State to the gaining of all His aims, the allotment of all His rights in His native land".

The Representative of the M.M. of the Patriarchate Priest Issa Mousleh read the Christmas message in Arabic. Then His Beatitude, the Archbishops the Priests and the Consul General venerated the star and the manger.

They all went up from the North Gate of the Cave for the litany three times around the five-aisled Basilica, chanting the Christmas Katavasiae: "Christ is born give Him glory...", concluding in the middle of the Church for a prayer.

Matins and the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom followed at the Catholicon of the Monastery, led by His Beatidute with co-celebrants the Archbishops of the Patriarchate; Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Demetrios of

Lydda, Aristovoulos of Madaba, and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Paul of Drama from the Church of Greece, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Priests and Deacons, and the Divine Liturgy at the God-receiving Cave, led by His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis. The dismissal of the Divine Liturgy according to the Status Quo was at 3.30 a.m.

A reception followed, with the Patriarchal School Students singing the Christmas carols, and then a festal meal at the Hegoumeneion, offered by the renovator of the Monastery the Patriarchal Representative Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylaktos of Jordan.

In the morning of Christmas Day, around 9.00 a.m. according to the Status Quo, the Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos went down to the Cave for veneration.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **CHRISTMAS EVE AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

The Feast of Christmas, the Metropolis of the Feasts according to the Church Fathers, was celebrated by the Patriarchate according to the old tradition in Bethlehem and at the place of Christ's Nativity in the flesh.

## **1. On Christmas Eve**

On Christmas Eve, Monday morning, December 24, 2019/ January 6, 2020, the Patriarchal Hagiotaphite Entourage marched from the Patriarchate to Jaffa Gate, bells tolling, got on the cars

and reached the Holy Monastery of Prophet Elijah which is located midway between Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos was welcomed there by the Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Paissios, the customary Israeli State officials of the Political Civil Administration of Bethlehem and Hebron district, by the representatives of the Palestinian State and by the representatives of the flock of the Patriarchate from Bethlehem, Beit Sahour and Beit Jalla.

After the veneration at the Church of the Monastery, the prayer and the reception at the Hegoumeneion, the Patriarchal Entourage left, led by the customary five Israeli Police horsemen and reached the check point at Rachel's Tomb.

There, Palestinian Police motorcyclists received the Patriarchal Entourage while on either side of the road faithful Christians, old and young people, children and infants were waiting to receive His Beatitude's blessing. The Patriarchal Entourage reached Bethlehem Square, was received by the Patriarchal Representative Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylaktos of Jordan, the representatives of the Municipality and Prefectures, Hieromonks, and the married parish clergy of the Patriarchate and by many people, while the Byzantine choirs with Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos in Greek and Mr. Samour Lawrence in Arabic were chanting the Christmas apolytikion on the way to the humble door of the Basilica.

Upon entering the Basilica, they were welcomed by the Greek Consul General on the right and the Mayor of the town on the left, and marched through the middle of the Basilica, which is a unique right of the the Rum Orthodox, and going up to the ikonostasion, they turned on the right, through St. Nikolaos' chapel and went down to the God-receiving Cave for veneration.

Going up through the north gate of the Cave, the Royal Hours of Christmas were read at the Catholicon, officiated by His

Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. The service was completed with the incense offering, and was followed by Vespers and the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, with the dismissal at 3.30 p.m. according to the Status Quo.

This was followed by the marching to the Monastery from the Baptisery Gate, where a festal meal was offered.

In the evening, around 6.00 p.m., with the hospitality of the renovator of the Monastery, Patriarchal Representative Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylaktos of Jordan, His Beatitude hosted a reception for the Palestinian President His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abas- Abu-Mazen, His Excellency Minister Sami Daoud the representative of His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan the Hashemite Custodian of Christian and Muslim holy sites, His Excellency the Palestinian Prime Minister Dr. Ramzi Khouri Palestinian Minister and Chairman of the Supreme Presidential Committee for Church Affairs as well as many other officials and diplomats.

In addition to wished of a blessed Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year, His Beatitude assured the audience that "In addition to our active local role, and efforts to relay the voice of Jerusalem to the world, the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem is exercising its historic role at the international level as well". His Beatitude further stressed that we must view in the strength of Orthodox Unity as the strengthening of the Orthodox faith, and in its weakness, a weakening of our faith.

The complete text of His Beatitude's address is found below;

"Mr. President Mahmoud Abbas

Mr. Prime Minister Dr. Mohammad Shtayyeh

Representative of His Majesty King Abdullah II, Mr. Sami Dawood

Chairman of the Supreme Presidential Committee for Church Affairs, Dr. Ramzi Khoury

Ladies and gentlemen,

We gather today in the birthplace of Christ, the source of light that reached out to the world, the land of the Redeemer, to celebrate the birth of the Messenger of Love and Peace, in a land that longs for peace, and under a leadership of which the main concern is to achieve peace to ensure a bright future for its people. People that have long sacrificed for their dignity, freedom and the realization of their legitimate dream of independence and self-determination.

We believe that we are able to make peace and live up to its requirements, no matter how difficult it may be. This demands that we transcend ourselves above our own limits, so that we can look at others as God sees them, and accept others as God accepts them, so that we can realize and achieve righteousness and truth for us and others.

