

# THE FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE SACRED CROSS AT THE HOLY MONASTERY OF THE SACRED CROSS

On the first Sunday after the Exaltation of the Cross, 18th September/1st October 2017, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, following the Church order of Jerusalem, officiated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Monastery of the Sacred Cross, located on West Jerusalem near the Hebrew Houses of Parliament.

According to the Church tradition the wood by which the Lord's Cross was made, was planted by Lot in the place where this Holy Monastery stands. The Patriarchate held a Higher School of Theology in this Monastery from 1845 to 1909, where exceptional Theologians of the Church, clergy and laity, and many of the Hagiotaphite Fathers of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries studied, such as the later Archbishop of Athens and Professor of the School of Theology of the University of Athens Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, Meletios Metaxakis, Kallistos Milaras and Timotheos Themelis Patriarch of Jerusalem and many others.

In the very old Church of this Monastery with Byzantine mosaics on the floor and excellent murals, His Beatitude celebrated the Divine Liturgy with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks led by Archimandrite Ieronymos, Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos, Archimandrite Kallistos, Archdeacon Mark and others. The choir was led by the left choir singer of the Church of the Resurrection Mr. George Alvanos, at the

presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and members of the General Consulate of Greece, with the participation in prayer of a congregation of the few remaining members of the Greek Community of West Jerusalem, as well as those of the Old City of Jerusalem, alongside monks and nuns.

During the Divine Liturgy His Beatitude gave the following Sermon:

“Gleaming like the sun, Thy precious Cross hath brightly shone forth today at the Place of the Skyll, O Christ, set fast on that blessed ground glorified of all men; and being exalted on this all holy mount of Thine, it indicateth most plainly unto all that by Thy Cross, O Saviour, Thou hast raised our nature to Heaven’s heights, at the merciful Friend of man, O Almighty and Sovereign Lord” the hymn writer of the Church exclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims.

By the grace of God and the power of the Sacred and Life-giving Cross we celebrate this sacred and Eucharistic Gathering on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Sacred Cross, in this holy place where according to the tradition Lot, Patriarch Abraham’s nephew, planted the three tree branches which blossomed. These branches were of pine, cedar and cypress trees. One of the branches of this tree, was used for the making of the Cross of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Today’s annual feast in this historic Monastery of the Cross is an extension of the great feast that was held a few days ago at the very sacred place of the finding of the Cross and at the place of Skyll, namely of the Crucifixion on Horrendous Golgotha.

The Holy Church of Jerusalem, being the faithful and truthful witness of the these sacred places glorifies the Holy

Trinitarian God, because through the Cross the heavens proclaimed God's glory to the people, as the hymn writer says "the voices of the Prophets declared beforehand the holy Wood, whereby Adam was set free from the ancient curse of death. Today as the Cross is lifted up, creation also lifteth up its voice, asking God for His rich mercy." In other words, not only the old Adam, but the whole creation were liberated from the corruption of death, and the creation as a whole is called to take part in the freedom of the glorious nature of God's children, as St. Paul preaches by saying: "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).

The finding of the Cross by St. Helen and its exaltation by Makarios, Patriarch of Jerusalem, are facts of the universal history, and this is because they refer to the common nature of men, whether they are Christians or not, believers or non-believers.

Christ's Cross is the ultimate symbol of the sacrifice of the Righteous One, namely the Son of Man, and for this reason it incarnates the outmost humility on the one hand, and the exalting power of repentance on the other. Being nailed on the Cross, Christ said: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

In other words the mystery of the Cross confirms and seals the great and unspeakable mystery of the Divine Providence, the gift of the salvation in Christ for the whole world. Moreover, the exaltation of the Sacred Cross reveals the triumph of the truly sacrificial love of Christ and His mystical body of the Church.

Behold why, having experienced unspeakable words on his ascend in third heaven, St. Paul writes to the Galatians: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the

world" (Gal. 6:14). And in more detail, St. Paul says, his only boast is the Lord's death on the cross, and through his faith in this cross he has become dead to the world. And every action and miracle of Christ is great and divine and marvelous, but most marvelous of all is His Sacred Cross, St. John Damascene says. And this is so, because it was only by the Cross and no other means that death was abolished, the forefather's sin was released, the resurrection was granted a gift, the gates of heaven were opened. "So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ" St. Paul says, "were baptized into his death" (Romans 6:3). "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27), "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinth. 1:24). Behold therefore, Christ's death, namely His Cross, has surrounded us with God's existing wisdom and power.

For this reason, my dear brothers and sisters, we exceptionally honour and venerate Christ's Cross, and simultaneously we glorify His Holy Resurrection, at the place where He lay His feet, as Prophet David says "We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool" (Psalm 132:7). And the fact that David is referring to the Cross is revealed by the following verse: "Arise, O Lord, into thy rest" (Psalm 132:8), as St. John Damascene interprets.

As for us today, "seeing the Cross's Wood exalted, let us render all majesty and glory to God, Who in His goodness was crucified while wearing flesh".

And with the hymn writer let us say: "O God, fulfilled is the saying of Thy Prophet Moses, which saith: Ye shall see your Life hanging before your eyes. Today the Cross is exalted and the world is set free from error. Today the Resurrection of Christ is inaugurated, and the ends of the earth rejoice, as with Davidic cymbals they offer Thee a hymn and say: Thou hast wrought salvation in the midst of the earth, O God, even the

Cross, and the Resurrection, whereby Thou hast saved us, O Thou Who art good and the Friend of man. O Almighty Lord, glory be to Thee." Amen."

After the Divine Liturgy, the Service of the Exaltation of the Sacred Cross followed, and then the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery Archimandrite Klavdios offered the Patriarchal Entourage a reception at the hegoumeneion.

### **From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE SACRED CROSS AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Wednesday, 14th/27th September 2017, the Feast of the universal Exaltation of the Sacred Cross was celebrated by the Patriarchate at the All-holy Church of the Resurrection.

