

THE FEAST OF PROPHET ELISHA AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday, June 14/27, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of Holy Prophet Elisha at the Church dedicated to him, at the centre of the town of Jericho by the sycamore tree of Zachaeus.

The Church honours St. Elisha, son of Saphat from the land of Abelmeholah as a great Prophet, who was called to be Prophet Elijah's disciple, he accepted the call and learned by him, working great miracles by the Divine Grace at the district of Jericho and the Jordan river. Some of these were the turning of the bitter waters of Jericho into drinking water, the healing of King of Syria Neeman from his leprosy, and the walking on the waters of river Jordan stepping on Elijah's fleece. Prophet Elijah had thrown his fleece to Elisha and gave him two-fold his grace when he was carried on the fiery chariot into heavens (4 Kings, 11-14).

In this Church, the Divine Liturgy was led by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, among whom Archimandrite Chrysostom and Fr. Kyriakos, Archimandrite Ignatios, Arab-speaking Priests among whom Fr. Yusef Hodali, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Eulogios, while the service was attended by a congregation from the town of Jericho and pilgrims from elsewhere.

His Beatitude sermon to this congregation is the one below;

“Rejoice, O Elisha, who while on earth hast shown an example of a life equal to the Angels, and while in the flesh hast lived without a peer. Since thou didst preserve the eye of thy

soul pure of all that is material, O Prophet, thou was counted worthy to foresee things to come by the clear light of the Spirit" the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The grace of Prophet Elisha has called us in this Holy place of the Biblical town of Jericho, where the waters were "bitter but they were healed" in order to festively celebrate the Prophet's commemoration in his holy Monastery.

"God is wondrous in his saints" (Psalm 67:36), the Prophet-King David says. Indeed, Prophet Elisha is distinguished among the Prophets because God worked great miracles through this chosen Prophet, whose anointing to the prophetic gift was done at the command of God, by Prophet Elijah, whose heir he became. "And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room" (3 Kings 19:15-16).

As it is well known, Prophet Elijah found Elisha plowing his field at the valley of the river Jordan, and called him to follow him, throwing over him his fleece. "And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, go back again: for what have I done to thee?" (3 Kings 19:20-21). This event shows that Elisha became not only Prophet Elijah's heir, but also an instrument of the mystery of the Divine Revelation, namely a vessel of the lighting power of the Holy Spirit.

Referring to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul ranks the Prophets directly after the Apostles by saying; "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets" (1 Cor. 12:28). "Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye

may prophesy” St. Paul advises again (1 Cor. 14:1). And elsewhere he says; “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:19-20).

In these God-inspired words of the Apostle of the nations, it is clearly shown that both the Apostles, the sanctified vessels of the Grace of the Gospel, and the Prophets, the God-inspired instruments of the Law of Moses, are the foundation stones, while Christ is the corner stone, on which the structure of the Church is based. The Church of Christ, in other words, is the one that unites in a harmonious and inseparable unity the Old with the New Testament. “For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matt. 5:18).

The Holy Church of Christ honours and venerates the commemoration of the holy Prophets, and of Prophet Elisha, because they belong to the heavenly body of the “fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph. 2:19). Let us hear the holy hymn writer saying; “Rejoice, Elisha supremely wise; for after cleansing thy mind of the carnal desires and lusts, thou within thee didst receive God the Spirit’s clear shining beams, which thou didst pass on to all, O glorious one, and didst appear wholly like unto the light. Hence, thou art gone to dwell in the never-setting light that is on high, ever praying for us all, who praise and honour thee”.

We are also called to this “never-setting light”, namely our mystical union with God in heavens, by Prophet Elisha, my dear brothers and sisters, in order to dwell in “the eternal dwelling places” (Luke 16:9).

And the Church of Christ on earth, is the dwelling place where

the cleansing of our souls and bodies is being accomplished, a cleansing from the spiritual leprosy, namely of sin. And we say this because today's honoured Prophet Elisha became among other things also a healer of the illness of leprosy, according to the witness of our Lord Jesus Christ who said; "And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian" (Luke 4:27).

In the general Epistle of St. James, the Brother of God, the Prophets are projected as examples to imitate. "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience" (James 5:10).

Such an example of suffering affliction, of long-suffering but also of intercession towards God for the sick, those who suffer injustice, and those tested by misdemeanors have we the luminary of the world, Elisha the Prophet.

Let us therefore entreat St. Elisha and along with the hymn writer say; "Thou Prophet and herald of Christ, at no time art thou ever separated from the throne of majesty, yet thou art ever present at the side of every one in sickness; while ministering in the highest, thou dost bless the whole world and art everywhere glorified. As thou forgiveness for our souls". Amen. Many Happy Returns!"

Before dismissal His Beatitude read the prayer for the fruit, especially for the grapes.

After the Divine Liturgy the Hegoumen of the Shrine Archimandrite Philoumenos offered a meal to the Patriarchal Entourage and others.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF ST. ONUPHRIUS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, June 12/25, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of our Righteous Father Onuphrius of Egypt at his holy Monastery, at the deep end of valley Enom, opposite of Siloam font.

Our Holy Father Onuphrius lived in Egypt in the 4th century in total abstinence of the passions and in asceticism of the virtues of Christ, “having become an immigrant from the turbulent world”, he lived in outmost austerity and poverty and nudity that was covered with his long beard, and became an example to imitate for the ascetics of all times.

The Patriarchate has dedicated a Monastery to him in the lower part of Jerusalem, the City of David, opposite Siloam’s font, which is the place the Pharisees bought with the thirty silver coins that Judas returned to them when he regretted his action of Jesus betrayal. For this reason, this place was called “field of blood” or “Potter’s field”.

In this Church which has a part inside a cave, the Divine Liturgy was led by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenopolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Archimandrite Ignatios and Fr. Nectarios and Fr. Eirinaios, from the Holy Monastery of Oblou, of the Holy Metropolis of Patra from the Church of Greece, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Sophronios, at the presence of a large congregation of pilgrims, monks and nuns.

His Beatitude delivered the following sermon to this congregation:

“You ought to behold the delight of the Lord, O God-bearer and with Him alone did ye long to converse alone. Wherefore ye abandoned the world, fleeing afar off to dwell in the wilderness and in mountains; and putting on Christ, ye took no thought for raiment, for ye had trafficked for the garment of incorruption, wherewith ye entered into the heavenly bridechamber, where ye rejoice eternally, O Onuphrius” the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The sacred commemoration of our Father among the Saints Onuphrius has gathered all of us today in his Holy Church in this Biblical and historical “potter’s field” also known as the “field of blood” (Matthew 27:7-8), in order to celebrate his feast in Eucharist and Doxology.