This year's Christmas comes, and the Middle East region is overwhelmed by regional tensions and conflicts. In Lebanon, the Lebanese are protesting against the country's worsening economy, in Syria Christmas still holds hope that the country will see a way out of the current impasse, and hopefully this new year will be a year of security for Syrians of all political, ethnic and religious affiliations. Yemen continues its internal war, which we pray to end as soon as possible, and we pray to the Creator to give Iraq and Libya the stability they have lost years ago.

On the bright side, in the Holy Land, we celebrate the legal victory of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem in our battle for the defense of Jaffa Gate properties in the Holy City as part of the consecutive battles fought by the "Mother of All Churches" to preserve its heritage, and the authentic

Christian presence in the Holy Land, especially in the city of Jerusalem, which God has blessed. In addition to practicing our duty in protecting the “pilgrim route” between the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Church of the Nativity, between the place of Christ’s birth and the place of his crucifixion.

We are also celebrating the birth of Christ today as we have completed important housing projects in Bethlehem, Beit Sahour and Beit Jala. In 2020, we are looking forward to executing a project of 400 apartment and a commercial center in Beit Hanina, Jerusalem, where we have been working on obtaining the necessary licenses for years. This huge project will reduce immigration from the Holy City and contribute to strengthen the resolve of its people. In the same context, we are preparing this year for the restoration of St. Dimitri’s School Building in the Old City, to provide a comfortable atmosphere for students and to preserve this historic building; in addition to dozens of charitable projects which our Patriarchate is implementing with the support of its flock in particular and the community in general. And the doors of the Patriarchate shall always remain open for the flock of our community and all the Palestinian and Jordanian peoples Christians be it or Muslim.

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In addition to our active local role, and efforts to relay the voice of Jerusalem to the world, the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem is exercising its historic role at the international Orthodox level as well. Our Patriarchate has opened its doors to host our brothers, the heads of the world’s Orthodox churches, to meet at our second home in Amman under the Auspices of The Hashemite Custodian of Islamic and Christian Holy Places, your brother Mr. President, His Majesty King Abdullah II, to discuss issues of global Orthodox unity; that in its’ strength we view a strengthening to our faith, and in

its' weakness, a weakening of our faith.

Your Excellency Mr. President.

Ladies and gentlemen

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14), let us rejoice and pray "This is a great mystery" (Ephesians 5:32) which appeared among us. The message of Christmas is a message of love, humility, peace and a meeting of hearts. Living the love and its consequences becomes permanent through a true relationship and reconciliation between man and God, between man and his/her fellow man, through a relationship of reconciliation and openness between man and himself/herself. This reconciliation in its three dimensions fills the human heart with peace, the peace of God coming from the highest, which helps people to deal with the daily living pressures and difficulties of life, and to meet the challenges with wisdom and love. The heavenly peace, which we all desire, enables believers, with the support of divine grace, to deal properly with economic, political and social difficulties.

Christmas is the feast of joy. Joy is to find power through forgiveness and love in tears, to reap success from failure, and to achieve ascension through humility and holiness. Christmas is the feast of joy built on the rock of faith.

Your Excellency,

In the name of the "Mother of all churches" and its community, we wish you a glorious Christmas filled with holiness and love, and a blessed new year full of goodness, blessings and peace; and we thank Your Excellency for your heartfelt Christmas message.

We lastly take this opportunity to give thanks to the Supreme Presidential Committee for Church Affairs and its' Chairman, His Excellency Minister Dr. Ramzi Khoury. As well as the Head

of the Presidential Bureau Her Excellency Ms. Intisar Amarah, Presidential Protocol Department and the Heads, Generals and Officers of the different Palestinian Security bodies for their tireless efforts and contribution to the success of this year's Christmas processions.

Along with the angels, we pray to God, " Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth ..." (Luke 2:14)."

With the above the Feast of Christmas Eve in Bethlehem ended.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF ST. NICHOLAOS AT THE PATRIARCATE**

## 1. The Feast of St. Nicholas in Beit Jalla

On Thursday, December 6/19, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of our Father among the Saints Nicholas, Bishop of Myra in Lycia the wonder worker at his magnificent Church of the Rum Orthodox Arab-speaking Community of Beit Jalla, near Bethlehem.

St. Nicholas is the Father of the Church of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Bishop of Myra in Lycia, protector of the poor, those who suffer injustice, the prisoners and needy, "a rule of faith and an icon of meekness, a teacher of temperance", protector of the sailor men, vary popular to the Orthodox people, defender also of the Orthodox doctrine of the One Essence of the Son to the Father in the 1<sup>st</sup> Ecumenical Synod of Nice in



325 A.D.

This great Hierarch was honoured by the Rum Orthodox Arab-speaking Community of Beit Jalla and all the town as its Patron Saint, with the Divine Liturgy which was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Most Reverend Archbishop Methodios of Tabor and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Ignatios, Archimandrite Alexios, the Ministering Priests of the Church, Steward Fr. George Awad, Fr. Paul, Fr. Yusef and Fr. Elias and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The Liturgy was attended by the full congregation of the Orthodox faithful of the town, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, the representatives of the Palestinian Autonomy, the President of the Ecclesiastical issues Committee Mr. Ramzi Houry and the Mayor Mr. Nichola Hamis.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this Congregation:

"With what fair songs of sweet melody shall we praise the all-venerable hierarch? That most potent foe of impiety and the defender of piety, distinguished among the Church leaders; the might and great protector and instructor of all, who putteth to shame all holding a false belief; who fought with Arius fiercely, proving his destroyer, and through whom his arrogant pride hath been overthrown by Christ, Who granteth great mercy to the world" the hymn writer proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The fortifying grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in this Church dedicated to Bishop Nickolas of Myra in Lycia, who was also a pilgrim in the Holy Land, in order to festively celebrate his commemoration.