On this Feast, the Church commemorates the fact that in the

year 336 A.D., during the service of the Consecration of the Church of the Resurrection the newly found Cross of the Lord was "exalted" so that the gathered crowd could see it and they all exclaimed "God save thy people...and Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison".

### 1. In the Evening

This event was celebrated beginning with the 9<sup>th</sup> Hour at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen followed by Vespers at the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Archbishops at the Holy Altar and Hagiotaphite Priests, first of whom was Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios and Priests from other Orthodox Churches, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Anastasios, with the Choir Leader of the All-Holy Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the Left Choir singer Mr. George Alvanos, with the participation of a congregation of many pilgrims from Greece, Cyprus, Russia, Romania, Ukraine and local Greek-Orthodox and Arab-Orthodox and monks and nuns.

### 2. On the Day of the Feast

On Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> September 2017, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Catholicon of the All-holy Church of the Resurrection, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the visiting Most Reverend Metropolitans Pitirim of Siberia of the Moscow Patriarchate, Gabriel of New Ionia and Philadelphia of the Church of Greece, and the Most Reverend Bishop Nikolaos of Amathounda of the Church of Cyprus, the Most Reverend Archbishops Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Theodosios of Sebastia, Demetrios of Lydda, and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, first of whom was Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, and visiting Hieromonks

from other Orthodox Churches, with the Choir Leader of the All-Holy Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the Left Choir singer Mr. George Alvanos, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and the participation of a vast crowd of pilgrims similar to that of the Easter period.

After the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, the Litany with the Sacred Cross which encompasses a part of the Sacred Cross of the Lord began.

The Procession went past Deposition, Adam's chapel, the Crown of Thorns, and down the chapel of the finding of the Sacred Cross. There the Patriarch performed the exaltation of the Sacred Cross at the four parts of the horizon, despite the unfortunate event of the Armenians trying to hinder the Litany of the Orthodox faithful.

On the way up, the procession went past the chapels of the Seven Pillars and round the Holy Sepulchre three times, then through the chapel of the Holy Deposition went up to Horrendous Golgotha.

Therein, the Patriarch exalted the Cross at the four parts of the horizon according to the Status Quo of worship and having placed the Sacred Cross on the Holy Altar of Golgotha, the people venerated the place of the actual Sacred Cross on which our Lord Jesus Christ was nailed for our salvation.

Having venerated the Sacred Cross and received the blessed basil leaves, the procession went down to the Holy Altar of the Catholicon where the congregation was dismissed for its ascend to the Patriarchate.

At the Patriarchate, His Beatitude gave the following address:

*“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14) St. Paul preaches.*

*Most Honourable Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos,*

*Reverend Fathers and Brothers,*

*Noble Christians and pilgrims*

*The power of the sacred and life-giving Cross has gathered us all in this sacred place of the passion on the Cross and the same place where the Cross was found, so that we can festively celebrate its universal exaltation.*

*“Being lifted upon the Cross, Thou didst raise Adam with Thyself and, with him, our whole fallen nature, O our Lord. Wherefore, exalting Thy spotless Cross, we ask Thee, O Friend of man, for Thy power from above, as we cry out: o Thou Most High, save them that revere the divine, bright and hallowed Exaltation of Thy Cross with fitting honour, since Thou art God and All-merciful” the hymn writer says.*

*That is why St. Paul boasts and the whole Church of Christ together with him. Indeed, the whole fallen nature of the humankind was co- exalted in the Cross of Christ the new Adam, and was liberated from the offense of the disobedience through the blotting out of the handwriting of ordinances that was against us (Col. 2:14).*

*In other words, the former Angel of light of God’s glory, having been obsessed with the cursed disease of conceit, was transformed into an angel of darkness and a malicious snake, the devil of disobedience. On the contrary, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ “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” (Philipians 2:8-10). And the Cross of Christ has become the wood of blessed obedience and ultimate humility, the*



*divine trophy and weapon against the devil and the visible and invisible enemies. Behold why the Sacred Cross is the beauty of the Church and the guardian of the whole world. Moreover, according to St. Gregory Palamas, the Sacred Cross glorifies and exalts our Saviour Christ, manifesting His victory to the world.*

*Therefore, together with St. Paul and the hymn writer of the Church let us say: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom having suffered, He mortified the passions. This very Cross of the Lord all of you and I hold as our boast; for it is our salvation this wood, the weapon of peace, the undefeated trophy." Amen. Many happy returns."*

**From Secretariat-General**

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**THE FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF  
THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE**

# (2017)

On Monday, 15th/28th August 2017, the Patriarchate celebrated in great festivity the feast of the Dormition of Theotokos according to its typical order of worship at the Tomb of Theotokos in Gethsemane.

Therein, with the Tomb of Theotokos being the Holy Altar, Matins and the Divine Liturgy were celebrated, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitans Isychios of Kapitolias and Timotheos of Bozra, the Most Reverend Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Demetrios of Lydda and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, and the visiting Most Reverend Metropolitans Panteleimon of Maronia and Komotini of the Church of Greece, and Cyril of Erythra of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, visiting Hieromonks and Presbyters from other Orthodox Churches, Archdeacon Mark and the Hierodeacons Anastasios and Agapios. Singing were the choir leader of the All-holy Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos in Greek and Russian and the choir of St. James the Brother of God Cathedral under Mr. George Kamar in Arabic, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos with the participation of a noble congregation of locals, Arab-speaking faithful from Jerusalem and the occupied territories and pilgrims from Greece, Cyprus, Russia, Ukraine and Romania.

