

THE FEAST OF SAINT THEODOSIUS THE COENOBIARCH AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, January 11th/24th, 2024, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of our holy Father Theodosius the Coenobiarch in the Holy Monastery founded by him and bears his name in the desert of Judea a few kilometres from Bethlehem and the Monastery of Saint Savvas.

During this feast, the whole Church, especially that of Jerusalem, remembers that the Holy Theodosius came from his native Mogarissa in Cappadocia to the Holy Land in the year 451.

Also, initially, he practised in the vicinity of Jerusalem's Holy Monastery of Ikelia and later he practised in extreme solitude in the desert, in the cave where the Magi spent the night, "returning by another way to their homeland". Then, through prayer and humility, he received the enlightenment from the Holy Spirit, so that he guided a multitude of monks to the life in Christ, who begged him to found this Monastery as a Coenobion, that is, as a Monastery, in which novice monks dwell in patience and common life and obedience until they prove themselves worthy for a solitary life in Lavra.

In this Monastery, the monks practised manual labour through which they met the needs of the poor and needy. The condition of entry into the Monastery is "no one lazy shall enter". There were about 400 monks in this monastery and Saint Sophronios and Saint Modestos, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, also practiced there. Saint Theodosius was appointed as exarch of the Coenobitic life, while Saint Savvas was appointed as the head of the Laureotic life.

With Saint Savvas, his compatriot, they emerged as supporters

of the decisions of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of 451, that Christ God is of one essence and two natures.

In this monastery, where the tomb of the Saint lies, an All-night Vigil was held by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with concelebrants their Eminences, the Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina and Theodosios of Sebasteia, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Spiritual Father of Saint Sabba's Monastery Archimandrite Eudokimos, the Archimandrites, Ignatios, Nectarios and Christodoulos, Archimandrite Chrysostom from the Metropolis of Megara of the Church of Greece, Priests from Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon in Greek and Mr Elias from the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem in Arabic. The Vigil was attended by only a few faithful Christians due to the ongoing war.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

"Lifting high to God thy most divine hands, thou wast shown to be a radiant pillar made to shine with the rays of thine earnest prayers. For since thy mind soared to Heaven, O righteous one, and thou partookest of things whereof none may speak, thou didst wholly flash like lightning and now dost pray Christ God that his great mercy may be granted unto us" (Matins, Kathisma 3), the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians

Christ, Who appeared to us in the Jordan has gathered us all in this holy place, where Saint Theodosius founded this marvellous Monastery and lived in this cave, to celebrate his holy commemoration in Eucharist.

Abba Theodosius founded a great Coenobion, inhabited by many people which excelled above all in Palestine, a work that was done by the good pleasing of God the Father with Christ and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, according to the biographer of the Saint, Elder Cyril of Skythopolis.

Coming from the town Mogarissa of Cappadocia, Saint Theodosius came to the Holy Land and became the great beauty of Palestine and the boast of the desert and the monastic schema, the support of right doctrines, the general and defender, and guide and protector of the coenobitic rule, according to his biographer.

The above are confirmed by his hymnographer too, who writes: "Ministering unto the Virgin and Mother of Christ God, thou didst receive the invincible grace of the Spirit, O Father Theodosius, and didst cast down invisible enemies" (Matins, Ode 4, Troparion 2).

Indeed, Saint Theodosius "reached a steadfast tower of virtues" and "received the invincible grace of the Spirit" because he knew that "our conversation is in heaven" (c.f. Hebrews 10,34). The way and the manner of our Father Theodosius to reach "our conversation in heaven" was his humility and obedience according to the prototype of the Only Begotten Son and Word of God the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, who "being the Son" learned obedience through His sufferings, and having completed His mission, became the cause of eternal salvation to those who obey Him (Hebrews, 5,8-9), Saint Paul preaches. A characteristic of Christ's obedience is His willingness to obey. "Our inclination is not sufficient unless we apply the works; for the work is the proof of the inclination" Saint Gregory the Theologian says.

The actions of obedience are indeed the proof of the inclination, because obedience is distinguished into slavery of the sin leading to death and righteousness in Christ, which leads to the Kingdom of God, Saint Fotios says, interpreting

the words of Saint Paul: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6,16).

Our Holy Father Theodosius became a genuine worker and servant of Christ's righteousness through the introduction of the coenobitic manner of monastics. And this was so because our Holy Father did not seek only his own deification, but also of those who retreated into the monastery he founded. "God made us in this manner, to become communicants of the divine nature and partakers of His eternity and thus we may be similar to Him through deification by grace" Saint Maximus the Confessor says.

And the "deification by grace" is no other than the gift or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as Saint Cyril of Alexandria says, regarding Christ's words, "Come; for all things are now ready" (Luke 14,17). "The God and Father of Christ prepared for those on earth the goods given to the world by Him, the forgiveness of sins, the intoxication of the Holy Spirit, the splendour of adoption, the kingdom of heaven". These spiritual goods, which God prepared for those on earth, i.e. for us humans, were achieved by Saint Theodosius. These goods are asked and can be acquired by every person who loves God with all his heart and with all his mind.

It is noteworthy that the one who truly loves God is the one who has reached the highest degree of spiritual perfection, as Saint Paul preaches, saying: "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him (I Cor. 2, 7-9). That is why the psalmist also begs God saying: "O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me;

let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles” (Ps. 43,3).

This light, that is, the Holy Spirit, did God the Father send to His Only Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the form of a dove in the Jordan River during His baptism by Saint John the Baptist, for the salvation of our souls. “The redeeming grace of God for all people was revealed”, Saint Paul says. And the hymnographer: “Today Christ is come to be baptized in the Jordan; today John toucheth the head of the Master” (Matins, Praises, Both now).

This marvellous and paradoxical mystery was also preached and confessed by Saint Theodosius, as his hymnographer writes: “He Who cleanseth the world, is baptized, even God, Who is become a mortal as I am for my sake. Him didst thou proclaim in two natures, O blessed Theodosius” (Matins, Ode 6, Troparion 2). Also, “Calling thy teachings to remembrance, Theodosius, we proclaim Christ in two essences, acknowledging the two natural wills and energies and authorities in God Who was baptized in the flesh” (Matins, Ode 9, Troparion 3).

As for us, my beloved brothers, let us beseech our Holy Father Theodosius with the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, that they may intercede with our Lord for our souls and peace in the Holy Land and a cessation of fire in the Gaza Strip. After Saint Paul let us say: ” For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Tit. 2, 11-13). Amen! Many and peaceful returns”.

After the Divine Liturgy, the active and diligent, benevolent renovator of the Monastery Archimandrite Ierotheos hosted a reception for the Patriarchal Entourage.

His Beatitude blessed him, wishing him a long life, to continue his heroic ministry in the Monastery, in which he has been ministering for over forty years.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINTS GEORGE AND JOHN THE HOZEVITES

On Sunday, January 8/21, 2024, the feast of the Holy Monastery of Hozeva in Wadi Qelt was celebrated. The Monastery is located in the desert of Brook Chorath, which leads to Jericho and the Dead Sea.

On this feast the Church honours the distinguished in this Monastery as its founders, John Metropolitan of Caesarea of Palestine, who left the pastoral care of his Metropolis and came to live in monastic striving in this Monastery. It also honours Bishop George, who came from Cyprus and renovated the Monastery after its destruction by the Persian raid in AD 614.

The Church of Jerusalem also commemorates on this day John the New Hozevite, who came from Romania and lived in monastic striving in the Monastery and was canonized as a Saint by the Patriarchate in 2015, to be celebrated separately on July 28. Along with them, we also commemorate the former Hegoumen Antonios, who slept in the Lord while renovating the Narthex of the Monastery in 1993. We also remember the Hegoumen Germanos who was unjustly murdered in 2001.

For this feast, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos came, and was welcomed by the Hegoumen

Archimandrite Constantine with the following address:

“Your Beatitude Father and Master with Your Holy Entourage,

We gathered together for another time, as we celebrate the annual memory of the Founders of the historic Hoseva Lavra, Saints John and George.

We gathered in the midst of wars and turmoil, amid uncertainty, sorrow and pain. Pain, which even Saint George the Hosevite experienced to the maximum degree during the invasion of the Persians in the Holy Land in 614 AD.

As far as we know during his lifetime, having envisioned and foreseen the invasion and the massacre that followed, the Saint mourned, lamented and wept eloquently “for the vulgarity of the people or rather the ignorance and disrespect”. Coming out of his cell, he sat on a stone under the sun (due to the great weakness of his flesh) and begged God, saying: “Lord God of compassion and Lord of mercy, Who wants all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, pick up your rod and teach this people, for they walk in ignorance”...