On Holy Father among the Saints Nicholaos lived during the reign of the Emperor Constantine the Great. He was born in Patara of Asia Minor and participated in the 1st Ecumenical Synod of Nice along with the other Holy Fathers, in the year 325, with which they condemned the heretic Arius and his teaching. St. Nicholaos was a fervent supporter of St. Athanasius the Great, who stated in precision the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. St. Nickolas slept in the Lord around the year 330 A.D.

Paying heed to St. Paul's words; "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21), St. Nicholaos was proven a true healer of Christ and a preacher of the gospel, and for his extreme virtue he received the sacred office of High Priesthood, and became a spiritual shepherd, as the Archbishop of the county of Myra in Lycia.

Describing the distinguished personality of St. Nicholaos, the hymn writer says; "Let us now praise the hierarch in song, that shepherd and teacher in Myra, that by his intercessions we may receive illumination, O ye people. For behold, being undefiled in spirit, he was altogether a source of purification, offering to Christ that sacrifice that is pure and without blemish and acceptable unto God, since he himself, as a priest, was made pure in soul and boy. Wherefore, he is truly a protector and a champion of the Church, as a great initiate of the divine grace of God".

Indeed, my dear brothers and sisters, St. Nicholaos is a protector and defender of the Church as well as of its salvific teaching, that is why he is called "rule of the right faith", for which he fought vigorously, both in words and in actions, according to the advice of St. Jude: "Beloved, ... it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). The "saints" in this case

are the Christians who received the healthy faith through the oral preaching once and for all.

This healthy faith is the one which calls us to fight the good fight for the salvation of our souls as St. Paul writes to his disciple Timothy, saying: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (1 Tim. 6:12). Our Father among the Saints Nicholaos also laid hold of the "eternal life", whose fame spread out to the whole world, remaining vivid up to the present, according to the words of the psalmist: "Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Psalm 19:4).

The sacred commemoration of St. Nicholaos the wonder worker has gathered us in this Eucharistic meeting so that we may honour him on the one hand, and thank our "Holy Lord God" on the other, who has given us the holy worker of His vineyard, namely of the Church of Christ. The good and faithful worker of Christ's vineyard was glorified by God the Father in the heavenly life, where he intercedes for our souls in boldness.

Our Holy Father Nicholaos who was proven a man of God and a chosen vessel, urges us through the mouth of the Chief Apostle Peter to a life worthy of God's benefits by saying; "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: 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 1:14-16).

In other words, my dear brothers and sisters, St. Nicholaos is a visible and living example of the genuine Christian, within whom Christ's character was formed. Precisely this forming of Christ within us is what St. Paul in agony urges us to accomplish by saying; "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. 4:19).

The "metropolis of the feasts" the great feast of Christmas is about to grant us this forming of Christ in us, namely the spiritual regeneration, in the neighbouring city of Bethlehem, as the hymn writer of the Church says; "Make ready, O Bethlehem; let the manger he prepared, let the cave show its welcome. The Truth is come, the shadow is passed away; God hath appeared from a Virgin unto men, formed as we are, and deifying that which He hath assumed. Wherefore, Adam is renewed with Eve, as they cry out: Thy good will hath appeared on earth to save our race".

The revelation through Mary the Theotokos of God to the people, Who took our form and deified our human nature, is being preached and evangelized by the Holy Church of Christ, through its honoured Bishop Nicholaos the wonder worker. This great mystery of the gospel (Eph. 6:19) are we called to celebrate, not in a worldly, social and material manner, but spiritually and worshipfully, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all (Christian) saints" (Eph. 6:18) as St. Paul preaches.

And along with the hymn writer let us say; "As thou standest before the throne of God, cease not to intercede earnestly for us all, thy faithful servants, O wise and wondrous Nicholaos, that we be delivered from the eternal fire and from the wicked counsel and ill-dealing of our enemies". Amen! Blessed Christmas!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a meal at lunch time, offered by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Ignatios and the Community Council at the Orient Palace Hotel.

## 2. The Feast of St. Nicholaos at St. Savvas' Lavra

St. Nicholaos was honoured also at his Church in the Lavra of St. Savvas, the first Church built in the Lavra, with the Divine Liturgy in an All-night Vigil, which was led by the

Archbishop in turn, Most Reverend Philoumenos of Pella, with the participation of St. Savvas' and the Hagiotaphite Fathers and pilgrims.

### 3. The Feast of St. Nicholaos in Jerusalem

The Feast of St. Nicholaos was also celebrated in his Holy Monastery in the Old City of Jerusalem. Vespers in the afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on the morning of the feast were led by the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod Most Reverend Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, with co-celebrants the Archimandrites Mattheos and Demetrios, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Sophronios, with the participation in prayer of a congregation from Jerusalem and Monks and Nuns of the Patriarchate.

After the Divine Liturgy the Caretaker of the Holy Monastery Archdeacon Mark offered a rich reception to the Episcopal Entourage and all present at the Hegoumeneion and the courtyard of the Monastery.

**From Secretariat-General**

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**THE FEAST OF ST. SAVVAS THE  
SANCTIFIED AT THE**

# PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, December 5/18, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of our Holy Father Savvas the Sanctified, at the Lavra founded by him in the Judea desert, further beyond Bethlehem and Beit Sahour, on the right bank of Brook Kedron, which flows towards the Dead Sea.