His Beatitude preached the divine word to this congregation as follows:

*“The group of the Disciples is gathered to bury the Mother of God, having come from places afar, by the mighty Spirit” the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.*

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

*Noble Christians and pilgrims*

*The grace of the Tomb of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary has gathered us all from all over the earth in the Holy City of Jerusalem, in order to celebrate the memory of the Dormition of Theotokos Maria on the one hand; and Her metastasis towards life, namely Her Son and Son of God our Lord Jesus Christ on the other.*

*Today's feast has a special significance not only for our Christian faith, but for the Church of Christ as a whole, and the local Church of Jerusalem in particular. And this is so, because according to St. John Damascene, "This [the Church of Jerusalem] the mother of Churches all over the earth has become the dwelling place of the Mother of God after the Son's rising from the dead. And with angelic and apostolic hymns, Her God-receiving body was brought and buried in Gethsemane, in which place the angelic chorea and hymns remained unceasing for three days".*

*Our Holy Church and its faithful members participate in this angelic and apostolic experience today, perceptibly and mystically through the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the Divine Liturgy that is celebrated in this very Tomb of the Mother of God, which has hosted the indeed God-receiving body of the All-Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.*

*This Tomb of Theotokos is a token and undeniable witness of the paradox miracle of the Dormition and Metastasis in Heaven of the immaculate body of Theotokos Mary the Full of Grace, as the hymn writer says: "O strange wonder, great and marvellous! For the fount of life is laid within a sepulchre; a ladder to Heaven's heights doth the small grave become. Be glad, O Gethsemane, the sanctuary of Her that gave birth to God. Ye faithful, let us cry out, possessing as our commander great Gabriel: Maiden Full of Grace, rejoice thou, with thee is the*

*Lord our God, Who abundantly granteth His great mercy to the world through thee."*

*The grace of the All-Holy Theotokos flows unceasingly as neither the divine power is confined inside the tomb, nor is there a restriction to the benefactions of the Mother of God, therefore my dear ones, let us hear St. John Damascene saying: "Let us therefore make our memory a safe for Theotokos. Through Whom the Holy Spirit has granted us humans our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, to Whom belongs the glory and the power, together with the Father without beginning and the All-Holy and Life-Giving Spirit, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen. Many Happy Returns."*

After the Service, the Hegoumen of the Shrine, Most Reverend Archbishop Dorotheos of Avela offered a reception to the Patriarchal Entourage and others from the congregation at the Hegoumeneion.

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

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# **THE FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD**

# AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, 6th/19th August 2017, the feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord was celebrated at the Patriarchate.

During this Feast, the Church commemorates the event that a little while before His Passion on the Cross, the Lord went up on Mount Tabor with the distinguished disciples, Peter, James and John and made them participants and witnesses of His glory, His pre-eternal uncreated light, in order to prepare them for His resurrection, through the divine vision where they saw Him and heard the voice of the Father witnessing, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him".

## 1. On Mount Tabor

Therein, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated Vespers in the evening and the outdoor midnight Vigil, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Timotheos of Bozra, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Ieronymos of Mouanza in Tanzania of the Alexandria Patriarchate and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Theodosios of New Siberia of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Prokopios of Tanagra, with the participation in prayer of a great number of visiting Hieromonks and Priests of other Orthodox Churches, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Demetrios; singing were, Fr. George on the right and the Acre choir led by Archimandrite Philotheos on the left, with the participation of an innumerate congregation of faithful from Greece, Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Cyprus and locals from the Galilee area.

Before the Holy Communion and the blessing of the grapes, His Beatitude preached the divine word to this noble congregation

as follows:

*“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”.*

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

*Noble Christians and pilgrims*

*The One Who was transfigured on this Holy Mount of Tabor in front of His Disciples and Apostles, our Lord Jesus Christ, has gathered us all in order to celebrate this great and salvific event of the manifestation of the unapproachable light of God’s glory.*

*The event of the transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ took place just before his passion on the Cross and His resurrection. The holy evangelists and Apostles describe precisely the experience they had, and of which they became eye and ear witnesses. “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” St. Peter says (2 Peter 1:16).*

*And the “majesty” of the Lord is nothing but the glory of the Only Begotten Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. This was confirmed by the voice that came from God the Father: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard – Peter says – when we were with him in the holy mount” (2 Peter 1:17-18).*

*This voice was heard from heaven during both the baptism in the river Jordan and the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, and*

*it was one of the strongest witnesses of all that ever came from heaven to earth. Through this voice God the Father expressed His outmost well-pleasing to the Messiah Christ, and through Him to us who have been inoculated in His mystical body, namely the Church. Moreover, the voice that came through the bright cloud exhorts the disciples to obey Him, the beloved Son of God; "hear ye him" (Mat. 17:5).*

*This divine exhortation "hear ye him", my dear brothers, is addressed also to us, especially on this celebrated feast, as the hymn writer says: "Ye who love to see and hear the things transcending the mind of man, let us mystically look on Christ: He shineth forth lightning-like with divine effulgence. Let us also hearken unto His Father's holy voice as it proclaimeth Him His beloved Son, Who on the Mount of Tabor shed His light upon man's infirmity and hath poured forth in mighty streams His enlightenment for our souls".*

*The bright cloud that overshadowed the disciples as well as the voice that came through it (Mat. 17:5), are the signs and the way by which God is being revealed, as St. Chrysostom preaches: "This is how God always appears. Cloud and mist surround Him", according to the psalmist (97:2), while according to Zigavinos: "God is placed on a cloud" and as the psalmist says again: "Who maketh the cloud his chariot" (Psalms 104:3). And this is so because God is uncreated light and therefore unapproachable. If God had not become human like us, who would have been able to see the unspeakable glory of God, Who dwells in unapproachable light, St. Cyril of Alexandria teaches, quoting St. Paul (1 Tim. 6:16).*

*The chosen ones of the Apostles and disciples of Christ, Peter, James and John, saw the unapproachable light of divinity only by a little and not clearly, since they "were changed with a divine ecstasy", as the hymn writer says: "When the foremost Apostles saw the uncontainable flood of Thy light upon the Mount of the Transfiguration, O beginningless Christ, and Thy Godhead unto which no man may approach, they were*

*changed with a divine ecstasy”*

*And we, my dear brothers, who stand on this Holy Mount of Tabor, let us entreat our God and Saviour Christ, that along with the Prophets Moses the seer of God and Elias the fiery charioteer and the Holy Apostles Peter, James and John, are deemed worthy of the glory of His unapproachable light, by the intercessions of our Lady the Most Blessed Theotokos. Amen.”*

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated on the morning of the feast, led by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, with the participation of many Orthodox faithful of the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate in Galilee and Acre.

