

# THE CELEBRATION OF LAZARUS' RESURRECTION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday March 18/31, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the rising from the dead of Holy and Righteous Lazarus by the Lord. Lazarus was the Lord's friend according to the narrative of St. John the Evangelist (John 11:1-46), by which the Lord resurrected Lazarus, whom He loved dearly, and He cried before his tomb in Bethany "giving us an assurance of the common Resurrection before His Passion".

This event was celebrated;

## 1. In Bethany

At the town of Bethany and at the Holy Monastery of Lazarus' sisters Martha and Mary, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and the Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the visiting Bishop Savvas from the Church of Serbia, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark and other Deacons. The choir was formed by choir singers from Cyprus and the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, and a large congregation of pilgrims from all Orthodox countries, Russia, Ukraine, Serbia, Romania, Greece and Cyprus.

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

*"Before Thine own death, O Christ, Thou hast raised from hell Lazarus that was four days dead, and hast taken the dominion of death. Through this one man whom Thou hast loved, Thou hast*

foretold the deliverance of all men from corruption. We therefore worship Thine almighty power and cry: Blessed art Thou, O Saviour, have mercy on us"; the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble pilgrims

The joy of all people, Christ the truth, the light, the life and the resurrection of the world, has gathered us from the ends of the world, in this sacred place of Bethany, to celebrate the resurrection of Holy and Righteous, and friend of Christ Lazarus, Martha and Mary's brother, who was dead for four days.

According to St. John the Evangelist, Lazarus' sister Mary, is the one who anointed the Lord's feet with ointment, and wiped them with her hair. Her brother Lazarus was gravely ill. So they sent unto Him (Jesus) "saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (John 11:2-4).

This event of Lazarus' rising from the dead took place in Bethany, a little while before the Passion on the Cross and the Resurrection of our Saviour Christ, at the presence of His disciples. And this happened so that there would be "an assurance of the resurrection" as the hymn writer says: "Giving us before Thy Passion an assurance of the general resurrection, Thou hast raised Lazarus from the dead, O Christ our God. Therefore, like the children, we also carry tokens of victory, and cry to Thee, the Conqueror of death; Hosanna in the highest; blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord"

Christ my beloved brothers is the Lord of life and death, as St. Paul says: "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and

living" (Romans 14:9).

In other words, the death of God the Word, Jesus Christ, is the one that interprets precisely and answers on the great mystery of corruption and death of our human nature.

And we say this, because Christ's death on the Cross is relevant to the common regeneration of the human nature, namely the "freedom from corruption" of the human nature. For this reason the hymn writer of the Church says: "And Lazarus became the first-fruits of the regeneration of the world".

However, the specific meaning of freedom is not possible to be comprehended, much more so, it is impossible to be understood in a philosophical manner through human logical criteria. It is only in Christ and by Christ that we can comprehend the width and depth of freedom as St. Paul preaches saying: "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57), and in more detail, let us praise God in thanksgiving, for He gives us the victory over death and corruption through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Only the faith in Christ's resurrection allows us to understand the words of St. John the Evangelist who says: "and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4-5). "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19).

By Lazarus' rising from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ revealed His almighty dominion over the world and its corruption. Moreover, He revealed the light of eternal life, namely His resurrection which referred to our human nature that He took upon Himself from the Ever-Virgin Mary the Theotokos. Let us hear the melodist saying: "O Christ, Thou hast raised up Thy friend that was four days dead, and hast made the lamentation of Martha and Mary to cease, showing to

*all that Thou art He who fills all things by Thy divine power and Thy sovereign will. To Thee the cherubim without ceasing cry aloud: "Hosanna in the highest: blessed art Thou, God over all: glory to Thee".*

*As we celebrate today my dear brothers this great and paradox miracle, namely Lazarus' rising from the dead, let us prepare ourselves that by the prayers of the righteous Lazarus we may be deemed worthy to also celebrate the glorious resurrection of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. Happy Easter.*

## 2. At the Mount of Olives

In the evening Vespers and the Small Compline were held at the Holy Shrine of the Ascension and the Holy Procession towards the Holy Monastery of the Men of Galilee, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, who was welcomed by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Anthimos in this Monastery.

On Lazarus Saturday morning, the day of the feast, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the place of the Lord's Ascension, near Bethany, also led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, with co-celebrants Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the Dean Priest Charalambos Bandur, Archimandrites Sergios, Stephen and Kallistos, and visiting Priests from other Orthodox Churches. The right choir was formed by the choir singers of the Church of the Resurrection and the Patriarchal School of Zion students, and the left by Mr. Rimon Kamar. The service was attended by a large congregation of local faithful and pilgrims.

After the Divine Liturgy, the Episcopal entourage was offered a reception at the Holy Monastery of the Ascension opposite the Shrine, by the caretaker of the Monastery Monk Achilios.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **DOXOLOGY FOR MARCH 25TH 1821 AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

At noon of the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent, March 12/25, 2018, there was a Doxology at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as thanksgiving to God for our nation's liberation from the Turkish occupation in 1821, and as an intercession for the repose of the souls of our Fathers who died in this fight.

The Doxology was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants Archbishops and Hieromonks Hagiotaphite Fathers, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos. The choir was formed by the choir leader of the Holy Sepulchre Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the choir of Mr. Demetrios Balagiorgos, while the service was attended by members of the Greek community and pilgrims.

After the Doxology the congregation returned to the Patriarchate in procession. There His Beatitude addressed the guests as follows;

*" [The Lord] hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:26) St. Paul proclaims.*

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

*Reverend Fathers and Brothers,*

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ*

*Our blessed by our Lord and God of our Fathers noble nation celebrates today the anniversary of its liberation from the slavery and tyranny of the Ottoman arrogance.*

*The indeed heroic revolution of 1821 was the result of the strong and deep national and religious, that is, Christian conscience of its fighters, as General Makrygiannis writes in his memoirs; "Without virtue and pain for the country and faith in religion, there are no nations"; "for each man, his country and religion are everything"; "there is no sweetest thing than the country and the religion".*

*The spirit of Hellenism, which received its completion from the evangelic Word of our Lord Jesus Christ, and thus formed the imperceptible spiritual and cultural grandeur of Romiosini, is what made the historic event of the nation's revolution in 1821 an event of reference for all peoples and nations.*

