

THE FEAST OF SAINT GEORGE THE GREAT MARTYR IN LYDDA

On Thursday, November 3/16, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated in Lydda the feast of the glorious great martyr George the Trophy-Bearer.

On this day, the Church, especially the Church of Jerusalem, remembers that according to his wish, after his martyrdom in Rome, the relics of Saint George were transported and buried in Lydda by his servant. This is the city of his mother's origin.

When piety shone upon Constantine the Great, Saint Helen came to the Holy Land and erected a magnificent Basilica Above the tomb of Saint George. The consecration of that Church was held on November 3, thus we commemorate and celebrate that event along with the repatriation of the Saint's relics on this day.

In this Basilica, the celebration of the repatriation of the holy relics of Saint George took place during Vespers in the evening, presided over by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis. The Divine Liturgy in the morning was officiated by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with their Eminences, the Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Metropolitan Joachim of Helenopolis and the Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, the Archimandrites; Nectarios, Ieronymos, Niphon, and Christodoulos, Priest Hader Baramki, Archdeacon Mark and the Hierodeacons Eulogios and Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by the Community Byzantine choir as the service was attended by pious people who came despite the warlike situation. The service was also attended by the Ambassadors of Serbia and Albania to Israel.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the

following Sermon:

“Thou hast gone up into the mount of martyrdom, O prizewinner George, and hast received a crown from the hand of the Lord; for this is the reward of the Martyrs. Wherefore, as is meet, we all magnify thee” (Minaion, Matis, Ode 9, Troparion 5), the hymnographer of the Church exclaims.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

Today the universal feast of Saint George has gathered us all. Today the grace of the Holy Spirit which has established brave George, the faithful servant and martyr of Christ’s love has gathered us all in the biblical town of Lydda to celebrate the commemoration of the consecration of his Church and the translation of his holy relics.

Saint George was the son of a rich and noble family from Cappadocia and served as a commander in the Roman army during the reign of Diocletian (AD 284-305). “When the emperor declared a severe persecution against the Christians, George declared himself to be a Christian, condemning the vanity of the idols and those who believed in them. Saint George suffered his martyrdom in Rome, or in Diospolis of Palestine, later named Georgioupolis, which is the current Lydda, where his tomb lies in his magnificent Church” according to Pasikratis, the Saint’s biographer.

Saint George, who had connected the confession of his faith to the crucified and risen from the dead Christ and the Holy Land, became a righteous cultivator of the mystery of the Divine Providence as his hymnographer proclaims: “Thou hast lived worthily of thy name, O soldier George, for taking the Cross of Christ upon thy shoulders, thou hast cultivated the earth that had become barren because of diabolic deception; and uprooting the thorny religion of the idols, thou hast planted the vine of the Orthodox faith. Wherefore, thou

gushest forth healings for the faithful throughout the world, and hast proved to be the Trinity's righteous husbandman" (Vespers, Glory).

Precisely because Saint George uprooted the thorny religion of the idols and planted the vine of the Orthodox faith, he became known all over the world, shining like the sun and like a bright star. The proof of this is that Saint George is the patron Saint of many peoples and nations until today.

Saint George is distinguished among the Church Saints because, like another Apostle, he became the preacher of truth, of Christ's gospel, not only by words, but with his very martyr's blood. Inspired by the Lord's prompting words, "fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10,28), and "And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say" (Luke 12,11-12), Saint George was assayed by the fire for the love for Christ. That is why the hymnographer says: "For longing conquered nature, persuading the lover to pass through death to the Beloved, even Christ God, the Saviour of our souls" (Matins, Glory of praises).

In other words, Saint George had the divine zeal in his heart and delivered himself to death, a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God (c.f. Romans 12,1), paying heed to Saint Paul's words: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1,21). That is the reason why Saint George became an imitator and communicant of Christ's passion. "He that abideth in me, and I in him" (John 15,5).

It is noteworthy that the martyrs of the love of the Righteous Christ, who suffered "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with

the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented" (Hebrews 11,36-37), had only one sole goal; the kingdom of God, His glory and righteousness. Enlightened by the Holy Spirit they beheld Christ, – according to His promise-, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14,18-19).

These words of the Lord, "but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14,19), are addressed to us also, my dear brothers and sisters, through the martyrs, and thus, the great martyr George, and through our holy Church, which is the body of the crucified and resurrected Christ.