At noon, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Hilarion offered a meal to the Patriarchal and Episcopal Entourages.

## 2. At the Theotokos' Tomb

Likewise, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Theotokos' Tomb according to the Status Quo of worship. It was led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, at the singing the choir leader of the All-holy Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos and the participation of a noble congregation.

The Hegoumen of the Theotokos' Tomb Most Reverend Archbishop Dorotheos of Avela offered a reception to all present.

## 3. Ramalla

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Lord in Ramalla, led by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, with a numerous participation of the Ramalla Community Orthodox Congregation.

At noon, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Galaction offered the Episcopal entourage a meal at a town restaurant.

**From Secretariat-General**



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## **THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN THE NEW CHOZEVITE**

On Thursday, 28th July / 10th August 2017, the Patriarchate celebrated the memory of our Father among the Saints John the New Chozevite, from Romania, at the Holy Monastery of the Saints George and John the Chozevites, where he lived in ascesis and slept in the Lord.

This Saint was canonized by the Jerusalem Patriarchate in the year of our salvation 2015.

At the Holy Monastery of his repentance, and for his honour, the Vigil was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, starting in the evening and finishing with the Divine Liturgy at dawn on Thursday.

Commencing the Vigil, the Hegoumen Fr. Constantine addressed His Beatitude as follows:

“Let us honour the ascetic of the caves of Chorath,  
Wonder-working John, the bright new risen star  
of Chozeva Monastery”

Your Beatitude Father and Master,

With your Reverend Entourage

Amidst the summer heat with the high temperatures, amidst the burning hot rocks and flaming dunes, the feast of St. John the New Chozevite is an oasis of dewiness! He is precisely depicted by St. Barsanoufrios, one of the great ascetics of the 6th century who writes:

“Just as the Lord did with the first ones [His Apostles]...likewise He can work through the present ones [His Saints] ...because I know of a servant of God in our generation, of our time and in this blessed place, who can resurrect people from the dead in the name of our Master Jesus Christ and expel demons, and cures incurable diseases and works other miracles... Because the ship has slurred over the storm, similarly the soldier the wars, the captain has mastered the bad weather, the farmer the disastrous weather, the merchant has escaped the thieves and the monk has been perfected in solitude...” (Philokalia p.390).

Your Beatitude,

We take this opportunity to thank You from the depths of our hearts for the evident affection and Fatherly love towards the Historic Lavra of Chozeva, because – through Your lively care and co-ordinated actions of Your Beatitude – our greatly afflicted Monastery for two years due to the lack of water, has recently been connected with the Water Company “Mekorot”. We earnestly and with no exception thank all relevant bodies who worked and toiled in the desert of Judea for the provision of the precious water, which has literally refreshed us! According to the Scripture:“anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name...will certainly not lose their reward” (Mark 9:41-42).

As your grateful Sons,

We welcome You!”

Likewise, His Beatitude addressed the Hegoumen Fr. Constantine:

“Most Reverend Hegoumen of this Holy Monastery Father Constantine,

The scent of the spiritual fragrance of this Holy place of Chozeva has gathered us all in the spiritual oasis of Chorath brook in order to honour the classified among the chorea of the saints John the New, who comes from Romania.

The honour of the memory of the saints of Christ’s Church is the least offering of the immeasurable philanthropy and gift of the Trinitarian God to us the humble and unworthy ministers of His and to all the Congregation.

And we say this because the saints and holy people of our Church, the servants of Christ, are the luminaries who guide us in the midst of the rough ocean and the darkness into safe harbours, into harbours of salvation, harbours filled with the irreproachable light of the transfiguration of our Saviour Christ.

This irreproachable light is neither immaterial nor solar, but it is the light that shines through the incorruptible relics of the saints. The saints, who, having become of one accord and of the same blood of the crucified and incarnate through the Theotokos Virgin Mary, God the Word, Christ, witness and confess the glory of the true God. They witness and confess the greatness of creation; while at the same time they preach that the enemy of man, namely the power of the devil, has been conquered by the resurrection from the dead of our Saviour Christ. All saints – among whom is our Father John – have been buried into Christ’s death, but they have also risen into Christ’s resurrection.

Let us therefore in fear of God but also in faith, come to our Holy Father John who has invited us the unworthy ones, in order to celebrate his feast and glorify the One who has glorified His saints. Amen.”

The Holy Vigil followed with co-celebrants the Most Reverend

Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, at the singing of three Byzantine Choir singers from Greece, with the participation of a Congregation from Greece, Russia, Romania and Arab-speaking Priests.

To those present, His Beatitude preached the divine word as follows:

“To the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.”[The Lord has made His saints worthy to be admired on earth and all His pleasing is found in them], Prophet David says (Psalm 16:3).

Beloved Brothers and Fathers,

Noble pilgrims of the Holy Monastery of Chozeva

The splendid engraving of the Hagiotaphitic land of Palestine, Saint John the New, has gathered us all in his hermitage in order to celebrate his annual memory.

Our Father among the Saints John is indeed a splendid engraving, because in a wondrous manner, the corruptible man is clad incorruptibility and the earthly man becomes heavenly. This is perpendicularly witnessed by his sacred and incorruptible relics which are fragrant with “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God” (Phil.4:18), and to us, who worship him in faith, they offer “gifts of healing” (1 Cor. 12:9).

Interpreting David’s words “to the saints that are in the earth and to the excellent in whom is all my delight” (Psalm 16:3), Athanasios the Great says; David calls saints those who have been sanctified through the Holy Spirit, while the earth is Christ’s Church. To them, who are placed on the earth of God, namely the Church, He has made known the will of God the Father through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, having their homeland in heaven, the saints live on the earth

of God, even if they are still living on this earth; “while having their abode in heaven, the saints live on the earth [of the Lord], even if they are on this earth.”

Let us also hear St. Paul saying: “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phil. 3:20-21).

