

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM INAUGURATES A SPORTS CENTRE IN KERAK

On Saturday afternoon, September 2/15, 2018, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos inaugurated a Sports Centre in Kerak – ancient city of Kyriakoupolis in South Jordan. This Sports Centre was founded within the frame of the “Initiative” of the Council of Churches in the Middle East, after a proposal made by His Beatitude, and the supervising of the Manager of the Patriarchate’s Office Mrs. Wafaa Ksous. The Centre covers an area of five acres which have been donated by the Minister of Public Works and Housing Sami Halasa.

The first buildings for this cause have already been built in the premises with the final aim of completing the appropriate buildings for the sports activities for youth of our congregation as well as for those of other Christian Churches and of the religion of Islam.

In the opening ceremony, His Beatitude honoured the Minister Mr. Halasa for his contribution, offering him a glass painting, as He also awarded ex-Member of Parliament Mr. Fares Ibrahim for his contribution. His Beatitude also offered icons to all who helped in the promotion of this project, an embossed table of Haram Sarif to the architects who belong to the religion of Islam, and an icon of Theotokos to Mrs. Wafaa Ksous and to the sponsors of the project Mr. Swen and his wife Mrs. Nina, who come from Munich of Germany.

After the opening ceremony, a meal was offered at a hotel in the town.

During the meal His Beatitude delivered the following address;

“Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are gathered here today for a great occasion, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for being here today.

We are celebrating a unique prospect. In the establishment of this sports centre we are creating a place both for training in sports and also an academy for the training of leaders.

This centre exists to promote two fundamental goods:

First, to encourage our youth to remain in their home towns and communities, because in this venture they can see a future for themselves here.

And secondly, to serve the Muslim and Christian Communities together, who have for generations lived as one family under the rule of the Hashemite Kingdom.

Sports is a global language that does not discriminate. Sports brings people together across every social, religious, political and economic divide, and provides a common ground for new friendships, and new possibilities.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Mother of all the Churches and the cultural mother of this land, is grateful to Almighty God for having given us this opportunity to establish this centre. For this centre is a blessing for our beloved Jordan and its people, and a tremendous encouragement for other projects of a similar nature that benefit our people and the integrity of our multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious society.

We are deeply grateful to His Excellency the Minister, who has given this land to the Patriarchate to be used for the common social benefit of the inhabitants of the region of Kerak, and for his foresight in seeing the potential of this ambitious venture.

We are also deeply grateful to our German colleagues of Lands

Aid, who have been keen to partner with us to establish this unique sports centre academy.

While there is no doubt that this project seems ambitious, at the same time we firmly believe that this centre will promote and serve in a practical way the socio-economic needs of the area. We are also convinced that this project will meet the needs of the local population, especially our youth, who long to have real opportunities for learning and a hope for a future in their homeland. Our sole intention as the Patriarchate is to serve the common good of this community.

We honour today the commitment of His Majesty, King Abdullah II, whose dedication to the well-being of all in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is well known and an inspiration to all. We also acknowledge the support of His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi, without whose unremitting attentiveness and care this work would not prosper.

May God bless this project and all who are involved in it, and may God bless all the peoples of our beloved Jordan.

Thank you."

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Tuesday August 15/28, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Dormition of Theotokos at her Tomb in Gethsemane.

For this Feast the Church teaches that the Theotokos slept in the Lord in a natural death, but she was taken up in heaven both in soul and body, and was placed at the right hand side of her Son, where she has become the first human of the triumphant Church and intercedes unceasingly for those who ask for her help in reverence and piety.

The Divine Liturgy for the Feast was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitans Isychios of Kapitolias and Timotheos of Bostra and Exarch of the Holy Sepulchre in Nicosia, the Most Reverend Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, and Demetrios of Lydda, the visiting Most Reverend Bishop Cyril of Erythra from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Deacons, and visiting Priests. The choir was led by the choir leader of the Patriarchate Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos with the help of Archimandrite Demetrios, while the service was attended by a large congregation and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“On Thine honoured Dormition now, all the Heavens are

jubilant, and the hosts of Angels exceedingly rejoice, as all the earth maketh mercy, singing dirges to thee in joy, Mother of the Lord of all, O thou all-holy Virgin Maid, who hast not known man, who hast truly delivered all the race of fallen mankind from the sentence passed on our forefathers long ago"; the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims,

Today "the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven," (Hebrews 12:23) is jubilant along with the earthly Church, on the festal commemoration of the sacred Metastasis of our Lady the Most Glorious Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary; therefore together with Archangel Gabriel exclaims in joy "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1:28); "rejoice O vessel of the divinity; rejoice thou who alone hast delivered the earthly things unto heaven; rejoice O thou who after childbirth art virgin, and who after death art living, do thou, O Theotokos ever save thine inheritance". And the hymn writer says: "He that strangely dwelt in thine immaculate womb when He became incarnate, the Same received thine all-sacred spirit and gave it rest in Himself as a Son beholden to His Mother. Wherefore, we praise thee, the Virgin, and supremely exalt thee unto all the ages".

Indeed the Teotokos is the one who is living after death. And this is because her natural death was a death that actually brought life, a death that introduced her to the glory of the true life of her Only Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Interpreting this paradox event, St. Cosmas the hymn writer says: "the bounds of nature are overcome in thee, O immaculate Virgin".

In other words, the natural biological death of the Ever-Virgin Mary could not cause any corruption of her God-

receiving body, but on the contrary, it became – according to St. Cosmas – , “a passage to an everlasting and better life”.

And according to St. John Damascene, it had to be so, for the One who hosted in her womb God the Word, to dwell in the divine dwelling places of her Son...it had to be so, for the One who preserved her virginity during labour, to preserve her body incorruptible after her death (Speech 2 on the Dormition).

During this time of thanksgiving the sacred Tomb of the Theotokos calls all of us who have indiscriminate faith, to draw nigh and partake of the divine gifts from the “spring of gleefulness”, namely the Theotokos, according to St. John Damascene.

“ Every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isaiah 55:1).