We say this, because, during our Church services and especially during the service of the Holy Eucharist, we have with us, in our midst, present the living Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, the God of love and peace. Moreover, we have the living testimony of the translation of the holy great martyr George's relics, in his tomb that lies here. "Having been disciplined a little, Saint George received great good, because God tested him and found him worthy of himself; [6] like gold in the furnace he tried him, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted him" (c.f. Wisdom of Solomon 3,5-6).

Today, just like the light of the holy glory, we are illumined by this solemn event of the commemoration of the consecration of Saint George's Church and the translation of his relics, amidst turbulence and hostilities in the Holy Land.

Let us pray, my dear ones, to our Father of lights, that by the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and those of the Holy great martyr George the trophy-bearer, the light of the infinite philanthropy of God may enlighten the minds of those in power and guide them in the path of peace and conciliation. Amen! Many happy returns."

A reception and lunch followed.

This feast was also celebrated in the Old City of Jerusalem in the Holy Monastery of Saint George at the Jewish Quarter, with the Divine Liturgy in the morning, hosted by Nun Kyriaki, in place of the renovator of the Church Abbess Marianna. The Abbess is currently in Cyprus due to the ongoing war.

The feast was also celebrated in the Holy Monastery of Saint George of the Hospital with Vespers in the evening and the Divine Liturgy in the morning, presided over by the Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, under the chanting of Hierodeacon Simeon and His Eminence Archbishop Dimitrios of Lydda helped at Vespers. The celebrations were hosted by the Abbess of the Monastery, Nun Pansemni.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT JAMES THE BROTHER OF GOD AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, October 23/November 5, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Holy Glorious Apostle and Martyr James, the Brother of God and first Hierarch of Jerusalem.

On this feast, the whole Church, especially the Church of Jerusalem, remembers that Saint James was the son of a woman who was previously married to Joseph, the betrothed of the Most Holy Theotokos, therefore, he was also called the brother of the Lord. Because of this legal relationship, Saint James was named Brother God. The Apostle Paul also testifies to

this, saying: "None of the apostles did I see but James the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1:19). He was righteous, a type of virtue and holiness, also called "hoblias", that is, righteous and protector of the people.

Saint James was installed by the Lord as the first Hierarch of the Church of Jerusalem, as his Kontakion says, "The Word of God, the Father's Only-begotten, came down and dwelt here in our midst in these last days. He then appointed thee as the first shepherd of all-holy Jerusalem, and He made thee her teacher and a faithful steward of lofty spiritual mysteries. For this cause as is meet, O wondrous James, O blest Apostle, we all praise and honour thee".

Through this authority given to him, he exhorted the Church of Jerusalem most devoutly, he wrote his Catholic letter in the New Testament, and he was calm, peaceful, presentable and beloved by all the people of Jerusalem. He presided over the first Apostolic Synod of Jerusalem in AD 49, which opened the doors of the Church to the nations and confessed the Lord as the Son of God and for this, the Jewish rulers threw him down from the wing of the Temple and killed him around AD 60. X. at an old age.

In his honour, in the Cathedral named after him, adjacent to the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and the Church of the Resurrection, Vespers was held in the evening, presided over by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the Divine Liturgy in the morning, concelebrated by their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitlias and the Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina and Philomenos of Pella, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nektarios, the ministering Priests of Saint James Cathedral, Fr Farah Badour and Fr Hader Baramki. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon with the students of the Patriarchal School of Zion on the right in Greek and by the choir of the Church under Mr Rimon Kamar on the left in Arabic. The service was attended by the congregation of the

Orthodox Community of Jerusalem, monks, nuns and a few remaining pilgrims, in the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos and members of the Greek Consulate General in Jerusalem.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following sermon:

“And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace”, (James 3:18). [The spiritual fruit of justice and Holiness is sown peacefully and without strife by those who practice and spread peace and who are truly wise and peace-making teachers], Saint James the Brother of God teaches.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The grace of the righteous Apostle James, the Brother of God brought us all together today in his Holy Cathedral, adjacent to the Holy and Life-giving Tomb of our Saviour Christ, to honour his holy memory.

Saint James acquired a prominent position in the holy Church of God and the city of Jerusalem, and because of his great piety he was given the title “the Just”.