Your Beatitude Father and Master,

As all of us are praying in fervent prayer of life-giving hope to the Messiah and Redeemer Lord Jesus and invoke the strong intercession of the Holy Hosevites, let us commence the feast...”

His Beatitude officiated the All-Night Vigil with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Archimandrites, Constantine, Chrysogonos and Christodoulos, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacons Simeon and Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by the lead Byzantine singer of the Holy Church of Saint Paraskevi Mr Stavros Christou, the lead Byzantine singer of the Holy Church of Saint Dimitrios of Tripolis Mr Stavros Petrou, the left Byzantine singer of the

Holy Church of the Meeting of the Lord in Kalamata, Mr Nikolaos Theotokatos, the left Byzantine singer of the Holy Church of the Holy Church of the Prophet Elijah in the Municipality of Saint Paraskevi, and the lead Byzantine singer of the Chapel of the Holy Apostles in the parish of Saint Paraskevi. The Vigil was attended by only a few monks and laity due to the ongoing hostilities in the State.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon before the Holy Communion:

“My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Psalm 42,2) the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved Fathers and Brethren,

Reverend Christians

The divine grace of the One surrounded by the clouds in the heavens and by the waters of the Jordan River, of the One who took upon Himself the sin of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ, has gathered us all in this neighbouring to the Jordan River Holy Monastery of Hozeva, to honour the sacred commemoration of our Holy Father among the Saints George, the so-called Hozevite.

Our blessed Father George left his hometown, Leukara of Cyprus and came to venerate the Holy Tomb of our Lord at the beginning of the 7th century, before he retreated to this Lavra of Hozeva, which was founded by the blessed John of Egypt.

Like another deer, the blessed George ran towards the springs of water (c.f. Psalm 42,2), that is the spring of life which is Christ, to see the face of God the Father, Who is the unapproachable light, as the psalmist says: “For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light” (Psalm 36,9). This is also confirmed by our Lord Jesus Christ with the words, “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever

believeth on me should not abide in darkness” (John 12,46).

Interpreting these words of the Lord, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says, “By confessing that He is the Light, Christ proves that He is God by nature since it is befitting only to the God by nature to be called thus”. And Saint Chrysostom says, “Because God is called by that name in the Old and the New Testament, He uses this name [light]. For this reason, Paul calls Christ ‘refulgence’, radiance, as he preaches “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power” (Hebrews 1,1-3).

This divine light, that is our salvation in Christ, did the soul of George seek, so that the word of the Gospel would be imprinted on it, according to the advice of Saint James the Brother of God: “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1,21). The way of salvation is achieved through the knowledge of the scriptures, and that knowledge is the food of faith as Saint Paul tells his disciple Timothy: “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3,15). Moreover, faith should be fruitful with good deeds, as Saint James says, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” (James 2,14).

Again, Saint Paul urges us: “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2,12-13). Thus Saint

George chooses the place of the desert on the one hand, and the monastic life on the other, which predisposes the unceasing asceticism of the virtues of salvation. "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation" (1 Thess. 5,8), Saint Paul preaches. This is also phrased by the hymnographer of the Church, "The Monastery of Hozeva hath found in thee a rule and most exact example for the pursuit of every form of virtuous works, O wise George, boast of the righteous. Therefore, those who have passed their lives in godliness leap for joy with thee unto the ages" (Menaion, Jan. 8, Matins, Ode 8, Troparion 3).

Indeed, Saint George was a rule and exact example for the pursuit of the virtues – according to Saint Theodore of Edessa – "to the extreme state of deification", the ascent to the unwaning light as George's hymnographer says, "Delivered from darkness, thou hast been taken up to the unwaning light, O glorious Father, and thou standest before the Almighty and Three-Sun Light with the orders on high, O blessed man, and thou delightest in the splendour that issueth thence and shinest like a fiery beacon upon us who hymn thee" (Matins, Ode 9, Troparion 3). It is noteworthy that according to the psalmist, God is covered in magnificent garments of light; "Thou, Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment" (Psalm 104,2), while according to Saint Paul, God is the only one "Who hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Tim. 6,16). That is why the hymnographer of our Holy Father George says, "and thou delightest in the splendour that issueth thence".

In his synaxarist, Saint Nicodemus of Mount Athos says: "Having reached the utmost apathy, the thrice-blessed George appeared full of the grace of the Most Holy Spirit. He departed to God Whom he desired, to enjoy along with the Angels more clearly and precisely the radiance and blessedness

that is projected from the Holy Trinity. This radiance is no other than the energy of the uncreated light, which anyone who has been baptized can enjoy, the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit, Who appeared in the form of a dove in the Jordan River. "Now there is brought to pass a great and awful mystery: to purify us mortals, the Master of creation is baptized by a servant's hand" (Matins, Aposticha of Praises, Troparion 1).

The glorious George became a preacher, an Evangelist and an Apostle of this great and awful mystery of reverence. Therefore, along with the hymnographer let us say: "In His ineffable mercy, He that is simple in His divine nature truly became twofold from thee, O Mother of God, uniting to His Divinity the flesh which He received from thy blood. Therefore, knowing thee to be the Theotokos, we praise thee with hymns unto all the ages" (Matins, Ode 8, Theotokion), entreating your intercessions, along with the prayers of our Holy Father George. Amen. Many happy and peaceful returns!"

After the service, the renovator of the Monastery Archimandrite Constantine Peramatzis hosted a meal.

From Secretariat-General

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday morning, January 20, His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III led a delegation from the Jerusalem Orthodox Patriarchate to the Armenian Patriarchate, to exchange

Christmas greetings. His Beatitude's speech was as follow:

*Your Beatitude, dear Archbishop Nourhan,
Your Eminences,
Your Graces,
Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,
Dear Fathers,*

*Christ is born!
Glorify him!*

We greet you warmly, Your Beatitude, and the members of your Brotherhood, as you celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of the Divine Logos in the Church of the Nativity. This is a time of deep joy, and we recall the words of the hymnographer:

*O Bethlehem, receive the Mother of God:
for she has come to you to give birth to the Light that never
sets.*

*Let everything that has breath praise the Maker of all.
(From Mattins of the Forefeast of the Nativity)*

As we keep the Christmas feast of joy, hope, and light in this time of darkness in our region and in our world, we must not refrain from appropriate rejoicing. For the Light that the darkness can never overcome has come into the world (cf. Jn 1:5), and this great feast renews our faith and trust in the God who comes to share our humanity in all its fullness.

Our spiritual mission that has been entrusted to us by Divine providence is to remain focussed always on this message of hope, especially when hope seems elusive. There is no doubt that at this present time in human history the human family

is facing some of its greatest challenges, and our region is no exception. For we are under particular pressure here in the Holy Land, where so many innocent victims suffer and where so many are displaced from their homes and their lands. As we are fully aware, the Christian community is also confronted by the impact of the conflict, and there has never been a time when our shared commitment to our spiritual mission here has been more urgent.

Just as we are keeping the Christmas feast, which is the feast of God's solidarity with us, we wish to take this opportunity to express our solidarity as well with you and your community in the face of the pressures you are bearing. The situation that you face is not simply an issue for the Armenian community alone; indeed it is an issue for the whole Christian community. We recall the words of Saint Paul, If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it (1 Cor. 12:26). We are committed to remain united in our resolve to defend the integrity of the Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

We assure you, Your Beatitude, of our firm support in your endeavours to protect the patrimony of the Armenian patriarchate. As Saint Paul encourages us, we are to bear one another's burdens, and in this way...fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). We are deeply concerned at the ongoing harassment that the Armenian community is experiencing in the matter of the Cow's Garden, and we pray for a swift resolution to these problems and the restoration of normal life for the Armenian community.

On this occasion we would like to offer our congratulations for your newly ordained bishops, and we also wish to express once again our condolences at the recent passing away of the late Archbishop Aris, who was a faithful servant of the Armenian Church and of the Christian community of the Holy Land. May his memory be eternal.

In this difficult season for the world and for our region, we must renew our resolve not to let anything distract us from our pastoral and spiritual mission to guard and protect the Holy Places and to serve and support the Christian presence here. Nothing is more important than this. We are to be vigilant for those who cause divisions among us and put obstacles in our way that are contrary to the Gospel (cf. Rom. 16:17). Let this be our special care so that we may always join our efforts and maintain our united front against those who wish to rend the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious fabric of our society.

In this blessed season of the Prince of Peace, we renew our appeal for peace and for a humanitarian ceasefire so that the innocent victims of the present conflict may receive the essential help and care that they so desperately need. And we encourage the authorities of our region and of the world to do all in their power to bring a swift end to this conflict, prevent any escalation, and engage in a process of dialogue that will lead to lasting and robust peace and security for all our peoples.

