

THE COMMEMORATION OF SAINTS IOANNIS AND GEROGE THE HOZEVITES

On Monday, January 8/21, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of our Righteous Fathers Ioannis and George the Hozevites at the Holy Monastery bearing their names, which lies at the bank of brook Chorath, at the natural cave of a rock, at the brook's estuary before Jericho.

The first of these Saints, Ioannis, is honoured by the Church on this day as the former Bishop of Caesarea, which came and lived in this Monastery in the 5th century, as a complacent Bishop who guided monks.

While Saint George, of Cypriot descent, rebuilt the Monastery after the destruction due to the Persian raid in 614 A.D.

In honour of these Saints as the founders of the Monastery there was an All-night Vigil, at the beginning of which the current Hegoumen and renovator of the Monastery Archimandrite Constantine Peramatzis welcomed H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the following words;

“I praise the two founders of the Monastery of Hozeva, wise George along with Ioannis...”

Your Beatitude Father and Master,
along with Your Reverend Entourage,

The Lavra of Hozeva celebrates today its founders, Saints Ioannis and George. Their lives had been a continuous sacrifice, having as their basic axis the liturgic life. It was a sacrifice of love and total devotion to the Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. It was also a sacrifice of

Godly love towards their fellow men.

We read in the life of St. George: "A certain day our Righteous Father George was sitting on a stone, being heated from the sun (because he was frail due to the excessive abstinence), and being totally afire inside from the desire of the spiritual love, with the aim of accomplishing the divine will. With continuous tears he was entreating the philanthropic God to have mercy on His people".

We generously experience this very same love towards God and our fellow men in You, Your Holy Beatitude! And we agree with the biographer of our Holy Father George in those things he characteristically mentions about his Holy Geronda: "Believe me Reverend Fathers and Brothers...if I was under temptation or any kind of sorrow and I would meet him, immediately everything vanished from me, as if a sponge had erased them, and from then onward I had much serenity and peace...Then, returning to ourselves, we remember the pious manner of living of the Holy Father, namely the stability in fasting, standing up all night during the night-vigils, the unceasing tears, the patience in the temptations. And to cut a long story short, we remember the stable and patient manner of his virtuous and angelic life, and we are filled with good and useful hopes."

Likewise, we have the same comfort of souls under Your Patriarchal and Fatherly Prayer and Protection!

Friend of Saints, Father and Master,

Welcome!"

The All-night Vigil with the Compline, Salutations, Matins and the Divine Liturgy were officiated by His Beatitude, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Archdeacon Mark and other Deacons. The choir was formed by the choir leader of the Metropolitan Church of the Annunciation of the Holy Metropolis Iliou Mr. Leonidas Doukas, the choir leader of the Holy Church

of St. Paul in Athens Mr. Eustathios Kasteliotis, the choir leader of St. Paraskevi in Athens Mr. Christos Stavrou and the choir leader of the Holy Church of St. Kyriaki in Pyrgos of the Holy Metropolis of Ilias Mr. Nikolaos Papademetriou, with the help of monks and the participation of a congregation of monks, nuns, Priests and pilgrims.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation;

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Mat. 11:29-30) the Lord says.

Beloved Brothers in Sisters in Christ,

Noble Pilgrims

We glorify the only-begotten Son of God, Who has no Father from the Mother's side, and no Mother from the Father's side; in the recent Christmas feast we saw Him as an infant, while in yesterday's celebration of Epiphany we saw Him made perfect the One who is manifested perfect, our God. Today we see Him in the dwellings of the Monastery of Hozeva, and the surrounding area of the river Jordan. Today we see Him being glorified in His saints, namely Ioannis, Ioannis the New and George, who were redeemed from the darkness and now dwell in the light of God's knowledge along with the Heavenly hosts, praising and glorifying Him.

We glorify the Holy Trinitarian God who has called all of us in this sacred Eucharistic gathering in order to festively honour the great ascetics of the desert of the Jordan and brook Chorath, the righteous George who came from Lefkara of Cyprus to these holy places that the preaching of repentance of St. John the Baptist was heard saying: “There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not

worthy to stoop down and unloose... He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost." (Mark 1:7-8).

Having been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, our Father George came in this deserted place following the footsteps of Holy men, such as Prophet Elias, and hearkening to the Lord's words: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Mat. 11:29). "Taken captive by divine love for the holy places of Sion, O all-blessed, thither didst thou depart, and there didst thou abide till thy death, O wisest of men, afflicting thy flesh with labours, towards the heavenly Sion" the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

The Church honours and venerates the commemoration of its saints because the prophets and the saints of the Law foretold us the kingdom of heaven: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat. 3:2) as St. John the Baptist used to preach in the desert of Judea. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27) St. Paul preaches.

And Christ, who we are called to "put on", is no other than the new Adam, who has been illumined by the divine and unapproachable light of the Father, namely of the Holy Spirit, who descended upon Him in the form of the dove when He was baptized in the river Jordan by St. John.

This very Christ, the new Adam for whom "there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11) is the One St. George put on from the garment of the unweaning and uncreated light. And we say this because Christ is the true light. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). While St. Paul advises us by saying: "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephes. 4:24). Put on the new man, who is the new creation, which has been

created according to the Will of God, so that you live in righteousness towards men and in devotion and holiness towards God, namely with the virtues which are the fruit of the truth of the gospel.

Indeed, my dear brothers and sisters, the yoke of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is good and the burden is light. In other words, the yoke of the obedience in Christ and His teaching is soft and salutary for the one who carries it; but also the burden of the commitments and duties the Lord asks from us is light.

This very thing did our Father George acknowledge, who has become a precise measurement and example for his imitators who also became saints, the Fathers of this modest place of Hozeva, the luminaries, Ioannis and Ioannis the New from Romania.

Let us entreat our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as “at thy divine giving of birth [Theotokos], the Word stripped Adam of the coats of mortality and clothed him with the robe which He alone had woven when He received a body in thy womb”, so that by the intercessions of our Holy Father among the Saints George the Hozevite and the saints of Hozeva with him, we who honour them, may be granted the enlightenment of the divine Epiphany of the river Jordan and the divine communion. Amen.”

The contrite feast was followed by a monastic meal which was offered to the Patriarchal Entourage and all congregation.

After the aforementioned two Saints of the Monastery, the Monastery always honours the first five ascetics who lived there in the 4th century, Promos, Elias, Aias, Gannaios and Zinon, and the new Saint Ioannis from Romania who has been recently canonized a Saint of the Orthodox Church by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

From Secretariat-General

THE CUTTING OF THE NEW YEAR CAKE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday evening, December 31, 2018/ January 13, 2019, the Eve of the New Civil Year 2019, at the Reception Hall of the Patriarchate there was the ceremony of the cutting of the New Year Cake, at the presence of the Hagiotaphite Fathers, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, nuns, local Orthodox Faithful and pilgrims from Greece, Cyprus, Russia and Romania.

During this ceremony the apolytikion of the Circumcision of the Lord was sung, and that of St. Basil and then H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed all present as follows;

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). Everyone who is united with Christ is a new creature. The ancient condition that the law and sin had created has passed away. Behold all things have become new, St. Paul preaches.