In fact, Saint James was shown to be a “pillar of the faith” and a support of the Church”; and this, because his Catholic letter shows him as “a teacher of great personal prestige among its readers”. On the other hand, his participation in the Apostolic Synod of Jerusalem and his teaching concerning the evangelization of the Gentiles, that is, the idolaters, confirm the prestige of James.

Saint Chrysostom, interpreting the fact that the Brother of God spoke in the Synod “after Barnabas and Paul had silenced them”, (Acts 15:12) says: “This [James] is the bishop of the Church in Jerusalem, for he says clearly; and “in the mouth of

two or three witnesses every word is established" (Cf. Matt. 18:16), then it is fulfilled. The hymnographer of the Church, extolling the preaching of Saint James, says: "Unto all the farthest regions of the earth, the sound of thy words hath resounded most mightily; and through them, O blessed James, we have been enlightened in all godly virtues and we are guided faithfully to the divine knowledge of the Trinity. We therefore importune thee: as a hierarch, offer up fervent prayer unto Jesus, the Friend of man, in His mercy to save our souls" (Minaion, Vespers, sticheron 2).

James the Brother of God boldly declared the Lord Jesus God as the Word and Creator of everything and that God the Father is the supreme and unique source of all enlightenment, physical or moral, and says "The wisdom of the people descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife are, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3, 17 -18).

In other words, the fruits of God's wisdom are produced through the power and grace of Jesus Christ. And among the good things of these fruits, the fruit of justice is distinguished. And this fruit is none other than the peace of Christ, who said "Without me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Even Saint Paul commands saying: "Be filled with the fruits of righteousness through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1,11). And Isaiah says: "And let the works of righteousness be peace, and let righteousness keep rest, and trust forever" (Is. 32,17).

[And in more detail: the result of justice will be peace. Justice will bring rest and peace, and people will walk in faith after everything].

Justice and peace between people are essentially the fruit of God's Grace and faith in Christ according to the testimony of the hymnographer:

"Truth has arisen from the earth and justice has flowed from heaven" (Psalm 84:12). For this reason, Saint James who was an eye-and-ear-witness, i.e. a natural witness of the mystery of piety, of the mystery of the divine Providence in Christ, on the one hand refers to Christ, Who walked the path of righteousness and opened it for us as well; on the other hand, he wonders, where wars and battles among men come from: "Whence are wars and battles among you? Are they not from your desires, rooted in your body parts?... adulterers and adulteresses! Have you not seen that the friendship of the world is the enmity of God? Whoever, therefore, willfully is a friend of the world, becomes an enemy of God".

Interpreting these reasons, Ecumenius says: "Have you not seen that the friendship of the world is alien to the friendship of God, or it makes enemies of God? In the world [the Brother God] calls out all material life, as the mother of corruption. He who communes with it hastily becomes an enemy of God".

Indeed, my beloved brothers, "the friendship of the world alienates us from the friendship of God. And this, because according to the Righteous James, God is all light and out of His own good will He gave birth to us spiritually through the gospel, which is the word of truth, so that we may be among the first and most honourable of His creations, chosen and dedicated to the God. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1,18).

Let us who solemnly honour Saint James, the Brother God and the first Hierarch of Jerusalem, beseech him so that by his prayers and the intercessions of the most blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, the Lord our God, may implant in the hearts of all of us, this word of truth, namely of the divine

light of righteousness and of peace, especially in the hearts and minds of the keepers of the world and our tested region. Amen. May you have many blessed and peaceful returns.”

After the end of the Divine Liturgy, the full congregation went up to the Patriarchate Hall through the historic steps of Saint James carrying the Holy Icon of Saint James, passing through the Gate of the Patriarchate, where they received the ceremonial loaf of bread as a blessing by Nun Serafima, who is in charge of the Patriarchate’s bakery.

In the hall of the Patriarchate, a prayer was offered, the Polychronion of His Beatitude was chanted and a reception followed, where His Beatitude spoke again as follows:

“Come and with sacred hymns let us all magnify James, the first enthroned bishop and luminary of the Church, as a hierarch and divine herald, who was fittingly called the Just” his hymnographer exclaims.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos,

Dear Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved brothers in Christ,

The Holy Church of Jerusalem honours and commemorates today the sacred memory of the holy Hieromartyr and Apostle James the Brother of God, the so-called “the Just”.