*In other words, the Resurrection of our human nature that was taken on by Christ, is the undiminished spring of hope in Christ, namely the freedom, for which "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Romans 8:22), according to wise Paul.*

*And we say this, because the participation of the Church with its clergy and faithful Christians, in the nation's fight for*

*its regeneration and renewal, was complete and spontaneous. Among the numerous servants of the fight for the faith and the country, distinguished are the great leaders and heroes; the Metropolitan Palaion Patron Germanos, who raised the pennon of the revolution, the Hegoumen Gregorios the righteous, Papaflessas, Athanasios Diakos, Bishop Isaiah of Salona, and members of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood.*

*We commemorate these great people of Church, because their fight for the removing of the barbaric yoke and their sacrifice to the point of blood were sacred. It was "a fight for the Holy faith of Christ and the freedom of the country" according to the slogan of the nation's revolution by the Elder of Moria, Theodoros Kolokotronis.*

*"Faith in Christ and freedom of the country" are the natural and incorruptible, timeless values of the spiritual font, in which the nation of the Greeks was re-baptized, or rather, regenerated from its ashes. Moreover, they are the bonding link of the safeguarding of the Greek-Orthodox identity, which sustains the absolute respect towards the human person, for which St. Paul says: "God accepteth no man's person" (Gal. 2:6), meaning the God does not look up to any person and is not biased.*

*The venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, wholeheartedly and indebted participates in this sacred commemoration of the anniversary of our noble nation's regeneration and renewal, and thus came down to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where it has offered a thanksgiving praise and Doxology to the Resurrected from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, for the benediction He has offered our nation. We have also prayed fervently and interceded for the eternal repose in the land of the living of the blessed souls of those who fought heroically and gloriously for the faith and the country, and suffered a martyr's death in the sacred fight of our noble nation of the Roman Orthodox people.*

*For these, allow Us to raise Our glass and exclaim as we should;*

*Vive the 25<sup>th</sup> March 1821!*

*Vive the noble royal nation of the Roman Orthodox people!*

*Vive Greece!*

*Vive our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood!*

This was followed by the Consul General's address, stated below;

*Your Beatitude,*

*Most Reverend Archbishops,*

*Reverend Fathers,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

*We are especially glad to celebrate today the revolution of our nation in 1821 at the Jerusalem Patriarchate, the Mother of Churches. In a feeling of National Pride, the Greeks all over the world celebrate today the most glorious page of our recent history and honour those who gave the fight on behalf of all, in their grandiose revolution which started on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1821, and managed through an unequal confrontation, full of sacrifices and unprecedented challenges, within an unfavourable to our fight universal environment, to lay down the Ottoman yoke, to put an end to the dark ages of the foreign sovereignty and ensure the supreme assets of freedom and national independence.*

*With today's celebration we owe to remember those elements that made the success of the Greek Revolution possible and which are always relative and especially when our Country faces great challenges and is surrounded by old and new dangers; Faith in the righteous fight which bears boldness and*

determination, able to surpass the greatest obstacles, the innate mental vigor of the Greeks, which ensures persistence and endurance in the most adverse conditions, and of course, the national unity of soul and the coiling of all the national powers in the common cause.

All of us owe to reinforce and actively pursue the national unity of soul, since every opponent will always try – as was the case during the fight of the liberation of our nation – to bifurcate, divide and create internal dispute and differences in order to intimidate our belief in the just cause of our fight and defuse our boldness and courage.

Today we do not forget that the national revolution of 1821 was made possible because the Hellenism managed to keep its identity integral as well as its values and desire for freedom, through the long tenebrous years of the Turkish occupation. Prime role towards this cause was held by the Church, which was the depositary of our values, safeguarding our language, our Christian faith and the hope of the Resurrection of our Nation. Therefore, according to the testimony of the fighters themselves, the purpose of the fight for the national regeneration and renewal was “For the holy faith of Christ and the freedom of the country”.

Greece has never forgotten the great contribution of the Expatriates in the fight of the national regeneration and is always grateful to them. Having started from the big European Cities, The Society of Friends, joined their revolutionist brothers in enthusiasm and self-denial and had a major contribution in the initial planning of the Revolution, contributing thus to the creation of a favourable climate towards the Greeks.

March 25, 1821 remains to all of us a founding stone of our national entity and the summital station of the Nation's contemporary history. The heroism, self-denial and determination of the Revolution Fighters and of all those who

*were inspired by them, to pursue a free, righteous and democratic Country, inspire us also, but simultaneously they bind us to be as estimable as they were, to rise up to the situation and work in unison for the overcoming of the obstacles, no matter how insurmountable they seem to be.*

*Today's celebration underlines the need to remain always alert to defend our rights against whomsoever plots against them, and to be determined to fight the righteous fight whenever we are called for it. And this, as in the case of the Revolution, is not accomplished without real sacrifices. "Greece", as General Makrygiannis said, "was not liberated by telling fairytales, it was liberated with the blood of the people".*

*Vive 25<sup>th</sup> March 1821!*

*Vive Greece!*

### **From Secretariat-General**

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# THE FEAST OF ST. GERASIMUS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday March 4/17, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of St. Gerasimus of the Jordan at his Holy Monastery in the valley of Jordan on the west bank of the river near Jericho.

Having arrived in the Holy Land from his country, Asia Minor in the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, St. Gerasimus strove in asceticism in various Palestinian Monasteries, until he founded his own Monastery, the Lavra of Kalamon. There, he led thousands of monks to the Orthodox Doctrine of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Synod of Chalcedon, of the two Natures of Christ in His One Hypostasis.

In this Holy Feast, after the warm welcome of the Scouts, the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom 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 Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitoliass, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Alexander of Pereyaslav in Ukraine, the Most Reverend Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, Demetrios of Lydda, Philoumenos of Pella and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis. Participants in the prayer were also the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Nikolaos of Mesogaia from the Church of Greece, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, with first in rank Archimandrite Meletios, followed by the Hegoumen of Fhes Archimandrite Ieronymos, the Hegoumen of the Monastery of the Shepherds Archimandrite Ignatios and local Priests; Fr. Issa Mousleh, and Fr. George Bananoura, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Anastasios. In the choir, Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the choir singer Demetrios chanted in Greek, Arabic, Russian and

Romanian. The service was attended by a large congregation of pilgrims from various countries.