We fully comprehend these God-inspired words of St. Paul through the Holy Church of Christ, but also within the Church which not only evangelizes the entrance of the new year with the words of the Bible and of the Lord; “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Isaiah 61:1-2) (Luke 4:18-19), but it also prays to God for the sanctification and the blessing of the new year, through its hymn writer John of

Damascus; "O Thou Who hast made all things in wisdom, O Word of the Father Who art from before all eternity, Who hast constituted the whole of creation by Thine almighty word, bless the crown of the year with Thy goodness, through the Theotokos, since Thou art good and the Friend of man".

And we say this because in the interpretation of the phrase "God created in the beginning" St. Basil the Great says; it has been said "He created in the beginning" for us to be taught that the world had been created without any intermediate passing of time, but immediately after the Will of God had been expressed. And elsewhere he says; or is it not so that the time is something of which the past has disappeared, the future has not appeared yet, while the present slips through the senses before it is even made understood that it is here?

In other words, the comprehension of the concept of time receives its appropriate meaning in the salvific mystery of the divine philanthropy, the incarnation through the pure blood of the Ever-Virgin Mary the Theotokos of God the Word and our Saviour Jesus Christ, as well as His Church.

And the Church, being the God-man mystical body of Christ, is the one who introduces in the world the eternity in Christ, and expands towards it. Within the liturgical life of the Church, where time becomes season (kairos), the memory of the past becomes memory in Christ.

For this reason St. Paul refers to the Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 49:8) who says; "In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee". "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2).

The Great Father and luminary of the Church Basil, whose commemoration is co-celebrated with the circumcision in the flesh of our Lord God Jesus Christ, calls us on this ceremony

which is being done in his honour, the cutting of the New Year Cake, to imitate his fervour, faith and humility, so that we ask first for the spiritual rebirth of our souls, namely the Kingdom of Heaven, hearkening to St. Peter's advice: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).

Bearing in mind this sobriety and the consideration of time according to Christ, and girding up the loins of our minds, let us entreat the Bishop of Caesarea of Cappadocia Basil the Great, to intercede to Christ our God for the salvation of our souls, for the peace of the world and of our tested region, and for the cessation of the schisms in the Churches.

And let us say along with St. John of Damascus; "O Thou Who hast made all things in wisdom, O Word of the Father Who art from before all eternity, Who hast constituted the whole of creation by Thine almighty word, bless the crown of the year with Thy goodness" and protect our venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, our reverend Christian flock and the Holy City of Jerusalem, through the Theotokos, grant the world the great mercy. Amen.

Many happy returns and a Blessed New Year.

Consequently His Beatitude cut the New Year Cake wishing a happy and joyful New Year 2019 and distributed the pieces while the students of the Patriarchal School were singing the carols and then they went out to sing the carols to the Hagiotaphite Fathers at the Central and at the Greek Community of Jerusalem.

From Secretariat-General

THE VISITS AT THE PATRIARCHATE ON THE OCCASION OF CHRISTMAS

On Wednesday morning, December 27, 2018/ January 9, 2019, the leaders of the Christian Churches of Jerusalem visited the Patriarchate on the occasion of Christmas.

At 9.15 a.m. the Franciscan Custody visited the Patriarchate under its Abbot, Fr. Francesco Patton.

H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Teophilos addressed the Custody as follows;

“Your Paternity, dear Father Francesco,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

We rejoice with you, dear Father Francesco, and we thank you warmly for your greetings for the feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Logos. As we sing in our Liturgy

Today the Virgin gives birth to Him who is above all being, and earth offers a cave to him whom no one can approach. Angels with shepherds give glory, and Magi journey with a star. For unto us is born a young child, the pre-eternal God.

(Kontakion of the Feast)

It is right that we pause for a moment together to recognise the extraordinary mystery of the Incarnation, when the Creator of all became a part of his own creation. And God did not become man for his own sake or benefit, but out of love for us, to restore humanity to our original vocation.

This great mystery of the meeting of heaven and earth is not simply a theological ideal; it is an event in our sacred history that happened here in this land, the land of the divine-human encounter. As Saint Athanasius the Great has said, "God became man, so that man might become divine".

And so we hold in special reverence the Church of the Nativity, where over the last few days both our communities have celebrated this great feast. Like all the Holy Places, the Church of the Nativity has been entrusted to us by Divine Providence to guard and sustain, and we give thanks for our fraternal partnership that enables us to pay attention to the restoration of the Grotto.

It is of course, fundamental that the Church of the Nativity remains a place of worship, prayer, and pilgrimage that is open to all freely and without distinction. The Holy Places are not museums or national monuments, but "springs of [spiritual] water gushing up to eternal life (cf. John 4:14).

Our brotherly co-operation has enabled us also during this last year to provide a united front against proposed legislation that would impinge severely on our rights and freedom with respect to our properties. We cannot rest in our vigilance against those radical elements in the society that seek to change the fundamental multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious identity of the Holy Land, and who are undermining the Christian character of this Holy City as well. Our continuing steadfastness together is our proper defence, and it is a sign of hope and encouragement to all those who look to the Holy Land in hope during this holy season.

We take this opportunity to thank you, dear Father Francesco, and your community, for your ongoing solidarity, along with the other Heads of Churches, and we re-commit ourselves to doing all that may be necessary to ensure that the Integrity of the Holy Places and our beloved Holy Land is maintained and respected by all.

MAY Christ our God, who by His Incarnation has gathered into unity all things in heaven and on earth, through the intercession of the Mother of God, the Theotokos, bless you, your brotherhood, and all the members of your communities, and MAY we wish you a happy and peaceful New Year.

Thank you”.

At 10.00 a.m. there was the visit of all the other Communities, of the Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem His Beatitude Pierre Battista Pizzaballa, the Church of the Copts, the Syrians, the Anglicans, the Lutherans and others.

His Beatitude addressed them as follows;

“Beloved Fellow Heads of the Churches,

Your Excellences,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers,

We welcome you all to our Patriarchate as we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we thank you warmly for the greetings that you have expressed to us. This is a joyous time, in which our welcoming of each other is a sign of our welcoming of the Good News of the Incarnate Logos. As we sing during the Royal Hours in preparation for the Christmas Feast, let us listen to Saint Sophronios, Patriarch of Jerusalem;

Make ready, O Bethlehem,
let the manger be prepared,
let the cave show its welcome.

The truth has come,
the shadow has passed away.

(The Royal Hours, Tone 8, by Patriarch Sophronios)

The divine-human encounter in the flesh lies at the heart of our sacred history in this land. Here we Christians have lived and built communities from the very beginning, cherishing and guarding with our very lives the Holy Places, that is a living *martyria* by God's salvific acts.

The integrity of the Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, along with the stability and vitality of the Christian presence here, are at the heart of our physical presence and spiritual mission. We believe firmly that we have the capacity to enable Christians to remain in this region, and our Churches have long experience in building initiatives that serve this purpose and goal.