This Saint James, who in his epistle calls himself “a servant of God and our Lord Jesus Christ” (James 1:1), became bishop of Jerusalem and was called to the Apostolic office by the Lord. As such, Saint James appears as the operator of the whole church life, of the formation and indeed of the organization of the administrative system of the Church of Jerusalem, which as the mother of all the Churches throughout the world was the model for everything on the part of the

Church. This is evidenced by his universal epistle of the greatest Apostolic authority addressed to "the twelve tribes in the diaspora" (James 1:1) of the Jews who believed in Christ.

Saint James, who was appointed by the Father of the only begotten God the Word as the first Hierarch, shepherd, teacher and faithful steward of the spiritual mysteries, became the foundation stone of the apostolate "indeed the cornerstone of Jesus Christ" (Eph. 2:20) of the Church of Jerusalem and the celebrated commemoration of Saint James refers to the Apostolic and Patriarchal throne of the Zionist Church, whose Minister and Successor Our Modesty became.

To this end we came, accompanied by honourable members of the High Priests, Priests and Hierodeacons in the holy Church of Saint James, where we celebrated in a Patriarchal Assembly the great Sacrament of the divine Eucharist to the honour and glory of the celebrated saint and righteous James, co-martyr of our crucified Saviour Christ by his own blood.

Today's institutional celebration of the Throne and of the holy memory of the holy glorious Apostle James the Brother of God and first Hierarch of the Church of Jerusalem is an undeniable testimony of the ongoing Apostolic succession, of the one imprinted on the face of each Primate of the Church of Jerusalem for one; and of the unceasing prayerful presence of the mission of the order of the Studious, of our Venerable Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, as well as of our devout Roman-Orthodox flock rooted and living in the Holy Land on the other hand.

This great Apostle and witness of Christ's love, let us beseech: Drive away all sorrows arising from the war in our region and grant us and the whole world justice and its fruit, peace.

Many and peaceful returns! Amen".

The celebration was sealed with the traditional handover by His Beatitude of the keys of the Cathedral of Saint James the Brother of God to its Priests and Stewards.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE UNIVERSAL EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, September 14/27, 2023, the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

During this feast, the Church remembers that Saint Helen, sent to the Holy Land by her son Constantine the Great, saw on the Horrendous Golgotha the Tomb of the Lord and the Cross, on which he was attached for our salvation, and she built the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the decade 326-336 AD.

To the glory of our Crucified and Resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, Saint Helen performed the Inauguration of his surrounding Church on September 13, 336 AD in the presence of the Archbishop of Jerusalem Makarios. Then he raised the Cross of Christ, so that the assembled multitudes could look at it from afar, and they repeatedly called out "Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy".

This act has remained as a tradition since then in the Church, celebrated the day after the feast of the Inauguration, that is on September 14th.

In honour of this event, Great Vespers was held on Tuesday afternoon in the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection after incense and the blessing of bread presided over by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

On the morning of the feast, Wednesday, September 14/27, 2023, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection, led by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolias and Panteleimon of Xanthi, two Bishops from the Patriarchate of Serbia, the Hegoumen of the Monastery Vlatadon, Reverend Bishop Nikiforos of Amorio, the Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Philoumenos of Pella, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks, priests from other Orthodox Churches, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Mr Angelos Gianopoulos with the help of Byzantine singers from Greece. The service was attended by a large congregation and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Demetrios Angelosopoulos.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a litany which marched from the Catholicon to the Shrine of Deposition, went down the stairs to Saint Helen's chapel and after the incense offering at the Altar of the Armenians and the throne of Saint Helen, it went to the Cave of the finding of the Cross. The exaltation of the Cross followed there, held by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the Holy Wood was exalted at the four parts of the horizon, under the chanting of the apolytikion of the feast. The Holy Cross was placed at the place of its finding and it was venerated by the High Priests and the Consul General.

The litany continued to the Holy Sepulchre, thrice around the Sacred Edicule as the Holy Wood was held on top of the heads of H.H.B. the High Priests and concluded at the Horrendous

Golgotha. There the Cross was exalted again at the four parts of the horizon by His Beatitude, while the large crowd of people were chanting the apolytikion of the feast. The High Priests and the Consul General venerated again the Holy Cross there, holding basil branches in their hands, which they will keep as a blessing in their homes.