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

*“The ladder of divine virtue, thou didst scale with ardour, and thou didst attain to the height of divine noetic vision, receiving reflections pure and clear, revealing the divine mysteries of Christ. Hence we honour thee with piety, as we cry, Gerasimus, thou God-bearer: Glory to Christ, Who hath given thee strength. Glory to Him Who hath crowned thee. Glory to Him Who worketh healings for all through thee”; The melodist of the Church proclaims.*

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

*Noble Christians and pilgrims*

*The abundance of the grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in this place of the desert, the place of the preaching for repentance by St. John the Forerunner and Baptist, in order to praise in thanksgiving and doxology the sacred memory of our Father among the Saints Gerasimus who was glorified through his asceticism in the Jordan area.*

*Giving heed to the words of the psalmist: “Lo, I have fled afar off and have dwelt in the wilderness” (Ps. 54:8), St. Gerasimus left his home town in Lycia of Asia Minor and according to the witness of Cyril of Skythopolis, in his book “Lives of Saints”, he mastered the monastic life with many feats against the evil spirits and retreated to the Jordan area to become an anchorite.*

*Just like the deer runs towards the springs of water with great desire, similarly St. Gerasimus’ soul thirsted ardently for nothing else but the Living God. As David the psalmist says: “My soul thirsted for God, the mighty, the living; when shall I come, and appear before the face of God?” (Ps. 41:3).*

*In other words, having realized the importance of the soul, St. Gerasimus despised the earthly treasures for the sake of the heavenly immortal goods, namely the righteousness and vision of the glory of God, according to David's words: "But as for me, in righteousness shall I appear before Thy face; I shall be filled when Thy glory is made manifest to me" (Ps. 16:15). And in more detail, I will work righteousness and through it I will see with the eyes of my soul your face [My God], my soul will be filled at the sight of the glory and the radiance of your face. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Mat. 5:8) says the Lord.*

*Life in Christ, namely the Christian's struggle to attain his union with God, or rather to gain the gift of the illumination of the Holy Spirit is the ultimate purpose of the Church, which is the mystical body of Christ in the world. "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) says the Lord.*

*This very "light of life", namely of the true and eternal life, is what our Father among the Saints Gerasimus gained, through the absolute renouncing of the worldly life of this era, and his retreat to the desert. He did this following St. John the Baptist, the Apostles, the God-bearing Fathers, Confessors, Martyrs, and Athletes of Christ, as well as his contemporary dwellers of the desert of Judea and around the river Jordan.*

*The dwellers of the desert who lived a life in Christ, my dear brothers, are no others than the citizens of the living God's city (Hebrews 12:22), namely the Church of Christ, the heavenly Jerusalem, where the Angels and all the Saints feast and spread joy and jubilation abundantly.*

*To this very Church, the Synaxis and Communion of God's beloved and chosen children who have been registered as heavenly citizens, have we also become members, all of us who*

*bear Christ's name. We have drawn nigh to God through the incarnate God the Word and His Only Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; and this God is the Father and Judge of all. We have also drawn nigh to the spirits of the righteous who have become perfect as St. Paul preaches: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Hebrews 12:22-23).*

*Behold therefore why the hymn writer of the Church proclaims: "At the commemoration of Thy martyrs, O Lord, the whole creation keeps festival; heaven with the angels greatly rejoices, and the earth with all mankind makes glad. At their intercessions have mercy upon us".*

*Indeed my dear ones, the heavens rejoice and the earth is made glad today on the annual commemoration of our Holy and righteous Gerasimus of the Jordan, who "scaled with ardour the ladder of divine virtue and attained to the height of divine noetic vision".*

*Towards this "height of divine noetic vision" are we also called my dear brothers, by our Holy Father Gerasimus and especially at the period of Great Lent, as the hymn writer says: "Slaying the wild beasts of the passions with fasting, let us draw nigh unto Christ through dispassion and purity".*

*This means that Christ is nigh to all of us, waiting for us to approach Him, having first cleansed ourselves through the time of Lent, which is the incriminator of sin and the advocate of repentance. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (James 4:7-8), St. James the Brother of God advices us.*

*Come let us draw nigh Christ our God, entreating the Mother of God, the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and asking our Holy Father Gerasimus, saying along with the melodist: "Standing by Christ along with the Saints, Holy Gerasimus, intercede for those who keep your Holy Commemoration", and deem us worthy to draw nigh also to the Resurrection of our Saviour Christ. Amen. Many Happy Returns!"*

After the Divine Liturgy there was a Litany around the Holy Monastery and finally a festal fasting meal at the refectory.

### **From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF THE ADORATION OF THE SACRED CROSS AT THE PATRIARCATE AND THE FEAST OF ST. PORPHYRIOS OF GAZA**

On the third Sunday of Lent, the Sunday of the Adoration of the Sacred Cross, on February 26/ March 11, 2018, the

Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of the Adoration of the Sacred Cross, so that by Its power we may continue the Lenten period until we come to celebrate the Holy Pascha.

This Feast was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos according to the order of the Patriarchate as a "Parresia" at the All-holy Church of the Resurrection. Great Vespers was held at the Catholicon of the Church and on the morning of the Feast the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Holy Sepulchre. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were the Patriarchal Commissioner Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Geronda Secretary General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Most Reverend Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastiya, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the visiting Metropolitan Sioni of the Church of Bulgaria and Archimandrites among whom Elder Kamarasis Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacons Anastasios and Sophrony. The choir leader of the All-holy Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos sand on the right and Archimandrite Demetrios on the left. The Service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and many local faithful and pilgrims.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a litany of the Sacred Wood three times around the Holy Sepulchre and then around the Shrines.

Finally the procession returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters where His Beatitude addressed the guests as follows;

"Cleansed by the grace of the Fast, let us in thanksgiving cry aloud with a pure mind unto Him who alone is pure: Thou hast given Thy blood for all of us, O Word, and Thou dost sanctify us by Thy Cross", the melodist of the church proclaims.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Noble Christians and pilgrims,

The luminous adoration of the Sacred Cross has shone upon all people today, on the third Sunday of Lent, as our Holy Church foretells the Resurrection of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Today all of us who abide in the Holy Land and those who are visiting it, have been deemed worthy to venerate the wood of salvation, namely the Sacred and Life-giving Cross, on which God the Word gave His blood for all of us.

The wood of the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ was placed on the place where His feet once stood, on the Horrendous Golgotha, witnessing the true witness of St. John the Evangelist, according to which; "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19:34).