The holy hymn writer calls our Holy Father Onuphrius from Egypt, a citizen of the desert, an Angel in flesh, wonder worker and healer of the souls of all who come to him. Indeed, Saint Onuphrius became a co-citizen of the Angels, a participant of the righteous and the holy, therefore he received the crown of righteousness that Christ prepared for him, as St. Paul says; “I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for a me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”(2 Tim. 4:7-8).

Our Father among the Saints Onuphrius loved Christ so much that when he heard the life of the great zealots of Christ, of Elias the Thesvite and John the Forerunner and Baptist, he retreated in the desert where he lived for sixty years without

seen any man at all, as his synaxarist says. And according to the witness of St. Pafnutius the Great, who met the Saint in the deepest desert and was also present at the departing of the Saint to the heavenly dwelling places, saw that our Father Onuphrius "was naked and his body was covered with white hair all over".

For this the holy hymn writer says: "Wherefore ye abandoned the world, fleeing afar off to dwell in the wilderness and in mountains; and putting on Christ, ye took no thought for raiment, for ye had trafficked for the garment of incorruption".

And what was the raiment of incorruption which he strove to secure, for his cover? It was the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ for which St. Paul proclaims by saying; "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). And elsewhere he says; "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4).

This very newness of life did our Holy Father Onuphrius follow, namely the path of the Gospel. And the path of the Gospel is no other than the path of incorruption and of eternal life. Let us hear the hymn writer saying; "Thou madest thyself a temple altogether luminous with the virtues, O righteous and all-blessed Onuphrius, flashing lightning-like with eh far-shining radiance of the clear and divine beams of Godlike miracles". And again; "Apprehending the illumination of Christ with an inspired mind, thou joyfully dweltest in the desert as in Paradise, putting forth shoots of incorruption."

Our Father Onuphrius became co-heir of the glory of the Son and Word of God the Father, not only because of the power of his faith, but also because of his harsh ascetic striving, and

of course through the help of the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul preaches; “ The Spirit [of adoption] itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:16-17). In other words, we become co-heirs of Christ if of course, we co-suffer with Him, in order to be glorified together with Him.

The holy festal commemoration by our holy Church of its saints, as our Holy Father Onuphrius, is not a commemoration of worldly events and historic persons, but rather a witness of the life in heavens, namely of “ the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Hebrews 12:23).

This witness, my dear brothers and sisters, are we called to join, heeding to our Holy Father Onuphrius on the one hand; and hearkening to the words of wise Paul on the other, saying; “For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Hebrews 13:14).

This means that the one bearing the name of Christ should continuously strive, praying unceasingly, hearkening to the words of the Lord in the book of Revelation of St. John: “be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). In other words, the one who belongs to the mystical body of Christ, namely the Church, should not neglect his spiritual duties for the sake of the worldly matters. And this is so because the danger of his spiritual death is always lurking.

Interpreting the words of St. Paul, “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Cor. 12:27) and “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called” (Ephes. 4:4-5), St. Gregory of Sinai says: just as the body without the spirit becomes dead, likewise, the one who neglects the

commandments of the Lord becomes dead in the spirit and remains without the power and the light of the Holy Spirit and the grace of Christ.

Because we, my brothers and sisters, through the Holy Baptism have been born children of light and sons of day (1 Thess. 5:5), let us not sleep the sleep of indifference and carelessness, as those who do not know Christ do, but let us be vigilant and sober, according to St. Paul's advice; "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thess. 5:6).

Let us imitate the vigilance, the abstinence, the fasting and the wakefulness, as well as the unceasing prayer of today's honoured, our Holy Father Onuphrius, as well as our Holy Father Peter of Mount Athos, and along with the hymn writer say; "As Angels in the flesh who dwelt in the hosts incorporeal, ye lit the desert like stars flashing in the night with your ascetic pains and toils. Now O God-bearing Fathers, importune God's great mercy for us who sing your praise, Onuphrius and Peter while crying out: Alleluia". (And along with our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary who prays for our souls). Amen."

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a procession inside the Monastery and a memorial service for the repose of the souls of the founders of the Monastery and Nun Seraphima who has recently slept in the Lord, as well as a prayer for the blessing of the fruit.

After the Divine Liturgy the good keeper and renovator of the Monastery Abbess Paissia offered a reception to the Patriarchal Entourage and the congregation at the hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General

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

On Monday June 4/17, 2019, the feast of the Monday of the Holy Spirit was celebrated at the Russian MISSIA and its Church of the Holy Trinity, as a feast of a special honour and worship of the Holy Spirit, Who inspired and enlightened the Holy Apostles in the form of tongues of fire.

The Divine Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Head of the Russian Spiritual Mission (MISSIA) Archimandrite Alexander, Archimandrite Athanasios, Archimandrite Dometian and other Priests of the Moscow Patriarchate, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Archdeacon Mark and other Deacons, at the chanting of the Monastery of the Russian Nunnery of Oreini choir, with the attendance of a noble Russian congregation.

His Beatitude read the following Sermon to this congregation;

“Let us faithful celebrate this fair post-festal time with joy and the final festival this is the day of Pentecost, which now fulfilleth the promise and time appointed. For on this day, the fire of the Good Comforter straightway came on earth, like unto tongues in form and it enlightened the disciples and made them Heaven’s initiates. Behold, the Comforter’s light hath come down and enlightened the whole world” the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Reverend Archimandrite Alexander, representative of H.H.B. the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Cyril in Jerusalem,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the All-holy and Life-giving Spirit has gathered all of us today in this Holy Church of the Holy Trinity, which belongs to the Spiritual Mission (MISSIA) of our brotherly Russian Church in Jerusalem, in order to co-celebrate in Eucharist the “fair post-festal time and the final festival” as the hymn writer says.

The feast of Pentecost is called “final” because it refers to the rebirth and renewal of us humans, as St. Paul preaches by saying; “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared... 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 3:4-6).

And the shedding of the Holy Spirit on us is no other than the completion of the time of the sending of the promised Holy Spirit to the Apostles, by our Lord Jesus Christ on the day of Pentecost, “at the upper room, where all the Apostles were gathered in one accord along with Mary the Mother of Jesus” (Acts 1:13-14).

Apostle Peter’s testimony at the Acts of the Apostles says; “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Acts 2:32-33).

This shedding forth of the Holy Spirit was foretold by the Holy Prophets Joel and Ezekiel, who said respectively: “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh” (Joel 2:28) “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you” (Ezekiel 36:26). And

this new spirit was given to us, according to St. Paul, by the High Priest, namely our Lord Jesus Christ, who is settled in the house of God, namely in the Church of the faithful. "And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near..., having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised" (Hebrews 10:21-23).