After the dismissal of the Liturgy, all the congregation venerated the Holy Wood which is kept in the case of King Justin.

At the end of the service, the Patriarchal entourage returned to the Patriarchate Reception Hall, along with a large crowd of faithful Christians to whom His Beatitude delivered the following address:

“Christ on the cross; let us come together as partakers of His sufferings, so that we may also be born of His glory. Christ in the dead, let us die to sin, that we may live in righteousness... Christ in hades; let us come together to the highest humility, that we may also meet and be exalted and be glorified, forever seeing God and be seen”, says Saint John of Damascus.

Beloved brothers in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The power of the Holy and Life-giving Cross deemed us worthy to celebrate in this place of its finding under Saint Helen, but also in the place of the Crucifixion of our God and Saviour Christ in the Horrendous Golgotha, the so-called “Skull Place”, its Universal Exaltation.

The truly great mystery of the divine Providence, as well as of the Holy Cross, whose “word to those who are lost is a blessing, to those who are saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18), cannot be understood by human logic, but only through faith and the purity of the soul, as Saint John of

Damascus says: "Great grace, admittedly, the mystery of the divine Providence will not be understood, it will be believed only by one who is free, of a pure mind, out of fear of God and with a desire to be given."

The Cross is the sacrificial power of God, and this is because in the Cross and through the Cross the great mystery of man's salvation was accomplished. It is written; "God our king, centuries ago, worked salvation in the midst of the earth" (Ps. 73,12). The Son of God, "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (Eph. 5:2). Because of this, all who obey him "he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him"(Hebrews 5:9).

The Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is "the beauty of the Church", "the support of the faithful", and the "weapon against the devil". The Cross is the trophy of Christ, through which the demons flee. "The cross is a trophy for Christ; Once it was stood up, forever it is woe to the demons who are driven away", says Saint John of Damascus.

Saint Cosmas, bishop of Maiouma, extolling the sermon of today's great feast, of the exaltation of the Holy Cross, exclaims hymnologically: "O Theotokos, thou art a mystical paradise, which being untilled hath blossomed forth Christ, by Who the life-bringing Tree of the Cross was planted in the earth. In worshipping Him now through its exaltation, thee do we magnify" (Ode 9, Heirmos).

In other words, Jesus Christ, as perfect God, is the one who planted "the tree of life in Paradise" (Genesis 2:9). He Himself planted "the life-giving tree of the Cross on earth" from the pure blood of the Virgin and Theotokos Mary during His incarnation.

The life-giving tree is none other than the wood of the Cross, on which he was crucified and in which "we have redemption

through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1, 7- 8). Through the cross, we worship “Christ our God, who was lifted up on the cross and sacrificed for our sins”. Let us honour and magnify the most blessed Theotokos and Mother of God, who gave birth to our God, the Word and our Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory and the kingdom now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen. Many happy returns”.

After this address, His Beatitude blessed all present. He awarded the honorary distinction of the Superior Brigade of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre to the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Vlatadon, His Eminence Bishop Nikiforos of Amori in recognition and appreciation of the accomplishments of the centre of this Monastery of outstanding theological and uniting work of the Churches and the provision of hospitality to students of the Patriarchate in it.

The multitudes of the faithful, receiving the Patriarchal blessing glorified to God for the salvation He provided to the world through the Cross of His Son.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS IN BEIT JALA

On Sunday, September 11/24, 2023, the feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos was celebrated by transference in Beit Jala.

On this feast, the Rum Orthodox Arabic-speaking community of

Beit Jala commemorates that the Theotokos was given to the Ancestors of God Joachim and Anna as a gift for themselves and for the whole of humanity so that Christ our Saviour would be born in the flesh from her.

This feast was celebrated at the beautiful 19th-century Church of the Nativity of the Theotokos.

His Beatitude had a very warm welcoming reception by the Hegoumen of Beit Jala Archimandrite Ignatios, the priests and the scouts.

The Divine Liturgy and all the feast were presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with their Eminences, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Archimandrite Ieronymos and the Priests of the community, Fr Boulos, Fr Yusef and Fr Elias, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The chanting was delivered by the community Byzantine choir as the service was attended by a large congregation praying in joy and reverence.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following sermon:

“Thy Nativity, O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy the whole world; for from thee hath dawned the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, annulling the curse and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting” (Apolytikion).