Once again my dear brothers and sisters, the Tomb of the Theotokos in Gethsemane calls us through the words of St. John Damascene which say: “I called upon all, through the gospel; the one that thirsts for the healing of his illness, for freedom from the passions of his soul, for the redemption of his sins, for deliverance from all kinds of calamities, for the repose in the kingdom of heaven, let him draw nigh unto me in faith, and take upon himself the path of grace which has great power and many uses” (Speech 2 on the Dormition).

Come therefore, all ye faithful, who are gathered here from near and afar, let us entreat the Most Blessed Theotokos, the immaculate Ever-Virgin and say along with the hymn writer: “Graciously receive from us this funeral hymn, O Mother of the Living God, and overshadow us with thy divine and light-bringing grace; grant victory to our hierarchs, peace to the people that loveth Christ, and forgiveness unto us that sing, and the salvation of our souls”. Amen.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen Most Reverend Archbishop Dorotheos of Avela offered a reception to the clergy and many of the congregation at the hegoumeneion.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday August 6/19, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Holy Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ. With this Feast the Church celebrates the commemoration of the narrative by the Evangelists according to which, forty days before the Lord's Passion, He went up Mount Tabor and was transfigured in front of His chosen disciples, Peter, James and John. This means that He appeared to them in His divine glory and His face was brighter than the sun, while a bright cloud overshadowed Him and Moses with Elijah appeared next to Him, conversing with Him, and the voice of God the Father was heard saying: "this is my beloved Son, hear ye him" (Matt. 17:1-9, Mark 9:1-9, Luke 9: 28-36).

The Feast was celebrated;

1. On Mount Tabor, where this incident occurred.

There, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem

Theophilos officiated Vespers and the All-night Vigil outside. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Archbishops of the Throne, Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Methodios of Tabor, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, while participants in prayer were the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and visiting Priests from other Churches. The right choir was led by Mr. George and the Most Reverend Archbishop Methodios and Metropolitan Joachim, while the left choir in Arabic was led by Archimandrite Philotheos. The service was attended by a great crowd of pilgrims from many Orthodox countries.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation;

“Christ took Peter, James, and John, into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And there appeared Moses and Elias talking with Him. And a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said: This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him” the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Pilgrims,

Our Lord Jesus Christ “Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment” (Psalm 104:2), has gathered all of us from the ends of the world to this sacred Mount Tabor, in order to celebrate His luminous Transfiguration and become participants of the light of Tabor.

“O changeless Light of the Light of Thine unbegotten Begetter, today, O Word have we now seen in Thy Light’s manifestation, the Father and the Holy Spirit as Light on Tabor, guiding with light all creation” the hymn writer says. This very changeless Light shone upon Christ’s face during His Transfiguration on

this sanctified place, according to the witness of Apostle Matthew: "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him" (Matthew 17:1-3).

Answering the question "what is transfiguration, what do we mean when we say that Christ was transfigured?" St. Chrysostom says that Christ allowed His disciples to see only as much from His divinity and glory as they could bear.

St. Gregory Palamas, referring to the teaching of the established God-bearing Fathers says; everybody is able to taste of the joy of the transfiguration's Light. And this is so because the Light of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ's Transfiguration is a foreteller of the future brightness of the chosen ones; "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt.22:14) says the Lord.

St. Gregory Palamas says that this Light was seen "by the first called of the Apostles – as you hear in the hymns of the Church – who saw the very essence of God's ever-unending strength...the brightest illumination of the original beauty, this kind of the divine beauty without form, through which man is deified and becomes worthy of conversing with the divine, this ever-unending heirless kingdom of God, this unapproachable light, a light heavenly and boundless, timeless, ever-unending, a light radiating incorruption, God's light to the deified...one grace of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit, which was made visible even to the physical eyes..."

The Light of Tabor, my dear brothers and sisters, can be known by the pious faithful through humility and the perfect love in Christ. The Saints of Christ's Church became participants of this experience. This was also accomplished by the martyrs of

the Church, through the love in Christ and the unceasing pure prayer. St. John of Damascus says that the mother of prayer is silence, and that prayer is the manifestation of the divine glory. In other words, when we secure our senses and be alone with ourselves and with God, and having become freed from the turbulence of the outside world, we come to ourselves, then we are able to see very clearly the kingdom of God within us. Because "the kingdom of heaven" which is the kingdom of God, "is within us" the Lord says (Luke 17:21).

The indeed paradox and marvelous events that took place during the transfiguration of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, refer to the mystery of the divine providence, whose climax is His Passion on the Cross and His resurrection from the dead.

Let us hear the hymn writer saying; "Before Thy Cross, O Lord, a mountain became like unto Heaven, and a cloud spread out like a tabernacle. When Thou wast transfigured and the Father bear witness to Thee, Peter with James and John were present, for they also were to be with Thee at the time of Thy betrayal; so that having seen Thy wonders, they might not be afraid at Thy sufferings, which may we be counted worthy to worship in peace, for Thy great mercy's sake".

In other words, another purpose of the manifestation of the divine glory, of the power of the Lord, was to reveal the forthcoming illumination of the resurrection. This is what Apostle Peter witnesses at his second epistle by saying; "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Peter 1:16-18).

Through his personal and true witness, Apostle Peter calls all of us who honour the commemoration of the Holy Transfiguration of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to become heirs of the uncreated light of His glory. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:3) St. Paul says.

Let us therefore say along with the hymn writer: "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36:9). Deem us worthy of Your illumination Christ our God, by the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and those of Your Holy Disciples, Peter, James and John and of the Prophets who saw God, Moses and Elijah and of all the Saints. Amen".

After the Divine Liturgy His Beatitude blessed the grapes and the various seeds according to the custom.

On the day of the Feast the Divine Liturgy at the Monastery was officiated by the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, with many co-celebrant Priests from the neighbouring areas and the participation of a very large congregation.

At noon, the Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Hilarion offered a meal with fish and grapes for the Patriarchal and the Episcopal entourages.

2. In Ramallah

In the morning of the Feast, the Holy Transfiguration was celebrated at the Palestinian city of Ramallah, in the centre of which lies the Patriarchate's Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration.

