

THE FEAST OF ST. GEORGE THE GREAT MARTYR IN LYDDA

On Saturday, November 3/16, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of St. George the Great Martyr and Trophy-bearer at his holy Church in Lydda.

On this day the Church celebrates the translation of the relics of St. George from Rome where he suffered a martyr's death, in 4th century A.D., to his hometown Lydda, and of the consecration of the Church by St. Helen.

In this Holy Church, which the Patriarchate preserves as a shrine, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem officiated the Divine Liturgy with the preceding warm welcome by the clergy. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Most Reverend Archbishop Damascene of Joppa, the Most Reverend Archbishop and Secretary-General Aristarchos of Constantina, and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Elias of Filomiliou, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos in Greek on the right and by the Community Choir in Arabic on the left, as the service was attended by representatives of the Greek Embassy in Israel and the Ambassadors of Serbia, England, Russia and Georgia, as well as a large congregation venerating the Saint's tomb.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation;

"They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me" (John 16:2-3) Jesus Christ orders to those who believe in Him.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The Sacred commemoration of the consecration of the Church of the Holy Great Martyr George the Trophy-bearer in your historic biblical town of Lydda, namely the translation of his sacred relics, has gathered us all in order to glorify in Eucharist our Lord God, Who has glorified the martyr of love, the true sun of righteousness, His Only Begotten Son and our Lord Jesus Christ.

St. George was established as one of the great martyrs of Christ's love, having become participant of the cruciform and redeeming blood of Christ, as well as a communicant of the cloud of martyrs of the Church (Hebrews 12:1).

We refer to the Church because the mission of the Church in the world is the perfection of man in Christ. And this perfection in Christ is the aim and the expectation of Christ's friends, and of course of His martyrs. And this is so, because Christ, God the Word, is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end (Revelation 21:6), namely the salvation of the people, as He "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

Having been the son of noble Christian parents, from a Cappadocian father and a Palestinian mother, George was brought up according to the law of divine reverence, of the faith in Christ, and on the one hand he reached for "the knowledge of truth", while on the other, he desired the heavenly and eternal city, hearkening to St. Paul's words; "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Hebrews 13:14). "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" (Philip.

3:20-21).

Because of this, and having cleansed his mind with the light of the glorious gospel of God (2 Cor. 4:4), George who was known for his undefeated bravery as a grand commander of the Roman army, presented himself in the Roman Parliament before the cruel persecutor of the Christians Emperor Diocletian, and boldly stated himself to be a Christian and proclaimed Christ to be the God and the Son of God.

In other words, my dear ones, St. George denounced the fallacy of the false gods and of the idols, as well as the self-religion of the Roman Emperors who made themselves gods and sought to be worshiped by their subjects and citizens. In this case George proves himself to be a faithful witness of Christ's truth but also of the freedom of the people from the demonic religion of the idols as prophet-king David says; "For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens" (Psalm 96:4-5).

Today's honoured commemoration of St. George does not only refer to the historic place and time of his life and action, but also to our contemporary state of humanity and of the world, for which world, St. John the Evangelist says: "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:19-20) and he concludes; "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21), which means from the idolatrous notions and fallacies concerning God.

The innate and impulsive faith of St. George to the crucified

and resurrected Christ as well as his Godly zeal in favour of the teaching of Christ's gospel, state that he became a witness and fighter for the divine righteousness in Christ, as St. Paul preaches; "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17).

The Trophy-bearer George gained this righteousness becoming an imitator of Christ in both words and actions, hearkening to St. Paul's advice; "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). As it is known, St. Paul completed his apostolic preaching mission in Rome, with the martyr's blood of Christ's love.

The Holy Martyrs of the Church of Christ are the most selective and exquisite chorea of its saints. And this is so because by their confession of Christ as the real God, they have exchanged the glory of this world (1 Cor. 7:31) with the glory of our 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" (Philip. 3:21).

Interpreting these words, St. Theodoritos says: "He said that our body has become of one accord with the body of His glory, not according to the measure of glory, but according to the quality. And this is also a luminous thing". And in more detail; the transformation of the holy martyrs' body underlines the change from the corrupt things to the incorrupt and from the lack of glory to glory itself" according to Zigavinos.

Behold therefore why the hymn writer of the Holy Great Martyr George says; "with the streams of thine own blood thou mightily didst quench the flame of delusion and error, destroying all the tyrants' pride, hereby glorifying Christ. From the right hand of the Most High hast thou therefore been given the crowns of life everlasting and of divine

incorruption”.

All of us who honour today the commemoration of George the brave Martyr, the preacher of truth, the defender of the poor and the healer of the sick, let us entreat him to intercede to our Lord God for the peace of our souls and the peace of our turbulent region.

Let us also beseech the Ever-Virgin Mary and Mother of God, the Most Blessed Theotokos to intercede to her Son and God and our Lord Jesus Christ, to guide our actions to a redeeming harbour and to the unwaning light which illumines the souls of the holy martyrs and of course of the Holy Great Martyr George the Trophy-bearer. Amen.”

After the Divine Liturgy, Hegoumen Archimandrite Nicodemus, who has worked on the preservation of the ikonostasion of the Church, offered a reception at the Community Club.

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM ADDRESSES THE ANGLICAN MEETING “MAJMA” IN JORDAN

On Wednesday morning, October 24/ November 6, 2019, His Beatitude and our Father the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed the Meeting “Majma” of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East, which took place in Bristol Hotel in Amman, after the invitation and welcoming reception

of the Most Reverend Bishop Suheil Dawani, with the following address in English;

"Your Grace, Archbishop Suheil,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Father Hosam,

Reverend Fathers,

Sisters and Brothers,

We greet you, dear Archbishop Suheil, and your clergy and people, as you gather for your annual synod. We join with you in welcoming your distinguished guests for the Anglican Community around the world.

We would like to take this opportunity first of all to underline the importance of the relationship that exists between the Orthodox Church and the Anglican Community, and especially between the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East. Needless to say, this relationship has born much fruit over the years, and most especially recently, as we have stood together in the face of challenges to the freedom and the rights of the Church in our region.

We thank you, dear Archbishop Suheil, for your solidarity and strength of purpose, and we give thanks to Almighty God for the blessings we enjoy in our close collaboration.

We also pay tribute today to His Majesty King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, where we enjoy the freedom to gather from all over our region, and where His Majesty, the Custodian over Muslim and Christian Holy Sites in the Holy Land, ensures religious freedom and supports the historic rights of the Church and the guarantee of the Christian

presence.

You have chosen as your theme "Becoming a living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1), and this is a timely subject for all of us who call the Holy Land and the Middle East, which is the cradle of Christianity, our home.

We cannot understand the meaning of sacrifice without first referring to our Lord's sacrifice on the Cross. We see in this divine sacrifice the power of humility, and we understand humility through metanoia. Let us listen to the Lord's words, "I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32). Humility and metanoia are the key to salvation, and without them nothing else is possible. The deeper we are shaped by humility and metanoia, the more available we are to God as those who can offer ourselves in sacrificial commitment and service to others.

As the Church Fathers teach us, sacrifice has many expressions. There is the sacrifice of self-giving service to others. There is the sacrifice that is the martyrdom of conscience. There is the sacrifice of costly commitment. Saint John Chrysostom says; "As we read in the words of Saint Paul, our sacrifice is a living one, holy and pleasing to God". Chrysostom emphasizes that one should not think of sacrifice as the slaughtering of our bodies, but as following the commandments of the Lord, which lead to our salvation and deification.

Sacrifice can be personal, and it can be corporate, but it never means giving up our integrity, for our personal and corporate sacrificial acts are to be understood in and through Christ.

It must be borne in mind that the purpose of the Church is precisely a sacrificial vocation, and this is why the Church is, and should be, a sign and inspiration for political and civic leadership as we see conflicts all over our world, where

disorder and confusion are so common a human experience. It is in this context that we consider our role and responsibility as spiritual leaders and priests. For the key to promoting the values of the Bible that are threatened, values like peace and justice, is precisely this kenotic tendency, and this kenosis must begin with ourselves. We do know that we cannot demand sacrifice from another; we can only live the sacrificial way of Christ ourselves, so that the Church may be a true beacon of light and hope. We must ourselves be a paradigm – as Saint Paul says, “Be imitators of me as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

To be imitators of Christ is indeed itself a work of sacrifice, and Christians who face trouble and persecution on a daily basis should remain firm in this vocation, because “our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20). As our Lord says, “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul” (Mat. 10:28).

Thank you for the kind invitation to be with you. May God bless you, dear Archbishop Suheil, and all the good servants in the vineyard of the Lord, that is your clergy and people, as you seek to live more deeply the mystery of Christ’s sacrificial life in your own”.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT JAMES THE

BROTHER OF GOD AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, October 23/ November 5, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of St. James the Brother of God and first Hierarch of Jerusalem as his Throne feast.