As we keep this holy season, Your Beatitude, we pray that the Light that shines from the Holy Grotto of Bethlehem will illumine the darkness of this present time, and enlighten the hearts and minds of all to seek peace and pursue it (Ps. 34:14).

*Christ is born!
Glorify him!*





THE CEREMONY OF THE CUTTING OF THE NEW YEAR CAKE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

At 5:00 p.m. on December 31, 2023/January 13, 2024, the last day of the year 2023 (Old Calendar), the traditional ceremony of cutting the Vasilopita, the cake which tradition associates with the charitable action of Saint Basil the Great, took place in the hall of the Patriarchate.

Invited to this ceremony were the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos, the Consul, Ms Mantika Anna, and their collaborators, Holy Fathers and members of the

Greek Parish and our Arabic-speaking flock.

In the beginning, His Beatitude spoke through His following address:

“And he [the Lord] said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power” (Acts 1,7).

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

He who with unspeakable wisdom made all things, God the Word, and from non-being to being produced, brought us all to this holy place of the venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem to thank God the Word for the beginning of the New Year of His goodness, and to honour the commemoration of our Father among the Saints Basil the Great, Bishop of Caesarea of Cappadocia, through the established cutting of the New Year Cake under his name, “Vasilopita”.

The determination of the concept of historical time and its alternation in past and future, in outgoing and incoming, old and new, on the part of the human intellect of national pagans and philosophers in general, remains incomplete if not completely impossible.

On the contrary, the determination of historical time is made possible through the presence in the world of the incarnate God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, from the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Mary, during the reign of Caesar Augustus and the Governor of Cyrene of Syria, in the city of David called Bethlehem according to the testimony of the Evangelist Luke (cf. Luke 2, 1-5).

The established Father of the Church, Saint Cyril of

Alexandria, commenting on the Lord's words to His disciples: "And he [the Lord] said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1,7), says, "it is not necessary to be curious about the classified and hidden in God, which the Lord was teaching".

Indeed, the consideration of time as past, present and future is an uninterpretable and incomprehensible fact, undisclosed and hidden in God. And this is because according to John of Damascus, "God from non-being into being produces and creates everything, invisible and visible, and man from the visible and invisible." And according to Saint Paul, "God, ...Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Hebrews 1,1-2).

Commenting on these words of Saint Paul, Theodoritos Kyrou says: "Aeon is not a substance but an inherent thing, which accompanies the beings that have a created nature...Aeon is the space, which is connected with the created nature. The Scripture says the Son (of God) is the creator of the ages. He is eternal, teaching us that He has always been above all temporal systems.

According to Saint Basil the Great, time is interconnected with the world's creation. "And when now the time came to introduce this world into the beings...then the foundation of the world was built, inherent in the world...a stream that constantly hastens and runs sideways towards them, and nowhere ends its course. Or is not time something of which the past has disappeared, and the future has not yet appeared, and the present, before it is well perceived, immediately escapes the grasp of sense?"

Following Saint Basil the Great, Saint John of Damascus says that aion is that which was extended along with the eternal beings like a movement of time or like a space in time; and

for this reason eternal, as God is called eternal, but also pre-eternal...I say, God, that is, the Father and His only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, His Holy Spirit, our one God.

This God of our Lord Jesus Christ put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of all things in all things completed (c.f. Eph. 1,22-23), Saint Paul preaches. This means that the Church, being the body of Christ is not from this world (John 8,23), but since it exists in this historical time, it celebrates the change of the year, not in a worldly manner, but spiritually, showing that it exists in the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Therefore, in the Church and through the Church of Christ, time is interpreted as a new creation by the Apostle Paul. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5,17-18). We become communicants of this newness in Christ when we participate in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, where Christ dwells in our hearts (c.f. Eph. 3,17). "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him" (John 6,56).

Moreover, time becomes the time of life eternal during baptism, where we receive the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and put on Christ. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3,27), Saint Paul preaches. This time of the gift of the seal of the Holy Spirit was granted to us by God the Father, so that we may cleanse ourselves from any defilement and become pleasant to God, just like the Apostle Barnabas says, "we should avoid the present situations and examine the times, flee completely from all the works of iniquity, lest the works of iniquity overtake us; and let us hate the deceit of the present time,

that in the future we may be loved.”

It becomes clear that the alternation of the Ecclesiastical year, i.e. the time, does not concern the distinction of hours, day and night, but to the “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20,21) according to the Evangelist Luke. About this, Saint Paul says, “For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6,2).

At the time of the change of the year, where apostasy and iniquity abound, and humanity is tested by wars, strife and “every evil thing” (cf. James 3:16), we too should reflect on our transgressions, and in fear and terror work out our salvation (cf. Philippians 2:12).

As we celebrate the dawn of the new year, in Christ, God the Word, the Incarnate by the pure flesh of the most blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, let us entreat Saint Basil the Great Hierarch of Cappadocia, to intercede for our souls, the peace of the whole world, especially for the tested Gaza strip and the wider region of the Middle East, as well as for every kind of schism and the healing of the torn unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church.

And let us say along with the Hymnographer: “Thou Who hast framed all things by Thine ineffable wisdom, O Christ God the Word, and hast established times and seasons for our sakes: bless the works of Thy hands.” (Minaion Sept. 1st, Matins, praises, both now). Thou Who art full of goodness, bless this year and protect in peace and unity Thine Church, our Venerable Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, our reverend Christian flock, the Holy City of Jerusalem, and our pious nation of the Rum Orthodox. Amen. Blessed and peaceful New Year, 2024. Many Happy Returns!”

Afterwards, the apolytykion of the Circumcision was chanted

and of Basil the Great. Then His Beatitude cut the cake, wishing a happy, blessed and peaceful New Year 2024 and distributed it to those present.

Finally, the students of the Patriarchal School of Zion sang the carols, “we are the New Generation of the Holy Sepulchre” in the Patriarchate, in the homes of the Holy Sepulchre Fathers and the homes of members of the Greek Parish.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE FOREFATHERS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, December 11/24, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy Forefathers.

On this feast before Christmas, the Church commemorates the Forefathers of Christ in the flesh before and during the Law of Moses, especially the Patriarch Abraham, to whom God gave the good tidings that “all nations of the earth shall be blessed in Thee”.

This feast was celebrated at the marvellous Church of the Holy Forefathers in Beit Sahour, presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, with the co-celebration of the Hegoumen of the shrine Archimandrite Ignatios, and the Priests of the parish, Sabbas Her, Issa Mousleh, Ioannis Rishmawi and George Banoura. The parish Byzantine choir delivered the chanting, as the service was attended by a large congregation and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr

Dimitrios Angelosopoulos.

H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos sent the following Sermon to this congregation:

“He that is full is emptied out in the flesh for our sakes, and a beginning doth He receive Who from before eternity is without beginning; He that is rich becometh poor, and though He is the Word of God, he reclineth in a manger of dumb beasts as an infant, working the refashioning of all men from the beginning of time” (Matins Dec. 11, Canon of the Forefathers, Ode 5, Theotokion).

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

Dear Christians,

The grace of the Holy Spirit brought us all together today in the so-called holy Church of the Holy Forefathers, in the blessed place of the “shepherds who kept watch at night praising God”, to celebrate their holy memory by singing and changing the angelic hymn and saying: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill among men” (Luke 2:14).

The loud-voiced Isaiah, prophesying the incarnation of the Word of God, says: “ And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots” (Isaiah 11:1). The root of Jesse referred to here, is the root of the abandoned trunk of the tree, of the Jewish people. And this is because Jesse was the father of David, from whom the Davidic dynasty sprang, from which Christ was born.

And Christ is the fulfilment of the Law of Moses and the Prophets, of the sacred history, of the beginning from the Patriarch Abraham as it is written: “Bible of the birth of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham”, (Matthew 1,1). This second Bible of the birth of Jesus Christ, since Jesus Christ is the story of the holy revelation, through which God “made known his ways to Moses, His will to the

children of Israel" (Ps. 103, 7); on the other hand, " The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen" (Ps. 98,2).

In other words, the Holy Forefathers are those to whom God revealed His will and through them revealed His justice to the nations, i.e. to the pagans: He showed this to the nations", says the interpreter Theodoritos Kyrou. According to the Evangelist Luke, the prophets are those who foretold the coming of the righteous (Acts 7, 52) as well as the passion of Christ (Acts 3,18). Let us listen to the testimony of the Apostle Peter preaching: " For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3, 22-26).

These words of Saint Peter demonstrate that the prophets, as well as many other personalities of the Old Testament, spoke and announced the child of God, that is, our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Behold, the Virgin has given birth and is giving birth to a son, and you shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14), the Prophet Isaiah exclaims. The prophet David says: " The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Ps. 110,1).