This Monastery was founded by St. Savvas, after his arrival from his hometown Moutalaski of Cappadocia in the Holy Land in 456 A.D. and having first been taught the monastic life by St. Euthymius the Great and St. Theoktistos.

During St. Savvas' lifetime and after his repose this Lavra became a monastic centre of Orthodoxy and all Christianity, as well as a centre of St. Savvas' ascetic striving in the Holy Land, and of his co-patriot and contemporary and friend, St. Theodosios the Cenobiarch, for the prevailing of the Doctrine of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Synod of Chalcedon regarding the one hypostasis of Christ in two natures.

Since 1965, the sacred relic of St. Savvas has been kept in the Lavra, as a blessing and encouragement of those who venerate it.

In this historic Monastery, St. Savvas was honoured on this day with an All-night Vigil, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the leading Archbishop of the Vespers Vigil, Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Secretary-General, Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Most Reverend Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank the Hegoumen of Beit Jalla Archimandrite Ignatios, Arab-speaking Priests, Archdeacon Mark, and Hierodeacon Simeon. The chanting was delivered by Mr. Balagiorgos choir on the right in Greek, with the help of His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba and the

Patriarchal School of Zion students, and the on the left in Arabic by the choir under the lead of the Patriarchal Representative in Arce-Ptolemais Archimandrite Philotheos. The Vigil was attended by pilgrims and local faithful from Bethlehem, Beit Jalla and Beit Sahour, along with the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation;

“For better is one day in Thy courts than thousands elsewhere. I have chosen rather to be an outcast in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of sinners” (Psalm 83:10).

Beloved Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Noble pilgrims

The grace of the All-holy Spirit has gathered us all in this holy place of the desert in order to festively honour the holy and sacred commemoration of our Holy Godly-minded Father Savvas the Sanctified.

Becoming a citizen of the desert in Palestine, our Holy Father Savvas proved to be “a peer of angelkind, a dweller with the saints in the heights, a companion of the prophets, a joint heir with the apostles and the martyrs”, always paying heed to St. Paul’s advice: “ For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phil. 3:20-21).

Having striven next to great and God-bearing teachers in the monastic Lavrae of the Judea and Jordan deserts, and having been taught the spiritual manner of living, with the power of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ he accomplished “to change his vile body and fashioned it like unto the Lord’s glorious

body” the body of the crucified and resurrected Christ.

A true witness of this fact is the herein kept and venerated incorrupt relic of the Saint; the fragrant relic of our Sanctified Father Savvas, who was received by the Lord “unto his heavenly kingdom” (2 Tim. 4:18), “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto” (1 Tim. 6:16).

The heavenly kingdom of Christ and the unapproachable light is being witnessed and evangelized by the Holy Church of us Orthodox Christians, who make its God-man body in the world, the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because according to St. Paul, He is the head of the body of the Church; “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col. 1:18-20).

Behold therefore, why David exclaims; “Bring unto the Lord, ye sons of God, bring unto the Lord glory and honour. Bring unto the Lord the glory due unto His Name, worship the Lord in His holy court” (Psalm 28:1-2). And the crowd of angels began to praise God and say; “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). And in more detail, glory to God in the highest places of heaven by the angels dwelling therein; and may peace reign to the whole of the earth, which is disturbed by sin and its violent passions; because God has manifested brightly His favour and goodwill to men through the incarnation of His Son.

Our Holy Father Savvas became a communicant of this divine peace, as did all the saints of Christ, “for He [Christ] is our peace” (Eph. 2:14). This peace of the incarnate Word of God, of Christ the Son of God who was born in the cave of Bethlehem from the pure blood of the Most Blessed Theotokos



and Ever-Virgin Mary, is being evangelized today by our honoured Father Savvas, the vessel of the Holy Spirit.

Let us entreat our Holy Father Savvas the Sanctified, and along with the hymn writer say; "Do thou entreat Christ, do thou plead with Christ, O righteous one, that the Church may be granted concord, tranquility, great mercy and lasting unity". And deem us who honour you worthy celebrate in peace and repentance the divine Nativity of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen! Blessed Christmas!

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a reception and a meal, and the Patriarchal Entourage returned to Jerusalem having first stopped by the Monastery of St. Theodosios the Cenobiarch.

In St. Savvas honour the Divine Liturgy was also celebrated at the Holy Chapel dedicated to him in the H. Monastery of the Archangels in the Old City of Jerusalem, by Archimandrite Stephen, with the care of the Hegoumen Most Reverend Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF ST. CATHERINE AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Sunday November 25/ December 8, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of Saint Catherine the Great Martyr and all-wise.

On this feast the Church commemorates St. Catherine, who was a very wise young lady from Alexandria, and with her faith in Christ and education, "with the Holy Spirit's sword silenced

brilliantly the clever among the godless" and suffered a martyr's death for Christ performing wonders and miracles during the reign of Maxentius and Maximinus (305 A.D.).