Beloved brothers in Christ,

Dear Christians

The grace of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Most High, who overshadowed the Virgin Mary, brought us all together in this magnificent Church, to celebrate her Nativity, listening to the exhortation of our Holy Father John of Damascus: “Come

all nations, every race of people and every language and age and every position, let us celebrate with joy the nativity of the universal joy”.

It is indeed an event of universal rejoicing the Nativity of our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, because as the hymnographer says to her “In thee O immaculate Maiden is the mystery of the Trinity praised and glorified. For the Father was well pleased and the Word dwelt among us, and the Divine Spirit overshadowed Thee” (Matins, Ode 6, Glory).

The Nativity of the Theotokos Mary marked the “beginning of salvation for the world”, that is, the lifting of the curse on the one hand and the abolition of death on the other. Both Adam and Eve were under the law of sin, curse and death due to their disobedience to God’s commandments. On the contrary, through the gracious Virgin Mary, who became the Mother of the Sun of Righteousness, the joy of Christ was proclaimed to the whole world.

The Nativity of the Theotokos brought joy to the whole world because as Saint John of Damascus says, the Virgin Mary gave birth to the world of a treasure of goods that cannot be taken away because with Her the Creator transfigured/transformed all nature through the human nature of Christ. That is to say, if the man who stands in the middle of mind and matter is the link of all visible and invisible creation, the word of God since He was united with the nature of men, through Him has been united with all creation.

The birth of the Virgin Mary heralded the freedom not only of man but also of all creation from the slavery of decay and death. This is why Saint Paul preaches saying: “ Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom. 8,21).

Moreover, the birth of the Virgin Mary revealed the energy of

“the mystery hidden from ages and from generations”, (Col. 1,26) ” Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel”, (Is. 7:14) exclaims the prophet Isaiah. This so-called Son Emmanuel is none other than the manifested Christ, as the hymnographer says: “We faithfully celebrate and worship thy holy nativity, which came of a promise, O immaculate Virgin, whereby we were delivered from the curse of our first father when Christ appeared” (Matins, Ode 7, Canon 2, Troparion 1).

Also noteworthy is the use of the Prophet Amos saying: “In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen” (Amos 9:11). In this prophetic word of Amos, Saint Cyril of Alexandria discerns the resurrection in Christ of the human tabernacle, that is, of the human flesh, saying: “For we are a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) according to the scriptures, for his sake; and death dug down (Amos 9:11) all [people’s] tabernacles, and God the Father in Christ rebuilt them.”

The hymnographer of the Church at the birth of the Virgin Mary discerns the pattern of the salvation of man in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ saying: “The prophecy of the Lord is fulfilled, let it be; I will raise up the tabernacle of the holy David, in you, They were prefigured, through whom the companion of men, in the flesh of God, was incarnated.”

The birth of the Virgin Mary, who protected her chastity and virginity, has a special significance for the Church of Christ, which according to the great Paul is the body of Christ (Col. 1, 18) and he is the saviour of the body of the Church (Eph. 5:23).

In other words, in the person of the most blessed Mary, we consider the mystery of the divine Providence, according to which “the whole of earthen men was incarnated in the flesh of

the pure blood of the Ever-Virgin Mary under the Son and Word of God the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ. "It was well-pleasing to the Father so that not from a physical connection, but from the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin, supernaturally the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us", preaches Saint John of Damascus.

Today, my beloved brothers, our Holy Church calls us through the righteous Joachim and Anna, who were ambassadors of the world's salvation with the birth of their All-Holy daughter Theotokos, to celebrate this great gift of our God to mankind and assign all hope in Him. And after the hymnographer, we say: "O Adam be made new again; our mother Eve, be magnified, ye Prophets with the Apostles, dance in delight with the righteous. Today the world is filled with joy common to Angels and to men: From chaste and righteous Joachim and godly Anna is born now the Theotokos and Virgin" (Exapostilario 2). Alone, and only her introduced Christ into the world for the salvation of our souls.

Many happy returns and blessed the new year of the very goodness of the Lord. Amen".

After the Divine Liturgy, a litany took place around the Church accompanied by the Scouts' parade.

After this, a treat reception took place in the hall next to the Church, and finally, a meal where the Patriarchal Entourage, the Mayor of the city and representative of the Head of the Ecclesiastical Supreme Palestinian Committee, Mr Ramzi Khouri were present.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday, August 15/28, 2023, the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos was celebrated by the Patriarchate in the Holy Shrine of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Gethsemane, where her Tomb is also located.