St. James the Brother of God is known to the Church as the son of Joseph the betrothed of Theotokos and brother of the Lord, according to the law, and the one to whom the Lord Himself entrusted the shepherding of the Church of Jerusalem. According to the Acts of the Apostles he was the Chairman of the First Synod of the Church of Jerusalem in 49 A.D. He is the author of the epistle with his name in the New Testament, he confessed Jesus as the Son of God and Christ and was overthrown from Solomon's Temple wing and is being honoured as a Hieromartyr.

Honouring his work, the Church of Jerusalem celebrated his commemoration at his Holy Cathedral next to the Central Monastery with Vespers in the evening and the Divine Liturgy on the morning of the Feast, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and the Most Reverend Archbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia, and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Priests of the Cathedral; Fr. Farah/ Charalambos Bandour, and Fr. Hader/George Baramki, other Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Eulogios, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and the participation in prayer of a large congregation from the Cathedral parish and pilgrims.

His Beatitude read the following Sermon to this congregation;

“The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever. The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment” (Psalm 37:29-30) the psalmist says.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The sacred commemoration of the righteous Apostle James the Brother of God has gathered us today in the Holy Cathedral dedicated to him, in order to offer a sacrifice of praise and bloodless Eucharist to the Holy Trinitarian God Who has performed great and wondrous things to His saints and righteous men.

St. James was distinguished as a tool of the working of the Holy Spirit, and this was so because he became the first Bishop of the Church of Jerusalem having been ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and was the first one to write the Divine Liturgy, having been taught by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as the synaxarist of the Church witnesses.

Paul, the Apostle of the nations, calls the righteous James a “pillar” (Gal. 2:9) of the Church, while his Catholic Epistle presents him as a teacher of a great standard among his readers. He received the name “Brother of God” because along with the other so thought brothers of Jesus Christ, he was a son of Joseph the betrothed to the Ever-Virgin Mary and Mother of God. Joseph had been married before with another woman. Because of his excessive asceticism, he had “his knees hardened just like those of a camel” because he prayed on his knees continuously, “worshiping God and praying for the remission of the sins of the people”. For his excessive zeal of righteousness, namely of the faith in God and the good works, he was called “Righteous”. “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith

save him?" (James 2:14) he preaches in his catholic epistle, calling upon the connection between the man's body and soul and saying: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26).

In other words, faith without works is idle and dead, not only because it is empty from the manifestations that prove the existence of spiritual life to the one who believes, but because it is not able to work the salvation; it is impossible for the indifferent and idle faith to lead to the eternal life, as St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "Faith in Christ works righteousness and relieves from the stains of the previous sins. And if someone may be found to be idle and prone to fall into the passions of the world, it seems that in a way he has mortified the faith...regressing rather to the roughness and ruthlessness of his former life".

St. James was called "Righteous" not only because he believed the foretold prophecies written by the Prophets of the Law of Moses regarding the Son and Word of God, but he also became a communicant of the Passion of Christ, and of His martyr's blood, suffering a similar death to His, as St. Paul says: "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss ...that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Philippians 3:8-11).

Interpreting this sacred words, St. Chrysostom says that our Lord Jesus Christ is our righteousness. "Righteousness is God; and it is a complete gift". And St. James teaches, that God is the source of all good things given to us. "Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James

1:16-17).

Indeed, we should be sure that God, Who called us to become participants of the righteousness of His Son and our Lord Jesus Christ, is reliable, and keeps His promises, for this reason each one of us should trust Him without hesitation, as St. Paul says; "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9).

And our faith to God is being tested through our actions, as St. John Damascene says; "Faith without works is dead", likewise, works without faith are dead; for the true faith is being tested through works". For this reason, St. James recommends long-suffering and patience, calling upon the example of the hardships of the prophets and Job's patience. "Be patient therefore Brethren and grudge not one against another so that you may not be judged; behold the judge standeth before the door" (James 5:7-9). "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:10-11).

These apostolic words of St. James' preaching urge us to consider our Christian faith on the one hand, and on the other, our joining to the mystical body of Christ, namely the Church, whose one and sole and ultimate purpose is for us to become, according to St. Paul, "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), namely holy and partakers of Christ's life, having of course been relieved from the corruption of the world beforehand, which is created by the sinful desire. "Becoming one with God with the partaking of the divine illumination and without altering the divine essence" St. John Damascene explains.

In other words, my dear brothers and sisters, the believers of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, according to St. John the

Evangelist, "are born of God" (John 1:13), or "of the Spirit of God" (John 3:5, 8), and God becomes their Father (Eph. 2:18/ Rom.4; 12) and therefore they become heirs of the Kingdom of God. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17) St. Paul says.

Honouring today the sacred commemoration of "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (James 1:1) the Apostle who preaches that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16), let us entreat along with the Mother of God and the hymn writer and say: "Distinguished among the Apostles as the brother and successor of Christ the Chief Shepherd, thou didst love death for His sake, and wast not ashamed of martyrdom, O glorious James. Entreat Him unceasingly that our souls be saved" and grant peace to our tested by war region. Amen.

After the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude, dressed in His Patriarchal vestments, and His Entourage returned to the Patriarchate Reception Hall, through the courtyard of Saint Constantine and the main gate of the Patriarchate. The Patriarchal Entourage and all faithful following them received the traditional small loaf of bread as a blessing from Abbess Seraphima.

At the Patriarchate Reception Hall, there was a special prayer by His Beatitude and His Entourage, the polychronion of His Beatitude was chanted and then a reception followed, where His Beatitude delivered the following address;

"James who was His (Jesus') brother appears that he was not distant from Him, nor foreign to the faith to Him, but on the contrary he was one of His most genuine disciples; so much so, that he was the first to be distinguished in the throne of the Church of Jerusalem" Eusevios of Caesarea mentions in his writings (Vol. 21, p. 380).

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos

Sophianopoulos,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem honours and venerates today the sacred commemoration of its first Hierarch, Spiritual Father, teacher and distinguished Apostle James the Brother of God. Being one of the most genuine of Christ's disciples, he was anointed by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself a minister of the spiritual sacraments, a High Priest, and was established the first Bishop of the Church of Jerusalem by the chorea of the Apostles, as his hymn writer says: "Thou has manifestly adorned the choir of the Apostles as the first high priest of Jerusalem, anointed by the very hand of the Word, as God's brother and disciple, and a sacred preacher of great mysteries".

St. James' festal commemoration refers not only to the institution of the Church which is inseparable to the Apostolic succession, that of the Bishop and Patriarch of Jerusalem, but also to the safeguarding of the religious and sacred Status Quo of the Holy City of Jerusalem, namely of its Christian demographic character.

St. James, who was called "Righteous" sealed the Throne of the Church of Jerusalem with his martyr's blood, becoming a co-martyr to Christ, Who is the mystical body and the head of the Church.

Our settlement by the mercy of God in the Bishop's Throne of St. James as his successor, bears witness to the true words of the Lord in the Gospel: "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it", namely of the Church (Matt. 16:18).

Therefore, all of us who live in Jerusalem (Luke 24:18) and witness "the Name above all names" (Phil. 2:9), the name of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, are called to pay heed to

the words of St. James the Brother of God whom we celebrate today; "Have long patience, therefore Brethren and stablish your hearts unto the coming of the Lord" (James 5: 7-8). Amen.

From Secretariat-General

DOXOLOGY FOR THE NATIONAL ANNIVERSARY OF 28TH OCTOBER

The Doxology at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for the National Anniversary of 28th October 1940 took place on Monday, October 15/28, 2019.

This Doxology was a thanksgiving to God for His aid in the liberation of our nation from the Italian threat and the German yoke of occupation in the years 1940-1944, and as a prayer for the repose of the souls of our fathers who fought, sacrificed themselves and gloriously fell in the battlefields.

The Doxology was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the participation in prayer of the Archbishops and Priests Hagiotaphite Fathers, at the chanting of the Novice Monk Constantinos Spyropoulos, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and members of the Greek Consulate, as well as members of the Greek Community and the Arab-speaking flock of the Patriarchate.

After the Doxology, bells tolling, the Patriarchal Entourage returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters, where there was a short reception with reciting of poems by the students of St. Demetrios School of the Patriarchate and the National Anthem,

followed by His Beatitude address as below;

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

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Today's anniversary of 28th October 1940 is a remembrance of a great and wondrous action for humankind, and especially for the Greek nation, because the epic of “No” was crucial for the outcome, namely the defeat, of the moral and physical instigators of the devastating World War II.

The recognized by all heroic resistance of the Greek warriors against the marching of the enemy forces of Axis, proved that the nation of the Greeks is governed by native moral and spiritual principles, of both their cultural heritage and Orthodox Christian faith with the tradition of the Holy Fathers.

Faith in righteousness, love for the country, self-sacrifice and especially the dignity of man for the non-negotiable principles of freedom, justice and national independence prevailed over the insanity and wrathful aggressiveness of the Nazi atrocity in the sacred fight of the safeguarding of the national borders and the defense of the territorial integrity of the country.