In other words, the sacred wood of the cross became the means through which, according to the hymn writer "Thy side was pierced and from it flowed the waters of forgiveness, refashioning our mortal nature". And according to St. Paul, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;" (Phil. 2:8-10).

Behold why when we venerate the Sacred Cross we become participants of Christ's great power, of blessing and sanctification. "We Christians kiss thee (Sacred Cross) with awe, and glorifying God who was nailed on thee, we cry aloud: O Lord, who on the Cross wast crucified, have mercy upon us, by the prayers of the Theotokos, for Thour art good and lovest

mankind". And deem us worthy to venerate Thy Glorious Resurrection. Amen. Many Happy Returns.

Have a good Easter."

On this day there was also the celebration of the commemoration of St. Porphyrios Archbishop of Gaza, who established the Christian faith in Gaza in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The Saint's tomb is preserved there, at the very old and historic Holy Monastery of the Patriarchate which bears his name. The Service was officiated by the Most Reverend Archbishop Alexios of Tiberias and it was attended by many Christians-citizens of this town.

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## **THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Sunday February 12/25, 2018, the Jerusalem Patriarchate celebrated the victory and triumph of the Church through the restoration of the holy icons, after the harassment caused by iconoclasm, during the reign of the reverend Empress Theodora Augusta and her son Emperor Michail III, in 842 A.D.

The restoration of the icons in the holy Churches is

celebrated as a feast of Orthodoxy because the icons depict and confirm the incarnate presence of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on earth, Who is the icon of His invisible Father.

This feast was celebrated by the Patriarchate as "Parresia", namely a great feast with the presence of the full congregation at the All-holy Church of the Resurrection, with Vespers in the evening and the Divine Liturgy in the morning of the feast. The services were officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants in the morning the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Most Reverend Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Methodios of Tabor, Theodosios of Sebastiya, Demetrios of Lydda and Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod, and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks present with first in rank Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacons Anastasios and Sophrony, and Priests from other Churches. The right choir was led by Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the left by Mr. George Alvanos. The service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and a congregation of monks, nuns, local faithful and pilgrims from Greece, Russia and other Orthodox countries.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a procession of the Holy Icons three times around the Sacred Edicule and then around the Shrines, which ended by the reading of the Synodical Canon of Orthodoxy from the Triodion opposite the Sacred Edicule. Finally the Patriarchal entourage and the congregation returned to the Patriarchate, where His Beatitude addressed the faithful as follows;

*"Restoring to the churches the representations of Thy flesh, O Lord, we ascribe to them an honour that is relative, and so express the great mystery of Thy dispensation. For Thou hast not appeared to us, O loving Lord, merely in outward*

*semblance, as say the followers of Mani, who are enemies of God, but in the full and true reality of the flesh; and so the icons that depict Thy flesh lead us to the desire and love of Thee” the melodist of the Church exclaims*

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

*Reverend Fathers and Brothers,*

*Noble Christians and pilgrims,*

*A joyful and gleeful day is this day in the Church of Christ, on the Feast of Orthodoxy, namely the restoration of the holy icons and their veneration.*

*The commemoration of this event does not only refer to the restoration of the icons, but also to the healthy faith of our Orthodox Church, the faith that has been delivered to us by the Prophets, the Apostles, the Holy and God-bearer Fathers of the Church, who martyred for her with their own blood. The hymn writer of the Church says “but we shall glory in the icon of the Word made flesh, which we venerate, but worship not as an idol”.*

*The well-approved St. Basil the Great says; “the honour goes to the prototype of the icon”. In other words, by venerating the icons we honour the persons who are depicted and the events of the sacred history, namely the great and salvific mystery of the divine providence, as so clearly the hymn writer explains saying; “Restoring to the churches the representations of Thy flesh, O Lord, we ascribe to them an honour that is relative”. According to St. Theodoros of the Studion, “by venerating the icon of Christ, we venerate Him relatively”. Also St. Tarasios, Patriarch of Constantinople says; “I am a venerator [of the icons] relatively, not worshipping them”.*

*The fallacy of the iconoclasm, which harassed the Church for a*

*long time, aimed at the enforcement of the irreverent religion of the people holding the false belief of a self-chosen worship [superstition]. It is exactly similar to our contemporary reality, imposed by the visible rulers of this world (Eph. 6:12), who ostensibly in the name of the human rights, impose by law "the detestable idolatry of the time that is past" (1 Peter 4:3), according to the Apostle Peter. And according to the Psalmist: "And man, being in honour, did not understand; he is compared to the mindless cattle, and is become like unto them" (Psalm 48:21).*

*We, my dear Brothers, "who follow in the footsteps of the faith" (Romans 4:12) and "the rule" (Gal. 6:16) of our Holy Fathers who had received the Divine Knowledge, "we know one Lord and God, glorified in Three Persons and Him alone we worship; we have one faith, one baptism, and we are clothed in Christ. This our salvation we confess in deed and word, and we depict it in the holy icons". This same Lord, we entreat Thee, grant peace to Thy people and Thy Church, so that we may be deemed worthy to go through the Holy and Great Lent and celebrate Thy glorious Resurrection. Amen. Many happy returns!"*

### **From Secretariat-General**

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# THE 1ST STASIS OF THE AKATHIST AT THE PATRIARCHATE

The Canon of the Theotokos and the 1<sup>st</sup> Stasis of the Salutations of the All-Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary were officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, on Friday afternoon of the 1<sup>st</sup> Week of Great Lent, February 10/23, 2018, at the Catholicon of the All-holy Church of the Resurrection. The right choir was led by Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the left by Mr. George Alvanos, while the service was attended by a large congregation of monks, nuns, and laity. The service was also attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos.

After the Service and the dismissal, His Beatitude preached the Divine Word and wished the congregation a blessed Great Lent as follows;

*“An Angel and the chiefest among them, was sent from Heaven to cry: Rejoice! To the Mother of God. And beholding Thee, O Lord, taking bodily form, he stood in awe, and with his bodiless voice he cried aloud to her such things as these: Rejoice thou through whom joy shall shine forth. Rejoice, thou through whom the curse shall be blotted out. Rejoice thou the Restoration of fallen Adam. Rejoice, thou the Redemption of the tears of Eve”, the hymn writer of the Church says.*

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

*Noble Christians,*

*Our Holy Church, honouring on the one hand the great and*

sacred mystery of God's providence, and on the other, our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, has established the Service of "The Akathist", or "The Salutations of the Theotokos", which is held during the fasting weeks of the Holy and Great Lent.