Commenting on these words of Paul: “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his [Christ’s] glorious body” (Phil. 3:21), Zigavinos says; “Transformation... the change from the corruptible into incorruptibility and from the inglorious into glorious”. While Theodoritos Kyrou says: “He has said that our body will be of the same form of His [Christ’s] glory, not according to the quantity of glory but according to the quality. For it is also luminous.”

It is precisely this transformation of the body, namely the change from the corruptible into incorruptibility, what our Father among the Saints John managed to achieve through his ascetic striving, by the strength, of course, and the work of Christ. In other words, St. John presented himself a perfect man in Jesus Christ (Col. 1:28), according to the council and the teaching of the wise Paul who says: those who are indeed of Christ have mortified the man of flesh together with the passions and its desires. “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24).

To this cause is that our Holy and God-bearer Father John calls us all, who honour his memory, “that we might be partakers of the holiness of God” (Hebrews 12:10). And for this: “Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16) says the Lord.

To the question, how do the saints partake of the holiness of God? St. Gregory Palamas urges us to hear St. Basil the Great saying: " Just like the iron that is in the fire does not lose the properties of the iron, but having become aflame with the strongest connection with the fire and having received all of the fire's nature, is transformed inside the fire according to the colour and the energy, likewise, the holy powers through the communion with the One who is by nature holy acquire holiness, which penetrates all their hypostasis and becomes identical to their nature. The difference of the Saints from the Holy Spirit is that while It is Holy by nature, they [the saints] become holy by participation" (G.F.Ch.Against Eunomios 3 vol.10).

Today's festal memory of our Father among the Saints John the New, who has also become a descendant of the saints on the holy earth, namely the Orthodox Church in general, and of the saints who lived in the cave of the Chozeva monastery by the Chorath brook in particular. He bears an undeniable living witness that our Lord God lives, Who for our salvation became incarnate through the Theotokos Virgin Mary and was baptized by St. John the Forerunner in the river Jordan by the power of the Holy Spirit, our Lord Jesus Christ. For to Him belongs all glory, together with the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen."

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a monastic meal, offered by the renovator and Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Constantine and his entourage.

### **From Secretariat-General**

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# **HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM OFFICIATES A CHRISTENING IN NAZARETH**

On Saturday afternoon, 5th August / 23rd July 2017, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos officiated the Sacrament of Christening of the grandchildren of a distinguished member of our Arab-speaking Community, at the Holy Church of the Sacred Shrine of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Nazareth.

Inaugurating these twin children as members of our Orthodox Church, His Beatitude gave the following address:

“ Brothers, so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death”... “Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him” St. Paul preaches (Romans 6: 3-11).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today a planting of truth has been planted in the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who bestows upon the baptized the blessed purification, the divine blessing and regeneration. And this planting of truth are the newly baptized servants of God Psara

& Sharif, who have been reborn through water and spirit and sealed with the seal of the gift of the Holy and Almighty and worshiped Spirit. "...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" St. Paul preaches(Titus 3:5-6).

The renewing through the washing of regeneration is nothing but the second birth in Christ through the Holy Spirit, as the wise Paul confesses by saying: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). This means that you are sons of God, because as many of you have been baptized in the Name of Christ believing Him to be the Saviour, you have put on Christ and have been united with Him.

And in what way do we put on Christ? The Lord says: "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). This very divine light, namely Christ, we put on and are surrounded with. According to great Photios "We are surrounded outwardly by Christ and His Holy Spirit not in the manner of wearing a garment, but by filling the heart and the thoughts with light and the face with grace."

In other words, my dear brothers, today, by the participation of all of us in the great sacrament of the christening of the newly baptized servants of God Psara & Sharif, we have become witnesses of their death and regeneration in Christ God and His Holy Church. And we say this, because having being baptized on the faith in Christ, the newly baptized have done so in His death.

They have died together with Him as far as sin is concerned, and the old man has been mortified in them. And just as Christ was risen from the tomb after He had died, likewise the baptized through descend in the water, come out of the font as new people, in order to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4)



displaying a holy life that is in accordance with the commandments of Christ and the teaching of our One, Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church. Amen.”

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF PROPHET ELIJAH AT MAALOULE OF NAZARETH**

On Saturday 23rd July / 5th August 2017, the memory of the Holy Prophet Elijah the Thesbite was celebrated a few days after the actual feast day at his Holy Church (which also honours the Ascension of the Lord) in the town Maaloule, a Nazareth suburb.

This town was inhabited until 1948, the year of the establishment of the State of Israel, when both the Palestinian inhabitants of the town and the Arab-speaking Greek-Orthodox ones of the Patriarchate deserted the town and its Holy Church.

The Church was asked for and returned to the Patriarchate with a licence from the surrounding Israeli army, with the acting policy of the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and the funding of the Hegoumen of Mount Tabor Archimandrite Hilarion, after approximately fifty years.

In this Holy Church, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, among whom was Archimandrite Hilarion and Arab-speaking Priests, such as Fr. Simeon, Fr. Sergios and Fr. Spyridon, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Anastasios. Singing were the choir singers of the Nazareth Shrine with the participation of a Congregation from Nazareth and its suburbs. Among this faithful there were descendants – children or grandchildren – of the Orthodox people who left the town, or of the reposed ones who have been buried there.