The Divine Liturgy was led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, with co-celebrant the Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Galaktion and Priest Jacob, with a large congregation attending the service.

After the Divine Liturgy the Hegoumen Archimandrite Galaktion

and the Community Council offered a meal to the Episcopal entourage and others.

3. At Gethsemane

Likewise there was an Episcopal Divine Liturgy at the Sacred Shrine of Gethsemane, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF ST. IOANNIS THE NEW HOZEVITE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday July 28/August 10, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of Saint Ioannis the New Hozevite at the Holy Monastery of his repentance and ascesis, ever since his arrival from his country Romania.

Having been distinguished in ascetic striving, writings of spiritual strengthening and having been glorified by God through many signs, and healing of illnesses, Saint Ioannis was canonized a Saint by the Church of Jerusalem in 2015.

On Thursday night there was an all-night vigil in his honour, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem

Theophilos with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis. The choir was formed by Mr. Leonidas Doukas, choir leader of the Holy Metropolis Iliou, Mr. Gregorios Zarkos, choir leader of the Holy Metropolis of Pireaus, Mr. Christos Stavrou, choir leader of the H. Church of St. Paraskevi in Attiki, and Mr. Dionysios Thanasoulis, left choir singer of the H. Church of Faneromeni in Holargos, Attiki, while the service was attended by many faithful who prayed in contrition.

The Hegoumen of the Coenobitic Brotherhood and renovator of the Holy Monastery Archimandrite Constantinos addressed His Beatitude upon His arrival as follows;

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

With Your Reverend Entourage,

Today, for one more time we celebrate the commemoration of St. Ioannis the New Hozevite, one of the myriads of the Holy Ascetics who turned the desert of Judea into a marvelous spiritual paradise.

Today’s honoured Saint of the Lavra of Hozeva, despite having completed his earthly life in solitude, had had full cognition of the problems of his time, and could also foresee things in the future.

He writes in his epistle “The contemporary Babel Tower”; “Today’s Babel Tower is neither a stone-building nor a building made of bricks, but the impetuous pursuit of new inventions. People say that the invention of new devices and weapons make man’s life easier, and provide him with security, in other words, they protect him. How deceitful this opinion is! We see all this time, that since our world became ‘modern’ and the inventions multiplied, wickedness also multiplied. ...Nowadays, despite the progress of the civilization, the world has become more turbulent and desperate than ever

before. As we see, this progress and fashion have taught people to walk naked, in other words it has driven away their sense of shame. It has taught people not to seek God any more. ... Science has become rich, while faith has become poor. The contemporary civilization has shortened men's clothes, and made people cut short their beards and hair. After that, it has made them abolish their Holy Tradition! In short, with this villainous progress in which the world boasts, the tears have multiplied more than ever, the cemeteries have become bigger due to the wars, the horizon has darkened by the smog of the engines, the sky has been filled with huge "fowls" with the iron beak which are ready to kill people".

The aforementioned description records the tenebrous condition of the time we live in with an amazing trueness.

Nevertheless, filled with optimism by the Divine Grace, the Saint writes in November 1952 the bright hope he foresaw in the future of the Jerusalem Church. And foreseeing the future, he wrote in his metaphorical poem "The granite castle of Hozeva";

"Today, however, in the Holy Land, a new tender plant blossoms, stemming from an ancient root, which springs up through the thorns"!

Your Beatitude Father and Master,

Welcome!

Let us begin the Feast!"

His Beatitude addressed the Congregation as follows;

"But the righteous live forever and their reward is with the Lord; the Most High takes care of them. Therefore they will receive a glorious crown and a beautiful diadem from the Hand of the Lord, because with his right hand he will cover them, and with his arm he will shield them"(Wisdom of Solomon

5:15-16). [The righteous live forever and their reward is at the Lord's hands; The Most High takes care of them. For this reason, from His hand will they receive the glorious Kingdom of Heaven and the Royal crown on their heads, because the Lord will overshadow them with His right hand and He will protect them from their enemies] according to wise Solomon.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble pilgrims,

The sacred commemoration of God's luminary, our Father among the Saints Ioannis the New Hozevite, has gathered all of us in this sacred Church, where he had ministered the Lord for several years, so that we glorify the Name of the One Who glorified him, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Since the prime of his youth, our Father among the Saints Ioannis loved Christ with all his soul and mind, hearkening to the Lord's Gospel words; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37).

In order to reach this goal, he followed the ascetic path of monasticism, the path of righteousness that leads to the Kingdom of Heaven. And he chose the desert of the river Jordan to be the place of his striving, as well as the unwelcoming caves of Brook Chorath, the Monastery of Saints George and Ioannis the Hozevites, where a multitude of Saints and righteous men received the divine light, according to the psalmist; "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Psalm 97:11). Commenting on these words, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "He has dawned [sown] instead of dawns [change of tense]. The divine light dawns on the mind and heart of every single pious and righteous man".

This very divine and noetic light dawned in the mind and heart of our Father among the Saints Ioannis. "Therefore he will receive a glorious crown and a beautiful diadem from the Hand

of the Lord" (Wisdom of Solomon 5:15). And this divine and noetic light dawned in the mind and heart of St. Ioannis, not only during his earthly life, but also during his heavenly life, as his incorrupt relics witness before our eyes, giving out the fragrant scent of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Behold therefore, why the wise Solomon says; "the righteous live forever and their reward is with the Lord" (Wisdom of Solomon 5: 15), while Prophet David urges us saying; "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Ps. 55:22). Likewise St. Peter says; "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

In other words, my dear Brothers and Sisters, the righteous in Christ is the one who by his "perfect manner of living" reaches the "likeness of God" according to St. Basil the Great, or "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephes. 4:13) according to St. Paul. Righteous is the one who reaches deification, in other words, his perfection in Christ, not only by his own power, namely his own free will, but also with the cooperation of the Divine Grace.

Referring to the new life in Christ, St. Paul says; "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephes. 4:24). This "new man" did our Father Ioannis put on, "who has been created after God".

Today's commemoration of our Father among the Saints Ioannis calls us to consider our Christian name. To consider the fact that our faith has been built on righteousness and holiness of truth: "I am the way the truth and the life" (John 14:6) the Lord says.