The purpose of fasting in general and of the Holy Lent in particular refers to the health of both body and soul of the faithful members of Christ's Church. It is not appropriate not to rejoice for the health of the soul but grieve over the changing of our diet, and thus appear to care more for the pleasure of the flesh rather than the diligence of the soul, St. Basil the Great says, and he defines fasting as "a medicine counterbalancing sin".

After His baptism in the river Jordan, our Lord Jesus Christ was taken by the Holy Spirit in the desert, where He fasted "for forty days and forty nights" (Mat.4: 1-2). And He did that before He preached the Gospel for the salvation of man, and of course before His passion in the flesh, the three-day burial and His Resurrection from the dead.

On other words, Christ is the One Who wants all men to be saved and receive the full knowledge of truth through faith. "Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:4-5) St. Paul preaches.

No one, my dear brothers, can attain to the fullness of the truth in Christ, without the confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Who has come down to earth from heaven for our salvation and has become incarnate through the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit and became man.

In other words, the historic person Virgin Mary, was deemed worthy to become the Mother of God. And the Theotokos became the Mother of God, because the Only Begotten Son and Word of

*God, was conceived as human in her womb, gestated in her vital organs and was held in her arms and breastfed from her breasts.*

*This great and strange and paradox mystery to which the only truthful witness is Virgin Mary from Nazareth, is interpreted theologically by the composer of the hymn which is the introduction of the Archangel Gabriel when he was sent from heaven to tell Theotokos "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" (Luke 1:28).*

*Christ, my dear brothers, is the joy of the world, which has been shown forth through the Virgin Mary. And this is because through the Most Blessed Theotokos, the Divine Word put upon Himself our human nature according to St. Andrew of Crete ; "O Virgin inviolate and Mother of God who hast not known man, from thee has God, the Creator of the ages, taken human flesh, uniting to Himself the nature of men."*

*The conceived by the Virgin Mary and united in the Holy Spirit human nature of God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, is the one which brought forth the redemption from the curse of the first created couple. It is His human nature the one that recalled the fall of the first Adam and saved Eve from the tears of sorrow. For this reason the melodist says: "Rejoice – Theotokos Mary – thou through whom creation is renewed". This is the "renewal of the human nature that Christ made", according to Theodoritos Kyrou.*

*Since the purpose of the Holy Lent is our renewal in Christ, our rebirth through repentance, therefore the Most Blessed and Ever-Virgin Theotokos Mary is projected during the fasting period, because it is through her that our human nature was renewed and revived. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). So, anyone who is united with Christ, is a new creation in Christ. The old state which was formed by the law and sin has faded. Behold, all*

*things are new, St. Paul preaches (2 Cor. 5:17).*

*Our Holy Church calls us, my dear brothers, to prepare ourselves through fasting, which is indeed the counterbalancing medicine of sin, but also through repentance, which is the strength of salvation. According to St. John of the Ladder, repentance is the daughter of hope, the renouncing of despair. Let us therefore prepare ourselves, my dear ones, so that we may be deemed worthy to celebrate the Resurrection of our Saviour Christ and along with Him our common resurrection from sin. "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" St. Paul says (1 Cor. 5:7).*

*Let us entreat our Most Holy Theotokos, and Mother of God and say along with the hymn writer: "Theotokos the hope and protection of those who sing thy praises, take from me the yoke of sin and, Pure Lady, accept me in repentance." Amen. Have a Blessed Great Lent and a Happy Easter."*

#### **From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF ST. SIMEON THE**

# **GOD-RECEIVER AT THE PATRIARCHATE (KATAMON 2018)**

On Friday February 3/16, 2018, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of St. Simeon the God-receiver, who held in his holy arms our Lord Who was brought to the Temple according to the Law when He was forty days old. The feast was held at the Holy Monastery of St. Simeon where his tomb lies, at the Katamon district of West Jerusalem.

St. Simeon was especially honoured at his Holy Monastery as the one who received the Lord when He was forty days old at the Temple. He was honoured by the Divine Liturgy on the morning of the feast, which was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina and Geronda Secretary-General, Methodios of Tabor and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Hagiotaphite Archimandrites Ananias, Hegoumen of the H. Monastery of St. George in Al Hader, Porphyrios, the representative of the Patriarchate in the U.S.A. (Long Island) and Ieronymos, the Hegoumen of Fhes in Jordan. There were also Arab-speaking Priests, visiting Priests from the Orthodox countries of Russia, Ukraine, and Romania, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacons Anastasios and Sophrony. Present was also the Master of Ceremonies Fr. Bartholomew. The right choir was led by the choir leader of the All-holy Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the left by Mr. George Alvanos, who sang in Greek, Arabic, Russian and Romanian. The Service was attended by a large congregation of Greeks from the local Greek Community and pilgrims from Russia, Greece and Romania.

His Beatitude preached to them the Divine word as follows;  
*“When Isaiah beheld God symbolically on an exalted throne attended by Angels of glory, he cried: O wretched man that I am! For I have seen beforehand the incarnate God, the Lord of*

*peace and unwaning light” the hymn writer of the Church St. Kosmas Bishop of Maiouma exclaims.*

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

*Noble Christians and pilgrims,*

*The almighty grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in this sacred burial place of St. Simeon the God-receiver, at the Jerusalem suburb “Katamon”, so that we praise in thanksgiving the God-receiver, and with him chaste Anna, who were Prophets of God and saw Him made a babe for our sakes.*

*Prophet Isaiah beheld symbolically the incarnation of the Word of God through the Ever-Virgin and Most Blessed Theotokos Mary and this was confirmed by “a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law. Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:25-32).*

*The incarnate God, “the King Lord of hosts” according to Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5) and the “salvation of God” (Luke 2:30), according to Elder Simeon is no other than Christ, who is the Lord of the unwaning light and of peace. For this reason St. Kosmas the melodist says “Our Lord and God Jesus Christ is the Master of the unwaning light and of peace”, while according to St. Paul, God dwells in light near which no man can approach*

unto; 'whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Tim. 6:16). And according to St. John the Theologian, God is the light which radiates holiness and truth and inside it there is no sign of darkness, ignorance, nor sin. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). According to prophet Isaiah the ordinances of God are light to the people on earth; "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isaiah 26:9).