The Patriarchate honoured the Great Martyr Catherine;

1. With the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of the Transfiguration of the Lord in Ramallah, which was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, and the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Archimandrite Kallistos, the Hegoumen of this Monastery Archimandrite Galaction, the ministering Priest of this parish Steward Fr. Jacob, Fr. Simeon and Archimandrite Seraphim from Nazareth, and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by the parish choir in Arabic and the service was attended by a large Rum-Orthodox Arab-speaking congregation of this town.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation;

"The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility" (Proverbs 15:33). [Reverence to God, the fear of God, turns the practical schooling into noble wisdom for the ones who receive the education. And the divine schooling is followed by reward and glory] the wise Solomon says.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians

The sacred commemoration of the Holy Great Martyr Catherine has gathered us all today in this historic place, in the Church of the Transfiguration of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in order to honour in Eucharist the all-wise martyr of His love.

According to the historian Eusevius of Caesarea, St. Catherine was from Alexandria, the daughter of Konsta, a wonderful virgin, extremely wise in temperament, and glorious in wealth, family and education; with her fixed mindset, she defeated the passionate and evil soul of Maximus the tyrant from Alexandria. And with her eloquence she made speechless the orators and philosophers who initiated a debate with her. And because of her confession of Christ, she received the crown of martyrdom by our Saviour Jesus Christ, in the year 305 A.D. (Eccles. History 8:14).

Catherine the Great Martyr was distinguished among the women who martyred for Christ for her rare wisdom and education, which stemmed from the "divine fear", namely the deep faith in the true God and the keeping of His commandments, as the psalmist says; "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Psalm 103:17-18). "While the felt life is not ever-lasting, the mercy of the Lord is ever-lasting" Origen says. Commenting on the words; "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom" (Proverbs 15:33), St. Chrysostom says; "The fear of God perfects life both in its practical and theoretical aspect".

In other words, my dear brothers and sisters, reverence of God, namely the fear of God is the foundation of the correct manner of living and of the human wisdom. For this, St. Paul says; "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:23-24).

This very armor of the divine strength and wisdom of God Word the Christ did the all-lauded Catherine put on, hearkening to St. Paul's advice; "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11).

Behold therefore why God's glory comes along with the wisdom and education of God, as St. Peter preaches; "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:4). The Great Martyr Catherine also received this "crown of glory that fadeth not away" as her hymn writer says; "Thou didst prove a voluntary Martyr, Catherine most glorious, when thou forcibly didst rebuke the tyrant, and didst convict the most grievous madness of polytheism, and by the light of grace divine and godly knowledge didst cast him to the ground. For which cause, Christ the Saviour of our souls, awarded the crown to thee as His witness in martyrdom and a virgin without reproach".

And we wonder, what kind and of what shape is the crown of glory with which St. Catherine was crowned? This crown of the glory of our God and Saviour Christ is no other than the participation of the righteous in the transfiguration of Jesus Christ, during which His face shone like the sun, and His raiment turned white as the light (Matt. 17:2).

In other words, the all-lauded Catherine, as another disciple of Christ, was deemed worthy to the vision of the glory of God, therefore she "now rejoices with the angelic choirs, with whom thou dost unceasingly cry: Bless Christ, O ye priests; supremely exalt Him, O ye people, unto the ages" the hymn writer says. And in His prayer, Jesus Christ prays to God the Father for Himself, for His disciples the Apostles and for all who believe in Him saying: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).

Interpreting the Lord's words; "that they may behold my glory" (John 17:24), St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "it will be not possible neither for the profane and sinners nor for those who dishonor the Law to behold the glory of Christ, but [it will be possible] only for the righteous and the benign ones. And we know this from the prophet who says "Let favour be shewed

to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord" (Isaiah 26:10). And also in the gospel preaching of our Saviour Christ; "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8).

This purity of heart made the Ever-Virgin Mary a chosen vessel of the Holy Spirit, through which she became the Mother of God the Word and our Saviour Christ, Who was born of her pure blood in the cave of Bethlehem.

Our Holy Church is preparing us for this great and inconceivable event, the mystery of the Divine Providence of the incarnation of God the Word, in order to celebrate, paying heed to St. Paul's preaching; "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27).

Christ, my dear brothers and sisters, is the light of the world and the Sun of righteousness, therefore we, who bear His name, are called to put on the raiment of the light of the Sun of righteousness, which is Christ. Let us then prepare ourselves, so that the Sun of Righteousness and the light of knowledge may enter in the cave of our souls.

We are also called to this by today's celebrated Holy Great Martyr Catherine, along with the Holy Great Martyr Mercurius, that we may imitate them, living a life in Christ in purity in all ways; and that we may say along with St. Paul; "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). Amen! Many happy returns and blessed Christmas!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by the blessing of the water for the new halls of the parish, while the Hegoumen and the Council offered a meal to His Beatitude, who offered in turn a Cross to Archimandrite Galaction.

2. At the Holy Monastery dedicated to St. Catherine in the

Old City, a stone's throw away from the Patriarchate, with Vespers in the afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on the morning of the feast, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, with co-celebrants; Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos and other Priests. The chanting was delivered by Monk Raphael and the services were attended by a noble congregation of local faithful and pilgrims.

After the Divine Liturgy the Hegoumen Archimandrite Stephen offered a reception.

3. At the Holy Monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai, where her sacred relic is kept.

For this feast a delegation was sent from the Patriarchate, led by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis. The delegation arrived in the evening of the forefeast, participated in Vespers and at the Divine Liturgy in the All-night Vigil and returned to Jerusalem on Sunday evening.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLY HIEROMARTYR PHILOUMENOS THE HAGIOTAPHITE AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

The commemoration of the New Holy Hieromartyr Philoumenos was celebrated on Friday November 16/29, 2019 at Jacob's well, the

place of his martyrdom. When he suffered a martyr's death he was the Hegoumen there and the current Hegoumen, Fr. Ioustinos has constructed a magnificent Church dedicated to St. Foteini the Samaritan Woman – as this is the place where she met the Lord.