During this past year, we have emphasized all this on many occasions, and we wish to express our gratitude to all of you for your solidarity in the face of unjust incursions and threats against our legitimate rights and freedoms as Christian communities here. For the moment we have fended off proposed legislation that would intrude unjustly on our legitimate rights and freedom with respect to our properties, and we continue to ensure that the Old City, and more specifically the Christian Quarter, maintains its historical Christian character. Our united efforts have up to the present enabled us to protect ourselves against those radical elements in our society that seek to weaken and break down the true multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious nature of

this Holy City and our region. We realise that this is a constant threat against which there must be constant vigilance.

Please allow us to take this opportunity to express our gratitude once again to His Grace Archbishop Suheil for all that he has done to enable us to work with His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, who has given our cause invaluable help and support. We cannot but mention the support the we have received from His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales in his recent gathering in London of Church Leaders from stricken areas of our beloved Middle East. We also thank His Excellency Archbishop Pizzaballa for facilitating and supporting our ongoing and fruitful relationship with the Holy See. It is just such international support as this, from Church leaders as well as governmental authorities, that has contributed so much to our success so far. We must not allow our alliances to be undermined in any way.

In support of this united front, please allow us to announce to you that we have encouraged the establishment of the International Community of the Holy Sepulchre, with a base in London. This Trust exists to benefit the Christian presence in the Middle East in general and in the Holy Land in particular, and it is an intentionally ecumenical and international organization. The concept of ICoHS, as it is popularly called, has flowed directly out of the work that we have been doing around the world to keep the situation of the Christian community here before the world community. We invite your participation and support in this venture. We have come to see that we have many supporters around the world who care deeply about the Holy Land, and who are prepared to act on our behalf. ICoHS is one way to be effective in this work.

Finally, let us acknowledge with gratitude His Majesty, King Abdullah II, who hosted the gathering of the Heads of Churches and Christian Communities in Amman last month in celebration of Christmas, and which took place in the presence of His

Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas.

At this season, when we welcome so many pilgrims who come longing for the spiritual refreshment of the Holy Places, and who long for the coming of our Lord into the cave of their hearts, MAY we who live and minister here also make ready our minds and souls, so that the incarnate Logos by the intercession of the Mother of God, the Theotokos, MAY shine in us and strengthen us to carry on the mission that the Divine Providence has entrusted to us.

MAY God bless you and your communities during this blessed Christmas season, and MAY God bless all the peoples of our beloved Holy Land. We wish you all a happy and peaceful New Year.

Thank you”.

Near noon the Apostolic Delegate visited the Patriarchate, as the representative of the Vatican in Jerusalem.

Likewise, the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella with an entourage returned the visit to the Copts, the Syrians and the Ethiopians.

From Secretariat-General

CHRISTMAS EVE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, December 25, 2018/ January 7, 2019, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ by the Virgin, during the reign of the Roman Emperor Caesar Octavian Augustus, at the place where

this event actually happened, in Bethlehem.

1. On Christmas Eve

According to the order of the Church of Jerusalem, the feast began on Christmas Eve, on Sunday 24th December 2018/ 6th January 2019.

At 11:15 a.m. of this day, according to the program of the Status Quo, the Entourage of the Orthodox Hagiotaphite Fathers under H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos departed from the Patriarchate towards Jaffa Gate, and from there to the Holy Monastery of Prophet Elias. After a small stopover there, the Patriarchal Entourage headed towards Bethlehem through the gate of Rachel's tomb, while Israeli horsemen marched ahead of the procession.

Upon arrival at Bethlehem Square, H.H.B. and His Entourage were welcomed by the Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem, Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan, many Priests dressed in their liturgical vestments and a large crowd of faithful, under the chanting of the troparia of the Nativity in Greek by Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos and the Choir "Tropos", who came from Greece escorted by the Exarch of Athens Archimandrite Damianos, and in Arabic by Mr. Lawrence Samour. The Patriarchal Entourage entered the Basilica of the Nativity and went to the Cave for veneration through the wood carved ikonostasion and St. Nikolaos' chapel.

Then the Patriarchal Entourage exited the Cave from its north gate and marching through the chapel which is being used by the Armenians turned left towards the area before the ikonostasion.

Vespers was held at this place, according to the typicon order and the Status Quo, with the incense procedure and the blessing of bread.

After Dismissal, around 3:30 p.m., there was a meal offered by

the Patriarchal Representative Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan, and in the evening there was the welcoming reception of the representative of His Excellency the President of the Palestinian State Mr. Mahmoud Abbas Abu-Mazen, and the representative of the King of Jordan His Majesty Abdullah Ibn Hussein, by His Beatitude, who addressed all present as follows;

“His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas “Abu Mazen”, President of the State of Palestine Represented by H.E. Dr. Rami Al-Hamdallah, Palestinian prime minister

His Excellency Samir Mbaidien, Jordanian Minister of Interior representative of His Majesty King Abdullah bin Al-Hussein.

Dear brothers and sisters,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we have the honour to celebrate the birth of our Lord Christ, in your presence, in the same city, the city of peace, where Jesus was born nearly two thousand years ago. This great event is a witness to the sanctity of this land.

The birth of Christ is not like any other birth, it is an eternal birth. It is the birth of love and peace, and the beginning of the Charter of Reconciliation between Heaven and Earth. To celebrate the birth of Christ is to emphasize the value of humanity, because there is no real worship of the Creator, if we don't respect the Creature, and no sincere faith if we do not respect life.

Honourable present,

With the birth of Christ, humanity began a new journey embodied in happiness, love and respect between all of humanity. With that God set an example and showed us how he loved the world so that everyone loves his or her world and society, as God honoured the person over the rest of the

creatures to declare the elevation of humans and the elevation of the humanitarian message.

In the Anthem of the Angels: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace" (Luke 2:14). The peace praised by the angels is not just a social peace, but it is also the embodiment of Christ and His presence. Thus, the angels celebrated the peace that came with the birth of Christ. Christ, by His incarnation, gave humanity peace with God and amongst the people and with oneself. What happened to Adam in Paradise when he sinned is that he and his descendants lost peace with God. When Cain killed his brother Abel, humanity lost peace amongst the people, this peace returned to humanity by the birth of our Lord Christ.

Honourable present,

Every year as we celebrate the Birth of Christ, people are attracted to the spirit of happiness, children are waiting for the holiday gifts and the world is full of joy, despite the hardships we face caused by instability. This feast comes to embody the happiness, joy and pleasure that the Palestinian people deserve and have been striving to attain to live in peace, dignity, stability, independence and happiness like the rest of the peoples of the world. Christmas is also a national holiday that adds a special joy to its religious holiness. A national holiday the joy of which is lived together by Muslims and Christians. This is because, the mutual flourishing of Muslims and Christians in this Holy Land has been a historical fact that has been experienced by citizens of our various lands ever since the treaty between the Caliph Omar bin Al-Khattab and our predecessor Patriarch Sophronius and until our present day.