This unapproachable light, my dear ones, is the Holy Spirit, which sat on each of the Apostles in the form of a tongue of fire on Pentecost day; "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:3-4). The Holy Spirit enlightens and sanctifies every man that comes in the world. "The earth was lightened with God's glory" St. John the Theologian preaches (Revel. 18:1).

This very Holy Spirit, Who proceedeth from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, Who spake by the Prophets (Creed) is the One who was with the Righteous Simeon. "And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2:25-26). In reference to these, the melodist says; "The joy of the afflicted is come, the Redemption of Israel hath truly appeared as an infant in His Temple, letting me depart unto the lift that is to come, cried Simeon rejoicing". Regarding the infant's coming to the Temple, Isaiah says "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (Isaiah 9:6). "The first is born, the latter is given; the first for what was seen, the latter for what was understood" St. Amphilohios of Ikonion interprets.

This infant, born in the Cave of Bethlehem from the pure blood of the Ever-Virgin Theotokos Mary and held in the arms of the

*Righteous Simeon, becomes "seen and understood" continuously throughout the ages to all those who want to be saved and inherit the eternal life. This is accomplished through our participation, my dear brothers, in the sacrament of the Eucharist, the divine and bloodless sacrifice of praise which is offered to God the Father through Jesus Christ, as St. Paul preaches; "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Hebrews 13:15). And according to Prophet David, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God" (Psalm 50:23).*

*In other words, the only way to salvation is found in honest reverence and in healthy faith. Related to this, the Father of the Church Theodoritos says: "it is appropriate not only to praise God and offer the sacrifice of praise, but also to walk upright and adjust our personal life accordingly".*

*"The salvation of God", Christ, Who "through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14) is the One Who will deem us worthy to worship the Living God as we should, St. Paul preaches.*

*Behold my brothers, a time pleasing to us, a time for repentance, "He Who is full is emptied out; He Who is before eternity receiveth a beginning; the Word taketh on the grossness of matter; the Artificer is fashioned; the Uncontainable, assuming a body, is contained in thy womb, O Virgin graced of God".*

*Let us entreat the Righteous and God-receiver Simeon, whom we commemorate today, that by the intercessions of himself and of Anna the prophet we may be deemed worthy to see "the salvation of God" and the Son of the Ever-Virgin Mary, our Lord and God Jesus Christ, to Whom belongs all glory and power unto the ages of ages. Amen."*

The Hegoumen and renovator of the Holy Monastery for over 40 years, Archimandrite Theodoritos offered a reception to the Patriarchal entourage and the Congregation at the hegoumeneion and the courtyard of the Monastery after the Divine Liturgy.

### **From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF ST. THEODOSIUS THE CENOBIARCH**

On Wednesday, January 11/24, 2018, the Patriarchate commemorated our Father among the Saints Theodosius at the Holy Monastery founded by him in the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. in the desert of Judea, between Beit Sahour and the Holy Monastery of St. Savvas the Sanctified.

Having come from his hometown Cappadocia to the Holy Land, St. Theodosius lived in asceticism at the Holy Monastery of Ikelia near Jerusalem and later at the cave via which the Magi "returned to their country following another way".

At this Monastery which had four Churches, the Saint gathered 700 Monks and became the leader of the Coenobitic Monastic life in Palestine and the protector of the doctrine regarding the two natures of Christ in the 4<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Synod of

Chalkedon, along with his co-patriot Savvas the Sanctified, who was the leader of the monastic life in Lavrae in Palestine.

At the Holy Church of this Monastery the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Arab-speaking Priests of our Patriarchate. The right choir was led by the choir leader of the All-holy Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos in Greek, Russian and Romanian and the left choir by members of the Arab-speaking congregation in Arabic. The Service was attended by a noble congregation of local faithful mainly from Beit Sahour and many pilgrims.

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

*“By imitating the obedience and unexampled humility of Christ, Who bowed His head before the Forerunner, O Father Theodosius, thou wast led up to an unshakeable tower of virtues”. The hymn writer of the Church proclaims.*

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

*Noble Christians and pilgrims,*

*Our Father among the Saints Theodosius, the master of the desert, who while being in human form became co-citizen of the angels, has gathered us all at the place of his asceticism and burial, in order to celebrate his commemoration.*

*St. Theodosius’ life of monasticism and asceticism is distinguished for his utmost obedience and perfect humility, in imitation of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

*St. Theodosius’ virtues in Christ made him not only “an*

*unshakeable tower” but also a wonder worker, according to his biographer, who narrates the infinite miracles of the saint. St. Simeon the Stylite was the one who taught our Father Theodosius the life in Christ, namely the angelic life on earth.*

*The life in Christ of those who were great in asceticism such as our Holy Father Theodosius, is a continuation and an extension of the sacred history on earth, namely the mystery of the Divine Providence, which has been preached and evangelized by the Prophets, Apostles and Evangelists who were bearers of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the object of all the saints and especially of the desert fathers’ desire and love for God, has always been the humankind’s incorruption in Christ, by Christ’s resurrection, and they eagerly sought their change in Christ, the new Adam; they sought “theosis” (deification). “The Lord...transformed the heavenly things into the heavenly life” St. Isidoros Ploosiotis says.*

*Our Holy Father Theodosius received this transformation, namely the heavenly life, as shown by the preserved to this day incorrupt relic of his head, the irrefutable token of the faith of our Holy Church in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is also confirmed by St. Theodosius’ hymn writer, when referring to the Saint’s disciple Basil who was resurrected from the dead; “Imitating the voluntary death of Christ, the renowned Basil, thy disciple, inaugurateth the new tomb in exceeding joy, O Father Theodosius”. This is one of the many miracles St. Theodosius worked while still alive, as his Synaxarist says: “once in Jerusalem, he received schooling by great and holy men of the desert. Having mastered the ultimate abstinence, so that he would eat only once a week, and for thirty years he had not tasted bread, and having acquired the virtue in Christ, he became so great that he could work odd miracles.”*

*St. Theodosius is distinguished among the desert fathers, because he became a bloodless Martyr of the mystery of*

reverence, namely of our healthy Orthodox faith. He preached the two natures of the God-man our Lord Jesus Christ, boldly and vigorously, while the heretic followers of Nestorianism denied them. Let us hear the hymn writer referring to this issue: "Calling thy teachings to remembrance, O Theodosius, we proclaim Christ in two essences, acknowledging the two natural wills and energies and authorities in God Who was baptized in the flesh".