St. Philoumenos' martyrdom was validated by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem with its Synodical Act in the year 2009. In this Holy Church which is built above the chapel with the well, the Divine Liturgy on the day the Saint martyred, on 16/29 November 1979, was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Most Reverend Archbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina and Theophylactos of Jordan, His Eminence the Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks among who were; the Hegoumen of Beit Jala Archimandrite Ignatios, the Archimandrites; Makarios and Leontios, Fr. Kyriakos and Arab-speaking Priests. The chanting was delivered by Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos in Greek on the right and the Rafidia Community Choir in Arabic on the left, as the service was attended by a contrite congregation of local faithful and pilgrims from Greece, Romania, and Russia.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation;

“O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles” (Psalm 43:3) the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in this sacred place of Patriarch Jacob's well, where our Lord Jesus Christ told the Samaritan Woman; “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), in order to honour in Eucharist the commemoration

of the New Martyr of the Church of Jerusalem St. Philoumenos the Hagiotaphite.

Christ's light and His truth guided and brought young Philoumenos from the island of Cyprus "on a holy mountain and in the dwelling places of God the Word" in the Holy City of Jerusalem, where he joined the Monastic Order of the Studious Ones, namely of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood which ministers the All-holy Shrines, which witness the martyrdom on the Cross of the "leader of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2) and "of [our] life" (Acts 3:15).

Hieromonk Philoumenos worked as a shepherd and with boldness for the gospel of Christ in all ministries appointed to him, in the Monastic centre of the Patriarchate and in the various villages and towns of its jurisdiction, hearkening to St. Paul's advice; "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord..., who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:7-10).

And indeed, our Holy Father Philoumenos was not ashamed of the martyrdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, during his ministry in this sacred Shrine, imitating St. Foteini, the Samaritan Woman, who became a martyr and equal to the apostles in the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

The fervent love towards God filled our Father Philoumenos with a spirit of power and love but also of wisdom, therefore he did not flinch preaching the witness and the preaching of the crucified Christ, "unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:23) according to wise Paul.

The "revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25) of the incarnation of God the Word and our Saviour Jesus Christ, my dear Brothers and



Sisters, is the one which the holy calling and Christ's grace revealed to us, and abolished the death of corruption and sin. Moreover, it brought to light the life and incorruption with the preaching of the gospel, as St. Paul preached; "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:9-10).

In other words, Christ revealed to us the death of eternal life, namely the death of incorruption, through His resurrection, as Theophylactos the interpreter says; "in His own body He [Christ] actively abolished death, making it [His body] incorrupt. For this reason His holy martyrs became communicants and participants of Christ's death, namely of His eternal Kingdom. According to St. Chrysostom; "Christ lives and works in the souls of the martyrs".

The genuine martyr of Christ's blood is distinguished for his perfect love, as Clement of Alexandria says; "we call martyrdom an accomplishment, not because the man came to the end of his life, as the rest [of the people], but because he has accomplished the perfect work of love". It is precisely this perfect work of love that today's honoured martyr St. Philoumenos accomplished. And "his perfect work of love in Christ" was sealed with his confession to God that the Messiah is Christ. This confession was done in this Jacob's well as witnessed by St. John the Evangelist; "The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he" (John 4:25-26).

St. Philoumenos manifested again this "perfect work of love" though his martyr's death, hearkening to the Lord's words; "Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of

God" (Luke 12:8). This means that becoming one among the cloud of the martyrs of the Church, our Father Philoumenos did not find the confession of his Christian faith enough, but he was "planted together in the likeness of his death" (Romans 6:5), namely of Christ.

Today's commemoration of Hieromartyr Philoumenos in this very place of his martyrdom proves that the Church of Christ is not a worldly institution but the God-man mystical body of Christ who was crucified and resurrected for us and said; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24), "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25), "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).

To follow Christ, my dear ones, means to be in communion of faith, as much as in communion of life and participation in His passion, in co-suffering with Him, according to the glorious example of our Holy Hieromartyr Philoumenos the Hagiotaphite.

Let us thank our Lord God Who glorified St. Philoumenos who glorified Him, who we now entreat, along with our Most Blessed Lady and Ever-Virgin Mary to intercede to our God and Saviour Christ for our souls. And along with the hymn writer let us say; "the law of the praises is being defeated by the magnitude of your feats; the Master Christ alone glorifies you with the divine splendour; fervently entreat Him for those who praise you in faith". Amen! Many happy returns!"

After the Divine Liturgy the Hegoumen and renovator of the Monastery and founder of the new Church of St. Foteini offered a reception at the Hegoumeneion and later a meal at lunch time.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE 14TH ENTHRONEMENT ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS

On Friday, November 9/22, 2019, a Doxology took place at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for the 14<sup>th</sup> Election and Enthronement Anniversary of His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

The Doxology was officiated by H.H.B. with co-celebrants the Hagiotaphite Archbishops and Hieromonks, Arab-speaking Priests, Deacons and Monks of all the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and with the participation of a noble congregation from Jerusalem, other Communities of the Arab-speaking flock of the Patriarchate and pilgrims.

After the Doxology, bells tolling, the Patriarchal Entourage returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters.