The above prophecies refer to the Messiah Christ, God the

Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all the ages and incarnated by the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin. The hymnographer of the Church also proclaims this fact, saying: "Abraham's descendants became divine and most wise Prophets, fervently heralding in the Spirit Him that was to be born of Abraham and of Judah, event eh Word of God" (Matins, Ode 9, Troparion 3). "O ye who love the Father's choirs, let us all leap for joy today, with songs and hymns let us honour Abraham, Isaac and Jacob...from whom came Christ the Lord...in His exceeding compassion" (Exaposteilarion 1).

Today's celebrated memory of the Holy Forefathers is due precisely to this fact that "Christ the Lord seen in the flesh". Jesus Christ, my beloved brothers, is without genealogy according to the divinity. The generation of Christ according to the divinity is unexplained, Saint Gregory Palamas teaches, saying: "Unexplained, then, is the generation of Christ according to the divinity; it is genealogical according to man, the offspring of man and the son of man suffers to be born as man to save man".

How is it possible to beget the incomprehensible God, Who is without beginning and eternal? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was to God and God was the Word" (John 1:1), Saint John the Theologian says. The Word of God did not have predecessors, and together with His Father, He has the name "above every name and every word", (Cf. Philippians 2:9), Saint Gregory says again when asked: "How is He genealogized?" the one in the beginning "I am", and existing to God and being God, and being God's Word and Son? and having not a Father before Himself, and a name after the Father, who is above every name and every word?"

It is noteworthy that the Holy Forefathers, those enlightened by the Holy Spirit, testify and preach that Christ, as Saint Chrysostom also says, is the fulfilment of the Law and the prophets, the one who fulfils all the Patristic Providence. In

this fullness of God's Fatherly Providence, we the faithful participate as members of the body of Christ and His Church. For even Saint Paul commands, saying: " Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2, 8-10).

Interpreting this word of Paul, Saint Theophilaktos says: "There our (human) nature was united to God and we in Him received communion by nature." Therefore, let us beseech the Holy Forefathers, so that their prayers and the intercessions of the most blessed Theotokos may be honoured to celebrate the metropolis of holidays, the divine nativity of the God of the Word and our Savior Christ in the cave of Bethlehem. Amen. Many happy returns and blessed Christmas."

At noon, a meal was offered.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT NIKOLAOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, December 6/19, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of Saint Nikolaos, Bishop of Mira of Lycia the wonderworker.

On this feast, the Church commemorates Saint Nikolaos as the Father of the Church in the 4th century, "a rule of faith and

an image of piety”, who participated in the First Ecumenical Council of Nice and defended the one essence of the Son with the Father.

This feast was celebrated:

1. At the town of Beit Jala, at the marvellous Church of Saint Nikolaos. The Divine Liturgy was presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina and Theodosios of Sebasteia, Archimandrite Nectarios, the Hegoumen of the H. Monastery of Saint George Al Khader Archimandrite Porphyrios, the Priests Boulos, Yusef and Elias and other Priests of the area and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The Service was attended by the full congregation of the town, the representative of the Greek Consulate General in Jerusalem Mrs Constantina Gyftou, and the representatives of the Palestinian State, Mr Houloud Dagiebes and Mr Riyad Hananie, and the Hegoumen of Beit Jala Archimandrite Ignatios who was responsible for the organization of the feast.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death” (Ps. 48,14) the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians

Christ’s Hierarch, Nikolaos the Bishop of Mira in Lycea has gathered us all in his Church, at the biblical town of Beit Jala to celebrate his sacred commemoration.

The Holy Church of Christ rejoices and is glad on the commemoration of its Saint Nikolaos, because he was a great

shepherd who imitated the Arch-shepherd Christ, not only around his spiritual jurisdiction but for all the Catholic and Apostolic Church as Saint John of Damascus says. Thou the great shepherd and imitator of Arch-shepherd Christ in all things we implore thee O Nikolaos, from the sacred heights shepherd thine servants, saving all from the hardships of life.

Indeed, our Father Nikolaos became a great shepherd of the whole Church because he had our Lord Jesus Christ as a prototype; "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep... I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10,11,14-15).

In interpreting the Lord's words, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "Man distanced himself from God's love and was inclined toward sin. For this reason, he was cast out of the holy and divine courtyard, I mean the courtyard of paradise. And because he fell ill from this attitude of the devil, who cunningly cheated man and led him into sin, from which death sprouted, man became a victim of wolves who were indeed bitter and ruthless. But because Christ is the good shepherd for all men, He lay His life for us...and suffered in the Cross for us, so that by death He may abolish death, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Col. 2,14) as it is written".

The holy and divine courtyard is no other than the Church, the earthly paradise, which God granted to us men so that we may have freedom, "which we have in Christ" (Gal. 2,4). "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5,1) Saint Paul urges us. The Son and Word of God became the First Shepherd "For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand" (Ps. 95,7) the

psalmist proclaims. God appointed Apostles and teachers to the Church (c.f. 1 Cor. 12,28), the successors of whom are the Bishops, sustained by the Holy Spirit, and they pastor the Church of Christ (c.f. Acts 20,28).

Saint Nikolaos was such a Bishop and shepherd, a successor of the Apostles and shone in the Church. His active participation in the First Ecumenical Council of Nice in AD 325 against the heretic teachings of Areus made Saint Nikolaos a "rule of faith" and "protector of the Church" as his hymnographer says: "A fervent protector art thou of the whole Church of Christ, most boldly destroying the ungodly teachings of all the impious heresies; and a rule of Orthodoxy wast thou to all men, interceding for all them that follow thy teachings and godly admonitions, O most merciful Nikolaos" (Matins, Kathisma 5).

The blessed Nikolaos, as the hymnographer says, "was sanctified as a great initiate of the divine Grace of God" (Kontakion), because he kept the divine commandments and worked righteousness at all times, just like the psalmist says: "Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times" (Ps. 106,3). Behold, therefore, why Saint Nikolaos was called a wonderworker.

Our Father Nikolaos did not write any writings because the Gospel of Christ was written in his heart, and he kept a clear consciousness of the mystery of faith (c.f. 1 Tim. 3,9). God shone in Nikolaos' heart the light of the knowledge of God's glory in Jesus Christ (c.f. 2 Cor. 4,6) as Saint Paul preaches. Moved by the enlightening power of God's glory, Saint Nikolaos became a shepherd of the Ecumenical Church and a teacher of Orthodoxy, that is, of the doctrines of truth, as the hymnographer says: "Going about amidst the beauties that eye hath never seen, thou didst perceive that glory which is awesome and fearful; wherefore, thou, O holy of holies, dost tell us the heavenly oracles of those eternal and true visions seen on high, O most sacred Hierarch Nikolaos" (Praises,

Troparion 3).

In other words, my dear brethren, the Shepherds of the Church are the instruments of the Holy Spirit and they have been appointed with the care of the Churches, while Christ is the First Shepherd, that is why Saint Peter says: "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1 Peter 5,7-9).

The God-bearing Nikolaos, who had visited the holy land of Palestine, calls us to this cause, to remain steadfast in the faith that we have received from our God and Saviour Jesus Christ through His holy

Apostles and their successors, the holy God-bearing Fathers of our Church. This faith is no other than the great mystery of the Divine Providence, the Incarnation of God the Word, and His condescension toward the humble and feeble humanity, which took place at the Grotto of Bethlehem.

This means that God is close, near us, as the psalmist says, "Thou art near, O Lord; and all thy commandments are truth" (Ps.119,151). And elsewhere, according to the prophet Jeremiah, "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?" (Jeremiah 23,23). This God, Who is near, is the Sun of Righteousness and the God of peace, born of the Father without seed and became incarnate from the Virgin at the end of times.

Yes, my dear brethren, our neighbouring Bethlehem is preparing to receive in its cave the Saviour and Redeemer of the world, from the pure flesh of the Ever-Virgin Mary and Most Blessed Theotokos. Let us also prepare the "cave" of our hearts to receive the God of love and peace in the Holy Spirit. And

along with Saint John of Damascus let us say: "To thy servants' hymns incline O Benefactor, bring low the haughty pride of the adversary; O Blessed One, that lookest down and seest all; Keep us above sin, whoever sing Thy praises, steadfast and unmoved on the foundation of faith" (Christmas Matins, Ode 3, 2nd Rule, Heirmos). [In other words, Lord, the benefactor Who sees everything in our lives and are truly blessed, consent to Your servants' hymns. Humble our pride enemy the devil and lead us who praise You to rise above sin, keeping us steadfastly on the foundation of faith]. Amen. Many happy returns and a blessed Christmas!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a procession inside and around the Church.

A meal was offered at noon, which the Priests and carers of the Church attended.