We have had a difficult year, with many challenges, many of which are the result of aspirations for political gains by politicians attempting to strengthen their political positions at the expense of our churches, in addition to attempts to

undermine our churches and our inherent Christian presence in this holy land to which the birth of Christ is witness to our roots within. H.E. President Abbas and His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al-Hussein, the custodian of the Christian and Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem, stood by us and we all succeeded in confronting the attempts to undermine our rights with the blessing of our Lord Christ and our unity on the basis of truth and justice.

Your Excellency the Prime Minister,

We take the opportunity of Christmas to wish everyone a blessed and prosperous year, full of good and happiness and crowned with peace, tranquillity, stability and security.

We ask our Lord Christ, to bless everyone with a rich flood of grace, to bless everyone with his heavenly blessings and to cause everyone to enjoy health, well-being and to heal the sick, to comfort the needy, and to protect everyone from all harm.

We also ask our Saviour, Jesus Christ, to provide us the means to enjoy peace and security in the Holy Land and all over the world, and to guard our society from all evil. We also pray to the Lord to protect our leadership under President Mahmoud Abbas, The President of the State of Palestine.

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests”

Merry Christmas and MAY you all enjoy Bliss, Love and Peace”.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE FOREFATHERS AT BEIT SAHOUR

On the Sunday of the Feast of the Forefathers, December 17/30, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Forefathers at the Holy Church dedicated to them which is also the patron Church of Beit Sahour, near Bethlehem.

On this feast the Church honours the commemoration of the Forefathers of Christ who lived before the Law and by the Law, of whom He was a descendant, and became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and Virgin Mary as He was born in the flesh by her.

In this beautiful Church which is decorated with a stone-carved ikonostasion and Byzantine hagiography, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the morning, officiated by the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, with co-celebrants the Priests of this parish, Fr. Savva, Fr. Issa, Fr. Ionannis and Fr. George. The parish choir chanted in Arabic with the participation of a full congregation of the inhabitants of the town.

Presbyter Issa read to this congregation the Sermon of His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos as below;

“Being the fulfilment of the Law and of the Prophets, Christ our God, Thou who hast completed the providence of the Father, do Thou fill our hearts with joy and gladness always; now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.” (Liturgy of St. Chrysostom).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Reverend Christians,

The conveyed message through the mouth of the Angel of God to

the shepherds who remained in their fields at night in your town of Beit Sahour: "behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord"(Luke 2:10-11), has gathered all of us today in this Holy Church in order to celebrate in thanksgiving and doxology the commemoration of our Holy Forefathers, namely all those who pleased God from Adam to Joseph the Betrothed to the Most Holy Theotokos; likewise, all the prophets and prophetess, especially Prophet Daniel and the three children.

Those among the prophets who have pleased God throughout the centuries are those who proclaimed the mystery of the Divine Providence, the birth of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who fulfilled every aspect of the Father's Providence.

Today's feast of the Forefathers in this very place where the heavenly hosts, the angels, conversed with the people who stayed in their fields at night, is the preamble of the evangelism of the great joy (Luke 2:3), of the deliverance of man from the bondage of sin and the corruption of death.

And this is so, because the Son of God, Christ, is the new Adam, not the earthly man any more, but the One who has been conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Ever-Virgin Mary and became incarnate through her pure blood, for our salvation.

The sacred history is no other than the history of our Holy Church, and we have been born members of its body, namely of Christ. It is precisely this sacred history that the Holy Forefathers and all the prophets composed and recorded, as they received all the revelations of God. And in the Old Testament the revelations of God the Word, of Christ, were in a bodiless form, while in the New Testament the revelations of God the Word, the Christ were done in the flesh.

The Holy Forefathers, the righteous prophets of the Old

Testament, did not only have a communion in the Holy Spirit with the Word of God, the Christ, but also with the vision of His incarnation. In other words, they saw the Word of God as a man, in the form of a man. Adam, for example, heard the voice of the Lord God walking in paradise in the evening (Gen. 3:8). Jacob saw the face of God “for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” (Genesis 32:30). Moses saw the back of God; “And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen” (Exodus 33:21-23). Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne; “I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple” (Isaiah 6:1). Daniel saw the Lord as the son of man; “And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips” (Daniel 10:16). Prophet Isaiah converses with God; “and behold the word of the Lord came unto him, and he said to him: What dost thou here, Elias? And he answered: With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant” (3 Kings 19:9-10).

It is noteworthy that the Holy Forefathers and prophets did not see the unintelligible and unreachable nature of God, but the form and the image of Him, which image was going to be materialized in the future, as St. Paul says, in Christ Jesus, “who being in the form of God... was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:5-7). And elsewhere St. Paul says; Satan “hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor. 4:4).

Our Holy Church honours and venerates the memory of the Holy Forefathers because they foretell the great mystery of the divine providence, the mystery of the salvation of man. “We honour the pinnacles among the Fathers, even Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; for from their seed, Christ shone forth incarnate of a Virgin, since He is almighty” the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Christ is the Saviour of the world and this is also proven by the fact that apart from Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and Joseph, the first people who venerated the divine infant were the shepherds who stayed in their fields at night. And this is so because they were characterized by their simplicity and purity of heart. Moreover, the shepherds imitated the lives and virtues of the Patriarchs and of the prophets of the Old Testament. The Church Fathers underline the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ chose the simplest people in the heart and mind to reveal the unspeakable mystery of the incarnation of God the Word. Christ did not choose the proud and cunning Scribes and Pharisees who knew and taught the scriptures and the Law of Moses.

The Church my beloved, is not of this world, of this time, which "lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19) as the Evangelist John says. The Church abides and exists in the world in order to save the world and deliver it from the darkness, the unrighteousness and the oppression of the devil. In other words, the purpose of the Church is to evangelize the "on earth peace" which was introduced to the world by the incarnation of the Divine Word and praised by the angels.

And we say this, because by His incarnation, Christ made peace between God and man, between man with his fellow men, and between man with himself. And this happened because in our Lord Jesus Christ there was the union of the divine with the human nature impartially, with no alteration, with no division and inseparably.

Behold therefore, why the angel of the Lord said to the shepherds in the fields: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

Let us then my dear ones, prepare ourselves and cleanse our hearts so that the great joy and peace of the Sun of

Righteousness, of the born Saviour Jesus Christ may enter in them. Amen.

Have a blessed and peaceful Christmas.”

After the Divine Liturgy there was a meal for the Episcopal entourage and many others, offered by the Community.

From Secretariat-General

**THE VISITS OF THE
PATRIARCHATE ON THE FEAST OF
CHRISTMAS OF THE WESTERN**

CHURCHES

On Friday December /, the customary visits of the Patriarchate on the occasion of Christmas Feast took place at the Fraternity of the Franciscan Custody in the Holy Land at first, and then at the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem.

Our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos who was escorted by Hagiotaphite Fathers, addressed the Franciscans as follows;

“Your Paternity, dear Father Francesco,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Respective Fraternities,

Beloved in Christ,

We greet you, dear Father Francesco, and your community, with the joy of this holy season as you celebrated the feast of the Nativity. At this time, when the eyes of the world are directed to the Holy Land, we remember these words from the Orthodox services;

O Joseph, proclaim the wonders to David,

the ancestor of God. You have seen a Virgin

great with child; you have given glory with

the shepherds; you have worshipped with

the Magi; and you have been instructed through an angel.