Geronda Secretary-General, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina addressed His Beatitude as follows;

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

The Mother of Churches is rejoicing today in gleefulness on the quite important and happy occasion of Your Beatitude’s Enthronement at the glorious Throne of St. James the Brother of God and First Hierarch of Jerusalem.

This was accomplished through the devoted endeavours of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood for the preservation of the Status Quo of the Holy Land and of course of the Old City of Jerusalem, which had been undermined by the illegal agreements of mortgaging its land property of incalculable value. With these endeavours, fourteen years ago, in 2005, the Brotherhood through its representative the Holy and Sacred Synod, unanimously and by normal voting "placed up on the lamppost" Your Beatitude as the worthy Shepherd and navigator of the Primeval Church of Jerusalem. The election of Your Beatitude and the subsequent Enthronement with the participation of all Orthodox Churches and with the recognition of all local governments, dispelled the vortex which severely shook but did not submerge the vessel of the Church of Jerusalem and tightened the joints of its mystical body in the bond of peace.

This event was celebrated today as it should, with the festive thanksgiving Doxology in full participation of Monks, clergy and laity at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. And now, in this historic reception hall of the Patriarchate, we rend Your Beatitude the worthy praise for all the "pious, righteous and just things" You have accomplished for the All-holy Shrines, the Brotherhood and the flock.

First of all, as far as the Shrines are concerned, Your Beatitude at all times both in words and in actions and toward all directions has underlined that they are a special blessing, the special and characteristic feature and the irrefutable privilege of the Church of Jerusalem as places of the Divine appearance of Christ, and for this reason, the mission of the Brotherhood is to preserve and serve them as living liturgical places for the teaching and the sanctification of the many noble pilgrims who visit them. Considering the All-holy Shrines a heritage not only of the Brotherhood but of our nation, they have been renovated, as the Sacred Edicule, the roof of the Basilica of Bethlehem, the

Holy Monastery of St. John the Baptist by the river Jordan, the current renovation of the God-receiving Cave, and our rights toward them have bravely been protected, such as the right of the presence of the second guard in the interior of the Edicule of the All-holy Tomb for the reception of the Coptic and Syrian Communities after the Divine Liturgy on the Vigil of Easter and the right of the Elevation of the Holy Cross at the place of its finding, by the against the Status Quo treacherous manner of the Armenians.

The vivid interest of Your Beatitude for the Rum Orthodox Arab-speaking flock and the detailed watch over its related issues has been noted over this period, through the frequent significant funding of the Patriarchate for the completion of the Holy Church of the Nativity of Theotokos in the Community of Sahnin, through the offering of a wood-carved ikonostasion made in Cyprus as well as of the Holy Church of Saints Constantine and Helen in Koufr Smea in the district of Acre, of the recently consecrated Holy Church of St. Savvas the Sanctified in Yafat Nasra near Nazareth, and of the Holy Church of St. Moses the Ethiopian in Rafidia of Nablus, in Samaria.

Along with the other brotherly Orthodox Churches, Your Beatitude has made many efforts to keep the cooperation determined by the tradition of our Orthodox Church for the unity in Christ, projecting the dialogue in wisdom and mediocrity as the solution for the occasionally arising Inter-Orthodox issues. Appreciating this attitude of Yours, our Brotherly Church of Russia has offered You the prize Alexei II for the year 2018, "for outstanding activities in strengthening the unity of the Orthodox Christian nations and for upholding and promoting Christian values in the life of society". This happened only yesterday in Your visit to Moscow, where You also met with His Excellency the President of Russia Mr. Putin and requested His support for the Christians of the Holy Land and of the Middle East.

Since the beginning of Your Patriarchal Office, the epicenter of the efforts and actions of Your Beatitude has undoubtedly been the by all means preservation of the Biblically established and internationally recognized Status Quo of the Old City of Jerusalem. This Status Quo is being violated and distorted in the case of the prevailing as legitimate of the long-term leases of the Jaffa Gate Hotels of the Patriarchate, which lack transparency and justice and are full of financial corruption. For the abolishment of these agreements, Your Beatitude has energetically worked toward the awareness and mobility of people and organizations, members of influence abroad, as well as within this country. Worth saying is the initiative of Your Beatitude last July this year, to organize a peaceful march of all the local Churches from our Patriarchate to Jaffa Gate in front of the Imperial and Petra hotels, and the subsequent prayer with the reading of a Message conveying internationally our request to preserve Jaffa Gate as the Gate for the entrance of the Heads of Churches of the Old City of Jerusalem to their Seats and as the natural access point of the Christian pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre, as it has been for centuries.

Encouraged with these accomplished things, Your Beatitude, and warmly congratulating You, the Hagiotaphite Fathers join You in the good fight for the success and the help of God for all initiatives You undertake, and the materialization of all Your aims for the good of our Brotherhood and of the Church of Holy Jerusalem.

Raising my glass in a toast, Your Beatitude, on behalf of the Holy and Sacred Synod and all Hagiotaphite Fathers, I wish You many happy returns, in health, gleefulness, peace and stability, full of Divine strength and enforcement, so that You may increase and enrich Your Patriarchal Office that has been entrusted to You by the Divine Providence, for the benefit and the praise of the blessed nation of the Rum Orthodox and for the Glory of our Trinitarian God.”

Likewise, the Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and the representatives of the Orthodox Churches of the Patriarchate of Moscow and the Patriarchate of Romania addressed His Beatitude.