The “No” of 28th October 1940 was not only the negative answer to the insulters and arrogant treacherous cosmocrats, but mainly to their morbid ideology, namely to the totalitarianism, to fascism and to Nazism.

The Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, honouring as it should the epic of 1940, and wholeheartedly participating in this victorious commemoration of freedom, after the crushing of the relentless occupation of Nazism, came down to the Church of

the Holy Sepulchre, for the thanksgiving Doxology to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Resurrected.

Moreover, we have prayed for the eternal repose of the souls and everlasting remembrance of our fathers and brothers who fought and gloriously fell in the fight for our faith, country and freedom.

This very faith in the light of God the Word, Christ, has established the epic of 1940, and we are called to preserve it as a sacred consignment for the generations to come.

For all these, allow Us to raise our glass in a toast and cry out:

Long live 28th October 1940!

Long live the "NO"

Long live Greece!

Long live the noble nation of the Rum Orthodox!

Long live the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood!"

And the Consul General's address as follows:

"Your Beatitude,

Most Reverend Archbishops,

Reverend Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen

We celebrate today a leading event of the modern Greek history. The unanimous rejection by Hellenism on 28th October 1940 of the ultimatum for the unconditional surrender of the Homeland and the concession of its national sovereignty. We celebrate the heroic and unequal struggle for the defense of Greece's freedom and territorial integrity during World War

II, which began with the epic of Pindos. Today is a day of honour and remembrance for all Greeks.

This historical NO demonstrated the moral stature, the love for freedom and the strong sense of justice of the Greeks. Thanks to this code of principles, they opposed overwhelmingly superior forces: the dark fiber forces of fascism and Nazism that sought to impose the bond of totalitarianism and racism on the peoples of Europe and beyond. The sense of justice shielded the Greeks, who, knowing that they fought in fair struggles for their freedom, achieved their first victory against the Axis, sending a message of hope to the other peoples of Europe and delaying the implementation of their more general strategic plan, contributing this way in the final victory of the Allies.

The "NO" showed in the clearest way the common, deep historical consciousness of the Greeks, that fueled and reinforced the patriotism, the vigor, the self-esteem and the great sense of responsibility with which the sacred and the holy were defended. The "No" was precisely the refusal of the Greek people to forget their history and live a petty and submissive life. Today, all Greeks, wherever we are, pay tribute to the fallen and the fighters in the battlefields of 1940-41 in Pindos, in the Macedonian forts, in our seas, in Crete and elsewhere. We honour those who participated in the National Resistance and those who continued to fight, on the side of the Allies, in the battlefields of World War II, the Middle East and Europe. Today we do not forget the hundreds of thousands innocent victims of the Occupation.

In the national heroic effort that began on October 28, 1940, as in any other national endeavor, the dynamic participation and valuable contribution of the Hellenism of the diaspora was crucial. Greece is very proud and grateful for the great contribution of the Greek community in the Middle East and especially of the Hellenism of Jerusalem, which is historically recorded.

Responding to the need to unite all the forces of the Nation, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Mother of Churches, was then and always remains, a key point of reference, the guardian of the moral authority and spiritual merit of our Orthodox faith and proof of unchanging survival potential of the Greek Orthodox tradition, which is a source of strength, inspiration and hope for the future for all of us.

The anniversary of October 28, 1940 has always been and is even more present today, especially for the new generation which needs to understand and embrace its lessons. In an international environment characterized by extensions, disputes and conflicts, often fueled from dark ideologies and distorted attitudes, as in the pre-war period, we, as Greeks, have the responsibility of preservation of our national unity and unanimity of soul, our commitment to the ideals of freedom and democracy, our inspiration from the moral and spiritual values of our Orthodox faith, and our alertness and determination to cope with all kinds of challenges.

Long live the 28th October 1940

Long live Greece!"

A festal reception followed.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE TRANSLATION

OF THE RELICS OF ST. SAVVAS THE SANCTIFIED

On Saturday, October 13/26, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the translation of the relics of our Holy Father Savvas the Sanctified.

The translation of the relics took place on October 13/26, in the year 1965. At that time, one year after the meeting of the memorable Patriarch Athenagoras with Pope John Paul VI, after the lifting of the anathemas and the beginning of the theological dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem requested the return of the sacred relics of St. Savvas, which had been transported to Venice by the Crusaders.

The Roman Catholic Church granted this petition and the Saint's relics was returned to be welcomed by the full congregation at Jaffa Gate, offered for veneration at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for a week, and from there it was finally transported to the Lavra the Saint had founded, for the protection of the Fathers of the Lavra and of the pilgrims, as well as for their spiritual strengthening and sanctification.

For the celebration of this event, the All-night Vigil, with the Compline, Salutations, Matins and the Divine Liturgy were officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis and the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, and Hieromonks from other Orthodox Churches, Arab-speaking Priests, and the Hierodeacons Mark and Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the Choir leader of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Novice Monk Constantinos and the left choir singer of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos

on the right in Greek, and by Archimandrite Philotheos on the left in Arabic, with the participation in prayer of the Spiritual Father of the Lavra Archimandrite Eudokimos, local faithful from Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, and pilgrims from Greece, Romania and Russia.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon before the Holy Communion;

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1-2) St. Paul preaches.

Beloved Fathers and Brothers in Christ,

Noble Christians and Pilgrims

Savvas the Sanctified “who has become a citizen of the heavenly metropolis” has gathered all of us in his holy Lavra, to celebrate the sacred commemoration of the translation of his holy relic from the Italian city of Venice.

The keeping of the commemoration of the translation of St. Savvas’ relic is a task both pleasing to God and a benevolence to us, who are subject to the corruption of death, by our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Hearkening to St. Paul’s advice, St. Savvas offered his body a living sacrifice, pleasing to God, offering at the same time a logical worship, namely the spiritual one, “which has nothing corporal, nothing fattening, nothing that can be felt” according to St. Chrysostom. This is confirmed by his biographer Cyril of Skythopolis by saying: “Predestined by God from his mother’s womb and foreseen before his body was formed, according to Prophet Jeremias, Savvas despised the

things of this worldly life all together and offered himself in a monastery...where he was trained in the monastic life in precision he learned the Psalter and along with all the remaining coenobitic rules in no time".

His desire for reverence, namely the life in Christ, led Savvas from the town Moutalaski of Cappadocia to the God-trodden places of Palestine, where he learned the monastic life by the great teachers of the desert, the Holy Fathers Theodosios the Cenobiarch and Euthymios, and became their true imitator.

Bearing in mind St. Paul's wise advice; "that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2), the citizen of this desert Savvas scouted the forms of this era, namely wealth, glory and every temporary and corruptible thing, and instead he was zealous to perform the perfect will of God. Therefore the hymn writer of the Church says; "through virtues thou didst live outside both of the world and the flesh, and through thy life and virtues, thou didst glorify on earth they very Lord of Glory, O Father most wise, and thou rightly art glorified, O Savvas chosen of God; for in Him thou art a divine spring welling forth with cures".

And indeed, my dear brothers, St. Savvas has become "a spring welling forth with cures", a doctor for the sick and a healer of incurable diseases of both the soul and the body. A true witness of this is his incorrupt relic which lies before us, which gives a sacred fragrance and healing gifts, as St. Gregory Palamas says: "which word can worthily express God's glory that is revealed by the relics of the saints, by their continuous emitted sacred fragrance, the relics which are a source of myrrh, of healing, full of workings of powers, in multiple and redeeming for us epiphanies". [And in more detail; which words can clearly express God's glory which is revealed by the corpses of the saints and the relics of the bones, a glory continuous throughout the ages, as well as the

fragrance which is emitted from them, and the myrrh they gush out, the healing gifts and the workings of the powers and the many and redeeming healings that we experience through them?"]

Needless to say that the relics of the saints are a witness of the resurrection of the dead, "a commemoration of the righteous in praises" (Proverbs 10:7)., and "the souls of the righteous in the hand of God" (Wisdom of Solomon 3:1) according to the Holy Bible. And our Lord Jesus Christ says; "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matt. 22:32).

This true witness of the "God of the living" on the one hand and of "the resurrection of the dead" on the other, is being preached and evangelized to us by our Holy Father Savvas the Sanctified, who loved his Lord God with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his mind (Matt. 22:3) according to the Lord's command.

We are also called to this purpose, as we honour the commemoration of our Holy and God-bearing Father Savvas, so that we keep the commandments of our Saviour Jesus Christ and love His Church, because as St. John the Evangelist says: "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true" (1 John 5:19-20).

And we say this, because according to the psalmist, many say they love Him (God), "Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues" (Ps. 78:36).

Let us entreat the great citizen of the desert Savvas the Sanctified, who has boldness toward Christ our God, that he may intercede along with our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary for the light of our minds and peace of our souls. And along with the hymn writer let us say; "Thy very

great and most honourable Lavra crieth out hymns of thanksgiving, bringing thee forward as its colonizer and founder and defender, O wise Savvas; and boasting int crieth out unto the Lord: Blessed is the God of our Fathers". Amen. Many Happy Returns!"