In other words, Holy Pentecost is the time during which the Holy Spirit established the Apostles members of the resurrected from the dead body of Christ, by the providence of the Father and the cooperation of the Son. We, by the power and the working of the Holy Spirit have put on Christ through the holy Baptism, as St. Paul teaches; "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27), and again he says; "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13).

On Pentecost day, the Church that is in the spirit becomes body of Christ and the Holy Apostles members of the Body of Christ. As the sacred hymn writer says; "The Holy Spirit perfecteth the priesthood; He hath taught wisdom to the illiterate. He hath shown forth the fishermen as theologians. He holdeth together the whole institution of the Church."

According to St. Clement of Rome the Church "was revealed in the flesh of Christ, namely it became the body of Christ by the incarnation of Christ the Word of God. Because the incarnation of the Son and Word of God became with the synergy of the Holy Spirit and whatever happens within the Church happens with the synergy of the Holy Spirit, and for this reason, Pentecost is linked with the revelation of the Church in the world."

The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, the One that Christ spoke about a little while before His Passion on the Cross; "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:15-17).

Interpreting these words, St. Basil says; "The Lord clearly distinguishes the diversity of the persons. If I go, He says, I will pray the Father and He shall give you a Comforter. Therefore, the Son is the one who entreats, the Father is being entreated, and the Comforter is the One who is being sent".

According to St. Cyril of Alexandria, the Comforter is "the Spirit of the Truth of the Son". This Comforter is the power and the teacher of the Church, as well as our protector, as St. Cyril of Jerusalem says; "We have a great ally and protector by God, a great teacher of the Church a great defender for us...And [the Holy Spirit] is called Comforter because it prays and comforts and deeply understands and feels our infirmities" (Catech. 16:20).

The deeper meaning of the "final" feast of Pentecost and the "post-festal" one, namely today's feast of the Holy Spirit, is clearly expressed by the hymn writer by saying; "Of old the tongues were confounded because of the audacity in the building of the tower, but now the tongues are made wise for the sake of the glory of Divine knowledge. There, God condemned the impious because of their offence; and here, Christ hath enlightened the fishermen by the Spirit. At that time the confusion of tongues was wrought for punishment, but now the concord of tongues hath been inaugurated for the salvation of our souls".

Precisely this inauguration in Christ for the salvation of our souls, as well as the unity of our faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit, who enlightened the Apostles, through whom we have received the glory of the knowledge of God, have we come to demonstrate through the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist in the Holy City, the City of Jerusalem, we, the brotherly Churches, namely the Church of Jerusalem (Sion) which has been founded on the blood on the Cross of our Saviour Christ, and the Orthodox Russian Church which has been watered by the blood of its new martyrs.

Let us entreat the Comforter Who has been sent to the Saints, to dwell in our hearts and along with the hymn writer let us say; "Draw nigh unto us, draw nigh, O Thou Who art everywhere present, and even as Thou art ever with Thine Apostles, so do Thou also unite to Thyself us who long for Thee, O Compassionate One, that, being united with Thee, we may praise and glorify Thine All-holy Spirit". Amen. Many Happy Returns."

Consequently His Beatitude stressed the importance of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for the restoring and strengthening of the wounded unity of the Church and of the Orthodox peoples.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a meal, offered by the Head of MISSIA Archimandrite Alexander. During the meal His Beatitude offered Archimandrite Alexander an icon of Theotokos of Jerusalem, while the Archimandrite offered His Beatitude an icon of St. Euphrosyne.

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY AT THE RUSSIAN-SPEAKING COMMUNITY OF NAZARETH DISTRICT

On Saturday, May 26/June 8, 2019, the eve of the Sunday of the Holy Fathers, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Russian-speaking parish of the Church of St. Nikolaos, which belongs to the Patriarchate and was built by Patriarch Damianos in 1911. The Church had been at the disposal of the Arab-speaking members of the Patriarchate until the year 1948, when due to the Arab-Israeli conflict the members of the parish abandoned it and twenty years ago, during the Patriarchal Office of memorable Patriarch Diodoros the Church was returned to the Patriarchate, damaged in time, and since then, it has been used for the Services of the incoming Russian Orthodox faithful, who are under the care of the Patriarchate.

The Divine Liturgy on the commemoration of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Synod in Nice in 325 A.D. was officiated by His Beatitude, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan, the Hegoumen of the H. Monastery of St. Charalambos in Jerusalem, Archimandrite Kallistos, the Hegoumen of the H. Shrine in Cana, Archimandrite Chrysostom, the Russian-speaking Priest of the parish Hieromonk Sergios, Priest Simeon and other Priests and Archdeacon Mark. The parish choir chanted in Russian and the service was attended by a large number of faithful from this

town of Midgal Ha-emek.

His Beatitude spoke to this congregation as follows;

“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:1-3).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in this Holy Church of St. Nickolaos in town Moundejel, in order to celebrate in Eucharist and thanksgiving the annual commemoration of the 318 God-bearing Fathers of the First Ecumenical Synod in Nice (in 325 A.D.), with you, the Russian-Speaking and inseparable member of the body of the Church of Jerusalem.

Our Holy Orthodox Church especially honours the commemoration of the 318 Holy Fathers, because they were not only established as genuine vessels of the Holy Spirit, but also as true teachers and shepherds of the world, hearkening to St. Paul’s wise advice; “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:28-29).

The grievous wolves are no others than the known leaders of the heresies of Arianism, Nestorianism, Monothelitism and many other similar distorted teachings, as St. Paul foresaw by

saying; "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30).

The Holy God-bearing Fathers of the Church are those who kept the consignment, namely the truth of the Gospel, exactly as they received it from the Holy Apostles, "avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6:20).

The truth of the Gospel refers to eternal life; it is the knowledge of the true God, the Son of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, as He Himself says; "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

Explaining the phrase "eternal life", Christ defines what it means, and which is the way or the means to accomplish it. Interpreting these words of the Lord, St. Cyril of Alexandria says; "He defined faith through the power of the true knowledge of God as mother of the eternal life... And life is the knowledge, as the completion of the power of the mystery and the one which brings forth the mystical blessing of the communication between the human world and the supernatural one, through which, we are united with the living and life-giving Word."

In other words, by dear brothers and sisters, the knowledge of the true God means that we should have a personal knowledge of God the Father and His Son the Christ, just as we personally know people with whom we live together or are in close communication.

This very personal knowledge did the Holy Apostles gain, by becoming disciples and friends of Christ, hearkening to His advice; "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14).

This consignment of the knowledge of the true God is being

preached, evangelized and witnessed throughout the centuries by the Holy Church of Jerusalem, to every man "whosoever will save his life" (Matt. 16:25).