2. The feast was also celebrated at the Holy Church of Saint Nikolaos in Jerusalem near the Patriarchate.

Great Vespers on Monday afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on Tuesday Morning were officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolas, with the co-celebration of the Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, Archimandrite Claudius and Priest Nectarios. The chanting was delivered by His Eminence Archbishop Dimitrios of Lydda, Archimandrite Christodoulos and the Patriarchal School of Zion students. The Services were attended by many faithful Christians and representatives of the Greek Consulate General in Jerusalem.

After the Divine Liturgy, the renovator and good keeper of the Church Archdeacon Mark hosted a reception for all at the Hegoumeneion and the courtyard of the Holy Church.

From Secretariat-General

THREE-DAY CELEBRATIONS AT THE HOLY LAVRA OF SAINT SABBAS THE SANCTIFIED

From Sunday, December 4th / 17th 2023 to Tuesday, December 6th / 19th 2023, the celebrations of the Holy Lavra of Saint Sabbas the Sanctified took place. The Lavra is located on the right bank of the Brook Cedron, which leads to the Dead Sea.

This Lavra was founded by Saint Sabba as a Monastery for the hesychast monks. The Saint came to the Holy Land from Mutalaski in Cappadocia in AD 456 and apprenticed for twenty years to the saints Theoktistos and Euthymius the Great.

In this Lavra, the Saint directed thousands of monks to the life and salvation in Christ. He was distinguished as a fosterer of the monastic life, and after his compatriot Saint Theodosius the Cenobiarch, they steadfastly supported the doctrine of the two natures of Christ at the Fourth Ecumenical Synod of Chalcedon in AD 451. In the Monastery, his holy relic, returned from Venice in 1965, is preserved incorruptible. His Lavra was the beginning and prototype of hesychastic ecclesiastical life and the typicon of its Liturgical texts is used in all Orthodox Churches to this day.

For the celebrations, the High Priest of this year, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis went to the Lavra to officiate the Feast of Saint John of Damascus and Saint Barabara the Great Martyr at the chapel dedicated to Saint John of Damascus on Sunday, December 4/7, 2023.

The main feast of Saint Sabba the Sanctified: On Monday December 5/18, 2023, the All-night Vigil was presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks and Priests from the Bethlehem and Galilee districts. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and the Monastery Fathers on the right in Greek and by a Byzantine choir from Bethlehem on the left in Arabic, as the Vigil was attended by local faithful Christians.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon before the Holy Communion:

“I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore, my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Ps. 16,8-10), the psalmist proclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Having become a vessel of the Holy Spirit, our Holy Father Sabbas has gathered us all in his blessed Lavra to celebrate his holy commemoration.

The God-minded Sabbas became a peer of the angels and dweller with the saints in the heights by the power of the Holy Spirit that was given to him. And this is so because like David he would say: “I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved” (Ps. 16, 8). According to Saint Cyril of Skythopolis, our Holy Father Sabbas was predestined by God since the time he was in his mother’s womb, and had been foreknown before his body parts were formed, just like the Prophet Jeremiah: “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth

out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jeremiah 1,5).

In his holy calling, Saint Sabbas went through all the steps of the ladder of virtues, joining the holy and the righteous saints of God of the monastic life, the citizens of the desert and great teachers of Palestine, Theodosius, Euthymius, Theoktistos and others. The striving Sabbas among the distinguished citizens of the desert would always pay heed to the words of the psalmist: "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Ps. 103, 17-18).

Through the keeping of God's commandments, both in words and actions, Saint Sabbas "crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5,24) and gained the virtues through which God received him in the divine heavenly courts according to the saying: "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts" (Ps. 65,4). And the soul of the righteous man of God was not left in hell; neither did he see corruption (c.f. Ps. 16,10).

Behold, therefore, why Saint Sabbas was counted among the holy and the righteous men of God and was called "sanctified". He strove in every kind of asceticism, worked miracles, and surpassed everybody in perseverance. The true witness of this is his incorrupt and fragrant relic before our eyes.

In this relic, of Saint Sabbas the sanctified, we see the new man, who has put on Christ and has become a new creation according to God's will, so that we may live among people in righteousness, devotion, and holiness toward God. These virtues are the fruit of the truth of the Gospel, as Saint Paul urges: "Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4,24).

Interpreting these words of Paul, Zigavinos says: "The corrupt life is built in the devil...while the good and virtuous life is built in God, as God has created and made it legitimate". In other words, losing the image of God in us had as a result the sin and misery of the fallen man. When we put on the new man, then the divine image which we have lost is restored in us, and this restoration is the Godly beauty of the soul, the glory and the holiness of the new man.

It is noteworthy that the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, which enlightened our Holy Father Sabbas, has been extended to the ends of the world, therefore, he is recognized as an Apostle and preacher of the Gospel of truth: "Their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Romans 10,18), Saint Paul preaches, referring to the psalmist.

This is also confirmed by his biographer, Cyril of Skythopolis, who writes: "An angel on earth and a heavenly man, the wise Sabbas became a great teacher, defender of Orthodoxy and accuser of false doctrines, he became a faithful and prudent steward, multiplying the divine gifts, clad in power from on high by the goodwill of God the Father with the help of Christ and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he inhabited the desert with a multitude of monks and founded seven monasteries in it".

The Holy Church of the Orthodox Christians, especially the Church of Jerusalem, honours today the God-bearing Father Sabbas the Sanctified, who has boldness before Christ God. We honour him not only as a citizen of the desert but also as a fighter for the mystery of Providence. Let us entreat him, along with the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, to grant us peace for our souls, our tested region and the whole world. May we also celebrate the blessed Nativity of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ in the holy city of Bethlehem. Many happy returns!"

The Vigil was followed by a monastic meal.

Blessing the Fathers and accepting the thanks from them and their Spiritual Father Archimandrite Eudokimos, His Beatitude returned to Jerusalem.

The feast of Saint Sabbas was also celebrated at the chapel dedicated to him inside the Holy Monastery of the Archangels in Jerusalem. The Divine Liturgy was officiated by Archimandrite Claudius and Priest Nectarios, in the presence of nuns and faithful Christians.

The feast of Saint Barbara the Great Martyr was also celebrated at the chapel dedicated to her inside the Holy Monastery of Saint Nikolaos in Jerusalem, with Vespers on Saturday afternoon and the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning, led by Archimandrite Claudius and co-celebrated by Archdeacon Mark, who continues the renovation of the Church. The services were attended by faithful Christians from Jerusalem.

For the feast of Saint Nikolaos, at the Church dedicated to him, the first of the Lavra which is "built by God" according to Cyril of Skythopolis, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated on Tuesday, December 6/19, 2023, led by His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, at the presence of faithful Christians. After the Divine Liturgy, there was a memorial service for the repose of the Lavra's departed Fathers, before Saint Sabba's Tomb and above the cemetery.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEASTS OF THE HOLY NEW MARTYR PHILOUMENOS AND OF THE APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST MATTHEW AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, November 16/29, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the new Hieromartyr Philoumenos of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew.

On this feast, the Church, especially that of Jerusalem, commemorates that on November 29, 1979, the Archimandrite Philoumenos, who served as the Hegoumen of Jacob's Well, found a martyr's death by an irreverent person next to Jacob's well, at the time of Vespers.

In honour of these two Saints, at Jacob's Well the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by Archimandrite Leontios with the co-celebration of Priests of this area, hosted by the Hegoumen and founder of the marvellous Cathedral dedicated to Saint Foteini the Samaritan woman, Archimandrite Ioustinos. The service was attended by only a few faithful Christians due to the ongoing hostilities.

For this feast, His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos sent the following Sermon:

“If the world hates you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you...If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (John 15,18-20), the Lord says.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians,

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in this holy place of the confession of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Samaritan woman that "the Messiah that is to come, I that speak unto thee am he" (c.f. John 4,25-26). This is also the place of the martyrdom of the confessor and martyr Philoumenos, and we have come to honour his commemoration.

The Hieromartyr Filoumenos emigrated from the island of Cyprus to the Holy Land and joined the monastic order of the Studious (Spoudaioi), i.e. the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, he was distinguished by his devout zeal, his self-sacrificing ministry in the Holy Places and especially his care for our Christ-named flock, listening to the sermon of Saint Paul saying: "... Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1,28).

Just as the blessed Paul exhorted to always be a perfect man "in the virtues or in the knowledge of the mystery of Christ", as Zigavinos interprets, likewise, our Father Philoumenos did not stop instructing, that is advising and teaching every man, that Christ is the Saviour of the world, the truth and the light. And this is because, as Saint Chrysostom says, apart from Christ there is no perfection. "Perfect man, not in the [Mosaic] law, nor in angels, but in Christ."