After the Dismissal and the boiled wheat in the Narthex, His Beatitude joined the monastic meal at the refectory and blessing everybody, departed via the Holy Monastery of St. Theodosios the Cenobiarch, according to the custom.

From Secretariat-General

PRIEST'S ORDINATION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday, October 12/25, 2019, the ordination to Priest of Deacon George Baramki was held during the Divine Liturgy on Horrendous Golgotha by the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina.

Fr. George Baramki has been ministering at St. James the Brother of God Cathedral as a Deacon of the Arab-speaking Orthodox Community of Jerusalem, while he is also working as a teacher at the Russian Orthodox Church School of Mount of Olives and Gethsemane in Bethany.

Before the ordination, the Archbishop admonished the ordained as follows, while the latter also read a speech, expressing his fear before the sacrament, but also his hope, that the Comforter will fortify him in his current high ministry.

Address of Geronda Secretary-General Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina at the ordination to Priest of Deacon Hader/George Baramki

“Reverend Deacon George,

It's been only a little while since your ordination to Deacon at the Life-giving Tomb of the Lord. Since your ordination to Deacon, you have ministered in devotion, reverence and fear of God at the parish of St. James the Brother of God Cathedral, and in all other ministries appointed to you by the Patriarchate.

The Patriarchate, the Mother of all Churches, and your mother Church, has appreciated your ecclesiastical ministry and simultaneously your educational service at the School of the Russian Church in Bethany, and today, with the blessings of H.H. Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and of the Holy and Sacred Synod, you are called to receive the office of the Priesthood, to officiate as Priest the Sacraments of the Church and especially that of the Baptism and of the Holy Eucharist, to offer the bloodless sacrifice to the Lord and give His immaculate body and blood to the people of God for the remission of their sins and life everlasting.

In this ministry you will be established today and will always be guided by the Holy Spirit, Who will come down through the invocation and the touching of the hands of the Archbishop, in this place of Golgotha, the horrendous place of the sacrifice of the sinless One, the place where Christ, the Son of God and our Saviour became the propitiatory sacrifice for the remission of our sins.

It is a great blessing, a great honour, but also a great responsibility. Come forward though, and do not hesitate, Christ and the Church are calling you, and remain faithful until death, having as an example those who preceded in this

ministry, Apostles, Confessors, Righteous Fathers and Teachers of the Church.

Be sure that from now on you will be accompanied by the prayers of the Hagiotaphite Fathers, the co-celebrant Priests, the commissioners and the congregation of St. James' Cathedral, of your parents, your pious wife and all those who honour you with their presence, so that you may become worthy of your ministry." His speech is below as it was read in Arabic;

السيامة الكهنوتية المقدسة لشماس رعية القدس

كا تدرائية القديس يعقوب أخو الرب

الأب الشماس جاورجيوس (خضر) برامكي

"وما من أحد يتولى بنفسه هذا المقام، بل من دعاه الله كما دعا هارون"

(بولس الرسول الإناء المختار في رسالة إلى العبرانيين 5: 4)

الجمعة 12/10/2019 شرقي 25/10/2019 غربي، تذكّار القديسين

الشهداء بروبس وطراخوس وأندرونيكوس (مطفّر)

المجد لك يا رب المجد لك

باسم الآب والإبن والروح القدس الإله الواحد آمين

وَاحِدَةً سَأَلْتُ مِنَ الرَّبِّ وَإِيَّاهَا أَلْتَمِسُ: أَنْ

أَسْكُنَ فِي بَيْتِ الرَّبِّ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ حَيَاتِي، لِكَيْ

أَعَيْنَ بِهَاءِ الرَّبِّ، وَأَتَبْصُرَ هَيْكَلَهُ. (مز 26: 4)

قال الرب: اطلبوا أَوْلَاءَ مَلَائِكَةِ اللَّهِ وَبِرَّهِ وَكُلُّ تِلْكَ

الأشياء تَزَادُ لَكُمْ" (لوقا ١٢: ٣١)

في مستهل كلمتي أود أن أتقدم بالشكر والتقدير لصاحب الغبطة

بطريرك المدينة المقدسة أورشليم كيريوس كيريوس ثيوفيلوس الثالث

وأعضاء المجمع المقدّس الموقّرين على الثقة التي اوكلوها لي

للعمل في حقل الرب، ولك يا سيادة الوكيل البطريركي والسكرتير

العام رئيس أساقفة قسطنطيني أرسيترخوس الجزيل الإحترام، السّادة

المطارنة الحاضرين، الآباء الكهنة الأجلاء والشماسة المحبيّ

المسيح، رعية القديس يعقوب أخو الرب، الشعب الواقف، إخوتي في

الرب يسوع المسيح، جميعكم وجميعكنّ.

اليوم يا ابي ومرشدي الحكيم والأمين أرسيترخوس على يدك سوف تحل

نعمة الالهية التي في كل حين تشفي المرضى وتكمل الناقصين.

"أَنَا أَشْكُرُ الْمَسِيحَ يَسُوعَ رَبَّنَا الَّذِي قَوَّانِي،

أَزَّهْ حَسْبَنِي أَمِينًا، إِذْ جَعَلَنِي لِيْ خِدْمَةً" (رسالة بولس الرسول الأولى إلى تيموثاوس 1: 12). وأخترني لكي أنال نصيب هذه الخدمة والرسالة المقدسة لأن الله وحده يعرف القلوب. فطلبت الرب فأعطني سؤال قلبي. (مزمور 36: 4) طلبت الرب بإجتهاد فاستجاب لي ومن جميع مخاوفي نجاني. عظموا الرب معي ولنرفع اسمه جميعنا.

أشتهيت أن أصبح خادماً للرب وكاهناً منذ الصغر كنت ارتل كلمات الكاهن في خدمة القداس الإلهي بالبيت وأفكر كيف علي أن انذر نفسي للرب حيث يقول الكاهن في طلبه السلامية لنودع أنفسنا وكل حياتنا للمسيح الإله. لكن فهمت أن الأمر ليس سهلاً أن استودع حياتي للرب لذلك نطلب معونة سيدتنا والدة الإله الدائمة البتولية مريم وجميع القديسين. وأيضاً كانت كلمات الكاهن تدخل الى اعماق قلبي عندما يقول القدسات للقديسين أي جسد المسيح المقدس ودمه الكريم هما القدسات التي ينبغي منحها لمناولة القديسين. أي جميعنا مدعون إلى القداسة لأنه مكتوب «كُونُوا قِدِّيسِينَ لِأَنَّي أَنَا قُدُّوسٌ». (1 بط 1: 16) وعلي أن اجاهد في سبيل بلوغ الكمال. وتعلمت أن مَلَكَوْتُ السَّمَاوَاتِ يُغْمَبُ، وَالْغَاصِبُونَ يَخْتَطِفُونَهُ. (مت 11: 12) أي علينا أن نجاهد غير متهاونين مع أنفسنا ونغصب ذواتنا على ترك الخطيئة والالتصاق بالله حتى يكون لنا ملكوت السموات.

بهذا اليوم المبارك واقفُ امامكم إنطلاقاً من دعوة الرب يسوع المسيح لتلاميذه بقوله "فَاذْهَبُوا وَتَلْمِذُوا جَمِيعَ الْأُمَمِ مَعْمِدِينَ إِيَّاهُمْ بِاسْمِ الْآبِ وَالْابْنِ وَالرُّوحِ الْقُدُّوسِ، وَاعْلَمُوهُمْ أَنَّ يَحْفَظُوا جَمِيعَ مَا أَوْصَيْتُكُمْ بِهِ. (متى 28: 19-20)

من أجل حفظ الوصية وتكملة العمل الرسولي ومحبة الله اقدم نفسي للخدمة. هذه هي وصية الرب أن أحيي الربَّ إلهي من كلِّ قَلْبِي، وَمِنْ كُلِّ نَفْسِي، وَمِنْ كُلِّ فِكْرِي (متى 22: 37) وقال الرب يسوع المسيح لسمعان بطرس: يا سمعان بن يونا، أتحبني أكثر من هؤلاء؟ قال له: نعم يا رب، أنت تعلم أنني أحبك. قال له: إرع خرافي (يوحنا 21: 15) وايضاً قال إذهبوا إلى العالم أجمع وبشِّروا بالإنجيل للخليقة كلِّها" (مرقس 16: 15). فَوَيْلٌ لِي إِنْ كُنْتُ لَا أَبَشِّرُ. (1 كو 9: 16) أَنْتَ يَا رَبَّ الطَّرِيقُ وَالْحَقُّ وَالْحَيَاةُ. لَيْسَ أَحَدٌ يَأْتِي إِلَيَّ إِلَّا بِكَ (يوحنا 14: 6) يا رب إلى من نذهب؟ وكلام الحياة الأبدية هو عندك" (يوحنا 6: 68) أنت يا رب تنير سراجي أنت يا إلهي تضئ ظلمتي (مزمور 17: 28)