In other words, putting away the old man of sin is not enough; we should put on the new man of the grace of the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul orders by saying; "The night is far spent, the day

is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:12-14).

Having applied these God-inspired orders of St. Paul, St. Ioannis became indeed "a light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Luke 1:79), to the people of our contemporary era of confusion, where – according to the foreseeing words of our Holy Father "man himself is preparing again to build the Tower of Babel on earth, seeking to destroy the foundations of the "Divine Law". Almost all of the tongues [languages] have been established and the hour of conflict will not delay much longer".

Therefore let us entreat our Holy Father Ioannis the New Hozevite who dances with the Angels on high, and has become a luminary and friend of Christ, so that he may intercede for us along with our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, for the salvation of our souls and the prevailing of peace in our tested region. Amen."

After the spiritual and sanctifying feast of the Divine Liturgy there was a hospitable monastic meal.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF PROPHET ELIJAH

AT MAALOULE

On Sunday July 23/August 5, 2018, the commemoration of Holy Prophet Elijah was celebrated a few days later from the actual feast day, at his Holy Church in Maaloule, near the city of Nazareth in Galilee.

This Holy Church belonged to the Patriarchate and was used by the Arab-speaking Orthodox Community there, which however deserted the Church and left the area after the political events in the year 1948.

The Patriarchate regained this Church from the Israeli army which had camped there. The Church was renovated and restored to liturgical function after the funding by the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Tabor Archimandrite Ilarion and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth.

In this Church the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis. The Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth participated in prayer, while the Choir of the Nazareth Shrine delivered the hymns.

His Beatitude preached the Divine word to this congregation as follows;

“As a seer of God, the Thesbite with Moses beholdeth upon Tabor that which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which the heart of earthborn men hath not considered, even the Almighty Lord incarnate”, the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims,

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us today at this

sacred Church of Prophet Elijah, so that we glorify Christ our God in Eucharist, and exclaim in joy and gleefulness: "Rejoice thou earthly Angel and heavenly man, O Elijah, great of name".

Prophet Elijah is distinguished among the prophets because, not only did he prophesize the incarnation of God the Word, but he also saw along with Prophet Moses at Mount Tabor on the day of Christ's transfiguration "that which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which the heart of earthborn men hath not considered".

Moreover, the Evangelist Luke commemorates Prophet Elijah when he refers to the apparition of God's Angel to Zacharias, to announce the birth of St. John the Baptist, who "will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17), meaning that he would have the spiritual gift and the power of Prophet Elijah.

And Apostle James the Brother of God, while emphasizing the power of prayer sets Prophet Elijah as an example saying: "Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops" (James 5:17-18).

The charismatic personality of Prophet Elijah is shown to act intensively with Godly zeal, both in the Old and in the New Testament, preaching repentance and fighting against idolatry to which the people of God had been drawn.

In other words, the contribution of Elijah in the preservation of the Divine History, the Moral Monotheism, which was revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai, had been decisive. A characteristic feature of this is the conversation between King Ahab and Prophet Elijah; "When he saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is that you, you troubler of Israel?" "I have not made trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the Lord's commands

and have followed the Baals" (3 Kings 18:17-18), "and the four hundred prophets of Asherah (disgrace)"(3 Kings 18:19).

It is noteworthy that those "prophets of Asherah" (disgrace) were the priests of Baal, and they foretold prophecies by magic spells on the one hand; on the other hand they worked for the deity of Astarte-Aphrodite with sexual orgies and shameful deeds. For this reason they were named the priests of disgrace.

The prophetic mission of Elijah, as well as his preaching of repentance have a timeless significance and immediate referral to our contemporary era of apostasy and iniquity. "Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction" (2 Thessalonians 2:3), says St. Paul, and he adds; "For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way" (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

Here, my dear ones, one begs the question; what is apostasy, rebellion, and lawlessness? They are the fallacy of the "child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You [the child of devil] are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord" (Acts 13:10) according to wise Paul.

And "the right ways of the Lord" are the commandments of God, namely the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, which is given to the people, so that they may be led to the truth of Christ through their repentance, as Prophet Ezekiel says: "And if a wicked person turns away from their wickedness and does what is just and right, they will live by doing so" (Ezekiel 33:19). And in more detail; it is righteous, when the sinner repents and turns away from sin and works righteousness, to live on as a very happy man, due to his righteous manner of living.

In other words, man is called to repentance through his freedom of choice and personal responsibility towards God. The grace of God is what performs the work in the repenting man; as St. Paul says, "where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (Romans 5:20). And elsewhere, "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:4-5).

To the excessive zeal of Elijah; "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant. I am the only one left" (3 Kings 19:14). God, by His apparitions to Prophet Elijah as "great and powerful wind", as "earthquake", as "fire" and as "a gentle whisper" (3 Kings 19:11-12), teaches the Prophet who has sunk in despair due to the triumph of evil, that he should have been considering God's love and long-suffering, for He is not pleased with the death of the wicked people, but awaits their repentance. "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32).

Therefore, my dear ones, let us entreat the wondrous and God-bearing Elijah, so that along with the Theotokos Mary, they may intercede for us to the only Friend of man, God. And let us say along with the hymn writer; "Beholding the great iniquity of men, and God's immeasurable love for man, the Prophet Elijah was troubled, being wroth; and he uttered uncompassionate words unto Him that is compassionate, and cried out: Be Thou wroth with them that have set Thee as nought, O most righteous Judge. Bet the bowels of the Good One were in no wise stirred to punish them that set Him at nought. For He ever awaiteth the repentance of all men, since He is the only Friend of man". Amen.

After the Divine Liturgy there was a reception.

In the afternoon the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of

Nazareth offered a meal at the Holy Metropolis Headquarters.

From Secretariat-General

ORDINATION OF A RUSSIAN-SPEAKING DEACON AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday morning, July 22/August 4, 2018, during the Divine Liturgy at the Horrendous Golgotha, Mr. Alexander Yasevich was ordained a Deacon. He is a member of the Russian-speaking congregation of the Patriarchate at Ber Sheba parish in South Israel.