As in the past, "By faith Noah, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world" (Hebrews 11:7), likewise Christ, prepared His Church for our salvation, founding it on the redeeming blood of His crucifixion on the Horrendous Golgotha. For this reason the Church of Jerusalem does not have national borders. The "national" borders of the Church of Jerusalem are; the place of the incarnation of God the Word, namely of the Nativity of Christ from the pure blood of the Ever-Virgin Mary in Bethlehem, of His baptism in the river Jordan, of His Crucifixion on the place of skull, the Golgotha, and of His three-day burial and Resurrection in Jerusalem.

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem was made by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself the inexhaustible fountain, namely the place of the Holy Pentecost, during which the Holy Spirit came down to the Apostles as "tongues of fire" while they "were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1-2). "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) as St. Luke the Apostle and Evangelist says.

This reality "out of every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) of the existing Orthodox Christians is being ministered liturgically by the Church of Jerusalem, which is in essence the "good olive tree" to which "the natural branches", namely our brothers of the same doctrine "are grafted into their own olive tree" (Romans 11:24) as St. Paul preaches.

Today my dear brothers and sisters, we have come as the good shepherd to the courtyard of our own flock, in order to declare the unity of our faith and the community of the Holy Spirit.

Behold why then, our Holy Church of Jerusalem is the Church of the Passion on the Cross, of the Resurrection and of Pentecost, and behold why the Church of Jerusalem is called the Mother of all Churches, while its Head is the successor of St. James the Brother of God, the First Hierarch of the Church in general.

Let us entreat today's honoured Saints and God-bearing Fathers of the First Ecumenical Synod in Nice, so that along with the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary they may intercede our God and Saviour for the salvation of our souls.

And let us say along with St. Paul: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32) and in more detail; and now, I entrust you, my brothers, into God and into the Word which His grace has revealed to us, and Which Word will protect you from every fallacy and distortion of faith. I entrust you in God, Who is able to continue your progress in development and give you as an inheritance among all those who progressed towards their sanctification which they received through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Many Happy Returns."

After the Divine Liturgy the Community offered a reception to the Patriarchal Entourage at the courtyard of the Church.

From Secretariat-General

<https://youtu.be/k4vfEPi3EXM>

THE FEAST OF SAINTS CONSTANTINE AND HELEN AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday May 21/ June 3, 2019, the Patriarchate and the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood celebrated the commemoration of the Holy Glorious Sovereigns and Equals to the Apostles Constantine and Helen.

Saints Constantine and Helen are celebrated by the Church as equals to the Apostles due the Mediolanon decree in 312 A.D., by Constantine the Great, which allowed the Christians to freely exercise their religious duties, it allowed the freedom to spread Christianity and construct churches. First among which was the Church of the Resurrection which was built by Saint Helen between the years 326-336 A.D. when she had visited the Holy Land.

The Hagiotaphite Brotherhood honours Saint Helen as its founder and for this reason the Monastic Church is dedicated to her and her son Saint Constantine.

In this Church, Vespers was held in the evening, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the morning, officiated by Him, with co-celebrants Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Archimandrite Alexios the Typikon Keeper, and ministering Priests of the Church. The chanting was delivered by the Choir Leader of the Church Archimandrite Eusevios on the right and the Choir Leader of the Church of the Resurrection Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos on the left, with the participation in prayer of Hagiotaphite Archbishops and Priests, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and many faithful Christians.

In the evening after Vespers, there was a reception with the

boiled wheat and dried bread, while in the morning there was the official return to the Patriarchate Headquarters, the distribution of small loaves of bread as a blessing, by the supervisor of the bakery Nun Seraphima, and finally the following address of His Beatitude;

“Rejoice, O great and all-wise Constantine, thou fount of Orthodox Faith, that dost water continually all the lands beneath the sun with thy sweet and delightful streams. Rejoice, O root from which there sprouted forth the fruit that nourisheth Christ’s most holy Church. Rejoice, thou most glorious boast and fame of all the farthest ends of earth, first of Christian kings. Rejoice, thou joy of the faithful men.”

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

Today the Holy Church of Christ and especially the Church of Jerusalem, mystically rejoicing on the holy commemoration of the Holy glorious, God-crown sovereigns and equal to the Apostles Constantine and Helen, has celebrated festively the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist at the Monastic Patriarchal Church bearing their name.

We keep the commemoration of these glorious equals to the Apostles Constantine and Helen, as we should, we, the primeval Monastic order of the Studious Ones, namely the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, which was founded by St. Helen, as well as the Roum Orthodox Christian people.

Correctly and righteously the hymn writer of the Church salutes St. Constantine as “the fount of Orthodox faith that dost water continually all the lands beneath the sun with sweet and delightful streams”, namely Romiosyne, and

especially the Holy Land, which has been watered and sanctified by the blood of righteousness of our God and Saviour Christ on the Cross.

And we say this, because for us who keep the feast of Saints Constantine and Helen, this is not a mere commemoration of a historic event, but rather a reminder of the divine mission of the Church of Jerusalem, which has been ministering the All-holy Shrines throughout the centuries, and has been witnessing the light of truth, the light of the crucified and resurrected Christ. And this light is no other than the light of the faith of the noble sovereigns of Romiosyne, Constantine and his mother Helen, as the hymn writer of the church expresses very clearly; "Not from man did great Constantine with his blest mother Helen receive the royal sovereignty, but by God's grace from Heaven. For he beheld the divine Cross as a bright flashing trophy. With it was he victorious over all who opposed him, and he destroyed the deceit and error of all the idols, while making strong throughout the world Orthodox faith and practice."

Let us pray to the Only Heavenly King, so that through the intercessions of our Lady the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and those of His Saints Constantine and Helen, we may be enlightened by the light and the power of the divine trophy, the Life-giving Cross, which has become a weapon for then against their opponents, and for us, boast and peace. "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 preaches. Amen. Many Happy returns! Christ is risen!"

Finally there was a festal monastic meal at the refectory of the Patriarchate.

From Secretariat-General

SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT JACOB'S WELL

The Sunday of the Samaritan Woman was celebrated on Sunday May 13/26, 2019 at Jacob's Well in Samaria in the city of Nablus. On this feast the Church commemorates the event of the conversation of the Samaritan Woman with our Lord Jesus by Jacob's well, in which according to St. John the Evangelist (ch. 4:42) He revealed to her that He is Christ the Messiah.

At this place of the Well, at the marvelous Church of St. Foteini, which the current Hegoumen Archimandrite Justin has constructed, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Archimandrite Porfyrios and Archimandrite Ignatios, and Arab-speaking Priests. The chanting was delivered by Archimandrite Leontios the Hegoumen the Community of the Annunciation in Rafidia, on the right in Greek, and the Rafidia choir on the left in Arabic, while the service was attended by a noble congregation of local faithful, Greeks, Russians, Romanians, Serbians and of other nationalities.