امام هذا الفرع الكبير بقبول سر الكهنوت أقف ملتصقا صلواتكم الحارة يا شعب المسيح، لكي أكون عبداً مستحقاً لسماع صوت الرب القائل "نِعِمَّ - أَيْهَا الْعَبْدُ الصَّالِحُ وَالْأَمِينُ! كُنْتُ أَمِينًا فِي الْقَلِيلِ فَأَقِيمُكَ عَلَى الْكَثِيرِ. اُدْخُلْ إِلَيَّ فَرَحَ سَيِّدِكَ" (متى 25:21) قد حفظت الوديعة أيها الوكيل الأمين التي أوكلتها إليك، فصلوا معي ولأجلي. ذوقوا وأنظروا ما أطيب الرب. فطوبى للرجل المتوكل عليه (مزمور 33: 8) الأغنياء افتقروا وجاعوا أما الذين يتقون الرب فلا يعوزهم أي شيء من الخير. (إنجيل متى 5: 19) ،وتعلمت منذ الصغر انه مَنْ عَمِلَ وَعَلِمَ ، فَهَذَا يُدْعَى عَظِيمًا فِي مَلَائِكُوتِ السَّمَاوَاتِ . ومن أراد أن يكون عظيماً فيكم فليكن لكم خادماً (متى 20:26) كهنتك يا رب يلبسون البر وأبراركَ يتهللون. رحم الله جميع الكهنة الأرثوذكسين ونخص بالذكر من عائلتي الأب ميخالاكي برامكي الذي تمت سيامته عام 1826 والاب يعقوب برامكي الذي قام بالخدمة 50 عاماً والاب قسطندي برامكي الذي انتقل الى السماوات عام 1918 وايضا الاب الياس يغنم الذي ادخلني الى الهيكل في عمر 40 يوماً والاب جبرا بدور والاب عيسى توما. قال الرب مَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَتَّبِعَنِي، فَلْيَكْفُرْ بِذَنبِهِ وَيَحْمِلْ صَلَيبَهُ وَيَتَّبِعَنِي وفي سيامتي للشموسية كان عيد زياح الصليب 14/8/2018 واليوم إرادة الرب ان تكون السيامة الكهنوتية في مكان صلب يسوع المسيح (الجلجثة المقدسة). فَإِنَّ كَلِمَةَ الصَّالِحِ عِنْدَ الْهَالِكِينَ جَهَالَةٌ، وَأَمَّا عِنْدَنَا نَحْنُ الْمُخَلَّصِينَ فَهِيَ قُوَّةُ اللَّهِ" (الرسالة الاولى الى أهل كورنتس 1/18) واشكر الله على محبته وأشكرك يا سيادة المطران على النعمة التي ستنسكب بواسطتك على هامتي أنا الخاطئ، ولكم أيها الآباء مشاركي في الخدمة، ولكل من حضر ليشاركني هذه الفرحة من قريب ومن بعيد كل منكم باسمه. كما واتوجه بشكري الجزيل الى جمعية حاملات الطيب الأرثوذكسية والملجأ الارثوذكسي ونادي الإتحاد الأرثوذكسي العربي ووكلاء كاتدرائية القديس يعقوب اخو الرب وجميع اللجان وافراد الطائفة الكرام بالقدس والى زوجتي الحبيبة الخورية الجديدة (ماتوشكا ماريا)، أي "الأم الصغيرة" على وقوفها بجانبى ولن أنسى أبني نيقولاوس سامي المشارك معنا بصلاة وأبني الثاني سابا الذي هو حاضرٌ داخل أحشاء امه هذه السيامة المقدسة. وأمي وأبي لهم مني أسمى آيات العرفان بالجميل. اشكر كافة الآباء الكهنة الذين كابدوا مشقة الطريق لكي يفرحوا

معي بهذا اليوم المبارك، كما اخص بالذكر ابي قدس الأرشمندريت ميلاتيوس الذي كان لي السند القويم، والأب قدس الايكونومس فرح بدور، وابي قدس الأب ميخائيل من دير القديس سابا المتقدس الذي يصلي لعائلتي دائماً، والمرشد الحكيم لعائلتي الأرشمندريت رومان كروسوفكي رئيس البعثة الأرثوذكسية الروسية في أورشليم واشكرالأم اليزابيث رئيسة دير القديسة مريم المجدلية الروسي في القدس والام ماريا وال مديره الأعلى للمدرسة الأرثوذكسية الروسية في العيزرية على ثقتهم ومحبتهم.

فأعدك أيها الرب يسوع المسيح على الجلجثة في مكان صلبك المقدس ستفرح بإبنك لأنني سوف احمل الصليب واشهد لك في حياتي ومستعد للإستشهاد حتى شهادة الدم من اجل كلمة الحق والإيمان المستقيم الأرثوذكسي وفي سبيل محبة يسوع المسيح. "لَأَنَّ لِي الْحَيَاةَ هِيَ الْمَسِيحُ وَالْمَوْتُ هُوَ رَبِّحٌ". (فيلبي 1: 21). هذا هو اكليل الشهداء.

أيها الشهداء القديسون الذين جاهدتم حسناً وتكللتم تشفعوا الى الرب ان ترحم نفوسنا.

المجد لك أيها المسيح الاله فخر الرسل وبهجة الشهداء.

"اذكرني يا رب متى أتيت في ملكوتك"

قال الرب ولن يندم «أَنْتَ كَاهِنٌ إِلَيَّ الْآنَ بَدَأَ عَلَيَّ رُتْبَةٌ». «مَلَاكِي صَادَقَ».

The ordained was honoured with the presence of co-celebrant Hagiotaphite Fathers and Arab-speaking Priests, friends of his and his wife, and members of the parish of St. James the Brother of God, where he is called to minister as a Priest; all present prayed for him and cried out the "Axios" along with the Archbishop when the newly ordained was being dressed with the priestly vestments.

After the end of the celebration of this Divine Liturgy, the ordained, along with the Episcopal entourage, went to the Patriarchate Reception Hall, and paid his respect and thanksgiving to His Beatitude, while the latter blessed him with the following words and offered him an icon of the Theotokos and of St. Philoumenos;

"Dear Father Hader/George,

The grace of the Holy Spirit has made you today a Steward and minister of the Divine and unspeakable Sacraments of the Church, namely of the mystical body of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Your ministry as a ministering Priest at the Holy Cathedral of St. James the Brother of God is quite honourable, but also quite responsible. And this is so because St. James' Priests undertake the pastoral care of the precious Community of Jerusalem, especially at a time when the Christian presence is being tested in both the Holy Land and in Jerusalem.

The Holy Church of Jerusalem has called you to work in its Spiritual and geographical vineyard. The harvest is great, and the workers only a few, but what is impossible for the people is made possible by God. The grace and the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit established the uneducated fishermen as great enlighteners of the world, making them apostles and teachers.

Your obedience to your Spiritual Authority, namely the Patriarchate, and your humility, should become the armor of your new Priestly ministry. And your love with all your soul, heart and mind toward God and His Church should be the manner and way of your communication with the flock.

The study of the Holy Bible and the teachings of the Holy Apostles and Evangelists should be the source of your inspiration for the preaching of the Divine Word of the Gospel of Christ. And the study of the writings of the Holy and God-bearing Fathers of the Church should be the safe key for the interpretation and explanation of the Holy Scriptures.

With these Fatherly and Patriarchal words, we wish that the strengthening Grace of the Holy Spirit may establish you a worthy worker of the vineyard of the Lord and of His Church, through the intercessions of the Most Blessed and Ever-Virgin Mary. May you be Axios and secured at all times!"

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE D. LITURGY AT THE CHURCH OF ST. MOSES THE ETHIOPIAN IN SAMARIA

On Sunday, October 7/20, 2019, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos led the Divine Liturgy at the old Church of St. Moses the Ethiopian, at the Community of Rafidia in Nablus of Samaria, not far from Jacob's well, where the Lord spoke with the Samaritan woman.