Entreat Christ our God to save our souls.

(Dismissal Hymn, Vespers after the Nativity of Christ, Second Tone)

By Divine Providence, Saint Joseph was given the responsibility of guarding and protecting the Mother of God and the new-born Saviour Jesus Christ, and so he is an example to us in our own day, to whom the same Divine Providence has entrusted the guarding and protecting of the Holy Places, as well as the shepherding of the Christian communities of the Holy Land. May Saint Joseph strengthen us for this mission by his intercession.

The responsibility of guarding and protecting the Holy Places as well as of serving the Christian communities rests heavily upon us especially when the Christian communities of the Middle East in general and our beloved Holy Land is particular continue to pass through difficult times. This has been a turbulent year, with many problems and challenges. But by the grace of God we have shown a united front, which has enabled us to defend our rights, privileges, and autonomy.

As you yourself have written, "Christmas symbolises unity, coexistence, new beginnings and hope." Our unity of purpose is essential to ensuring the special character of the Holy City of Jerusalem and the Holy Land as the home of the Jews, Christians and Muslims, and as you have so rightly said, "in the Holy Land it is fitting that there should continue to be coexistence between Christians, Muslims, and Jews.' This is the "message of peace and brotherhood between all religions and all peoples.'

The Churches play an essential role in maintaining this spirit of coexistence. Our duty as Christians and as monastics is to ensure the ongoing nature of the Holy Sites as places of worship and spiritual refreshment not just for Christians, but also for peoples of all faiths who come on pilgrimage. We know the importance of this mission in the ever-increasing number of pilgrims who visit the Holy Places.

Nor can we underestimate our role in the establishment of true peace and reconciliation. The feast of the Nativity is the

feast of peace and reconciliation par excellence, when the Prince of Peace came in the flesh to reconcile humanity with God, and human beings with each other. As Saint Paul has written, he was born in human form (Phil. 2:7).

This is the hope of this Christmas season, and this is our commitment.

As we celebrate this feast with you, dear Father Francesco, we take this opportunity to give thanks again for the productive co-operation between our two Brotherhoods in the ongoing restoration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Grotto of the Church of the Nativity. This co-operation is unprecedented in our shared history, and it is a real sign of the reconciliation that we are called to preach and to live.

May God bless you, Your Paternity, your Brotherhood, and all the Communities entrusted to your pastoral care. We wish you a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Thank you”.

And at the Latin Patriarchate as follows;

“Your Excellency, dear Archbishop Pizzaballa,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers,

Beloved in Christ,

As you keep this Christmas feast, we greet you with the joy of the angels who proclaimed, “Glory be to God on high, and peace, goodwill among all people”. We pray that you may know the pace of this holy season and draw strength and illumination from the Incarnate Logos, who is “the Dayspring from the east, who has visited us from on high”, in whom “we

who were in darkness and shadow have found the truth” (Exapostilarion from Matins of the Nativity).

As you know well, Your Excellency, this has been a year of many challenges, both locally and internationally.

At home we have had to face the ongoing pressure on our rights, privileges, and autonomy as Churches – a pressure that continues to demand our united opposition for the sake of preserving not only the Status Quo, but also the true character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land as a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious society in which a vital, vibrant, living Christian presence is essential.

On an international level, there has been more migration of refugees within the Middle East and abroad, and our region continues to wrestle with the humanitarian crisis of so many displaced and homeless persons. In this regard we cannot forget the plight of our Lord Himself, who as an infant was displaced from his own home by the political unrest of His time.

We are deeply encouraged by the support we have received from Church and governmental leaders around the world, and we have shown to the world our own unity of purpose in many ways. In particular we have recently shown our common witness at the Christmas Festival in Jordan, hosted by His Majesty King Abdullah and His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas.

It is essential to our common mission here to protect the Christian community of the Middle East and to do all in our power to encourage and help them to remain in their ancestral homes. Our ancient, native Christian communities must not just survive the present pressures and difficulties; they must thrive and prosper if this region is to maintain its historic and unique identity as the home of the three Abrahamic traditions.

We recognize, dear Archbishop Pizzaballa, your pastoral zeal

and your commitment to the well-being of this Holy City and our beloved Holy Land. Your years of selfless service are ample evidence of your love of the Holy Land and all our peoples. Our deepening relationship of co-operation over the years is yet another sign of hope both for those who call the Holy Land their home, as well as for those who call Jerusalem as their spiritual home and who come here in thousands every month as pilgrims.

Here is our common witness to the world. May we share together the rejoicing of the whole of creation at the birth of Christ, as we sing;

Make glad, O ye righteous;

greatly rejoice, O ye heavens;

ye mountains dance for joy. Christ is born...

Angels sing praises, saying,

“O Lord past our understanding,

Glory to you.”

(Katavasie from Matins of the Feast of the Nativity)

May God bless you, Your Excellency, along with your bishops, clergy, and people, and may the Incarnate Logos illumine all our hearts and fill us with a peaceful, reconciling Spirit.

We wish you a happy Christmas and a New Year of peace and joy.

Thank you.

Afterward, His Beatitude, escorted by Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina visited the Apostolic Delegate representative of the Vatican in the Holy Land and the Anglican Church in Jerusalem under the Bishop Most Reverend Suheil Dawani.

THE ADDRESS OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM TO THE PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL ON THE OCCASION OF THE NEW YEAR 2019

On Thursday, December 14/27, 2018, the official Meeting of the Heads of the Churches of Jerusalem took place at the Presidential Residence of Israel, with the President of the State of Israel, on the occasion of the New Year.

In this meeting, the President of the State of Israel, Mr. Reuven Rivlin, escorted by the Minister of Internal Affairs of Israel, Mr. Arié Machlouf Deri, addressed the Heads of Churches and their escorts, wishing them health, peaceful the New Year 2019 and prosperity, and underlined the importance of this meeting, especially in the Holy City of Jerusalem, Holy for the three monotheistic religions, in which nevertheless there were incidents of violence in the past year. Israel strives to protect the increasingly numerous pilgrims in Jerusalem and in the other shrines, such as in the Jordan River, where the Monastery of St. John the Baptist has been renovated and the surrounding area is being de-mined. Israel has no intention of interfering with the properties of the Churches. The President wished that the New Year may be blessed by God.

His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos returned the address of the President of behalf of all the Churches as follows;

27 December 2018

Your Excellency Mr. President,

Your Excellency, the Minister of the Negev,

Your Beatitudes,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are delighted to extend to you, Mr. President, on behalf of the Churches and Christian Communities of the Holy Land, the greetings of this holy season, during which our Abrahamic traditions are celebrating important festivals, and during which time so many pilgrims come to this City and Holy Land for spiritual renewal.

Very soon the eyes of the Christian world will be turned to the Jordan River, as Christians remember shortly after the Christmas Feast the occasion of Our Lord's baptism. We shall gather at the Jordan River with both the local Christian Community as well as with pilgrims from around the world at Qasr El Yahud.