The ordination took place after the decision of the Holy and Sacred Synod, by the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, who has been taking care of the Ber Sheba Russian-speaking congregation and established there a House of Prayer dedicated to the Patriarch Abraham, the Holy Macaws and St. Sophronios the Patriarch of Jerusalem, with the approval and support of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

The Most Reverend Archbishop of Madaba addressed the ordained Deacon as follows;

“Reverend Sub-Deacon Alexander,

The Holy Church of Jerusalem has been exercising its pastoral mission around its jurisdiction and has not been held back by any kind of hard toil, danger, nor geographical distance, in order to minister and serve the Christians wherever they are.

Since the year 2008, I have undertaken the difficult task to gather the Orthodox Christians who live in the region of South Israel. In my daily prayer I had been asking for three things from God; to deem us worthy to find an initial place in order to experience our first Liturgy; to deem us worthy to acquire our first Priest; and finally to deem us worthy to build our own Church.

With God’s help we managed to have our first Holy Church in Ber Sheba and celebrate the Divine Liturgy there. At the same time, God brought you in our small Church and you willingly helped in the readings and in other tasks. From the very beginning I noticed your character and saw your obedience, your willingness and endurance in the temptations. I introduced you to the Archbishops of the Brotherhood and the Fathers of the Church and finally I took you to His Beatitude our Patriarch.

The Holy and Sacred Synod approved your ordination to the degree of the Deacon and your appointment to the newly-founded parish of Ber Sheba, as a helper and Deacon along with the current Priest Fr. Igor Ravsky. Your beloved wife and children, who are with you today, realized your love for the Church from the beginning and did not hinder your desire to serve Christ.

Now you need to have extra patience, first to deal with your own temptations and then with the temptations that will come to your parish. We will support you with our prayer, our council, and we will help you to perform your new duties correctly.

You should always remember that the one who wants to be first ought to serve all others, and follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who washed His Disciples' feet. Keep your heart humble, without asking anything for yourself, but ask only for what is best for Christ's flock.

I wish Christ, Who was crucified here in Golgotha and Resurrected at the All-holy Tomb, may strengthen you, and fill you with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit."

The address was followed by hailing "Axios! Axios!" by those who escorted him, relatives and members of the Ber Sheba parish.

After the ordination the newly-ordained Deacon Alexander offered a reception at the Office of Geronda Sacristan who was represented by Monk Nikolaos.

The ordained Deacon then visited and thanked H.H.B. at the Russian Holy Monastery of St. Mary Magdalene in Gethsemane.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF PROPHET ELIJAH AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday, July 20/August 2nd, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of Prophet Elijah the Thesbite at his Holy Monastery midway between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, near the ancient Monastery of the Theotokos' Seat.

This ancient Monastery was built at the area where Prophet

Elijah had slept under a broom tree, when an Angel of the Lord woke him up and told him; "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you". And he arose and ate and travelled on foot in the desert for forty days and nights with the strength he received from that food (3 Kings 19:5-7).

At this Holy Monastery for this feast there was Vespers in the evening, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa. The Divine Liturgy in the morning of the Feast was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Arab-speaking Priests, Archdeacon Mark, Hierodeacon Eulogios and Deacon Sophronios.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to the Congregation present;

"As a seer of God, the Thesbite with Moses beholdeth upon Tabor that which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which the heart of earthborn men hath not considered, even the Almighty Lord incarnate", the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims,

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us today at this sacred Church of Prophet Elijah, so that we glorify Christ our God in Eucharist, and exclaim in joy and gleefulness: "Rejoice thou earthly Angel and heavenly man, O Elijah, great of name".

Prophet Elijah is distinguished among the prophets because, not only did he prophesize the incarnation of God the Word, but he also saw along with Prophet Moses at Mount Tabor on the day of Christ's transfiguration "that which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and which the heart of earthborn men hath not considered".

Moreover, the Evangelist Luke commemorates Prophet Elijah when he refers to the apparition of God's Angel to Zacharias, to announce the birth of St. John the Baptist, who "will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17), meaning that he would have the spiritual gift and the power of Prophet Elijah.

And Apostle James the Brother of God, while emphasizing the power of prayer sets Prophet Elijah as an example saying: "Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops" (James 5:17-18).

The charismatic personality of Prophet Elijah is shown to act intensively with Godly zeal, both in the Old and in the New Testament, preaching repentance and fighting against idolatry to which the people of God had been drawn.

In other words, the contribution of Elijah in the preservation of the Divine History, the Moral Monotheism, which was revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai, had been decisive. A characteristic feature of this is the conversation between King Ahab and Prophet Elijah; "When he saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is that you, you troubler of Israel?" "I have not made trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the Lord's commands and have followed the Baals" (3 Kings 18:17-18), "and the four hundred prophets of Asherah (disgrace)"(3 Kings 18:19).

It is noteworthy that those "prophets of Asherah" (disgrace) were the priests of Baal, and they foretold prophecies by magic spells on the one hand; on the other hand they worked for the deity of Astarte-Aphrodite with sexual orgies and shameful deeds. For this reason they were named the priests of disgrace.

The prophetic mission of Elijah, as well as his preaching of

repentance have a timeless significance and immediate referral to our contemporary era of apostasy and iniquity. "Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction" (2 Thessalonians 2:3), says St. Paul, and he adds; "For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way" (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

Here, my dear ones, one begs the question; what is apostasy, rebellion, and lawlessness? They are the fallacy of the "child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You [the child of devil] are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord" (Acts 13:10) according to wise Paul.

And "the right ways of the Lord" are the commandments of God, namely the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, which is given to the people, so that they may be led to the truth of Christ through their repentance, as Prophet Ezekiel says: "And if a wicked person turns away from their wickedness and does what is just and right, they will live by doing so" (Ezekiel 33:19). And in more detail; it is righteous, when the sinner repents and turns away from sin and works righteousness, to live on as a very happy man, due to his righteous manner of living.