St. Moses the Ethiopian is witnessed by the Synaxarion of the Church as having lived in Ethiopia in the 4th century A.D., a former chief robber, who became contrite by an unknown event, repented and was baptized, and received the monastic schema. He founded a Monastery and led many – some of whom used to be former fellow robbers of his – to life in Christ and in salvation. St. Moses died at the age of seventy.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated on the renovation of this Church, by the funding of the Palestinian Autonomy, that is why representatives of the State were present, among whom Mr. Ramzi Chury, President of the Palestinian Church Committee of Christian Affairs, his Secretary Mrs. Hananiye Amire, representatives of the Mayor of the district, the Ambassador of the Palestinian Autonomy in the Vatican Mr. Issa Kassiye,

and other Municipal and Governmental officials.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Hegoumen of Rafidia, Archimandrite Leontios, the Hegoumen of Jacob's well, Archimandrite Ioustinos, Archimandrite Porfyrios, the representative of the Patriarchate in the Arab M.M. Fr. Issa Mousleh, other Priests and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine singer of the left choir of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Mr. Vasilios Gotsopoulos in Greek, and the Rafidia Community choir in Arabic, while the Community members participated in the service. His Beatitude offered an icon of the Theotokos for the Church and a Cross to Archimandrite Leontios.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation;

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9), St. Peter preaches.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians

Blessed is the Lord our God, who has brought us in your beautiful town of Rafidia, in order to celebrate the commemoration of our Holy Father among the Saints Moses of Ethiopia, in the old Church dedicated to him and has been recently renovated.

This blessed Moses came from Ethiopia and lived in the 4th century. Being a slave, he was banished by his lord for his infamous works and brutal personality. Ever since, he led a sinful and illegal life, became the leader of a gang of thieves and he was renowned for being a robber.

One day he repented unexpectedly and retreated to a Monastery in a deserted area of Arabia, as Bishop Palladios of Elenoupolis mentions in his history saying; "This robber, having become contrite by some reason, gave himself in a monastery and was thus brought to the state of repentance." In the monastery he was tested by harsh temptations, which he fought by multiplying fasting and prayer, vigils and the like manners of repentance. Many spiritual students of his, who used to be his companions in sin, followed him in the ascetic life of the desert. Saint Moses was killed by barbarians and slept in the Lord at the age of 75 in the end of the 4th century, in 400 A.D. And this was so in order to fulfil the word of our Master Christ; "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matt. 26:52).

Our Holy Church honours his commemoration especially, because he hearkened to Christ's words; "and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). And "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matt. 9:13). These words of the Lord in the Gospel denote that so great is the power of repentance that it can lead the penitent man to the light and the truth of our Lord, as the psalmist says: "send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God" (Psalm 43:3-4). Interpreting these words, Theodoritos Kyrou says: "He called the Church of God tabernacles of the Lord, Jerusalem a holy hill, and the redeeming epiphany of our Saviour Jesus Christ the light and the truth".

Indeed, my dear brothers and sisters, our Holy Father among the Saints Moses, did not only repent and was led to the light and the truth of Christ, but he also became a Priest, ministering in the Holy Altar of God. This fact reveals the depth and width of repentance, which stems from the outmost philanthropy of God "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Behold

therefore why St. Paul says: "God granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18).

In other words, in His ineffable philanthropy, God does not only accept repentance, but He also makes it work within the repenting one through the workings of His grace. God transforms the hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. He awakens the sleeping consciousness, crying out and saying: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Eph. 5:14). And it is God who stimulates the will of the sinner in order to seek His mercy. Repentance is a gift from God, which man should accept with his free will as St. John of the Ladder states in short; "Repentance is a treaty with God for a second life", namely an agreement with God for a new life.

And this is what Saint Moses did, as St. Zosimas mentions in his notes: "Was Aba Moses not a chief robber initially, did he not do a million bad things? So that he was rejected by his Lord because of his recalcitrance? But because he entered [Christianity] bravely and with such fervent accord, we are all aware of the stature he reached so that he is counted among the chosen servants of God".

Truly, the heart of our Father among the Saints Moses became a pure habitat of the Holy Spirit, as his hymn writer says: "Thy heart, made to shine by visions and labours, was shown to be a pure dwelling-place of the Spirit, O all-blessed Father". Our Father Moses accomplished this with the Divine grace, and with his good accord, namely his free choice and decision.

Relatively, let us hear what the Great Father of the Church St. Gregory of Nyssa says regarding the meaning of "accord"; "accord is this, the non-enslaved and self-dominant property of something, which is placed in the freedom of the intellect". This means that God cannot be held responsible for any malicious thing happening in any case, and therefore not of the personal sin of man. God does not tempt us, on the

contrary He is the source of every good and perfect gift, as St. James the Brother of God teaches by saying: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:13-14).

Our Holy Father Moses is projected by the Church not only as an example of repentance but also as an example of the power of the accord, namely of the will for the overcoming of sins and the abstinence of our passions, through the weapons of fasting and prayer, as well as through the transposition of the intellect to things favourable for both mind (nous) and speech (logos).

Let us entreat our Father who is counted among the chorea of the saints, so that along with our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, they may intercede to Christ our God to grant us the great mercy and the renewal of our souls and bodies. Amen.

And from the Holy Altar, we would like to express our warm wholehearted thanks to all those who worked for the renovation of the historic parish Church of St. Moses the Ethiopian, especially to the President of the Supreme Committee of Religious Affairs Mr. Ramzi Khury, who represents His Excellency the President of the Palestinian State Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, wishing him health and longevity and every governmental power through God. Many Happy Returns!"

During the meal offered at lunch time, by the Hegoumen and the Community Council, His Beatitude also said the following;

"I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee" (Hebrews 2:12 / Psalm 22:23).

Your Excellency Mr. Ramzi Khoury, representative of His Excellency the President of the Palestinian State Mr. Mahmoud

Abbas,

Honorable Members of the Church Council of the Rafidia Community,

Dear Fathers and Brothers, Noble Christians

Let us praise our Lord God, Who has deemed us worthy in this Eucharistic gathering to bless the recently renovated small, but historic Church of our Holy Father Moses the Ethiopian.

The renovation of this humble Church does not refer so much to its architectural value, as it does to the irrefutable witness of the centuries-old Christian and Apostolic legacy, and the ab-Antiquo presence of the primary Church of Christ, namely the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The most beautiful and developing town of Rafidia has especial importance and this is so because it is incorporated within the historic and cultural frame of the wider district of the Biblical town of Nablus, with Jacob's well as a reference point, which is the birth town of St. Foteini, the Samaritan woman.

The indicated interest of the Palestinian Government in favour of the renovation and preservation of monuments and houses of worship without any distinction among the religious communities and the Christian Doctrines is a solid proof of the love and the good co-existence and co-habitation of the religious communities and of their equal treatment.

The Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, remaining stable and faithful in its God-sent mission, continues its ministry, namely the ministry of the safe-guarding of the All-holy shrines, of the care of its flock, and especially of the protection of the religious and cultural Status Quo of the Holy City of Jerusalem.

We take this opportunity in order to again express from the

depths of our hearts our thanks to the President of the Church Committee and its respected members, the Hegoumen of Jacob's well, Reverend Archimandrite Ioustinos and your Spiritual Father, Reverend Archimandrite Leontios, and especially the representative of the President Mahmoud Abbas Dr. Ramzi Khoury, whose contribution is undoubtedly recognized above all.

We wish health and the success in God to the ongoing God-pleasing work of your community. Amen."

His Beatitude offered Mr. Ramzi Chury an icon of the Theotokos and a painting of Jerusalem to the other Palestinian representatives. Finally, the President of the Community Mr. Psiara Chury spoke, expressing his thanksgiving.

From Secretariat-General

THE CONSECRATION OF THE HOLY CHURCH OF SAINT SAVVAS IN YAFFAAN NASIRAH OF NAZARETH

On Saturday, September 29/ October 12, 2019, the Consecration of the Holy Church of Saint Savvas the Sanctified was held, at the Greek Orthodox Arab-Speaking Community of town Yafaan Nasirah, near the city of Nazareth, where our Lord Jesus Christ lived and because of which, He was called Nazarene.

This Holy Church, initially built in the 12th century, and now renovated and dedicated to Saint Savvas, reminds us through its presence and name of the fact that the pastoral activity

of St. Savvas, which began in the 5th century from his great Monastery-Lavra in Judea, had also reached Galilee, where he constructed Churches and Monasteries, according to his biographer Cyril of Skythopolis.

According to the typikon order of our Orthodox Church, the service of the Consecration was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of the local Metropolitan His Eminence Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, among whom Archimandrite Artemios, the Supervisor of this Community Steward Fr. Gabriel Nadaf, and from afar, the Spiritual Father of the Lavra of St. Savvas Archimandrite Eudokimos, who brought the relics of the slaughtered Fathers of St. Savvas' Monastery, for the Holy Altar, the Master of Ceremonies Archimandrite Bartholomew, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the Novice Monk Constantine in Greek and the Nazareth Community choir in Arabic, with the participation in prayer of the Community members and faithful from many parishes of Nazareth and Galilee.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon before the Holy Communion;

"By means of His coming, Christ hath filled all things with His light; our souls are now consecrated and by His Holy Spirit He hath renewed the world; for a house is founded to the Lord's praise and glory, wherein Christ our God, for the salvation of mortals, doth consecrate and hallow the hearts of all His faithful flock" the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

Today the grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in the neighbouring to Nazareth town of Yaffea, in order to consecrate the newly built Church of St. Savvas the Sanctified for the glory and honour of the Holy Trinitarian God.