We wish to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for your personal interest in, and your commitment to, the project of clearing the minefields at this site, and for making this site accessible after so many years. We also express our appreciation to the army for their important role in coordinating all the parties in completing this tremendous undertaking.

Mr. President, even as we celebrate this wonderful accomplishment, hindrances remain.

One particular challenge that we have managed to resist several times now, the last occasion having been achieved with Your Excellency's courteous intervention, must be faced head on.

Certain Members of the Knesset, who we believe are misled, moved once again to propose to the Ministerial Committee for Legislation the discriminatory bill which restricts the rights of Christian Institutions to deal with their property and threatens the income that sustains the humanitarian mission of the Church, along with its care for the Holy Sites.

We are thankful to the firm support of our friends both in Israel and around the world, who, in spite of the inconvenient timing, came immediately to our assistance. We are sure that their support will not fall, should this legislation be pushed forward again.

Your Excellency, we are grateful for your gracious intervention and for the wise approach of Prime Minister Netanyahu in causing this bill to be withdrawn. This action is consistent with your commitments to preserve the long-standing Status Quo and to sustaining the unique multi-religious tapestry of our beloved Jerusalem.

While thankful for this reprieve, we are deeply concerned that attempts to bring this legislation forward will continue. We shall therefore remain actively attentive to this matter, and convinced that this Bill has no place in the corpus of legislation of the State of Israel. We reiterate our readiness for dialogue to find lasting solutions that benefit the whole society. Yet, at the same time we stand united in our position both to defend our legitimate and sacred rights, as well as to continue that constructive engagement with governmental authorities that has been formed and shaped over the many

years.

We do not seek our own benefit, but that of the mission that has been entrusted to us by Divine Providence; to serve the Holy Places and witness to this land of the divine-human encounter – that is our common sacred history. Jerusalem is the universal symbol of peace to which the whole world looks for reconciliation and mutual flourishing. It is unique in its existence as a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious community that is home to the three Abrahamic faiths. Jerusalem is the spiritual heart of the world that is longing for truth, light and righteousness.

As we read in the Psalms

*Our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem.*

*Jerusalem-built as a city
that is bound firmly together.*

(Ps. 121[122]:2-3)

We join with you in your official commitment to preserve this multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious character of Jerusalem, and we applaud your steadfastness to our harmonious mutual flourishing. As a Jerusalemite yourself, you understand well that Jerusalem is a unique paradigm of the human community, in maintaining cultural and religious traditions that live peacefully side by side. We welcome the support that you give to ensure that Jerusalem maintains this essential character.

We take this opportunity, Mr. President, to wish you and your family a Happy New Year. May God bless you in your work on behalf of all the peoples of our beloved Holy Land.

Thank you.

THE FEAST OF THE ENTRY OF THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday, November 21/ December 4, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos at the Temple, at the Holy Nunnery of Megali Panagia which is adjacent to the Patriarchate.

On this feast the Church celebrates the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos in the Temple when she was three years old. She was brought to the Temple by her parents and entered into the Holy Altar of the Temple of Solomon, where she was prepared as a chosen vessel in order to contain within her the One whom nothing can contain and incarnate the -until then without flesh- Word of God.

For this feast there was Vespers in the evening and the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in on the feast day, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, with Hieromonks and deacons as co-celebrants. The chanting was delivered by Archimandrite Eusevios on the right and the Choir Leader of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos and the Patriarchal School students on the left, while the services were attended by many monks, nuns, laity, pilgrims and local faithful.

His Eminence delivered a Sermon before the Holy Communion, underlining the virtues of the Holy Ancestors of God Joachim and Anna, who for many years endured silently the scorning of

the Jews due to their being sterile, having steadfast faith in God. Moreover, he praised the character of Holy Prophet Zacharias, who having had the gift of prophesy and recognizing the future Mother of the Son of God, instead of keeping her in the girl's school near the Temple, he took her in the forbidden sacred area of the Temple, the Holy of Holies, thus causing the rage of the Jews against him and putting himself into grave danger.

“We are able, therefore, to honour this great Feast of the Mother of God, imitating the great patience, the steadfast faith and the sacrifice of the Holy Ancestors of God, as well as the heroic character, which was manifested by the Holy Prophet Zacharias. And while they displayed such a virtue, living in the darkness of the Law and not knowing of the Resurrection of the Lord, we on the contrary, have the special blessing to live within the Church and with the Grace of the Holy Spirit, making only a small effort in order to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven”.

After the Divine Liturgy, the renovator of the Church of the Monastery and of its ancient icons, Reverend Nun Melanie, offered a reception to the Episcopal entourage and the congregation at the Hegoumeneion and the courtyard of the Church.

From Secretariat-General

THE THIRD DAY OF THE VISIT OF

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM IN ROMANIA

On Saturday morning, November 18/ December 1, 2018, there was a Service of thanksgiving Doxology to God for His help in the liberation and unity of the Romanian people as one Orthodox nation. The service was held on an outdoor platform in front of the Holy Trinity Cathedral, and despite the sunny weather, the temperature was six degrees below zero, making the fingers stiff. The service was attended by the Princess and many people.

At the end of the Doxology the Patriarch of Romania spoke in English:

“Let us defend and cultivate national freedom and unity as expressions of the dignity of the Romanian people”

The Great Union in Alba Iulia, since which we celebrate 100 years today, on December 1, 2018, is the celebration of freedom, unity and dignity of the Romanian people, gained through many sacrifices and sufferings.

The War of Romanian Unification (1916-1919), as Romanians have called their participation in the First World War (1914-1918), aimed to unify all Romanians into one national state, “following centuries of sufferings endured in a Christian manner” with faith, patience, and hope.

The achievement of national unity on December 1, 1918, was also possible with the contribution of the Romanian Orthodox Church, which supported the Great Union of all Romanians. The Church was together with the people in every effort to cultivate national consciousness and to affirm the wish of national unity, in all Romanian provinces, but particularly in Transylvania, Bessarabia, and Bukovina.

Through prayer, through speech, by printed books, with the personal presence and the concrete action of its servants, the Church was active in the unification process, involved in the achievement of this ideal through learned hierarchs, patriotic priests and deacons, theology professors and students with oratory, persuasion and mobilization skills, but also through monastics who have taken care of the wounded soldiers, in monasteries and parishes that organized money and food collections, all of them together morally encouraging and materially helping the Romanian fighters for national freedom and unity.

During the 1916-1918 Unification War, more than 250 Romanian Orthodox priests accompanied the troops of the Romanian army on the battlefields as *military confessors*. Some of them died on the front, others were taken prisoners and deported. Over 200 monks and nuns worked as nurses in various campaign hospitals or on the front, some dying on duty because of typhus exanthema. Hundreds of priests were investigated, robbed or expelled from their parishes by the enemy, others died after being shot in the territories occupied by German troops. In Transylvania, over 150 priests were thrown into the Hungarian prisons, some of them being sentenced to death or years of imprisonment. More than 200 priests were deported to Western Hungary, in Sopron County, where they lived in inhumane conditions until their release in 1919 by Romanian troops (Ref. Rev. Prof. Mircea Pacurariu, *History of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 3rd ed.* In Romanian: Basilica Publishing House, Bucharest 2013, pp. 471-473).