In other words, man is called to repentance through his freedom of choice and personal responsibility towards God. The grace of God is what performs the work in the repenting man; as St. Paul says, "where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (Romans 5:20). And elsewhere, "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:4-5).

To the excessive zeal of Elijah; "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant. I am the only one left" (3 Kings 19:14). God, by His apparitions to Prophet Elijah as "great and powerful wind", as "earthquake", as "fire" and as "a gentle whisper" (3 Kings 19:11-12), teaches the Prophet who has sunk in despair due to the triumph of evil, that he should have been considering God's love and long-suffering, for He is not pleased with the death of the wicked people, but awaits their repentance. "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32).

Therefore, my dear ones, let us entreat the wondrous and God-bearing Elijah, so that along with the Theotokos Mary, they may intercede for us to the only Friend of man, God. And let us say along with the hymn writer; "Beholding the great iniquity of men, and God's immeasurable love for man, the Prophet Elijah was troubled, being wroth; and he uttered uncompassionate words unto Him that is compassionate, and cried out: Be Thou wroth with them that have set Thee as nought, O most righteous Judge. Bet the bowels of the Good One were in no wise stirred to punish them that set Him at nought. For He ever awaiteth the repentance of all men, since He is the only Friend of man". Amen.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Paissios offered a monastic meal to those present.

From Secretariat-General

THE UNDERTAKING OF DUTY OF THE PATRIARCHAL REPRESENTATIVE IN NORTH JORDAN

On Saturday July 15/28, 2018, according to the Synodical Decision, the appointed Archimandrite Raphael undertook his official duty as the Patriarchal Representative of North Jordan, in the town of Irbet.

This was serviced during the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of St. George in Irbet. The Service was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Benedict of Philadelphia, and the Most Reverend Archbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina and Secretary-General, Christophoros of Kyriakoupolis, Aristovoulos of Madaba, Philoumenos of Pella, and the established Archimandrite Raphael as the Patriarchal Representative in North Jordan, the Ministering Priests of Irbet, Priest Abdullah and Priest Jordan, Deacon Eulogios, and the Deacon of Madaba Shrine Fr. George. The parish choir delivered the hymns in Arabic and Greek and many faithful attended the service, participating in the prayer for their new Pastor.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation;

“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 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 Peter 5:1-3), St. Paul commands the Priests.

Reverend Archimandrite Raphael,

By Our Patriarchal proposal Our Holy and Sacred Synod has appointed you Patriarchal Representative, at the North Hashemite Kindgom of Jordan at the town of Irbet, having considering your long-term fruitful ministry at the holy shrine of the God-receiving Cage in Bethllehem, along with your zealous pastoral activity,

You are called to undertake this new pastoral ministry at the vineyard of our Holy Church of Jerusalem the Mother of all Churches, hearkening to the words of the chief of the Apostles Peter who says: "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (1 Peter 3:13).

And we say this because "the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few" (Matt. 9:37), and "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word [of the Lord's Gospel]; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22), as it is being revealed by the signs of the time.

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem, having as its first Hierarch the Holy Apostle James the Brother of God, who was ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ, and received the lot of this spiritual jurisdiction at the Promised Land on either side of the River Jordan, has never ceased to evangelize the kenotic love of Christ on the cross, hearkening again to St. Peter words who says: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his

mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:21-24).

Irrefutable witnesses of the Evangelism of Christ's love are the Greek-Orthodox monuments which have been preserved throughout the ages in the inward parts of the blessed land of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the living Christian Greek-Orthodox Communities which enjoy the respect of their religious identity and the total freedom of exercising their church services. This truth is witnessed in this town (Irbet) and its outskirts by its inhabitants, the Christians who live in harmony with their fellow citizens who follow other religions.

The venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood which has been established by God's providence as the guardian and minister of the Holy Shrines and our Christian Congregation, continues its mission following St. Paul's commandment to his disciple Timothy: "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5).

Therefore, you, Father Raphael, genuine child of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, bring to a good end the ministry that has been given to you in the Church. Multiply the gift you have received by the Holy Spirit to be a steward at the house of God, continuing the God-pleasing work of your predecessor Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella "being an example to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3).

And honour your elders "as the congress of God and league of the Apostles" (St. Ignatios). "For Priesthood is ranked at the top of every good thing among men; and the one that is enraged

towards it does not dishonor any man, but God and Jesus Christ, the first-born and the only High Priest by nature. Do therefore every single thing in good order in Christ. Let the laity be subject to the deacons; the deacons to the priests; the priests to the Bishop; the Bishop to Christ, as He was subject to the Father" St. Ingatios orders (BEP, vol. 2, p. 315).

It is precisely this good order in Christ what is being suggested by the care of the Spiritual Shepherd and especially of the leading Priests, to whom St. Paul says; "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:9-10).

Indeed, in this did all the saints and the martyrs of Christ's love bear witness, just like today's commemorated Saint Ioulita with her son Kyrikos, who became "bright stars at the fixation of the sky, brightening the whole world by their wonders" according to the hymn writer.

Let us entreat them, so that along with the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary they may intercede to our Lord and God to grant us, Father Raphael, a leading and pastoral Spirit, mercy and peace to our souls, and to our Reverend King Abdullah II and His family and the Hashemite Kingdom of our beloved Jordan, strength, health, and longevity. We also pray for every good thing for the people of this country and for the preservation of the holy places and the Holy City of Jerusalem which are under the custody of His Majesty.

And now, reverend Archimandrite Father Raphael, receive the Precious Cross of the Lord, the weapon against the devil, so that by It, you may guide the footsteps of your flock to the working of the Lord's commandments. Amen."

The Patriarchal Representative replied to His Beatitude's

words as follows;

Your Beatitude Father and Master,

On behalf of the holy clergy and the people, we welcome You today in Irbet, the seat of the Patriarchal Region of North Jordan, with feelings of deep honour, due respect and spiritual joy, and we say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord", along with the words of Prophet Isaiah: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (in Romans 10:15).

Your presence is a great blessing to us, because You come from the Holy City of Jerusalem bringing us the grace and the blessing of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb and of all the Holy Shrines of the Holy Land. Your blessed presence strengthens and supports us and also denotes the unity of our local Church.