In other words, my dear brothers, our Father among the Saints Theodosius did not only become a master of the desert, but also a teacher and pastor of the Church, for which Christ was willingly seen in the flesh, being baptized in the river Jordan by St. John the Baptist, and was crucified in the flesh in Golgotha.

The Holy Church of Christ and thus the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood rejoice and are glad in this Feast, because the holy feasts of the Church are a foretaste of the heavenly joy. "A foretaste of the heavenly joy, namely of the heavenly Church is today's feast" according to the God-bearing Fathers.

St. Theodosius became a communicant of this foretaste of the eternal joy of the kingdom of heaven, and he calls all of us who honour his commemoration, to become participants of the universal salvation through our Incarnate Lord Jesus Christ.

Participants and communicants of this eternal joy were our holy fathers, the flowers of the desert, the co-patriots of St. Theodosius, Euthymios the great, Savvas the Sanctified, John the George the Chozevites, Theokletos and Martyrios along with Gerasimos of the Jordan and John the New Chozevite.

Having become martyrs of consciousness, and evangelists of Christ, they did not come from the desert where John had been preaching the baptism of repentance, but from the font of the Church. They were born of the Holy Spirit and became citizens of the desert, succeeding our Lord Jesus Christ by keeping and

*working His commandments.*

*This holy consignment of St. John the Baptist and his imitators, namely the newer citizens of the desert, has been preserved all along by the venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, which has given many martyrs of the blood of Christ's love, both in the past and the contemporary era. For this reason "the gates of hell shall not prevail against" the Church of Christ (Mat. 16.18).*

*Let us entreat our holy father Theodosius, who has boldness before Christ our God, so that through his prayers, along with those of the Most Blessed and Ever-Virgin Mary our Lady Theotokos, we may be found worthy of the mercy of our souls and the peace of the whole world, as well as of the peace in our region. And let us say along with the hymn writer; "Forget not thy flock even now, O all-blessed Theodosius; but by thine intercessions with the Lord, save us we pray." Amen. Many happy returns!*

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a prayer at the Cave of the Magi, a Holy Litany around the Church and a memorial service of the renovators of the Holy Church, Archbishop Bartholomew of Madaba, and Monks Leontios and Galaction.

Archimandrite Ierotheos, who has served the Monastery for forty years and renovated it, offered a meal at noon.

### **From Secretariat-General**

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# THE FEAST OF SAINTS GEORGE AND JOHN THE CHOZEVITES

On Sunday January 8/21, 2018, after the Feast of Theophany, the Patriarchate commemorated Saints George and John the Chozevites, at the Holy Monastery bearing their names, at the Brook Chorath on the way to Jericho.

On this Feast, the Church honours St. John who left his Archdiocese in Caesarea of Palestine in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and lived in this monastery, becoming a leader of souls and the renovator of the Monastery. The Church also honours St. George from Cyprus, who comforted monks' souls and renovated the Monastery after the Persian raid damages in 614 A.D.

The All-night Vigil in this Monastery was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Archbishops, and Priests. The choir was formed by noble pilgrims who came from the Church of Greece; Leonidas Doukas, choir leader at the Cathedral of the Holy Archdiocese Iliou Aharnes and Petroupolis, Eustathios Kasteliotis, choir leader of the Holy Church of St. Paul in Athens, Gregorios Zarkos, choir leader of the Holy Church of the Holy Trinity in Pireaus and Dionysios Thanasoulis, left choir singer of the Holy Church of Panagia Faneromeni in Attiki. The service was attended by a large congregation.

The Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Constantinos addressed His Beatitude upon His reception with the following

words:

“Let us praise in hymns the two leaders of our Holy Monastery, St. John along with St. George, our patron Saints and intercessors to God.”

Your Beatitude Father and Master, and Your Venerable Entourage,

Festal is our gathering tonight! It is festal because we honour the two Owners and Patron Saints of the Lavra of Chozeva, Saints John and George.

Both Saints led an ascetic life here, admonishing and supporting the three thousand Monks who also lived in asceticism in the Lava; in other words, they became leaders of the Ascetics.

The centre of our life is one! The Holy Altar! The mystical life, the Services of our Holy Church! St. George the Chozevite himself, was teaching the following while strengthening spiritually his Monks during hardships:

“Spend much time, my child, in the Church of God, giving all your strength in this effort, in silence and piety. Because it is good for one to serve his mother, which is the Church, in all reverence and meekness. All Grace comes to us from her (the mother Church), making us heirs of eternal life.”

Friend of the Saints, Father and Master!

As your Sons, we exclaim; welcome, Your Beatitude!”

His Beatitude preached the Divine Word as follows:

*“The true Light hath appeared, and He giveth enlightenment to all. Christ, Who surpasseth all purity, is baptized with us; He bringeth sanctification into the water, and it becometh a place of cleansing of souls. That which is visible is earthly; which is perceived with the understanding is higher than the*

Heavens. Through washing cometh salvation, and through water, the Spirit. By descending into the water we ascend to God. Wondrous are Thy works, O Lord; glory to Thee". This is what the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims of the Saints of Chozeva sacred relics,

Our Father among the Saints George the Chozevite, who has invited us all in his festal commemoration, had become a communicant of the true Light that hath appeared. His Monastery witnesses the marvels of God as the psalmist says: "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works" (Ps. 71:17).

Indeed, the wondrous works of God have been declared in this Monastery until now, through the sacred relics of the Fathers and monks who have lived in ascetic striving throughout the ages in the caves on either side of brook Chorath; and especially the full relic of our Father among the Saints John the new Chozevite, the wonder worker, who became a martyr of consciousness.

The monks who lived in ascetic striving here became sons of light of our Holy Church, namely of the mystical body of Christ as the psalmist says: "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Ps. 103:17-18).

Saint George, whose sacred memory we commemorate today, lived approximately one hundred years after Saint John the Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine who also lived in this Monastery. St. George, who experienced the barbaric Persian raid, undertook both the gathering of the scattered monks and ascetics and the

reconstruction of the monastic and coenobitic life in the Lavra of Chozeva. "The height of his virtues and the miracles he worked with his holy prayers placed the Monastery above all others in Palestine, which after his death received the name of St. George the Chozevite. Because he is its patron Saint and his tomb became the most honoured place at the Monastery", according to the epistles of St. John the New Chozevite.