His Beatitude delivered the following sermon to this congregation;

"Let Heaven and earth radiantly rejoice today, for Christ hath appeared incarnate as man, that He might deliver the whole race of Adam from the curse; and when he came to Samaria, He was made marvelous with miracles. He that is compassed about

by the waters of the clouds standeth nigh unto a woman and seeketh water. Wherefore, let us the faithful all worship Him, Who of His own will became poor for our sake in His compassionate counsel" the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

Christ who is the living water and also gives the living water (John 4:10), has gathered us all at Jacob's well in the city of Samaria, in order to celebrate the feast of the Samaritan Woman in Eucharist.

The meeting and converse of our Lord Jesus Christ with the Samaritan Woman, evokes feelings of marvel with His prophetic teaching on the one hand, and on the other, He works miracles by which the people are convinced that He is the Messiah, as St. John the Evangelist witnesses: "The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias 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).

These miracles, or signs, are; that Christ reveals Himself to the Samaritan Woman and simultaneously reveals two things to her; first that He is "the living water". "Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water" (John 4:10). Secondly, that God is a Spirit; "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

At this well, Christ "being wearied with his journey" (John 4:6), and being with the Samaritan Woman, He made known to the world His divine truth, which liberates man from the aridity of ignorance as the hymn writer of the Church says; "Thou art the water of life, cried the Samaritan Woman unto

Christ. Give me to drink therefore, who always thirst for Thy Divine Grace, O Word, that I may no longer be held by the drought of ignorance, by may proclaim thy mighty acts, O Lord Jesus".

It should be noted that the philanthropist God, our Lord Jesus Christ, reveals for the first time the deepest purpose of His mission in the world to the Samaritan Woman the sinner, and not to His disciples. And the Samaritan Woman was not only baptized by Christ, the "living water", but also became a preacher of the Gospel of Light, of Truth and of repentance.

It is precisely this my dear ones what is pleasing to God, Who wants all men to be saved, and receive the full knowledge of the truth through faith and repentance, as St. Paul preaches; "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

Indeed, Christ is the "fountain of life", "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Rev. 21:6), the Lord says. Christ offers this water in abundance to those who honestly search for it. "I am the living water" (John 4:10). And this "living water" is no other than the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of our Saviour Christ as He Himself confirms by saying: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38).

Interpreting these words, St. Cyril of Alexandria says, that once the faithful man has drunk and satisfied his thirst in Christ, he also then becomes a fountain that satisfies the thirsty souls of other people, "so that he does not only fill his own mind with the river waters, but is also able to transmit the God-given good to the hearts of others and gush it out to those afar".

This is exactly what happened with the Samaritan Woman, who

became a fountain, namely the initiative for many of the Samaritan people to believe in Christ, as St. John the Evangelist witnesses; “And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did” (John 4:39).

Both the witness of St. John the Evangelist – “for the saying of the woman” and the words of St. Luke the Evangelist in today’s narrative from the Acts of the Apostles – “and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord” (Acts 11:21), “and much people was added unto the Lord” (Acts 11:24), through the Gospel preaching in Antioch, clearly express and confirm the historic reality, that the one who will enter the waters of the divine word of the Gospel of Christ, inevitably will have his mind illumined by the light of truth and will be liberated from the spirit of fallacy (1 John 4:6), “avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith” (1 Tim. 6:20-21).

This annunciation of light and truth and righteousness is being ministered by our Holy Church of Christ throughout the world, calling all men “to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:2-3).

In other words, my dear brothers and sisters, the Church is the Divine-human body of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who was crucified and resurrected for us. Outside the Church, namely, without our participation in the Divine-human body of the Church, which is the mystical body of Christ, our rebirth in Christ is simply impossible, as impossible is our progress towards the perfect knowledge of God, which the Samaritan Woman, St. Foteini, whom we honour festively today, accomplished, and became a faithful Apostle and martyr of the love of Christ.

Holy Martyr Foteini the Samaritan Woman calls us through the urging words of Apostle Barnabas to remain devoted and attached to our Lord Jesus Christ with all our soul, so that we may be worthy of our Christian name, as well as of our joining in the mystical body of Christ, the Church, inside which and through which, our deification is made possible.

So let us say along with the hymn writer; "When thy Son destroyed all the might of death, O Virgin, as the mighty God, He exalted and deified us with Himself by His Resurrection. Wherefore we sing His praise unto the ages". Amen. Christ is risen!"

After Dismissal there was a procession and a lunch meal offered by Archimandrite Justin, while at the reception, His Beatitude awarded Mr. Jiries Khouri (Abu Khaled) for his contribution to the Rafidia Community and addressed him as follows;

"Dear Mr. Jiries Khouri, (Abu Khaled),

The Holy and Sacred Synod of the Church of Jerusalem, and we personally, recognizing the work of the good workers of the vineyard of the Church, have decided to award you with the Holy Cross of the Order of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, in recognition of your devotion to the Church and especially of your great contribution to our Rum Orthodox Community in Rafidia.

This honorary distinction refers not only to your contribution to the Church and the State, but mainly and primarily to your moral manner of living and the integrity of your personality.

The wise Apostle Paul expressed the importance of the honorary distinction in simplicity and precision by saying; "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (2 Tim. 2:5).

We wish the One Who was resurrected from the dead and gave the

“living water” to the Samaritan Woman, may establish you a communicant of St. Paul’s words who said; “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

Axios! Christ is risen! Our warmest Patriarchal congratulations!”

During the awarding Mr. Yusef Nasser spoke (see video) and during the meal His Beatitude also addressed all present as follows;

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24) the Lord says.

Reverend Hegoumen and renovator of the Holy Monastery of Jacob’s Well, Father Justin,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers, Noble Christians and pilgrims.

We thank our Trinitarian God, Who deemed us worthy to celebrate again this year the commemoration of the meeting of the Samaritan Woman with God the Word, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Christ’s answer to the Samaritan Woman’s question “Where God should be worshiped?” – “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24) is the founding principle of our Christian faith to the God of the incarnate love. “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16) St. John the Evangelist teaches.

This Gospel preaching is being ministered throughout the centuries by the Roum Orthodox Church of Jerusalem. This Gospel truth is being witnessed by this Holy Shrine of Jacob’s

well in the blessed land of Palestine.

Needless to say that the fountain of water does not only satisfy the natural thirst, but mainly and primarily the spiritual thirst, namely the thirst of the souls of those who come here from the ends of the world, from all religions, namely from the Abrahamic ones.