His perfection in Christ, his union even after Christ, was achieved by Saint Philoumenos, becoming a co-witness of Christ's passion on the Cross, with the testimony of his blood, which [witness] was not accepted by his murderer. Paul saw the Lord in ecstasy saying to him: " Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me." (Acts 22,18).

Saint Philoumenos belongs to the cloud of martyrs (Heb. 12:1) of those who testified for the truth and for the Church of

God, who was healed by his own blood" (Acts 20:28). This means that the glorious martyrdom of Christ is that which founded the Church of God, for the salvation of men. The Church of Jerusalem rejoices in the Lord, because "it first accomplished redemption through His [Christ's] blood, the forgiveness of trespasses according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7). Saint John of Damascus praises this fact, saying: "Hail, holy Zion, Mother of the Churches of God's dwelling place, for thou wast the first to receive forgiveness of sins through the Resurrection."

In other words, the martyrdom of Saint Philoumenos is the testimony of the blood of Christ, which was given as a ransom and freed us from the captivity of our sins, extending over the centuries. Moreover, it is a testimony in the Holy Land of the Holy Shrines, which testify to the mystery of piety, of the incarnation, namely of the God, Word and our Saviour Christ, of His martyrdom on the Cross and of His Resurrection. The city of Jerusalem, watered with the holy blood of the Righteous One, that is, of our Saviour Christ, was transformed into an inexhaustible spring, gushing forth the divine blood of "the faithful and true witness of Christ" (Cf. Revelation 3:14).

This witness, " Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood", (Revelation 1,5), revealed the meaning of the unfathomable indeed mystery of the martyrdom of the Cross of our Saviour Christ, Whose (Christ's) every believer is called to imitate the martyrdom. " If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:20) the Lord says.

Interpreting the above words of the Lord, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: "... as if Christ had said: I am the Creator of all things and I have under my control all things, things in heaven and things on earth, I did not put a rein on their

anger... but rather I allowed them to choose what seemed right to them, and to do whatever they wanted, even though I had the power to prevent this when I was being prosecuted. So, when you were persecuted, you endured for a moment the aversion of those who hate you... and pursued the same ends that I pursued, that you might be partakers of the same glory. For those who sympathize with me will reign with me.”

This is precisely what the holy Hieromartyr Philoumenos, who is honoured today, sought, imitating Jesus Christ in sympathizing with Him and co-reigning with Him in Christ’s heavenly kingdom with all his co-martyrs and especially with the great martyr Foteini the Samaritan woman, to whom the Lord “sent His light and truth”, (Cf. Psalm 43,3).

We, my beloved brothers, beseech our Father Philoumenos, whose remaining incorruptible relics adorn the Church of Christ, so that his supplications and the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, may be deemed as Saint Paul says, “that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Eph. 4:1). May the peace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all those who love Him. Amen. Merry and blessed Christmas.

From Secretariat-General

THE CELEBRATION OF THE 18TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ELECTION

AND ENTHRONEMENT OF HIS BEATITUDE OUR FATHER AND PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III

On Wednesday, November 9/22, 2023, at 10:30 p.m. The 18th anniversary of the election and enthronement of His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III was celebrated.

Due to this event, a Doxology was performed in the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, presided over by H.H.B. with the co-celebration of the High Priests of the Throne, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks, Elders from the parishes of Israel and from Palestine, Archdeacon Mark and other deacons. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon on the right and Mr Angelos Yiannopoulos on the left, in the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos and members of the Greek community.

After the Doxology, the whole congregation went to the Patriarchate Reception Hall, where the Geronda Chief Secretary, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina addressed His Beatitude as follows:

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

The city of Gaza is honoured by its mention in the book of the Acts of the Apostles of the early Church. ” A man of Ethiopia,

an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians” was headed to Gaza, when the Spirit of the Lord informed the apostle Philip to approach his chariot, preach to him and baptize him when they found water (c.f. Acts 8, 27-39). Subsequently, from AD 306, Gaza and its surroundings were the area of missionary, monastic and social activity of Saint Hilarion the Great, disciple of Saint Anthony. Between the years 395 and 421 AD Saint Porphyrios, who came from Thessalonica to the Holy Land, was ordained bishop of Gaza, and established Christianity in Gaza through many struggles. On these foundations from 743 AD, Cosmas of Jerusalem, the melodist Bishop of Maiuma of Gaza, developed his pastoral work for ten years.

This city, after such a glorious Christian cultural heritage, survived the political conquests and mutations of history, alas! today it is plagued and desolated by hostilities, the consequences of which are the ruins of building complexes, the loss of lives of innocent civilians, women and children, “of which there was no number”, which cause a heart-rending sigh, including the 18 victims of those who took refuge at the holy Monastery of Saint Porphyrios of our Patriarchate.

Under the shadow of these gloomy and tragic events and in a spirit of participation towards the tested people and the Greek-Orthodox Arabic-speaking flock in Gaza, the Patriarchate and the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood within it is not celebrating solemnly this year. Instead, a special memorial is being made ecclesiastically, through Doxology at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, for the event of the election and enthronement of Your Holy Beatitude at the glorious Throne of the Mother of Churches, by God’s blessing and the unanimous votes of the Holy Synod, eighteen years ago.

Continuing our ecclesiastical Synaxis in this historic hall of the Patriarchate, we consider it worthy and fair to mention that this honourable but also multi-responsible Patriarchal Pastorate was taken over by His Beatitude with the burden of

illegal agreements on His shoulders, from those who promised an incalculable amount of material and cultural value property of the Patriarchate, that is the Imperial and Petra hotels of the Jaffa Gate. For the cancellation of these agreements, Your adamant Beatitude went to court and other battles which demanded huge sums of money.

As one of the priorities of Your Work, Your Beatitude had the preservation of this property under the full ownership management of the Patriarchate, mainly to ensure the always unimpeded access of Christian leaders and pilgrims to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. You did not neglect the care of the dignity of the Church, through the participation of our Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood in the conservation works carried out along with the Franciscans and the Armenians of the floor of the Rotunda and the area below the Seven Arches and to the south of it. Moreover, the preservation and restoration of the old Russian-made chandeliers by special conservators from Russia, as well as donors, under the direction and cooperation of the icon-conservator from Cyprus Mr Stavrou Andreas. Mr Stavrou continues his conservation work by extension to the antiquities of the Library of the Monastery of the Holy Cross and the lower hall of the Patriarchate and to the icons of the Gallery for the purpose of their appropriate placement in the museum which is being prepared to be housed in the preserved and renovated house of the Blessed Patriarch Diodorus.

It should also be noted that the efforts of Your Beatitude were intense in rallying and mobilizing the Christian Churches of Jerusalem in a common dynamic Christian witness under the leadership of the Patriarchate, to protect the rights of Christians in their native Holy Land from verbal and physical abuse by the radical extreme Israeli elements, one of which happens to be the ongoing occupation of the property of the Patriarchate belonging to the School and the cemetery of Holy Zion.

To the Consuls of other visitors of various countries and

those of the European Union who visited the Patriarchate without interruption, you put a great effort into their understanding and consideration of the factor of the religions, Jewish, Christian and Muslim, and their doctrines, as the basis for the solution of the old political Palestinian problem, wherever the status of the Old City of Jerusalem is preserved.

Through Your actions, Your Beatitude, you promoted the Patriarchate to the position it deserved as the most ancient Christian institution of the greatest religious, cultural and pacifying offering and scope and beyond the limits of its jurisdiction in the Holy Land. This is inferred from our visit, beginning last September, to the Exhibition organized in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, to the Ecumenical Centre of the W.C.C. in Geneva, where you presented the renovated Basilica of the Nativity of Bethlehem last year as the heart and the shield protecting the identity of the Christian and the entire Palestinian people. This is also inferred from our visit to the European Union in Brussels, during which you reiterated the need to protect the rights of the Christians of the Holy Land, not least through your participation as an honoured guest at the coronation of the King of the United Kingdom Charles III with oil consecrated to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Also, from our recent visit to Pope Francis in the Vatican, when you once again appealed for the protection of the threatened Christians of the Holy Land and expressed the commitment of our Patriarchate to mediate for a dialogue for the sake of peace between Russia and Ukraine and for the sake of the dialogue of avoiding the consolidation of the schism in the disturbed unity of the Orthodox Churches.

In the dialogue with the other Christian Churches, our Patriarchate also continued to participate in order to approach and present, despite the existing doctrinal differences, a common Christian witness to the world suffering

from various problems and asking for comfort. Proof of this is the dialogue hosted by the Anglican Church between the Orthodox and the Anglican Church, which hastily completed its work, due to the onset of the war in Gaza.