His Beatitude preached the divine word to this noble congregation as follows:

*“Then Elijah the prophet rose up like fire, and his word burned like a torch. He brought a famine upon them, and he reduced their number by his zeal. By the Lord’s word he shut up the sky, and in the same way he brought down fire three times. How glorious you were, Elijah, in your amazing deeds! Who will boast like you can?” (Wisdom Sirach 48:1-4).*

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

*Noble Christians and Pilgrims,*

*The incarnate Angel, the Prophets’ summit and boast, the second forerunner of the coming of Christ our God, Elijah the glorious, has gathered us all in this sacred place, where the Church dedicated to him stands, in order to festively honour his annual memory.*

*He came from Thesbis of Galaad, from the land of the Arabs and the Naphtali tribe. He is the greatest character in the Old Testament and the genuine bearer of the religion of the moral monotheism. This is made manifest by his ascetic life and miracles. Elijah and Moses appeared together with Christ on*

*His Transfiguration and they were conversing with Him (Mat. 17:2-3). Moreover, the Apostle James the Brother of God, referring to the power of prayer, calls upon the Prophet's example saying: "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (James 5:17-18).*

*Needless to highlight that the power of Prophet Elijah's prayer has as its spring the inherent zeal of the Prophet, namely his great zealous faith in God. And the sudden appearance of this Prophet, as well as his manner of death, show the great and immediate intervention of God in the history of the people who infringe and wrong the truth, by every kind of idolatry and their obscene life, as St. Paul preaches: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them" (Romans 1:18-19).*

*In other words, my dear Brothers, the wrath of God is made manifest through the exceeding zeal of Prophet Elijah, who however, fails to realize that God is primarily and especially philanthropist and long-suffering, waiting for the repentance of the sinner, as Prophet Joel says: "turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil" (Joel 2:13), meaning that He changes His mind over the punishment of our evil deeds.*

*Interpreting the aforementioned words of St. Paul, Theodore Mompoustas says: "Rightly – St. Paul – said that the wrath of God will be revealed, however, in this present time it is covered by the long-suffering God Who is not punishing at the same instant, so that He may not shut out the time of*

repentance." So, St. Paul correctly said that the wrath of God is being revealed in the world, nevertheless, because God is long-suffering and awaits the repentance of man until the time of the Last Judgment, He does not rush to His creation's immediate punishment.

"During his life, Elijah performed wonders, and in death his accomplishments were marvelous", Sirach says (Wisdom Sirach 48:14). Prophet Elijah's prophetic voice as well as the miracles he worked took place at a time when his people and the people of God were plagued by corruption and religious conjunctivism. This is witnessed by the book of Kings where we read: "And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away" (3 Kings 19:13-14). And immediately the Lord answered him: "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (3 Kings 19:18).

The prophetic and judgmental voice of today's honoured Saint of our Church, Elijah, does not only refer to the society of his time, but also to our contemporary society and time, and to the moral decline and corruption of the religious ideals in general and the fundamental principles of our Christian faith in particular.

In other words, my dear ones, Prophet Elijah's word denounces the injustice and idolatry of the passions and of the false gods; it denounces the irreverence towards the God of love and righteousness and the light of truth; it denounces iniquity and apostasy. Simultaneously, Prophet Elijah preaches and

*confesses that the God of Abraham, Jacob and Isaac lives and He is not absent, and he prays to Him saying: "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again" (3 Kings 18:37), meaning that You Lord are the true God Who is able to turn the hearts of this people back to You again so that they may follow You.*

*Prophet Elijah's prayer was heard, and the Lord God sent fire from heaven and burnt down the altar of the false god Baal. In similar faith and fervent prayer are we also called to invoke and pray to God our Saviour Christ, by the intercessions of the Most-Blessed Theotokos Maria, and the prayers of the glorious Prophet Elijah. Amen. Many happy returns."*

After the Divine Liturgy there was a reception on the yard under the shade of the pine trees, while at noon, a meal was offered to His Beatitude and others by Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth.

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

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## **THE FEAST OF PROPHET ELIJAH AT THE PATRIARCHATE (2017)**

On Wednesday, 20th July/2nd August the Patriarchate celebrated the memory of Prophet Elijah the Thesbite, at the Holy

Monastery bearing his name, which is located midway between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, near the archaeological site of the ancient Monastery of Theotokos' Kathisma.

Prophet Elijah remains in the memory of the Church according to the books of the Old Testament as the "incarnate Angel and the Prophet's summit and boast, the second forerunner of the coming of Christ", full of the zeal of the Lord, defending the rights of His truth before the king Ahaab and his wife Jezabel. Through his prayer, God sent fire down from heaven which burnt down the stones and the wood of the altar (3 Kings ch. 18). He prayed that God will give no rain for three years and again through his prayer he stopped the drought (3 Kings 18:44-46). He ascended in heaven in a fiery chariot and from there he sent his grace twofold to his disciple prophet Elisha at the river Jordan (4 Kings ch. 2).

In honour of his memory there was a feast at his Holy Monastery at the place where Prophet Elijah slept "... under a juniper tree, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat... And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God" (3 Kings 19:5-8).

Therein, Vespers was held in the evening, officiated by the Patriarchal Commissioner in Bethlehem Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylaktos of Jordan and the Divine Liturgy in the Morning, officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Most Reverend Archbishop Methodios of Tabor and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Anastasios, at the singing of Archimandrite Aristovoulos on the right in Greek and Russian and Mr. Rimon Kamar on the left in Arabic, with the participation in prayer of the congregation from Jerusalem, and the neighbouring areas

of Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour.

To the noble congregation His Beatitude preached the divine word as follows:

*“Then Elijah the prophet rose up like fire, and his word burned like a torch. He brought a famine upon them, and he reduced their number by his zeal. By the Lord’s word he shut up the sky, and in the same way he brought down fire three times. How glorious you were, Elijah, in your amazing deeds! Who will boast like you can?” (Wisdom Sirach 48:1-4).*

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

*Noble Christians and Pilgrims,*

*The incarnate Angel, the Prophets’ summit and boast, the second forerunner of the coming of Christ our God, Elijah the glorious, has gathered us all in this sacred place, where the Church dedicated to him stands, in order to festively honour his annual memory.*

*He came from Thesbis of Galaad, from the land of the Arabs and the Naphtali tribe. He is the greatest character in the Old Testament and the genuine bearer of the religion of the moral monotheism. This is made manifest by his ascetic life and miracles. Elijah and Moses appeared together with Christ on His Transfiguration and they were conversing with Him (Mat. 17:2-3). Moreover, the Apostle James the Brother of God, referring to the power of prayer, calls upon the Prophet’s example saying: “Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit” (James 5:17-18).*

*Needless to highlight that the power of Prophet Elijah’s prayer has as its spring the inherent zeal of the Prophet,*

namely his great zealous faith in God. And the sudden appearance of this Prophet, as well as his manner of death, show the great and immediate intervention of God in the history of the people who infringe and wrong the truth, by every kind of idolatry and their obscene life, as St. Paul preaches: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them" (Romans 1:18-19).