In other words, the preservation and the ministry of worship of this Holy Shrine by the primary Roum Orthodox Monastic Order of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood on the one hand, and the assurance of the free access of the pilgrims by the competent authorities of the Palestinian State on the other, promote the mutual respect and the peaceful co-existence of religions and civilizations.

We pray that the fountain of Wisdom and the Provider of the Holy Spirit, God the Father of all of us, may bedew, comfort and vivify the athirst souls of all children of God, while the Grace of the Holy Spirit, which has made the Samaritan Woman a martyr of the love of God, may transform, sanctify and deify those who worship God in spirit and truth.

Many Happy returns! Christ is Risen!"

Finally, Mr. Ganam spoke (see video).

From Secretariat-General

PRIEST'S ORDINATION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

The ordination of Deacon Savva Mahouli, son of the Care Taker Priest Theodosios Mahouli, to Priest, according to the Synodical decision of the Holy and Sacred Synod chaired by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, took place during the All-night Vigil at the Holy Sepulchre, which started with Matins at 11.30 p.m. on Thursday May 10/23, 2019 and the Divine Liturgy began at 1.30 a.m. on Friday May 11/24, 2019. Fr. Savvas is going to minister as the helper of the Care Taker of the Community of Tarseha Priest Gregory, and to some extent as a helper of his father, Priest Theodosios at the Koufr Yasif Community.

Before the ordination the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina who ordained the new Priest addressed him as follows;

“Reverend Deacon Savvas,

Only a few months have gone by since you received the sacrament of the first degree of Priesthood, to be a Hierodeacon, by the hands of the Archbishop in this Holy Place, the Horrendous Golgotha and the Life-giving Tomb of the Lord.

During these few months you have proven to be worthy of the trust the Church has shown you, because in faith and diligence you have ministered as a Deacon the Orthodox people of the Tarseha Community helping Fr. Gregory, the Care Taker, and the Koufr Smea Community, helping your father in flesh Fr. Theodosios.

The Holy and Sacred Synod, chaired by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, based on the witness of the Patriarchal Representative in Acre-Ptolemais, Archimandrite Philotheos, of Fr. Gregory and of your father, Fr. Theodosios, along with that of the Care Takers of the parishes of Tarseha and of Koufr Smea, has approved your ordination to Priest.

You are therefore called, at this hour of the Divine Liturgy and here, at the holiest place of the world to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit to perform as a Priest the sacraments of the Church, the sacrament of the Eucharist, the bloodless sacrifice of Christ, to baptize the children of the Orthodox Christians with three submersions and emergencies in the water and give them the first Holy Communion, which for us Orthodox is straight after the baptism, and to study the Holy Bible, to understand and explain it to the faithful, just like the Church Fathers have done.

Indeed, it is a great honour, a great responsibility, great is also the joy and the gleefulness, but do not hesitate, come forth and bear in mind to always sacrifice yourself, just like the Lord sacrificed Himself for our sake. He became a sacrifice for us, and with that sacrifice, with His Cross, joy came to the whole world.

Come forth therefore, kneel before the stone that the angel moved from the Tomb and pray that the All-holy Spirit may come down and burn your sins, purify you and make you a chosen vessel of God, a trusted and worthy worker in the vineyard of the Lord.

Be sure that you are accompanied by the prayers of your parents, your wife, relatives, my own prayers, and those of all who honour you with their presence at this hour."

After the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the placing of the Archbishop's hands on the ordained Deacon's head, which established him to the degree of the Priest, those who

honoured him with their presence, Archimandrite Philotheos, the co-celebrant Priests and the other Priests present, along with his relatives, called out the words “Axios”, “Axios”.

The newly ordained Priest offered a reception to his guests at the Office of Geronda Sacristan Most Reverend Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis.

Finally, in the morning he visited the Patriarchate Headquarters and received His Beatitude’s council and blessing.

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY IN REINE

On the Sunday of the Paralytic man, May 6/19, 2019, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of St. George the Great Martyr at the Greek-Orthodox Arab-speaking Community of Reine, Nazareth’s suburb.

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Hagiotaphite Archimandrite Kallistos, the Dean Priest of this parish Fr. Simeon and other Arab-speaking Priests, and Archdeacon Mark, while the hymns were delivered by the parish choir and the service was attended by a large crowd of faithful Christians.

His Beatitude read the following Sermon to this congregation;

“At the Sheep’s Pool, a man lay in sickness; and when he saw Thee, O Lord, he cried: I have no man, that when the water is troubled, he might put me therein. But when I go, another anticipateth me and receiveth the healing, and I lie yet in mine infirmity. And straightway, taking compassion on him, the Saviour saith unto him: for thee I became man, for thee I am clothed in flesh, and sayest thou: I have no man? Take up thy bed and walk” the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians

Christ who is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have slept, and the first-born of all creation, and the Creator of all things, has gathered us in this holy Church of your town Reine, in order to celebrate the day of Pascha and the Lord’s miracle of the healing of the paralytic man at the Sheep’s pool in Jerusalem, as St. John the Evangelist says:

“and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk” (John 5, 1-2, 5-8).

Interpreting Jesus command to the paralytic man “take up thy bed, and walk”, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: “The command was in a Godly manner, having the proof of a power and authority above human power. For He is not praying for the healing of the infirmity of the sick man, so that He may not be seen to some as one of the holy prophets, but as the Lord of powers,

in all authority, He commands that the miracle be done”.

In other words, through the sign of the miracle, or the healing of the paralytic man, Jesus reveals His divine glory on the one hand, and on the other, He proves that He is the Son and Word of God, and also the Saviour of the people, namely, the healer of our souls and bodies. Moreover, He proves that “his word was with power” (Luke 4:32). This power of Jesus was ascertained by the astonished people, when Christ commanded the impure spirits to leave the possessed woman, as Luke the Evangelist says: “And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out” (Luke 4:36).

Christ proved this divine power most profoundly by His three-day resurrection, as the hymn writer of the church festively says: “Let the heavens rejoice! Let the earth be glad! For the Lord has shown strength with His arm! He has trampled down death by death! He has become the first born of the dead! He has delivered us from the depths of hell, and has granted to the world great mercy”.

It is made clear, my dear ones, that through His resurrection from the dead, Christ has revealed Himself to be the sovereign Lord and conqueror of the death of corruption and sin, and the deliverer of the humankind from the voraciousness of hades. For this reason the hymn writer is not restricted in the narration of the miraculous healing of the paralytic man, but prays to the healer and our Savior Jesus Christ for the healing of our paralytic soul, by saying: “As of old Thou didst raise up the paralytic, O Lord God, by Thy Godlike care and might, raise up my soul which is palsied by diverse sins and transgressions and by unseemly deeds and acts, that, being saved, I may also cry out: O Compassionate Redeemer, O Christ God, glory to Thy dominion and might”.