Regarding the Great Union in Alba Iulia, on December 1, 1918, the 1228 official delegates in the Constituent National Assembly included *many Church servants*. The two Romanian Churches in Transylvania (the Orthodox and the Greek-Catholic Churches) were represented in Alba Iulia by *five bishops, four vicars, ten delegates of the Orthodox consistories (diocesan councils) and Greek-Catholic collegiate chapter, 129 deans,*

one representative of theological-pedagogical institutes, and two representatives of the students of theology, adding many other priests who came leading their believers to seal the century-long desire of the Romanian ancestors to live in one country without oppression.

Church servants were elected in the Great Council of the Romanian nation, as well as in the Conducting Council, while the Romanian Orthodox bishop Carasnebes, Miron Cristea, who later became a Primate Metropolitan (1919), and then the Patriarch of Greater Romania (1925), as well as the Greek-Catholic Bishop of Gherla, Iuliu Hossu, were elected as members of the four-person delegation who presented the Union Act to King Ferdinand in Bucharest.

Now, celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Great Union of December 1, 1918, we want *to pay homage of gratitude to all those who contributed to the achievement of the greatest ideal of our history.*

As an act of commemoration of the 1918 Great Union founders, on this Centennial anniversary, on November 25, together with His Holiness Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople and Ecumenical Patriarch, and the hierarchs of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, we consecrated the *Romanian People's Salvation Cathedral* or the National Cathedral in Bucharest, a symbol of Romanian spirituality and unity, which draws together the love for God of a Christian, sacrificial, and generous nation and the gratitude we permanently owe to the National Heroes.

We are all called to keep and cultivate the gift of national freedom and unity as a symbol of the dignity of the Romanian people, acquired with many human sacrifices and many spiritual and material efforts!

For all the benefactors of the Great Union, we thank today the Most Holy Trinity, the Protector of the Coronation Cathedral

in Alba Iulia, and we gratefully remember all Romanian heroes who sacrificed themselves for the freedom, unity and dignity of the Romanian people.

Today, all Romanian citizens have the duty *to keep and cultivate not only the gift of freedom, but also the gift of national unity*, as a symbol of the dignity of the Romanian people, in dialogue and cooperation with all peoples of the world.

Many and blessed years, Romania!

+ DANIEL

Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church

After the Doxology, at a nearby building of the Museum there was a representation of the event of the 1220 delegation of representatives who came from Transylvania, Bessarabia, and Bukovina, and signed the papers for the unity. The representation was done by people dressed in traditional clothes of the time of the agreement, and people dressed in contemporary clothes who held two-metre-long bulges, similar to those by which they bulged in 1918 and summoned the soldiers to war and to the unity of the Romanian people. There was also the unveiling of three plaques bearing inscriptions with the names of those who contributed to the unity. These were followed by the attendance of a parade of groups of laity dressed in 1918 clothes, who sang national songs, and finally there was the blessing of the water by the Patriarch of Romania at the very high cross-shaped monument of those who fell in the battlefields in 1918 and a memorial service for the repose of their souls.

At noon there was a meal offered by Archbishop Eirinaios of Alba Julia.

In the afternoon of the same day there was the welcoming reception of the President of Romania Mr. Werner Johannes at the square of Alba Julia Cathedral.

From this position the President and his associates, along with Their Beatitudes the Patriarchs returned to the cross-shaped monument, the symbol of the freedom and unity of the Romanian people and the President with the Mayor cut the ribbon to allow their entrance inside.

Consequently at the central square of the city, before the President of the country, other officials and Their Beatitudes, as well as a huge crowd of people, who had filled the streets and the balconies of the blocks of flats around, there was a parade of groups of soldiers, tanks, Fire brigade, artillery, helicopters, military aviation and many other contemporary weapons for the defense of the Romanian people, under the music of a philharmonic orchestra.

Thereafter, supper was offered by Archbishop Eirinaios of Alba Julia, and finally the Patriarchal entourage travelled by car via Sibiu, and by plane back to Bucharest. His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem and His entourage flew from Bucharest back to Tel Aviv by El-Al airways early on Sunday morning, December 2, 2018. Glory be to God for all things.

From Secretariat-General

SECOND DAY OF THE FORMAL

VISIT OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM IN ROMANIA

On Friday, November 17/30, 2018, the Patriarchal co-celebration of the Divine Liturgy on the commemoration of the Holy Apostle Andrew the First-called (new cal.) took place at his magnificent newly-built Cathedral at the centre of the city of Bucharest, which was completed with the inspiration and under the initiative, guidance and custody of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Romania Daniel and by the contribution of the Romanian people.

This co-celebration was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants His Beatitude the Patriarch of Romania Daniel, and the Most Reverend Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina and Geronda Secretary-General, Christophoros of Kyriakoupolis and Patriarchal Commissioner in Amman of Jordan, hundreds of Priests and Deacons, under the chanting of the choir of the Holy Cathedral. The service was attended by a large congregation which stood in much reverence and patience despite the very cold weather due to the snowfall earlier in the day.

After the reading of the Gospel, His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon;

“Again the next day after John [the Baptist] stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!... One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (John 1:35-37, 40-41).

Your Beatitude Patriarch of Romania Daniel,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

From the city of the Passion on the Cross and of the Resurrection of the King of kings, and the city of Saint James the Brother of God and its First Hierarch, we have come to the blessed land of the evangelic preaching of the Holy Apostle Andrew the First-called. The first reason for this is to thank and glorify the Holy Trinitarian God on this God-pleasing event of the consecration of this magnificently-built Cathedral in honour of Apostle Andrew; on the other hand, along with St. Paul we may proclaim that: "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:5-6).

It is precisely this "light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" what the commemorated Apostle Andrew preached by saying to his brother Simon Peter "we have found the Messiah", namely Christ. This way, our Apostle Andrew becomes the reason for the first meeting of the Lord with Peter, who became the chief of the Apostles, as well as [for His meeting] with Philip, his fellow citizen. And the calling of Andrew and Peter was made by the Sea of Galilee, when He found them and said to them: "And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him" (Matt. 4:19-20).

Apostle Andrew's zeal for God for his Master Christ, made him imitator of the martyr's passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as his hymn writer says; "Thou didst desire the Master and didst pursue Him, guided in His footsteps unto life, O supremely honourable Andrew, and thou didst truly emulate His sufferings even unto death."

The blood of the martyr's passion of Apostle James the Brother of God and of Andrew the First-called as well as that of all the Apostles are the seal of our healthy Orthodox faith, and also the strong foundation on which the Church of Christ has been built, as Apostle Paul preaches;

“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:20-21).

And the holy temple in the Lord are the faithful members of the mystical body of Christ, namely the Church, as St. Paul preaches: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16). Interpreting these words, Origen says; “We become a temple of God, if we make ourselves a dwelling place for the Spirit of God”. While Theodoritos Kyrou says; “It is befitting to point out that he named temples of God those who are the dwelling places of the grace of the Spirit; and the word witnesses that the All-holy Spirit [is] God”.