On Mount Sinai, this very Lord, our God, showed Moses a tabernacle made of no human hands, outlining the Church of Christ, which according to St. Paul is the mount of Spiritual Zion, and the city of the Living God (Hebrews 12:2). And according to the witness of Evangelist Mark, Jesus Christ told His Disciple Peter: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). And this is so because the Church is the mystical body of Christ, and Christ is the head of this body as St. Paul preaches; "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23).

The hymnographer of the consecration of the Church accurately states the meaning of this event, calling upon the gospel words of St. John the Theologian who says; "When the Word dwelt among us in the flesh, the Son of Thunder spake thus in his writings: we have radiantly beheld the glory which the Son hath from the Father in the grace of truth. And as many of us as have received Him with faith, to all hath He given the power to become children of God; and we, who were born again not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but have received the increase by the Holy Spirit, have raised up this house of prayer, and cry out: Do Thy Thyself now establish this house O Lord".

In other words, today, we that have been reborn through the Holy Baptism and have put on Christ, have made a house, a Church of prayer, where the heavens rejoice and the earthly things are made glad; the creation is being blessed and the Creator is being worshiped, and where lies the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the

Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

Nevertheless, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). And the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of Christ is the One who holds together the whole constitution of the Church as the hymn writer says; "The Holy Spirit provideth all things; He gusheth forth prophecy; He perfecteth the priesthood; he hath taught wisdom to the illiterate. He hath shown forth the fishermen as theologians. He holdeth together the whole constitution of the Church. Moreover, the Lord confirms this through the mouth of Prophet Ezekiel saying: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

These prophetic words show that the service of the consecration refers to the consecration of our souls and bodies in the Holy Spirit. And we say this, hearkening to the preaching of St. Paul saying; "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defiles the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. 3:16-17), and elsewhere, "ye are the temple of the living God" (2 Cor. 6:16).

The consecration in the Holy Spirit, namely the "new heart" and the "new spirit" of Christ did our Holy Father among the Saint Savvas the Sanctified acquire, thus becoming a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, of "the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23). Behold therefore why the consecrated Churches are dedicated in honour of the holy and righteous people of God, and especially in honour of our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and Mother of God. "God is wondrous in His saints" (Psalm 67:36) the psalmist proclaims.

Indeed, God was made wondrous in His Saint Savvas the Sanctified, making him “a temple of the Living God” and an incorrupt relic fragrant of the “holiness in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 1:4) of the resurrection from the dead of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Today’s consecrated Church of St. Savvas the Sanctified in the district of Nazareth, the town of the Annunciation of Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, is an irrefutable witness of the revealed mystery of old, for the love and philanthropy of God in the incarnate God the Word Jesus Christ, through the pure blood of the Full of Grace Virgin Mary.

Therefore, we cry out loud; “Great art Thou O Lord, and wondrous are Thy works, and no word sufficeth to praise Thy wonders”. And along with Saint Sophronius the Patriarch of Jerusalem we say; “Today Paradise is opened unto men, and the Sun of Righteousness shineth upon us. Today things on high celebrate together with things below, and things below converse with things on high. Today the sacred and grandiloquent festival of the (Rum) Orthodox is glad”. And together with St. John Damascene we praise; “Hail thou O Holy Zion, mother of Churches, God’s abode, for thou wast the first to obtain remission of sins through the resurrection”.

In this house of God, the dwelling place of God, we are also invited my dear ones, by God Himself, our Saviour Jesus Christ Who says: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

We pray and beseech Thee o Lord, just as You has sent down Your glory to Your Disciples after Your resurrection from the dead and Your Ascension in heavens, renew a right Spirit within us, and uphold us with Thy free Spirit, and accept our prayers of repentance. Moreover, accept every bloodless and thanksgiving sacrifice offered to Thee in faith by all who love the decorum of Your house. Amen.”

During the offered meal, His Beatitude addressed all present as follows;

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Your Excellence Mr. President of the Community,

Your Excellences, Representatives of the Government,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ

We rend glory and thanksgiving to the Holy Trinitarian God who has deemed us worthy for the consecration of the newly built Church, dedicated to Saint Savvas the Sanctified, in your town today.

Our joy in Christ is commendable day is indeed great. And this is so, because a good work is being offered to your town, and for the Christian community a house of worship and prayer. A house of God is being offered, where all those who labour and are heavy laden may find rest, as the Lord says; “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

And our joy in Christ is greater because the Church of the Living God (2 Cor. 6:16), namely of the reverend flock of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, gives its active witness, both through its participation in the liturgic life and practice of the church, and through the accomplished social and pastoral ministry under the spiritual guidance of Reverend Priest Fr. Gabriel (Nadaf) and his associates; and especially of the ministry of the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth who is the shepherd of your community.

The good cooperation between the spiritual shepherd and his flock, not only brought forth the good fruit, but also brought the completion of the construction and function of the

presently consecrated Holy Church of St. Savvas the Sanctified.

Needless to say, that as a house of worship and prayer to the God of love and mercy, the Church is a guarantee of the identity of the members of the Community, especially of the youth.

And we say this, because the contemporary era of the rapid development of the electronic technology creates a confusion to the whole world and especially to the youth, and questions the great spiritual and moral values of the Holy Scriptures, which consist the inexhaustible source of the healthy faith in the God of love and philanthropy, as well as of endless mercy. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).

On this blessed opportunity, we would like to assure you, my dear brothers and sisters, that the Venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem remains faithful and dedicated to its holy mission of the safeguarding of the All-holy Shrines, as well as of its pastoral care for its Christian flock.

Finally, we express our warmest thanks to all here present, in this great feast of the consecration, and especially to the women's associations, of the youth, the scouts, who made every effort for this event.

May the Lord God, strengthen and guide their actions to the working of His commandments, through the intercession of our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and of our Holy Father among the Saints, Savvas the Sanctified. Amen. Many Happy Returns!"

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE UNIVERSAL EXALTATION OF THE SACRED CROSS

On Friday, September 14/27, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Universal Exaltation of the Sacred Cross.

On this feast the Church commemorates that fact that after the construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre by Saint Helen, on the day of the Consecration in the year 336, the Sacred Cross of Christ that was found on Golgotha was “exalted” so that the crowds of all faithful would see it from afar.

This feast was celebrated by the Patriarchate as “Parresia”, with Vespers in the evening and the Divine Liturgy on the Feast day, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Both Vespers and the Divine Liturgy were officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

Vespers began with the welcoming reception and veneration of the Holy Deposition and the All-holy Tomb, with the bells tolling, the incense offering procedure and the Blessing of Bread at the Catholicon.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Catholicon, where co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Archbishops of the Throne, Most Reverend Metropolitans; Isychios of Kapitolias, and Timotheos of Bostra, the Most Reverend Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Theodosios of Sebastia, Demetrios of Lydda, Philoumenos of Pella and the Most Reverend Metropolitan

Joachim of Helenoupolis, visiting Archbishops from the Patriarchate of Moscow, the Patriarchate of Serbia and from the Church of Greece. Likewise, co-celebrants were the Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark, 5 more Deacons and many Priests from Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, and Serbia. The Services were attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and the full congregation of a great multitude of pilgrims, despite the unacceptable hindrance of the Armenians.

After the Divine Liturgy the Procession marched toward the area of the Cave of the Finding of the Sacred Cross where the Exaltation of the Sacred Cross took place according to the Typikon order.

The Procession then marched three times around the Sacred Edicule and then up to the Horrendous Golgotha where there was again the Exaltation, by His Beatitude. Starting from the Holy Altar of Golgotha the Cross was exalted and turned to the four points of the horizon with a special prayer in each of the four exaltations. Many pilgrims venerated the Sacred Cross with the piece of the Sacred Wood in great joy and reverence and received basil leaves as a blessing from the disc where the Sacred Cross was placed.

After the Divine Liturgy the Patriarchal Entourage returned to the Patriarchate in joy and gleefulness, bells tolling.

There the pilgrims paid their respects to His Beatitude, and received His blessing, hearing the following address of His;

“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” (Gal. 6:14) St. Paul says.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

Our Holy Orthodox Church celebrates today the universal Exaltation of the Honoured and Life-giving Cross, which took place by Saint Makarios, Archbishop of Jerusalem at the presence of Saint Helen the mother of the Byzantine Emperor, Saint Constantine the Great.

We celebrated today this great event of salvation at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where the Horrendous Golgotha lies, where the Sacred Cross was placed and later found by Saint Helen the Equal to the Apostles.

The one who “was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Cor. 12:4), says; “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” (Gal. 6:14).

Interpreting these words of St. Paul, St. Chrysostom says; “and what is the boasting in the Cross? That Christ received for my sake the form of a servant and suffered all His sufferings for me, the slave, the enemy and ingratitude, but He loved me that much, so that He delivered Himself for me.”