Your Beatitude, in confession may I say, that obeying Your command and the decision of the Holy Synod, I came to this blessed place, repeating Christ's words, "I have come to minister". I have come to minister the mystery of the salvation of the flock and offer God's blessing freely. I came to share with these people their joys and sorrows. Since my first day in this blessed place I felt at home. I found open doors and hearts. I found blessed Priests who work for the good of the Church and the congregation silently, and who welcomed me with much love. I found noble people who respect and honour the clergy. But especially I found children, young men and women who love Christ and His Church. Your Beatitude, I came to minister this holy clergy and people of God, and I will stand by their side praying that God may grant them health and every good thing.

This sacred hour, before You, I call all of them to cooperate with me for the glory of God and His holy Church. I call upon

the Priests the members of the Ecclesiastical councils, our choir singers, the laity who work for the Church, men and women, those in charge of the Young and the Church Schools, the Scouts and all who work for the Church and I ask them to continue their work with the same zeal as before.

All together in the body of the Church should participate actively and use the gifts they have received from God. Today there is a new beginning at the ministry of our Region and they are a part of that. I will not be able to do a single thing by myself. We should do the best we can together. That is why I want them to be with me, the Clergy and the laity who work for the Church, I ask for their prayers, help and cooperation.

I strongly feel the need to thank from the depths of my heart all here present at the Church of St. George. I thank all the holy Bishops who came to participate at the beginning of my new ministry and ask for their prayers for me the unworthy. I also thank all the Priests, the choirs, the young people, the scouts and all of you, and I ask you to pray for my unworthiness.

I also would like to thank all the security forces, who have joined us since early in the morning. And we glorify God for the blessing of this security in our blessed country, which is owed to the wise Hashemite leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah bin Al-Hussein II.

Your Beatitude,

Especially I thank You from the depths of my heart, for Your trust in me, Your Fatherly advice and love, and I would like to ask You to pray that I may perform my duties in fear of God.

I ask Your Patriarchal blessing and as You son, I pray that the Trinitarian God may grant You many years to come, steadfast health, strong faith and a mind set in both the

Cross and the Resurrection, so that guided by the Holy Spirit You may lead the Christian Congregation of the venerable Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem in continuous spiritual fruition and radiate the Light of the Cross and the Resurrection in our time.”

Consequently there was a reception at the reception hall.

This was followed by a meal at a town restaurant offered by the Patriarchate. During the meal, His Beatitude addressed the guests as follows;

“Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Romans 12:9-10) “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:17-18), St. Paul orders.

Dear and Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We thank the Holy and Most Merciful God, Who has deigned us worthy to celebrate the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of St. George on this blessed occasion of the undertaking of duty of Reverend Archimandrite Raphael, our Patriarchal Representative at the town of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Irbet and its outskirts.

We are especially glad because the pastoral care of the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem in its spiritual jurisdiction on either side of the River Jordan is being continued without any hurdle. This is owed to the free exercising of the religious and worshiping events that all the religious and thus the Christian Communities in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan enjoy.

The mission of the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate, namely the Jerusalem Church, is based on the Lord's commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22:37-39).

The one who loves God "with all his heart" cannot help but love his neighbour also, as St. Paul preaches: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18).

The All-holy Shrines which have been ministered throughout the centuries in self-denial and self-sacrifice by the monastic order of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, evangelize and preach peace among men.

The contribution of the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate and its Hagiotaphite Brotherhood to both the preservation of the Holy Land as a place of worship and prayer, and the peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims, and of the Abrahamic religions in general, is recognized by all and especially by our reverend King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Abdullah bin All-Hussein II, since the Christian and Islamic shrines in Jerusalem are under His custody.

We, hearkening to the words of wise Paul: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Romans 14:19) have come to the appointment by our Holy Synod of the Patriarchal Representatives in Amman, Madaba, Irbet and elsewhere, in order to provide for the spiritual and social needs of our Christian congregation and to also reinforce the difficult but God-pleasing pastoring work of our beloved reverend Priests.

For all these, we think we should express our heartfelt thanks to all of you, who have honoured with your presence our reception, and especially the local civil authorities, the

military and police forces and much more the reverend and most dear to Us King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Abdullah bin Al-Hussein II, whose leadership is a guarantee of stability and peaceful co-existence of the different cultural and religious communities living in this country and in the Middle East. Long live the King!

Finally, We should not fail to praise the pastoral and social work of the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella during his ministry as our Patriarchal Representative in Irbet. To both Archimandrite Raphael and the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, we wish success in their new ministry and mission. Amen”.

From Secretariat-General

THE SYNAXIS OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday June 30/July 13, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Synaxis of the Twelve Apostles at the Holy Monastery dedicated to them and is located on the seaside at the west bank of the Sea of Tiberias, within the big town of Tiberias.

At the Church of this Holy Monastery the Divine Liturgy for the Synaxis, namely the gathering of the faithful in order to honour the Holy Apostles, was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Secretary-General, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Arab-speaking Priests of the neighbouring areas of the Patriarchate and Archdeacon Mark.

Archimandrite Philotheos and his choir delivered the hymns and there was a large congregation attending the service. His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to them;

“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease” (Matt. 10:1).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims,

The Chief Apostles Peter and Paul, who received their calling from on high by Christ, have invited all of us at the shore of the lake of Tiberias to celebrate their commemoration.

Yesterday the Holy duet Peter and Paul were honoured in Eucharist at Peter’s hometown, Capernaum; today, the Synaxis of the Twelve Holy Apostles is honoured in this holy place where for the third time, “Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead” (John 21:14).

Our Holy Orthodox Church honours especially the elected Apostles by Christ Himself – “I have chosen thee twelve” (Jonh 6:70) – because they became good benefactors of mankind, according to the hymn writer: “With one accord let us honour in hymns the divine Disciples and Apostles of Christ, who thundered the heavenly doctrines unto us, those verdant meadows of the Faith, those common benefactors of mankind, those Servants of the Saviour”.