It is worth noting that since the start of this disastrous war, Your Beatitude has continuously consulted with the other local Churches for joint calls for a cease-fire and declarations of condemnation of the attacks, from which the innocent victims were numerous. The victims of the Monastery of Saint Porphyrios, for the repose of the souls of whom Your Beatitude held a memorial service in the Church of the Resurrection and the victims of the Gaza Hospital of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem.

The worthily commemorated here today, Your Beatitude, are only a few contributions from the rich Pastoral activity of our Patriarchate and Your inspired guidance and prudent government management for the strengthening and encouragement of us, the Holy Sepulchre Fathers, and the clergy and the people, so that we may continue united with each other and with You in our struggle for the conquest of what is best and perfect for the praise of our blessed race and the glory of our Triune God.

Raising the glass, Your Beatitude, on behalf of the Brotherhood and the Holy Synod, I wish You many returns in good health, unbroken and stable, undisturbed, so that you may rejoice and be glad when you see the Church of Zion, the Throne of which God bestowed upon You, heading from success to success, from progress to progress and from glory to glory. So be it."

The Consul General Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos addressed His Beatitude as follows:

"Your Beatitude,

I have the special honour to express to You the warmest congratulations of the Hellenic Republic and mine personally

on the 18th anniversary of your enthronement. My colleagues and I are happy to celebrate this glorious anniversary together with the Patriarchate, the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and your Flock, filled with profound respect for Your Beatitude and gratitude for Your struggle and the precious work You are doing, since the blessed day on which You ascended the holy Throne of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

No one forgets that You took on this task under conditions that were among the most demanding and dangerous in the modern history of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. But the Church always finds the strength and wisdom to face even the most serious crises. In the long and arduous journey since then, You and the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood have restored and strengthened the prestige and radiance of the Patriarchate, for the benefit not only of its high spiritual and pastoral work but also of the safeguarding of its rights, the protection of holy places in the Holy Land and of its highest mission, the guardianship of its two-thousand-year tradition in the Holy Land.

Moreover, under your enlightened leadership, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem is not only an example of ardent adherence to the guardianship of its tradition and the Orthodox Faith but also a guide on the path of moderation and dialogue. In times of constant challenges, heightened international rivalry and intolerance, you have contributed the most with your guidance, with patience and brotherly love, so as to establish admirable unity and understanding among the Christian Churches in the Holy Land. An example of global reach, but also a necessary condition for saving the Christian heritage and presence in the Holy Land.

There is no lack of challenges today and perhaps there won't be any in the foreseeable future. Jerusalem, the Holy Places and the wider region are once again at the centre of a profound crisis, which has turned into a war. Against the pain and misery that provoke irrational and violent politics,

national and religious upheavals, the Patriarchate, under your leadership, provides spiritual consolation, but also is an active and unwavering factor of stability and settlement. Above all, it is a reference point for noble moral and spiritual values, keeping unquenchable the hope that your trying flock, but also all the troubled Humanity, need.

As you know, I was called upon to take up my duties just three weeks before the outbreak of the present crisis. I am sincerely grateful to You for your undivided cooperation, but also for the wise advice you have generously provided me, valuable aids in my own mission.

Your Beatitude,

Greece surrounds you and the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood with sincere and profound respect, fully aware of your arduous mission. I have the honour to renew today on its behalf its assurances that it remains committed to its will to come as a helper and supporter of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. For the Hellenic Republic, the defence of the rights and privileges of the Patriarchate in the Holy Land, the strengthening of the guardianship of the Orthodox tradition and the safeguarding of the Christian heritage and presence, are imperatives of the utmost importance. Which concerns the whole of Hellenism, inside and outside the Greek borders, its historical path and its spiritual identity. Therefore, and its future.

On behalf of the Hellenic Republic and the members of the Consulate General, I offer You our warmest wishes for many and happy returns on the Patriarchal Throne of Jerusalem, health and continued success in Your high mission."

His Beatitude thanked all of them with the following reply:

"The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works" the Psalmist exclaims, (Ps. 144,9).

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Dimitrios

Angelesopoulos,

Dear Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Dear Christians,

“My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord” (Ps. 144,21), as Holy David says, on today’s Eighteenth, the anniversary of the Enthronement of Our Mediocrity on the historical and Apostolic Throne of the holy and righteous James the Brother of God and the first Hierarchy of the Holy Church of Jerusalem.

As the apostle Luke says: “The Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20,28). This Holy Spirit made the righteous James the Brother of God, shepherd and “bishop of God” (Titus 1,7), “A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Heb. 8, 2).

We say this because the solemn anniversary of this enthronement does not relate to Our Mediocrity, but to the sacred institution of the Church, of which Christ is the head, and He is the Saviour of her body (cf. Eph. 5,23) according to Saint Paul.

Because we too, being grateful for the Lord’s favours, went after the accompanying honourable members of our Venerable Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, we rendered a thanksgiving praise to the Holy Triune God “ who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth forever” (Ps. 135,4).

Recalling the words of Saint Peter: “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5, 2-3), we have not diminished the daily care of the Christians and of the pious

flock of the Rum Orthodox Communities serving under the spiritual and ecclesiastical jurisdiction our Patriarchate, saying supplications and prayers of thanksgiving for all people, as the Lord will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Tim. 2,1-4).

Moreover, we did not give sleep to Our eyes and eyelids (cf. Psalm 131,4) in order to preserve the Holy Shrines which are the visible and true witness of the iconographic history in general and of the great mystery of piety (1 Tim. 3,1-6) more specifically, but also of the holy places of logical worship as well as the defence of the indescribable privileges and sovereign rights of the pious and noble race and nation of the Rum Orthodox Christians.

Even so, following the words of the Prophet Isaiah: "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest" (Is. 62,1), we did not stop protesting and denouncing every political and diplomatic authority, locally and internationally, the subjugated alteration of the existing poly-religious and multinational character of the holy city of Jerusalem, on the one hand, and the characterization invented by the Civic Authorities and related factors, ab-antiquo recognized ecclesiastical properties and pilgrimage lands, as public gardens (National Parks), on the other. Let it be noted that for this we have the Primates and the other Christian Communities in the Holy Land as -companions.

On the other hand, with agony and deep sadness we are watching the indescribable dramatic developments of the ongoing military conflict in the Gaza Strip, the loss of innocent human lives regardless of age, as well as the precarious situation of those taking refuge in the Holy Monastery of Saint Porphyrios of Gaza for protection, as well as of our Holy Sepulchre brothers, His Eminence Archbishop Alexios of Tiberias, our Patriarchal Representative, and the Hieromonk Silas, who is the ministering Priest there, who serve our Christian flock with self-denial. "I am the good shepherd. The

good shepherd lays down his soul for the sheep" (John 10,11), says the Lord.

Our Venerable Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and Our Mediocrity, being faithful to our spiritual and ecclesiastical mission, which was bestowed upon us by the Divine Providence, and hearing the Chief of the Apostles Peter's advice, "brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (2 Peter 1,10), have unceasingly tried to recompense to no man evil for evil, to live peaceably with all men (c.f. Romans 12,17-18). We put in action the good tidings of love, peace and righteousness of Christ. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14,17), Saint Paul preaches.

The eighteen-year enthronement anniversary of Our Mediocrity, celebrated today, relates mainly and primarily to the God-ordained institution of the Church of Jerusalem, founded on the redeeming blood of our Saviour Christ. For He tells us all that "the gates of heaven shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18) and "that God is indeed among us" (1 Cor. 14:25). This does not mean that the purpose of the holy Church of God is the building up in Christ and the salvation of our souls. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jud. 1:3), the Apostle Jude orders.

We say this because the mission of the Christian in our contemporary world, when "the whole world lies in wickedness" (1 Jn. 5:19) and is under the bondage of sin, is the testimony of our faith in Christ "unto the world, to bear witness to the truth" (John 18:37). This is exactly the truth of Christ, which we were called to bear witness to. "Do not receive a spirit of slavery, but receive a spirit of adoption" (Rom. 8,15) and "with freedom, Christ has set us free" (Gal. 5,1)

the wise Paul preaches. The testimony of the truth of Christ is denounced throughout the world by the holy Church of Jerusalem from the place of the "Martyrdom" that is Golgotha as well as the "Empty Tomb" of our Risen Saviour Christ.

We, the successors of the apostolic office of Saint James the Brother of God, and as Saint Hippolytus says, "appointed guardians of the Church", are not alone in our Patriarchal, ecumenical and pastoral ministry, because we have as communicants and meet comforters the respected and beloved in Christ, Holy Sepulchre Fathers and brothers High Priests, priests, hieromonks, deacons and monks distinguished by the moral and sacrificial and philanthropic spirit of the Church. "Let us all love one another in unity; and I shall not see my neighbour according to the flesh, but in Christ Jesus. Let there not be among you that which may divide you, but be united to the bishop, submitting to God through him in Christ" the hieromartyr Ignatius of Antioch orders.