It is a fact that palsy, namely the illness of the soul, is

owed to our sins and distance from the Law of God, but also from the sanatorium, His Church. The illness of the soul is the result of the bondage in the various passions of the soul, which exert a frivolous effect on the soul. For this reason Jesus says to the paralytic man: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14). And according to St. Paul, sin is the sting of death; "The sting of death is sin" (1 Cor. 15:56).

The healing of the palsied soul is only accomplished through the divine grace and the mercy of God. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). Behold why the hymn writer, as a representative of each one of us, expresses the fervent intercession to the Lord, so that by His divine stewardship, He may raise us, just like the paralytic man of old, from whichever sins and illegal actions we have made, and as the most merciful and almighty God grant us the healing of our souls, namely the salvation of our souls.

Christ's question to the paralytic man of today's gospel narrative "wilt thou be made whole?" (John 5:6) is directed to all of us. And the paralytic may have righteously answered by saying: "Sir, I have no man" (John 5:7); he said that because he did not know the Saviour of the world. However, we, my dear ones, have no right to say that we have no man, "when the water is troubled, to put us into the pool" (John 5:7).

And we say this, because the incarnate through Virgin Mary God the Word and our Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect man, the most merciful and friend of man, while His Church, His mystical body, is the spiritual as well as the physical pool, whose water is no other than the Holy Spirit of God the Father "Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:6). And Prophet Joel says: "And it shall come to pass in those days," – meaning the incarnation of Christ, God the Word – "saith God, I will pour out of my

Spirit upon all flesh... And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2: 17, 21).

In other words, my dear ones, we have a man, and moreover, a man who is a doctor and a healer, who heals every kind of infirmity, both of the soul and the body, as Matthew the Evangelist says: "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people" (Matt. 9:35). Furthermore, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who was resurrected from the dead, advises us; "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:7-8).

Christ is risen!"

Afterward His Beatitude offered an icon of the Theotokos to be kept in the Church.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a reception at the reception hall of the parish, where the Dance club of Cana of Galilee, which has been founded by the Hegoumen of Cana Archimandrite Chrysostom, danced traditional dances.

At noon, a meal was offered at the reception hall of the parish by the Community Council, where His Beatitude addressed all present as follows;

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today our Holy Church commemorates the healing of the paralytic man by our Lord Jesus Christ, at the Sheep's pool,

as St. John the Evangelist says (John 5:1-15).

The healing of the paralytic man, as well as of many other ill people by Christ during His earthly presence, confirms the fact that He Himself took upon Him our sins, namely our wounds and infirmities, and offered His body a sacrifice for them on the Cross. And He did this to liberate us from sins and enable us to live for righteousness and for virtue. Through His wounds you have been healed, St. Peter says.

It is precisely this healing that Christ granted to all humankind through His luminous Resurrection. The preaching of the Resurrection of the crucified and buried Christ is being ministered throughout the centuries by the Rum-Orthodox Church, through the safeguarding of the All-holy shrines on the one hand, which are the irrefutable witnesses of the Christian faith, and on the other, through the pastoral care of its Christian congregation in the Holy Land.

This sacred consignment, namely the precious treasure of the teaching of the Gospel of Christ are we called to preserve like the pupil of an eye, especially the Christians who inhabit the Holy Land and the wider region of the Middle East, hearkening to the council of the wise Apostle Paul to his disciple Timothy: "That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us" (2 Tim. 1:14). And St. Paul continues, urging his disciple, and all of us, not to imitate those who abandoned him and turned away from their Church. "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes" (2 Titus 1:15).

We, my dear brothers and sisters, who "have been healed by the stripes of our God and Saviour Christ" (1 Peter 2:24), and through baptism partake of His death, Who has trampled down and conquered the death of corruption and sin, are once more called to hear the faithful word of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who said to the paralytic man: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin

no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14).

In other words, we are once more called not to imitate Phygellus and Hermogenes.

Christ is risen! Many happy returns!"

From Secretariat-General

THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM PARTICIPATES AT THE SEMINAR OF THE IMPERIAL ORTHODOX PALESTINIAN SOCIETY

On Thursday afternoon, May 3/16, 2019, a Seminar under S.V. Stepashin, Chairman of the district and foreign departments of the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society, took place at Sergei Hotel which is adjacent to the Russian MISSIA of the Moscow Patriarchate, on the occasion of the two-hundred-year anniversary of the diplomatic support of the Russian presence in the Middle East. Sergei hotel was seized in 1948 by the State of Israel and has been recently restored to the jurisdiction of the Russian Church.

In this Seminar the Patriarchate was represented by the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Secretary-General, who read the following address of our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos;

“Mr. Chairman,

Respected Members of the Council,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Christ is risen!

We greet you with the joy of this Paschal season with the greeting that is also the triumph of our Orthodox faith. From this Holy City of Jerusalem, the light of the resurrection has spread to the whole world.

We welcome this seminar as you meet in Jerusalem. You meet at a time when our Christian witness is so important in support of the Christian presence in the Holy Land and the Middle East, and when the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate is playing a leading role in promoting deeper relationships among the Christian communities here. Such deepening relationships are crucial for the well-being of a vital, vibrant Christian presence.

The Patriarchate is also promoting important interfaith dialogue, and above all we are maintaining the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious character of Jerusalem and the Middle East.

The Church of Jerusalem, which is the Mother of all the Churches, is the guarantor of the unity of the Orthodox Church. We acknowledge especially the role that the Russian Orthodox Church has played down the centuries, and especially during the Ottoman period, in supporting the Church of Jerusalem politically, diplomatically, and of course, financially. But we need to acknowledge that there were also difficult times that tested our relationship; we must learn from them and work towards strengthening our Orthodox unity.

In the spirit of our Orthodox unity, we must learn from the past. We must always speak and act in ways that support the

life and mission of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in this region. We are the one, holy catholic and apostolic Church, and we are under a moral as well as a spiritual obligation to ensure that the identity and witness of the Orthodox Church in the Holy Land and the Middle East rests on the unshakable foundation of our Orthodox unity.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to His Excellency the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, for his material support for the restoration of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, and for his unwavering support for the mission of the Patriarchate.

We wish you, Mr. Chairman, and this seminar, every success in your deliberations, and we look forward to hearing about the fruits of your deliberations.

Christ is risen!"

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF JOSEPH OF ARIMATHAEA AND OF THE MYRRH- BEARING WOMEN IN REMLI

On Sunday, April 29/ May 12, 2019, the commemoration of the Myrrh-bearing Women and of St. Joseph of Arimathaea who asked from Pilate the body of the Lord to bury it was celebrated in Remli, the Ancient Arimathaea.