Moreover, the Holy Apostles are especially honoured, because the characteristic feature of the Church of Christ is its Apostolic nature, as the God-bearing Fathers of the Church formulated in the Creed; “I believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church”.

Having been called by the Lord, and having abandoned everything, those who were fishermen the fish and the nets, the Holy Apostles followed Him during all His earthly action until His Ascension, and after the Pentecost, once the Holy Spirit had inspired them, they became preachers of the faith in Christ and eye-and-ear witnesses to His Passion on the Cross, the three-day burial and His Resurrection from the dead.

The Holy Apostles' preaching on Christ, the Son and Word of God, Who was crucified and resurrected from the dead, was based on their personal experience, as John the Apostle and Evangelist says: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.

(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1-3).

To this very preaching, namely of the continuation of the redeeming mission of the Lord, of the redemption of mankind from sin and the corruption of death, were the Apostles called. And our Lord Jesus Christ Himself ordered them: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19).

The Church continues this order of the Lord, as it is the mystical body of Christ through the successors of the Apostles, the ordained Bishops and spiritual Shepherds, by the power and the working of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. The Apostles were those, who at the mission of the evangelism of Christ's Name and the pastoring of the newly-founded Churches, ordained Priests and Bishops around the

various towns "to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

St. Paul the Great, referring to the union between the gentiles and the Jews by God the Father in Jesus Christ says: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:19-21).

These founding stones, namely the Holy Apostles, along with the Chiefs Peter and Paul, does the Church of Christ honour and venerate today, glorifying the its cornerstone, our God and Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who emptied Himself for us, to make us partakers of His fullness, according to the hymn writer: "He that is full is made empty for our sakes, that we might partake of His fullness; for without parting from the bosom of the Father He that is uncircumscribable is come down into thine all-immaculate womb and is made flesh; for this cause we all bless thee, O Mary Bride of God".

Let us entreat this God-bearing Chorea of the Holy Apostles along with Peter and Paul, who have been sent forth to those sitting in the darkness and shadow, to pray to Christ our God for the salvation and enlightenment of our souls and peace for our tested region. Amen."

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a monastic reception and a meal of fish, which were offered by the good carer of the Monastery Hegoumen Archimandrite Sophronios.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY CHIEFS OF THE APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL

On Thursday June 29/July 12, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the Holy and Glorious and All-lauded Chiefs of the Apostles, Peter and Paul at the Holy Monastery dedicated to them, which has been built by the memorable Patriarch of Jerusalem Damascene at the north-west bank of the Sea of Tiberias.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated for this feast, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina and Secretary-General, Makarios of Qatar, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Arab-speaking Priests from the neighbouring parishes, and Archdeacon Mark. Archimandrite Philotheos and his choir delivered the hymns, and the service was attended by a congregation of pilgrims and local faithful from the Galilee district. His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon;

“A joyous feast hath shone unto the uttermost parts of the earth today, even the all-august memorial of the most wise Apostles, the Chiefs Peter and Paul. Therefore Rome danceth and rejoiceth with them. Let us also, O brethren, joyously celebrate with songs and hymns this most venerable day, saying: Rejoice, O Peter, Apostle and true friend of thy Teacher, Christ our God. Rejoice most dearly beloved Paul,

preacher of the Faith and teacher of the whole world. O holy and elect yoke-fellows, since ye have boldness, entreat Christ our God that our souls be saved” the Bishop of the Church Efraim from Karia says.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims,

The citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, Peter the rock of faith and Paul the preacher of the Church, the two men that shone forth by the grace of the Holy Trinity, the vessels of the Holy Spirit, have gathered all of us in this sacred shrine of Capernaum in order to honour their commemoration in Eucharist.

The Holy Apostles Peter and Paul are distinguished among the other Apostles because they have been elected by our Lord Jesus Christ to be chosen vessels, stewards of the mysteries of God and teachers of the whole world. Their holy and God-inspired epistles and letters are the irrefutable and non-negotiable consignment they have given to us men “who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 5-9) St. Peter teaches.

In other words, the final glory, our salvation, is ensured through the sorrows of the present life. And in these sorrows and testing we have the Holy Spirit as a helper, according to St. Paul’s teaching by saying: “For we know that the whole

creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:22-23). "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26).

Our Lord Jesus Christ, my dear brothers, came into the world to liberate man from the bondage of sin, namely from the darkness of ignorance and fallacy; and to lead man into the truth of freedom. The Lord says; "For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice" (John 18:37). (And everyone who is willing to learn the truth, hears and comprehends my voice and teaching and through its application he becomes a citizen of my spiritual and heavenly Kingdom).

To this voice of witness of the truth and witness of the Lord did the Holy Apostles hearken, and especially Peter and Paul among them. For this reason the Lord says to Peter; "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:17-18). And Paul, who has been called a chosen vessel (Acts 9:15) says: "[I] was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12:4). The Lord said to Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (1 Cor. 12:9).

The salvific mystery of the divine providence in Christ, my dear ones, is prolonged in the world throughout the centuries through the Church, the mystical body of Christ, and by the

eye-witnesses and servants of the divine word (Luke 1:2). And these eye-witnesses and servants of the divine word, namely of the preaching of the gospel, are the Apostles and their successors, the spiritual shepherds and teachers of the Church, the workers and ministers in the Lord's vineyard. They are the ones who continue the mission of Jesus Christ and of His Apostles on earth by the grace of the Holy Spirit, according to their advice; "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Christ's gospel preaching refers to the perfection of our Christian faith, whose motivation is and should be the salvation of our souls. "For now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light" (Romans 13:11-12), St. Paul preaches.

And the first among the Apostles, Peter, calls the faithful to have Christ, the leader of their lives, as an example to imitate. "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:21-22).

Let us entreat the Holy men of Christ, Peter and Paul, who we commemorate festively today, so that by their intercessions, along with those of the Most Blessed Theotokos, our Lady and Ever-Virgin Mary, we may be granted the mercy and compassion of Christ our Lord and God and Saviour. Amen.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a monastic reception and then an outdoor lunch with fish, offered by the renovator of the Monastery Hegoumen Eirinarchos.

From Secretariat-General