This enthronement anniversary of Our Mediocrity calls us all to the unity of faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit, especially with the brotherly Orthodox Churches. "Unity is achieved through love and truth and a preference for good", the great Origen points out. This "good choice" was shown very recently by the sister and neighbour Holy Church of Antioch, which restored the Eucharistic Communion with us. Let the love in Christ do this for the imitation of the brothers of the Orthodox Churches who are in misunderstanding and division.

For we too are in ministry to the saints, that is, to Christians as well as to the holy places of the Nativity, Crucifixion and Resurrection of God and our Saviour Christ, ordering ourselves "in all things grieving but not distressed" (2 Cor. 4,8) we continually thank and pray to God, that He may pacify our region, tested by the fire of the enemy, and preserve, in the hearts of the Primates of the brother Churches, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (cf. Eph. 4,3).

Let us ask the Lord to direct our hearts "to the love of God and to the patience of Christ" (2 Thess. 3,5), through the intercessions of our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos Mary and the prayers of our holy Father Nektarios, Bishop of Pentapolis. May the Grace of the Holy and Life-giving Tomb strengthen and protect us all in everything and always, especially during these difficult days.

Therefore, we call upon, on all those praying with Us and honouring through their presence the enthronement on this feast of Ours, for power from on high, the illuminating energy of the Holy Sepulchre, and every blessing from God, expressing warm thanksgiving to those who addressed Us: His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Chief-Secretary, who spoke on behalf of the respected members of the Holy Synod and of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos, the representative of the Holy Church of Russia, Reverend Archimandrite Vassianos, who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril, the representative of the Holy Church of Romania, Reverend Archimandrite Theophilos, who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Romania Daniel, His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Nazareth, His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Yaffo, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Yaffo, Reverend Fr Charalambos Badour, who spoke on behalf of Saint James Cathedral, the representatives of our Russian-speaking flock Fr Nikolaos Koulinsky, Fr Alexander from the Beer Sheba community, Fr Stavros Aranki who spoke on behalf of Birzeit community, the Ambassador of Russia to Israel Mr Victorov, the Ambassador of Georgia to Israel Mr Lasha, Mr Ode Quas, who spoke on behalf of the Schools of the Patriarchate and Mrs Panayiota Kafetzi, who spoke on behalf of the School of Saint Dimitrios, as well as all others who have participated in this celebration of the Enthronement Anniversary.

The reception was followed by a meal for the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood at the Patriarchate's refectory.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE ARCHANGELS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, November 8/21, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Synaxis of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel and of all the heavenly Bodiless Hosts.

On this feast the Church gathers to thank the Archangel Michael because when the fallen Lucifer rose against God, the Archangel called all the angels and called out "Let us give heed", meaning let us be careful and turn into prayer and unity with God so that we will not become like the fallen angel, who was turned from light into darkness.

The commemoration of this event was celebrated by the Patriarchate at the Holy Monastery of the Archangel Michael in the seaside town of Yaffo. This Church which was burnt during the 50's was rebuilt and brilliantly renovated by the current Hegoumen, His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Yaffo.

In this Church, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Archbishops, Damascene of Yaffo, Aristarchos of Constantina and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Archimandrites, Alexios, Niphon, Marcelus, Artemios, Ieronymos

and Christodoulos, the new Head of MISSIA Archimandrite Vassianos, Priests from the neighbouring areas and from Galilee, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by the Community Byzantine choir, as the service was attended by the flock of Yaffo and faithful Christians of Russian and Romanian origin, as well as the representative of the Greek Embassy to Tel Aviv Mr Kyriakos Loukakis and other members of the Embassy.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Supreme Commanders of God and ministers of the Divine Glory, guides of men and leaders of the bodiless hosts: Ask for what is to our profit and for great mercy since ye are Supreme Commanders of the bodiless hosts” (Kontakion), the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all today in this holy Church of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel in your historic biblical town of Yaffo, to celebrate the Synaxis of the holy bodiless heavenly hosts.

All Angels, according to Saint Paul, “are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Hebrews 1,14). In more detail, all Angels are ministering spirits who do not act according to their own initiative, but are sent by God to serve those who are meant to inherit eternal life.

The Angels are called by the psalmist to praise God: “Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word” (Ps. 103, 20). In other words, all Angels are called to praise God because they excel in strength, obey the Divine voice, “do his

commandments” and are willing to execute God’s commandments, “hearkening unto the voice of his word”.

According to Saint John of Damascus, “All Angels were created by the Word and were made whole by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, participating in enlightenment and grace according to their value and order”.

Regarding the nature of Angels, Saint John of Damascus says: “An Angel is a noetic substance, mobile, bodiless, which ministers God, by Whom he has received immortality in his nature by grace and the kind of this substance is only known to God”.

It is noteworthy that today’s feast is linked with the Grand Commander of the bodiless hosts, the Archangel Michael, and the fall of Lucifer, that is, Satan. This Lucifer, Saint John of Damascus says, “by his own will was turned against his nature and raised himself above God, Who created him, wanting to rebel against God, and was the first to become evil since he distanced himself from good; because nothing else is evil, but the lack of goodness, just as darkness is the lack of light. Goodness is a noetic light, just as evil is a noetic darkness...since the demons have the same nature as the Angels, they have become evil, arbitrarily turning their choice from good to evil”.

When the Grand Commander Michael saw this apostasy, that is, Lucifer’s fall, along with the fall of a multitude of other angels from the angelic order, as Christ says, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Luke 10,18), he gathered all the orders of the Angels saying “Let us give heed. Let us stand firm”. He praised God, exclaiming along with all the heavenly hosts, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Sabaoth, the heaven and earth are filled with Thy glory”. The hymnographer describes this action of Archangel Michael, saying: “Our God and Maker showed thee forth, O divine Chief Commander, as champion and governor of the race of us mortals, the noblest

steward of our good, and He also honoured thee with the unspeakable glory of unceasingly crying the divine and thrice-holy and God-inspired hymn of victory" (Exaposteilarion 1).

According to Saint John of Damascus, "This very God is the maker and creator, creating them from non-being into being, according to His image, a bodiless nature, an immaterial spirit and fire, as David says; "Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire" (Ps. 104, 4). The heavenly Angels of the earthly Saints of the Church are distinguished as thus, ministering spirits and flames of fire. "Secondary noetic lights, receiving their illumination from the Initial Light Who has no beginning and is the source of light", Saint John of Damascus says.

According to Saint Gregory the Theologian the Angels are the emanation of the Initial Light because they receive their light from the irreproachable, unspeakable and incomprehensible light of God. That is why they appear in the Bible as helpers in the redeeming mission of our Saviour Jesus Christ. "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (Hebrews 1,4), Saint Paul preaches.

The Angels care for the protection of the people. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18,10), the Lord says. The Angels convey the Saints' prayers to God; they transport the souls of the righteous to God's Kingdom. "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16,22). Under the lead of their Chief Michael, the Angels fight for the Church's defence against its adversary the devil. "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels" (Rev. 12,7), Saint John the Theologian says. "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him

a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 1,9).

The Angels connect the heavenly with the earthly world, the triumphant Church and the unceasing praising worship of God. "... they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Rev. 4,8). "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men" (Luke 2,13-14), Luke the Evangelist says.

Behold why our Holy Church renders this worthy honour to the Angels, especially to the Chief Archangels Michael and Gabriel. The Saints and the Righteous of Christ's Church, who had human flesh and lived in the world, became imitators of the Angels through prayer and asceticism, they became heavenly people and earthly angels, according to Saint Paul's advice, which is directed to us also: "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven... And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. 15,47-49).

Let us say along with the hymnographer: "O Marshal passing glorious, O divine leader Michael, thou wast appointed by God's will to be the chief and foremost of the Authorities, Powers, Dominions, Thrones, and Angels, Archangels, Principalities; wherefore, as thou now standest at that dread Throne, guard and keep and save and protect and shelter all them that honour thee with faith, who art the world's defender" (Exaposteilarion 3).

As for us who celebrate, maybe have the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos bring forth peace in the tested Holy Land and all over the world. Amen! Many happy returns, peaceful and blessed Christmas!"

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a meal that the Hegoumen

His Eminence Archbishop Damascene hosted.

The feast of the Synaxis of the Archangels was also celebrated at their Holy Monastery in Jerusalem, with Vespers and the Divine Liturgy, led by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, along with Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, Archimandrite Klaudios and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Angelos Gianopoulos with the Patriarchal School students. The service was attended by a large congregation of monks, nuns and faithful Christians from Jerusalem, who were offered a treat after the Liturgy by the Hegoumen and renovator of the Monastery, His Eminence Archbishop Dimitrios of Lydda.

From Secretariat-General