During this feast, the Church remembers that the Theotokos, the mother of Life, died and was buried by the Holy Apostles “in the village of Gethsemane” where the “tomb did not endure death”. Her body, which embodied the Lord of glory, was transferred to the heavens by the Lord, who inhabited her immaculate womb and she remained the “unchangeable hope and protection for all ages”.

This feast was solemnly celebrated and presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolas and Timotheos of Bostra, the Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Makarios of Qatar, with the co-prayer of the Hegoumen of the Shrine Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Fr Dometian from the Moscow Patriarchate, Fr Ioannis from the Patriarchate of Romania, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The service was attended by hundreds of pilgrims, at the changing of Hierodeacon Simeon in Greek and Mr Nabil from Saint James the Brother of God parish in Arabic. The Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras and the Greek Consulate staff also attended the service.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“In giving birth Thou didst preserve thy virginity, in thy dormition thou didst not forsake the world O Theotokos. Thou wast translated unto life since thou art the Mother of Life; and by thine, intercessions dost thou redeem our souls from death” (Apolytikion of the feast).

Beloved brothers in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The Grace of the Holy Spirit brought us all together from the ends of the earth, in this Tomb of the Theotokos to honour and praise the Dormition of the most praised and most glorious Blessed Lady of ours the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, as the choir of the holy Apostles of old.

“The greatly honoured choir of the Lord’s wise Apostles,” the hymnographer says, “hath wondrously assembled to gloriously bury thine undefiled body, O Theotokos, thou all-hymned Maid. Joining them, the multitudes of Angels have gathered, singing holy hymns to praise thy blessed translation, which we celebrate in faith” (Matins, Kathisma 2).

The Translation, that is, the Dormition of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary is none other than her transition from earth to heaven. The Mother of Life, that is, of God the Word and Son of God the Father, and her Son, moved to Life, the cause of Life, to God the Father. Just as the Theotokos preserved her virginity during His birth, so also during her Dormition she preserved the incorruption of her body.

Let’s listen to our holy father Saint John of Damascus saying: Oh, how the source of life is transferred to life passing through death. How does she, who when giving labour overcame the limits of nature, now bends to its laws and submits her immortal body to death. Why must this put off mortality and put on incorruption, since the Master, the Sovereign of nature, did not refuse to submit to death. He dies in the flesh and by death He abolishes death; and by corruption, He

grants us incorruption and makes His death the source of Resurrection.

The moral and spiritual but also saving magnitude of the contribution of the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary to the mystery of the Divine Providence is infinite, a miracle incomprehensible to the human mind. That is why Saint John of Damascus calls the Mother of God "the embodiment of the human race, the pride of all creation".

Graceful and blessed among women (Cf. Luk. 1:28), the Theotokos Mary became the Mother of God, of the Son and Word of God made flesh from her pure blood, and righteously just after her Dormition, appears at the right hand of her Son and God, now dwelling in the city of God in the heavens, as David says to her: "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God" (Ps. 87,2).

We, my beloved brothers, "do not have here a continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13,14), the city of "the living God" (Heb. 12,22), the city of the Son and God of the Immaculate Theotokos our Most Blessed Lady and Ever-Virgin Mary.

And now, standing in front of the holy Tomb of the Theotokos, we beseech her and after the hymnographer, we say: "When thou gavest up thy soul into His hands who once from thee had become man for our sakes, He, as thy Maker and thy God, removed thee unto the joy free of all defilement. With reverence therefore, we piously call thee blest, who alone art pure, untouched by any stain; and as is right, we all confess thee as Theotokos and cry to thee; Pray Christ, to Whom thou hast been translated, to grant our souls His salvation". Amen. Many happy returns".

After the Dismissal, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, who maintains the order and dignity of the Holy Shrine, offered a treat of refreshment at the rectory.

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST THE SAVIOUR AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, August 6/19, 2023, the feast of the Transfiguration was celebrated by the Patriarchate on Mount Tabor where the event of the Transfiguration took place.