In other words, my dear Brothers, the wrath of God is made manifest through the exceeding zeal of Prophet Elijah, who however, fails to realize that God is primarily and especially philanthropist and long-suffering, waiting for the repentance of the sinner, as Prophet Joel says: "turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil" (Joel 2:13), meaning that He changes His mind over the punishment of our evil deeds.

Interpreting the aforementioned words of St. Paul, Theodore Mompousteas says: "Rightly – St. Paul – said that the wrath of God will be revealed, however, in this present time it is covered by the long-suffering God Who is not punishing at the same instant, so that He may not shut out the time of repentance." So, St. Paul correctly said that the wrath of God is being revealed in the world, nevertheless, because God is long-suffering and awaits the repentance of man until the time of the Last Judgment, He does not rush to His creation's immediate punishment.

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conjunctivism. This is witnessed by the book of Kings where we read: "And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away" (3 Kings 19:13-14). And immediately the Lord answered him: "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (3 Kings 19:18).

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In other words, my dear ones, Prophet Elijah's word denounces the injustice and idolatry of the passions and of the false gods; it denounces the irreverence towards the God of love and righteousness and the light of truth; it denounces iniquity and apostasy. Simultaneously, Prophet Elijah preaches and confesses that the God of Abraham, Jacob and Isaac lives and He is not absent, and he prays to Him saying: "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again" (3 Kings 18:37), meaning that You Lord are the true God Who is able to turn the hearts of this people back to You again so that they may follow You.

Prophet Elijah's prayer was heard, and the Lord God sent fire from heaven and burnt down the altar of the false god Baal. In similar faith and fervent prayer are we also called to invoke

*and pray to God our Saviour Christ, by the intercessions of the Most-Blessed Theotokos Maria, and the prayers of the glorious Prophet Elijah. Amen. Many happy returns."*

After the Divine Liturgy the good keeper of the Monastery Archimandrite Paisios offered a reception and a meal at the hegoumeneion.

### **From Secretariat-General**

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# **THE FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES IN TIBERIAS (2017)**

On Thursday, 30th June/13th July 2017, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Synaxis of the Holy Apostles at

the Holy Monastery with their name in the town of Tiberias, and at the west bank of the sea of Tiberias.

Vespers in the evening was held by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, while the Divine Liturgy on the day of the Feast was led by His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Aristarchos of Constantina and the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Hierodeacons, at the singing of Archimandrite Philotheos and the Acre choir in Arabic and Greek, and with the participation of the noble congregation to which His Beatitude preached the Divine Word as follows:

*“Thou Who art Light that existed ere all ages, when Thou didst vouchsafe to come to me, the lowly man, through Thine ineffable love for man, and to become flesh in Thy great goodness, O Saviour of the world, Thine Apostles and disciples didst Thou then reveal as second lights brightly glittering with the resplendence and the dread lightning that flashed forth from Thee; and being sent forth, they illumined all of creation with Thy light divine, O Lord. And they ever beseech Thee to enlighten and to save our souls” the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.*

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

*Noble Christians and pilgrims,*

*We have come in this sacred place of “the Sea of Tiberias” in order to celebrate in thanksgiving the feast of the venerable Synaxis of Christ’s Holy and most wise all-glorious and all-praised twelve Apostles.*

*Indeed the Apostles and disciples of Christ were “second lights of the brightness/glory” of Christ. And this is so because they were called to the service of the salvific word of the gospel not by the people but from the Lord, as Marc the*

*Evangelist witnesses: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Marc 16:15). "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (Marc 16:20).*

*The Holy Apostles are those, who not only enlightened all creation with Christ's light through the preaching of the gospel, but also established Churches for which Prophet Isaiah said: "Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare his praise in the islands" (Isaiah 42:12). For this reason the Apostles are recognized as founding stones of the Church in the world, which has been established on the corner stone, namely Christ, as St. Paul clearly teaches: "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Ephes. 2:13), "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: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephes. 2:20-22).*

*In other words, the Apostles who were appointed in the establishment of the Church as well as the preaching, namely their teaching, are the trestle and pedestal of the Church, as Zigavinos says. Hence the Church as the mystical body of Christ and therefore the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, unites us with our Lord Jesus Christ and with the other members of it. This is accomplished according to St. Gregory the Theologian "by the architecture of the Holy Spirit".*

*The twelve Holy Apostles with Peter and Paul among them as their leaders, being vessels and organs of the Holy Spirit, became the architects of the primary authentic structure of the Church, for both its local and ecumenical, or better say, catholic structure.*

*Our One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church has kept its integrity, namely its faith, undistorted, and its managerial character steadfast, as St. Paul says: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28). [In detailed explanation; for this, since through the faith in Christ, we have received a kingdom that can never be moved, but remains eternal – and this is the kingdom that Christ established through the Church – let us rend God thanksgiving]. All this has been accomplished thanks to the power of the sacred and spiritual apostolic tradition – as St Paul orders – "therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 Thes. 2:15).*

*The mighty and unexplained event of the Holy Pentecost, namely the descending of the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire on Christ's disciples – as the book of Acts witnesses – "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), is the indelible seal of the special characteristic of the institution of the Church, namely its Apostolicity. Let us hear the hymn writer saying: "When the splendour of the Spirit appeared to you in deed and verity, O wise Apostles, ye all took the fullness of it into yourselves, initiated into lofty teachings in the upper room; and now as is meet, ye are counted blessed".*

*Needless to say that the Holy Apostles are the common fathers of the New Testament, that is, the foretold by the Old Testament Prophets building of the fallen tabernacle of David, by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, as Prophet Amos witnesses: "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon*

*whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things" (Acts 15:16-17/Amos 9:11-12).*

*The prophetic words of Amos were mentioned by the Holy Apostle James the brother of God in the Synod of the Apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-21). This underlines most clearly that the Divine-Human institution of the Church is impossible to be clarified and interpreted outside the boundaries of the Holy History, namely the order of the Holy Bible, which was revealed to Prophet Moses in Mount Sinai, through the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit unites and brings together the whole institution of the Church. That is why the decisions of the Apostles and their descendants are taken through the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, as witnessed in the Acts of the Apostles, ch.15: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us the Apostles, being assembled in one accord" (Acts 15: 22,25,28).*

*Therefore we, succeeding this sacred consignment of the Holy glorious and all-praised Apostles who were filled with the Divine vision, beseech them, together with the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, to intercede for the salvation of our souls and the peace in our region and the whole world. Amen."*

For the Sermon in Arabic please follow the link below:

<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2017/07/13/31801>

After the Divine Liturgy there was a reception at the Hegoumeneion and afterwards a fish meal was offered by the Hegoumen Hieromonk Dionysios, whom His Beatitude appointed Archimandrite with the occasion of the feast.

We wish him a good service and many happy returns.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# THE FEAST OF THE HOLY APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL IN CAPERNAUM (2017)

On Wednesday, 29th June/12th July 2017, the memory of the Holy glorious and leaders of the Apostles, Peter and Paul was celebrated by the Patriarchate at their Holy Monastery at the North-west shore of the Sea of Tiberias.

This Monastery holds a splendid Church which was built by the memorable Patriarch of Jerusalem Damianos in 1931. From 1967 onward, the Church and its surrounding area were under the care of the memorable Hagiotaphite Metropolitan Germanos of Petra, who highlighted the area with archaeological excavations, with the help of the memorable Hagiotaphite Hegoumen and Hieromonk Philipos, and after him, the memorable Monk Thadeos, the memorable Nun Eudocia from Australia and the memorable Nun Eulogia.

For the last 20 years, the Hagiotaphite Monk Eirinarchos has been taking care of the Monastery with Byzantine murals on the Church walls and the cultivation of the surrounding area.

At the Holy Church of this Monastery, the Divine Liturgy was led 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 Geronda Secretary-General, the Most

Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, at the singing of Archimandrite Aristovoulos and his choir in Greek, Arabic, Russian and Romanian.

His Beatitude preached the Divine Word to the Congregation as follows:

*“The most solemn festival of the Apostles is come to the Church of Christ, bringing us salvation. Therefore let us mystically clap our hands and cry out to them: Rejoice, ye luminaries for those in darkness; ye are rays of the Sun. Rejoice Peter and Paul, ye indestructible foundations of the divine doctrines, ye friends of Christ, ye precious vessels. Be ye present invisibly in our midst and deem us worthy of immaterial gifts, as we acclaim your feast with songs” the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.*

*Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

*Noble pilgrims,*

*The most venerable annual memory of the leaders of the Apostles Peter and Paul has gathered us all in this Holy place of the Hagiographic town of Capernaum, in order to rend glory and thanksgiving to our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who has philanthropically benefited the race of humans through His mighty and bright luminaries, who illumined all Universe by the word of the Gospel of love and peace.*

*“Who or what can be mightier than Peter? Who or what can be equal to Paul? Both of whom did conquer all creation in heaven and earth by their word and deeds; they were bound in the body of clay but were highlighted more benign than the angels. What therefore can we say to the teachers of the heavenly and earthly creation? I cannot find proper words to praise those who have praised our race, who have perambulated all earth and sea, and eradicated the roots of our sins, and have sown the seeds of reverence into the hearts of the disobedient men” St. Chrysostom says.*



Indeed, my dear ones, "we cannot find proper words to praise those who have praised our human race". And this is so, because Peter confessed that Christ is the Son of the Living God (Mat. 16:16), while Paul "was caught up in paradise and heard unspeakable words which is not lawful of a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12:4).

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself told Peter: "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 16:17-19). As for Paul, Christ said "he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16).

In other words, these Holy Apostles were proclaimed pillars of the Church and mighty luminaries of the Universe, namely its teachers, or as St. Chrysostom says, "the vessels of the Holy Spirit, the interpreters of the Holy Trinity, the lecturers of the Providence of the Divine Word".

And Saints Peter and Paul were proclaimed "lecturers of the Providence of the Divine Word" because they were the ones who showed us "what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" (Eph. 3:18) of Christ's condescension of mercy. Moreover, they are recognized as the spiritual architects of the Church life on earth, namely of the conformation/configuration of its management and hierarchical Spirit. Let us hear Paul saying: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph.

4:11-12). And in another verse: "But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you" (2 Cor. 10:13). [We will not boast for toils in places outside our jurisdiction, but we will boast for things within our jurisdiction, which God has appointed to us as the district of our mission]. Let us also hear Peter saying: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ...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).

The leaders of the Apostles Peter and Paul are especially honoured by the Holy Church of Christ, not by assuming that they surpass the other Apostles of the Gospel in the power and action of the Holy Spirit, but rather because they were highlighted by the diversity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as wise Paul and St. Peter preach: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal" (1 Cor. 12:4-7) according to Paul. And "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10) according to Peter.

These mighty men of our faith in Christ, namely Peter the rock of the faith (Mat. 16:18) and Paul the chosen vessel (Acts 9:15) according to the proclamation and witness of the Lord, are we called to imitate towards their sacred zeal and outmost love for Christ. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" – Paul says – "and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of

*the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).*

*Hence, together with the hymn writer and the intercessions of the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary let us say: "Rejoice Peter and Paul, ye indestructible foundations of the divine doctrines, ye friends of Christ, ye precious vessels. Be ye present invisibly in our midst, and deem us worthy of immaterial gifts, as we acclaim your feast with songs". Amen."*

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a reception at the Hegoumeneion and then a fish meal at the outdoor maritime area.

### **From Secretariat-General**

<http://youtu.be/buyAlmwtYTs>

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