His Beatitude replied to all with the following words;

“Your Excellency Mr. Consul General of Greece,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved Christians,

Noble pilgrims

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).

The appearing Church of the incarnate God Word in the place of His “provision” (Psalm 132:15) and “of habitation” (Psalm 132:13), our Holy Church of Jerusalem, rejoices today on the completion of the fourteen-year-old ministerial navigation of Our Mediocrity since the taking over of the lot of the ministry (Acts 1:25)] of the Apostolic and Patriarchal Throne of St. James the Brother of God and First Hierarch of Jerusalem.

This sacred and ecclesiastical event possesses a special meaningful significance for the centuries-old expanding mystical body of Christ, the Church, on the one hand, and for its life in the world on the other. And it should be noted that according to St. Paul, the faithful members of the Church are called “fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph. 2:19) and that “they dwell on earth but actually live in heaven” according to the epistle to Diognitos (Vol. 2, p. 253).

Because of these, we went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, escorted by the Reverend members of our Venerable Hagiotaphite

Brotherhood, where we rendered a thanksgiving Doxology to our Holy Trinitarian God, Who has been glorified "through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever" (1 Peter 4:11).

Today's celebrated fourteen-year-old enthronement anniversary does not refer to Our unworthiness, but to the established institution of the Church which has been founded by the redeeming blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, on which foundation "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11) as St. Paul preaches. And according to St. Ignatios of Antioch; "the apostolic" and "episcopal" throne of the Church encompasses a place of God; "Heads of the Bishops in the place of God, and of the Priests in the place of the synod of the apostles and of the deacons...who have been entrusted the ministry of Jesus Christ" (Epistle to Magnesians 6).

Our Patriarchal, monastic and Pastoral ministry so far, on the Hierarchic and Apostolic throne of St. James the Brother of God, of the Church of Jerusalem, has only one sole purpose, the preservation of the consignment of the healthy faith that has been handed over to Us by the Apostolic succession, and the upholding of the word of truth, and especially of the care of the Christian flock that has been entrusted to us, according to the teaching of St. Paul; "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12). Moreover, the preservation of the All-holy Shrines as places of the logic worship and a source of healing, where pilgrims flock from all ends of the earth for their spiritual refreshment, hearkening to the psalmist saying; "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:1-2).

Needless to say that the privileges and sovereign rights of



the noble and royal nation of the "Rum Orthodox" Christians on the All-holy Shrines, is a sacred duty in its "ab antiquo" mission in the Holy Land. Therefore, every effort is made to all directions, political and diplomatic, local and international governments to respect the existing multi-cultural and inter-religious Status Quo which has been established by international treaties, for both the biblical shrines and the Holy City of Jerusalem (which on itself is a universal pilgrimage).

Nevertheless, we submit to the advice of the God-inspired Paul; "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3), we have not wasted any time working in all humility for the keeping of the unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church of ours, "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (1 Tim. 3:9).

And we say this because Jerusalem, and therefore the Church of Jerusalem, being the primeval and inexhaustible source of the blood of righteousness, of peace and of eternal life, namely of Christ, is the point of reference of reconciliation of all of us, as St. Paul preaches by saying: "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).

This fourteenth enthronement anniversary of our Mediocrity calls us not to the boast of the things of our own, but that we "may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God" (Romans 15:17). "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience" (2 Cor. 1:120. Calling upon this testimony of our conscience, we shall not cease to strive for the good fight in the vineyard of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, namely in His Church, hearkening to the Lord's words: "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).

Co-witnesses to this annunciation of the testimony of Christ's light and of the glory of God the Father are our co-workers the reverend and dearest Hagiotaphite Fathers and Brothers, Archbishops, Hieromonks, Deacons and Monks, who are devoted body and soul to our sacred mission.

Let us therefore entreat God the Father of lights and of truth "to guide our steps to the working of His commandments" through the intercessions of our Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and through the intercessions of our Holy Father Nectarios of Pentapolis. May the Grace of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb of our Resurrected Saviour Christ fortify all of us who serve in the ministry of the All-holy shrines and in the pastoring of our Christian flock.

With all these, we call upon all who prayed along with us and honoured us with their presence in this festive enthronement anniversary, wishing them strength from on high, the grace of the All-holy Tomb, patience and every blessing from God, expressing our warm thanks to all who addressed us; Geronda Secretary-General, Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, who spoke on behalf of the members of the Holy and Sacred Synod and our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, Reverend Archimandrite Dometianos, representative of our Holy Brotherly Church of Russia, who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril, Reverend Archimandrite Theophilos, representative of the Holy Church of Romania, who conveyed the wished of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Romania Daniel, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Nazareth, the Most Reverend Archbishop Damascene of Joppa, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Joppa, Reverend Fr. Charalambos Bandour, who spoke on behalf of St. James Cathedral, Reverend Archimandrite Artemios and Fr. Alexander and Fr. Igor who spoke on behalf of the Russian-speaking Community in Ber-Sheba, the Most Reverend Archbishop

Christophoros of Kyriakoypolis, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Jordan and on behalf of the Respected Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Mr. Ode Kawas, General Magager of the Education Committee in Palestine, Reverend Fr. Boulos, who spoke on behalf of the Community of Beit Jalla and our dearest Steward Fr. Savvas, who spoke on behalf of Beit Sahour, Mr. Abu Aeta and Mr. Yousef Nasser, and all participating in this festivity of the Enthronement anniversary.

To the health of all of you!"

**From Secretariat-General**