In other words, all our hopes are based on the Cross. The Cross fortifies and encourages us, because our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ received our infirmities and through His blood on the Cross restored our human nature from the corruption of sin. Through the Cross, the whole creation was restored, and the humankind was restored as well. “For this Wood (the Cross) is our salvation, the weapon of peace, the trophy invincible” the hymnographer says.

“Indeed, the Cross, which our Church exalts in all boldness today, is a weapon of strength and victory but also a symbol of glory and an instrument for the abolition of the rejoicing

in the boasting, as St. James the Brother of God says: "But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil" (James 4:16).

Our Lord Jesus Christ became the model man of self-denial and outmost humility on the Cross, and through the Cross, because "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philip. 2:8).

The sacred feast of the Exaltation of the Sacred Cross calls us today in this cause, to the exaltation of the earthly toward the spiritual and redeeming works of the soul, to the exaltation of the corrupt to the incorrupt and eternal goods.

Moreover, this is what the Life-giving Cross of Christ advises us through the Lord's words; "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matt. 23:12).

As for us, let us say along with the hymn writer: "Thou Who was raised up on the Cross of Thine own will, and through the Cross Thou hast also raised us up, grant us the heavenly joy and have mercy on us for Thou art good and loving-kind". Amen. Many Happy Returns!"

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF

THEOTOKOS AT THE TOWN OF BEIT JALA

On Sunday, September 9/22, 2019, the feast of the Nativity was celebrated with one-day transference at the beautiful and magnificent Church of the Nativity of Theotokos in the Greek-Orthodox Arab-speaking community of Beit Jala

On this feast, most reverently honouring the Mother of God, the Greek-Orthodox Community of Beit Jala thanked festively God for His present to humanity, namely of Mary, who was given to her parents Joachim and Anna, in order for her to become the Mother of God and bear in the flesh our Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world, by the Holy Spirit.

The full congregation of this feast was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Secretary-General, Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, and the Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylaktos of Jordan, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Ignatios, Archimandrite Ieronymos, the ministering Priests of the Church Fathers George, Yusef, Paul and Elias, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the Beit Jala choir in Arabic and Greek, as the service was attended by the Consul Mrs. Katherine Tzima and a large congregation which had filled the Church.

His Beatitude delivered the following sermon to this congregation;

“Adam is set free and Eve danceth with joy, and I spirit they cry unto thee, the Theotokos. For through thee, we were delivered from the curse of our first father, when Christ appeared” St. Andrew of Crete the hymnographer proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit and the divine power of the Most High that overshadowed the blessed Virgin Mary has gathered us in this Holy Church in order to celebrate and faithfully venerate her Holy Nativity according to God's promise; through whom we have been saved from the ancient curse, with the epiphany of Christ the new Adam.

The Nativity of the Ever-Virgin Mary was foretold by the Holy Prophets and especially by Prophet Isaiah 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).

This son of the Virgin is no other than the "Sun of righteousness" namely the new Adam, Christ the Saviour of the world and redeemer from the corruption and death, as very clearly the hymnographer states; "'Thy Nativity, O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy to the whole world; for from thee hath dawned the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, annulling the curse and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting".

From the curse of corruption and death, namely of the Law of the Old Testament did Christ redeem us, as St. Paul says: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). Interpreting these words, the Great Father of the Church Athanasios says: "Christ became a curse...by accepting the cursed death".

For this reason, the Nativity of Theotokos, according to the hymn writer; "Hath proclaimed joy to the whole world". And we wonder; what is this joy? It is the universal and historic event that the Nativity of Theotokos by her righteous parents Joachim and Anna proclaimed three things; firstly, that Christ is the fulfilment of the Law of Moses and of the Prophets,

secondly, the union of the human nature with the divine in Christ through the pure blood of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, and thirdly the revealing of the truth in Christ.

Let us hear in that case St. Sergius the Hagiopolitis saying; "She is born, the Mother of our God, and with her the world is made new. She is brought forth, and the Church is arrayed with her proper majesty. She is the holy Temple, the vessel of the God-head, the virginal instrument, the royal bridechamber wherein was accomplished the wondrous mystery".

The Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is the only person in the world who has been blessed by all people according to her own confession witnessed by Evangelist Luke: " And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed" (Luke 1:46, 48). And this is so, because Mary the Mother of God has become "higher than all creation for she conceiveth the Creator in the flesh" and "a treasury of our life and the gateway of the unapproachable light" according to the hymn writer of the church.

Indeed my dear brothers and sisters, God's bride and Ever-Virgin Mary became the "gateway of the unapproachable light" because she received in her womb the fire of the God-head as the hymn writer states; "The bush on the mount unburnt by fire, and the Chaldean furnace cool with dew, prefigured thee plainly, O Bride of God; for thou didst receive in thy material womb the Immaterial God, and wast not consumed. Wherefore, we cry unto Him that was born of thee; Blessed is the God of our Fathers".

Today's feast of the Nativity of our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is not only a feast of joy but also a feast of the redemption of the humankind "from the guilt of the offences" as we read in the kontakion of the feast; "Joachim and Anna were freed from the reproach of childlessness, and Adam and Eve from the corruption of death,

O immaculate One, by thy holy Nativity, which thy people, redeemed from the guilt of offences, celebrate by crying to thee: The barren woman giveth birth to the Theotokos, the nourisher of our life".

On His Sermon on the Mount, our Lord Jesus Christ commemorates especially the guilt on the last judgment, saying; "Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matt. 5:21). And St. Paul, referring to the results of the Passion and death of Christ says; "He (Christ) also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15).

In other words, Satan is the one who incited the first-created couple to sin that led to death. Since therefore the devil incites people to sin, he is characterized as the one who has the power of death. This however, the power of death and sin and the one who possesses the power of death, the devil, were abolished by Christ's death.

By saying death, we mean the spiritual death, namely the apostasy of man against God, but also the natural death, which follows. These two kinds of death create fear and cause guilt which paralyzes man psychologically, since he is being threatened by this cruel death.

The incarnation of Christ God the Word, which was made manifest by the undertaking of the human nature from the pure blood of Theotokos, abolished the guilt and the fear of the bondage of death. Man does no longer feel guilty, because God shows from the depths His love toward us, because when we still were full of sin, Christ died for us, as St. Paul says: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Behold therefore, why today the Church of Christ rejoices and is glad and behold why we unceasingly bless the Mother of God. Let us then my dear brothers and sisters say along with the hymnographer; "Virginity is alien to mothers, and childbirth is foreign to virgins; in thee, O Theotokos, both were granted. Wherefore, all we the tribes of the earth call thee blest unceasingly". Most Holy Mother of God pray to your Son and God for all of us. Amen. Many happy returns!"

Many people came for their sanctification at the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, while the congregation assisted the choir in the chanting.

After the Divine Liturgy a reception was offered, and a meal at noon, by the Hegoumen Archimandrite Ignatios, and the Priests of the Community Council of the town; His Beatitude addressed all present at the meal as follows;

"Your Excellency Mr. President and respected members of the Church Committee,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Ps. 133:1)

The grace of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Mother of God has deemed us worthy, both clergy and the people to co-celebrate, festively and in Eucharist today, this joyful day of the regeneration of the world on the one hand; and the "decorum of the Church" on the other, namely the Nativity of the Mother of God.

Our Holy Church is rejoicing in gleefulness today, because, as the hymnographer also says, "the Mother of Life is born today, dispersing the darkness. She is the restoration of Adam and the recalling of Eve, the fountain of incorruption and the

release from corruption, through whom we have been deified and delivered from death”.

In these God-inspired words of St. Sergius the Hagiopolitis (of Jerusalem) we have the description of “what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height” (Eph. 3:18), as St. Paul says on the mystery of the Divine Providence, namely of our Holy Church, the mystical body of Christ; “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Eph. 5:30) according to St. Paul.

This means that the Church of Jerusalem, the Patriarchate which is known as Roum Orthodox along with the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, are the premium of the eternal presence of its Christian congregation on the one hand, and of the guarantee of its origin and ancestry on the other.

And we say this, because our Christian youth is facing many and various difficulties today, with prominent among them the identity and origin crisis. This is a phenomenon experienced by all Christian Communities, that is why an alert-campaign has been launched.

Our Roum Orthodox Patriarchate has never ceased to care for its flock, especially for the education of the youth. The dialogue of Christ’s love solves all problems and not the public politicized conflicts. Regardless of their social status, people come and go because they are subjected to the laws of corruption and death. However, the institution of the Patriarchate and of the Church is not subjected to these laws of corruption because it is founded on the redeeming blood of the crucified Righteous One, Christ.

This very event, the universal celebration is held by our Orthodox Church, in the Most Blessed and Ever-Virgin Mary the Mother of God. Our Church celebrates the Nativity of Theotokos, namely the reproach of death and corruption on the one hand; and the divine gift of eternal life in Christ on the

other, as very clearly the hymn writer says; "Thy Nativity, O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy to the whole world; for from thee hath dawned the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, annulling the curse and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting".

Many happy and peaceful returns!"

From Secretariat-General