We should also point out that each earthly temple as a place of “the logical worship of God” (Romans 12:1), depicts the temple of the spiritual city of the living God, that is the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22). And the earthly Jerusalem is named “the dwelling place of God” – according to St. John of Damascus – because our Lord Jesus Christ walked on it, “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col. 1:19-20 / Col. 2:9).

The Patron Saint of your blessed country, Apostle Andrew, as well as that of Jerusalem, the First Hierarch James the Brother of God, have gathered all of us in this Holy Cathedral

in order to confess that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). And this is so because "every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God" (1 John 4:2).

This witness of the "Incarnate and God-made-man, God the Word, through the pure blood of the Ever-Virgin Mary the Theotokos and Mother of God, our Lord Jesus Christ", of the light, the truth and the righteousness of the world we also confess, the ones who minister and safeguard the All-holy Shrines, which are the irrefutable and historical witnesses of our faith in the Crucified and Resurrected Christ, but also the guarantee of the unity of our salvific faith, which has been preached by the Holy Apostles and secured by the Holy Ecumenical Synods. "By keeping a steadfast faith you will reach the safe path, the much loved harbour in security", St. Ioannis the New Hozevite, the fruit of the Romanian land, says in his poetic verses.

Today's double festal participation of ours in the consecration of this beautiful Cathedral and in the Eucharistic Synaxis along with our dear Brother and Pastor, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Romania Daniel, on the sacred commemoration of the Holy Apostle Andrew the First-called, calls us to hear the advice of St. Paul who says; "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ... that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Philip. 1:27-29); to Who belongs the glory and the might unto the ages of ages.

May the grace of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb be with you all. Amen."

At the end of the Divine Liturgy and during the exchange of gifts, which were an icon of the Nativity of Theotokos by the Patriarch of Jerusalem and a mosaic icon of the Apostle Andrew by the Patriarch of Romania, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem said the following few words;

«Your Beatitude, dear Patriarch Daniel,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Respected Governmental and Civil Leaders,

Honoured Guests,

Reverend Fathers,

As we celebrate the consecration and inauguration of the great National Cathedral with you, dear Patriarch Daniel, the Church of Jerusalem, which is the Mother of all the Churches rejoices with our Sister Church of Romania and all the people of this land. We are happy to be here again at your kind and fraternal invitation.

Our greatest joy is to bring with us the blessings of the Holy City of Jerusalem and of the Holy Land, and to assure you, Your Beatitude, of the prayers of the Christians of the Holy Land. May the blessings of the Holy Places, which are the tangible signs of our sacred history, be an encouragement to you and to the Romanian People.

The Romanian Church is the spiritual guardian of the Romanian people, and the new National Cathedral which is appropriately known as "The People's Salvation Cathedral" is a visible expression of this important and providential role of the Church. You have brought to fruition at last a long-held dream for a national cathedral, which was first expressed after Romania gained its independence in 1877, and the presence of the cathedral in the heart of the capital city, near the

Parliament, is a testimony to the fact that the Church must be at the heart of the nation.

We hope and pray that the Church in this land may continue to fulfil its spiritual mission to the Romanian people, and be a sign of hope and inspiration at this critical time of human history.

We take this opportunity to thank you, Your Beatitude, for your gracious hospitality to us, and we also wish to thank all those who have made this celebration possible. We also acknowledge all the civic and governmental officials who supported this project during the building of this great cathedral.

May God bless you, Your Beatitude, in your primatial ministry, and may God grant abundant fruit to the mission of the Church in this land, to God's glory, and to the well-being and spiritual nurture of all the people of our beloved Romania.

And so we wish to raise our glass in a toast to you, Your Beatitude, and wish you many years.

Thank you».

There was a formal festal lunch at noon. During the meal His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem delivered the following address:

Your Beatitude, dear Patriarch Daniel,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Respected Governmental and Civic Leaders,

Honoured Guests,

Reverend Fathers,

As we celebrate the consecration and inauguration of the great National Cathedral with you, dear Patriarch Daniel, the Church of Jerusalem, which is the Mother of all the Churches rejoices with our Sister Church of Romania and all the people of this land. We are happy to be here again at your kind and fraternal invitation.

Our greatest joy is to bring with us the blessings of the Holy City of Jerusalem and of the Holy Land, and to assure you, Your Beatitude, of the prayers of the Christians of the Holy Land. MAY the blessings of the Holy Places, which are the tangible signs of our sacred history, be an encouragement to you and to the Romanian people.

The Romanian Church is the spiritual guardian of the Romanian people, and the new National Cathedral which is appropriately known as "The People's Salvation Cathedral" is a visible expression of this important and providential role of the Church. You have brought to fruition at last a long-held dream for a national cathedral, which was first expressed after Romania gained its independence in 1877, and the presence of the cathedral in the heart of the capital city, near the Parliament, is a testimony to the fact that the Church must be at the heart of the nation.

We hope and pray that the Church in this land may continue to fulfil its spiritual mission to the Romanian people, and be a sign of hope and inspiration at this critical time of human history.

We take this opportunity to thank you, Your Beatitude, for your gracious hospitality to us, and we also wish to thank all those who have made this celebration possible. We also acknowledge all the civic and governmental officials who supported this project during the building of this great cathedral.

MAY God bless you, Your Beatitude, in your primatial ministry, and may God grant abundant fruit to the mission of the Church in this land, to God's glory, and to the well-being and spiritual nurture of all the people of our beloved Romania.

And so we wish to raise our glass in a toast to you

Your Beatitude, and wish you many years.

Thank you.

On Friday evening, November 17/30, 2018, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos travelled from Bucharest to the city Alba Julia, escorted by His Beatitude the Patriarch of Romania Daniel, by plane and then by car. A hundred years ago in this city there was the proclamation of the union among Transylvania, Bessarabia and Vukovina with Romania, in one united country. This historic event for the unity and peace of the Romanian people was celebrated with various festivities during its centennial anniversary.

Upon their arrival, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and His Beatitude the Patriarch of Romania Daniel, were received by the Metropolitan Lavrentios of Transylvania and the Archbishop Eirinaios of Alba Julia, who has served as the representative of the Patriarchate of Romania in Jerusalem, along with many Hierarchs, hundreds of Priests dressed in their liturgical vestments, and a large crowd of pious people who were gathered to receive the blessing of the All-holy Tomb from His Beatitude's hands.

The welcoming reception was held at the Holy Trinity Cathedral, bearing witness to the reverence of the Romanian people and its devotion to its long-term tradition of faith.

It would have been impossible even for the hardest of souls to remain untouched by the manifestations of faith, reverence,

joy and jubilation by the pious people of the city of Alba Julia who were present.

In the evening the Patriarchal entourages dinned together and His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem offered the Archbishop Eirinaios of Alba Julia and icon of the nativity of Theotokos.

VIDEO & PHOTO CREDIT: BASILICA.RO

From Secretariat-General