The height of the Saint's virtues is expressed clearly by the hymn writer who says: "Neither lengthiness of the road nor severity of the place could avail to weaken thy strong and fiery zeal to make thy journey to God; and when thou joyously hadst arrived at the places that were trod by the feet of our Lord and God, thou leftest nothing undone till through thy labours and ascetic deeds thou camest unto the Sion in Heaven's heights."

St. George linked the fiery zeal, namely his most fiery journey to the Lord, with the places that were trod by the feet of the Incarnate Logos of God in the cave of Bethlehem, by the pure blood of the Ever-Virgin Mary; the places in the river Jordan district, where St. John the Baptist preached repentance and baptized the people in the water (Luke 3:3). And our Lord Jesus Christ was baptized by John in the river Jordan (Mark 2:9). "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mat. 3:16-17) according to the Evangelists' witness.

Bearing in mind the witness of the Holy Apostles and Evangelists and heeding to St. Paul's words: "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on

*us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:4-6), St. George came to this biblical sacred place of Chozeva, and made it a natural and spiritual font; where we foretaste the bathing of the baptism, "the bath of palingenesis" (concept of rebirth or re-creation), namely the resurrection. "For this is the meaning of palingenesis...the second birth", Ecumenios says.*

*In other words, my dear brothers and sisters, "the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). The grace which overshadowed those Saints in Christ who lived in ascetic striving before and after St. George in Chozeva, is no other than the Holy Spirit that came down on the beloved Son of God our Lord Jesus Christ in the bodily form of a dove, at the river Jordan.*

*As our Father among the Saints George the Chozevite became participant and communicant of this salvific grace, we are also called to partake of it, having the Saint as an example to imitate. And with the hymn writer let us say: "Thou didst pass thy life on earth like a bodiless being, O though who art truly great; wherefore, thou wast united to the choirs of the bodiless hosts, singing thrice-holy songs unto the Creator and receiving His illumination." Amen.*

The Hegoumen and renovator of the Monastery Archimandrite Constantinos offered a monastic meal after the Divine Liturgy.

### **From Secretariat-General**

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# THE CUTTING OF THE NEW YEAR CAKE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

The traditional cutting of the New Year Cake on the commemoration of St. Basil and the New Civil Year 2018 took place at the Reception Hall of the Patriarchate on Saturday evening December 31, 2017 / January 13, 2018.

The ceremony was attended by Hagiotaphite Fathers, clergy of the Patriarchate, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, pilgrims from Greece and faithful from the Patriarchate's congregation from various regions.

In this ceremony His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed the guests as follows:

***“And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power” (Acts 1.7)***

*Today our Holy Church has gathered us all in this sacred place of the venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem, in order to give thanks to the Holy Trinitarian God for the change of the year of the goodness of our Lord Jesus Christ, “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Philip. 2:6-7).*

*The changing of the year of the Lord's goodness, namely our Ecclesiastical Year, coincides with the historic time of man's life on earth, and according to the psalmist: “As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and*

*the place thereof shall know it no more" (Ps. 103:15-16).*

*And we say this because the perception of the meaning of time as past, present and future, is not being understood "by cunningly devised fables" (2 Peter 1:16), but "according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25), of the Incarnate God and Logos and our Saviour Jesus Christ who was born from the pure blood of the Ever Virgin Mary and is of one essence with the Holy Spirit, according to the true witness of the words of the Bible: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me...To preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Isaiah 61:1-2/Luke 4:18-19).*

*It is precisely this "Spirit of the Lord" the Holy Spirit of Christ which brings together and composes the institution of the mystical body of the Church in the world, that we should entreat at the beginning of the new year and say along with the wise Paul "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:4-6). And this Christ is "him which is, and which was, and which is to come" (Rev. 1:4).*

*It is evident through these revealing words that the Church introduces Christ's eternity within our historic reality, and it is being extended towards this eternity. And inside the Church, where the year becomes time, namely the quantity becomes quality, according to Ammonios, the memory of the past becomes memory in Christ. And the hope of the future becomes hope in Christ. For this reason, St. Paul quotes Prophet Isaiah (49:8) when he says "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).*

*This anticipated time and the day of salvation refer to both the feast of the circumcision in the flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour Christ, and to the annual commemoration of our Father among the Saints Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia; in his honour we keep the Ecclesiastical custom of cutting the New Year Cake which bears his name.*

*This festal Ecclesiastical and Patriarchal event calls us to consider the words of Solomon's wisdom: "For thou loves all the things that are, and abhorrest nothing which thou hast made: for never wouldest thou have made any thing, if thou hadst hated it" (Wisdom of Solomon 11:23-24).*

*Behold my dear ones, the arena of repentance is being opened before us. This is what the beginning of the new year of the Church offers to us. This is the manner of celebrating the beginning of the new year. According to the Wisdom of Solomon: "For he hath given me certain knowledge of the things that are, namely, to know how the world was made, and the operation of the elements: The beginning, ending, and midst of the times: the alterations of the turning of the sun, and the change of seasons: The circuits of years, and the positions of stars" (Wisdom of Solomon 7:17-19).*

*Taking under consideration the meaning of Time according to our God Jesus Christ, let us entreat the Great Hierarch Basil of Cappadocia, who has enriched the morals of the people, to intercede to our Saviour, who was circumcised in the flesh, for our souls and for the peace of the whole world, as well as for the peace in the much suffering region of the Middle East. Let us say with the hymn writer: "O Maker of all creation Who hast established the times and the seasons in Thine own power; Bless the crown of this year with Thy goodness, O Lord, and keep our rulers and Thy flock in peace, by the intercessions of the Theotokos" and Ever-Virgin Mary; keep in peace our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, our Christian Congregation the Holy City of Jerusalem and our noble nation. Amen.*

***Have an auspicious, happy and blessed New Year 2018.***

***Many Happy Returns!***

Following His Beatitude's address festal hymns of the day were chanted and His Beatitude cut the New Year Cake wishing a happy New Year to all. While His Beatitude was distributing the pieces of the cake, the Zion School students were singing the carols. Likewise, the students sang the carols at His Beatitude's house of residence and at the houses of many Hagiotaphite Fathers.

On behalf of the young people of our congregation, some young people addressed His Beatitude in Arabic as per the link below:

<http://www.jp-newsgate.net/ar/2018/01/13/35456>

**From Secretariat-General**

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