The Divine Liturgy for this feast at the Holy Church of St. George that belongs to the Patriarchate was officiated by

H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishops; Damascene of Joppa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks among whom Archimandrite Meletios, Archimandrite Ieronymos, Fr. Joseph who was visiting from the Church of Czech Republic, and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by the Byzantine singer of Remli Community Elias, and the service was attended by members of the Greek Embassy in Tel Aviv, and the faithful Christians of the Remli community.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude read the following Sermon:

“Let us arise in the deep dawn and, instead of myrrh, offer praise to the Master; and we shall see Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, Who causeth life to dawn for all” St. John Damascene says.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

The sun of righteousness, the resurrected Christ who has caused life to dawn for all has gathered us today in order to honour Joseph of Arimathaea in his hometown Arimathaea (Remli), along with his fellow-disciple of Christ Nicodemus. We also commemorate the reverend Myrrh-bearing Women.

The Myrrh-bearing Women are those who went to the Tomb of Jesus Christ “in deep dawn” as St. Luke the Evangelist says: “Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared” (Luke 24:1). Joseph and Nicodemus are the secret disciples of Christ who undertook the task of burying the sacred body of Christ as St. John the Evangelist says: “And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him

leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight" (John 19:38-39).

Both the Myrrh-bearing Women and the secret disciples of Christ Joseph and Nicodemus are the true witnesses of the burial and resurrection of Christ. For this reason our Holy Church honours and projects them and through them calls us to participate in the joy of the Resurrection of Christ, offering our God and Master the Paschal hymn instead of myrrh.

In other words, we are called to see Christ, Who is the sun of righteousness with the noetic eyes of our soul. We are called to participate not to the Passover, in which the Jewish people celebrated their passage through the red sea, from the Egyptian bondage to their freedom, through the Divine intervention, but instead, we are called, according to St. Gregory the Theologian to enter the Pascha of the Divine Grace, namely of the resurrection of Christ, through which we accomplish our passage "from death to life and from earth to heaven". We accomplish our communion with the resurrected Christ, for this reason St. Gregory the Theologian says: "O Pascha the great and sacred and purifying for the whole world". Without our communion with Christ we remain in the necrosis of sin and of its bondage. "The one who does not see and hear and feel things in spirit, is dead" St. Gregory of Sinai says.

Indeed, my dear brothers and sisters, the one who accepts Christ has Christ living in him, as He said: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him" (John 6:56), and "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).

Interpreting these words of the Lord, Zigavinos says: "The birth is not carnal but spiritual. Therefore, while the carnal

birth is felt with the senses, the spiritual one is felt in thought and there is no need to examine with feelings what is felt in thought, neither to give a human dimension to the divine things".

In other words the resurrection of our God and Saviour Christ refers to our rebirth as St. Paul preaches: "according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). This very Holy Spirit of the regeneration did Christ give to those who believe in His resurrection: "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (1 John 4:13) St. John the Evangelist and Apostle says. The bearers of the Spirit ascetic Fathers stress the fact that when man welcomes in him the resurrected Christ, Christ becomes his second soul; "the resurrection is a second soul to the people" St. Neilos says.

In order to become partaker of this experience, the man who is composed of body and soul and from bodily and psychic senses, has the need of catharsis (spiritual cleansing) as St. John Damascene says in his hymn "Let us purify our senses and we shall behold Christ, radiant with the unapproachable light of the resurrection, and we shall clearly hear Him say; Rejoice! As we sing the triumphal hymn".

The unapproachable light of the resurrection, namely of the glory of Christ did the Myrrh-bearing Women along with Joseph and Nicodemus see, both with their spiritual and natural eyes. For this reason the Myrrh-bearing Women were eye-witnesses of the Resurrection, while Joseph and Nicodemus of the burial.

Behold why the Synaxarist of the Church says: "On this day, the third Sunday of Pascha, we celebrate the feast of the Holy Myrrh-bearing Women. And also we commemorate Joseph of Arimathaea, the secret disciple, and Nicodemus, the disciple by night"

The Godly-wise Myrrh-bearing Women are those who evangelized the resurrection of Christ to His disciples, as St. John Damascene says in his hymn: "The godly-wise women followed after Thee in haste with sweet-smelling myrrh. But Him whom they sought in tears as dead, they joyfully adored as the living God and announced unto Thy disciples O Christ the glad tidings of the mystical pascha".

This mystical annunciation of Pascha, namely of the Resurrection, are we also called to embrace, my dear brothers and sisters, imitating the Christian thinking, which is the big love, the devotion and also the boldness of the Myrrh-bearing Women, who "went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid" (Mark 16:8), as well as that of Joseph and Nicodemus who displayed the same love and devotion and the same courage; "Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus" (Mark 15:43).

The resurrection of Christ, my dear Christians is nothing else but the Kingdom of God, "who hath called us unto his kingdom and glory" (1 Thes. 2:12) St. Paul preaches. Amen. Christ is Risen!

After the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, Archimandrite Niphon, the energetic Hegoumen who has renovated the Church and the Monastery, offered a reception at the Hegoumeneion, and spoke to the congregation, while His Beatitude also said the following;

"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Romans 6:3-4) St. Paul preaches.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem has the holy privilege to honour and venerate the commemoration of the Myrrh-bearing Women and of the secret disciples of Christ, Joseph and Nicodemus, in this very city of Arimathaea, the contemporary Remli.

Today's feast, which in essence refers to the feast of feasts and the festival of all festivals, Pascha, is not any celebration that can be seen physically, but a spiritual and internal one. The purpose of the Christian faith and life is one and only; the co-resurrection with the resurrected Christ. "He, who was initiated in the esoteric power of the resurrection has known by experience the reason why Christ created the world" St. Maximus the Confessor says.

St. Paul calls the Christians "to live a new life" (Romans 6:4). Our new life in Christ is necessary and obligatory if we want to avoid the spiritual death as St. Paul says: "For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God" (Romans 8:13-14).

The purpose and mission of our Rum Orthodox Patriarchate, namely of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem, has always been the safe-guarding and the ministry of the All-holy Shrines on the one hand, and the pastoral care of the Christian congregation on the other, which means the preservation of their cultural, traditional, and especially their national-religious identity, as well as the preaching of the love, righteousness and peace of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ who was resurrected from the dead. Christ is Risen!

After this address, His Beatitude offered a Priest's cross to Archimandrite Niphon in recognition of his devoted ministry as Hegoumen of Remli and to his helper for the last seventeen years Nun Fevronia, He offered a cross and an icon of the Holy

Sepulchre. At noon, the Community Council offered a meal at a city restaurant.

From Secretariat-General