During this feast, the whole Church, especially that of Jerusalem, to which Mount Tabor belongs as a place of pilgrimage, remembers singing and glorifying the event of the Transfiguration of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Gospel accounts (Matthew 17:2 – 8 and Mark. 9, 2-8), because, a short time before His passion, the Lord took the three distinguished disciples and went up with them to Mount Tabor, and He was transfigured before them.

As the Fathers of the Church explain, He hid His human nature and revealed, as far as they could see, the glory of His divine nature.

His face shone brighter than the sun and His clothes became white as light and Moses as the representative of the sleeping and Elijah as the representative of the living appeared conversing with Him, while a bright cloud descended upon them and a voice was heard from the Father “This is My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him”.

The Lord revealed this mystery to His disciples, so that, having seen His glory, they would be strengthened at the time

of the cross and to show them what glory the righteous will enjoy in the resurrection of the dead.

In honour of this exquisite mystery, there was an all-night Vigil from midnight to 3 a.m., which was presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Theodosios of Tomis from the Patriarchate of Romania, Metropolitan Nikolaos from the Patriarchate of Georgia, and Archbishop Makarios of Qatar, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Archdeacon Mark and many Priests from Orthodox Churches and Arabic-speaking Priests from the Galilee district. The chanting was delivered by Mr Angelos Gianopoulos in Greek on the right and Priest George from the Metropolis of Elia in Arabic on the left from the Byzantine choir of the blessed Archimandrite Philotheos. The vigil was attended by tens of thousands of pilgrims from various Orthodox countries who went up the mountain on foot due to the unacceptable restrictive measures by the Israeli police.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude blessed the grapes and delivered the following Sermon in Greek and Arabic:

“Thou wast transfigured on the mountain, O Christ our God, showing to Thy disciples Thy glory as each one could endure. Shine forth Thou on us who are sinners all, Thy light ever-unending, through the prayers of the Theotokos. Light-bestower, glory to Thee”.

Beloved brothers in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims,

The divine Grace of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, brought us all to this Holy Mount Tabor, so that we may thankfully celebrate His Transfiguration, listening to the call of the hymnographer saying: “Behold, we ascend to the mountain of the Lord, and in the house of our God, that we may behold the

glory of His Transfiguration, glory as the only begotten of the Father, so that we may receive light, and being born together in the spirit, let us praise the Trinity forever and ever”.

The Transfiguration of our Saviour Christ is an event, during which the greatness of the Mystery of the divine Providence, the mystery of the salvation of man, the “mystery hidden from the ages in God” was revealed in all its depth and breadth (Eph. 3.9).

The second great mystery of godliness, (1 Tim. 3:16) is Christ manifested in the flesh, “who in the form of God is not raptured, he is equal to God, but he emptied himself in the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men and being found in the form of a man, he humbled himself by becoming subject to death, death on the cross”, as Saint Paul preaches.

This confession of the Apostle Paul expresses with precipitation and interprets the words of the hymnographer for the reason of the transfiguration of Christ: “On the mount Thou wast transfigured, and Thy disciples, as much as they could bear, beheld Thy glory, O Christ our God; that when they should see Thee crucified, they would know Thy Passion to be willing, and would preach to the world that Thou art in truth the Effulgence of the Father” (Kontakion).

In other words, during the Transfiguration of the Lord on this high place, the revelation of His theanthropic hypostasis, the mixing of the two natures in the person of Christ, but also the revelation of the glory of God, that is, the dawning of God, was born. The ‘Effulgence of the Father’ means the radiance or the shine as the hymnographer says: “The changeless nature, having been mingled with mortal nature, **shone forth past all telling**, and in part revealed unto the Apostles the Light of Its own Immaterial Godhead” (Ode 5, Troparion 3). And again, “being perfect God, Thou becamest perfect mortal, mingling manhood with the entire Godhead in

Thine own Hypostasis, which Moses and Elias saw in his two natures on Mount Tabor" (Ode 3, Canon 2, Troparion 3).

Saint Gregory of Nyssa, interpreting the words of Paul "Christ as the effulgence of the glory of God" (Cf. Heb. 1,3) says "Just like the ray of light is related to the sun and to the lamp, likewise the effulgence of light is related to the Father". This example is used by the Holy Father Gregory of Nyssa, to make it clear that the Son and Word of God is the same as the Father and the Holy Spirit, therefore the "Father's dawned light" is the inaccessible and uncreated light of the Holy Trinity.

Saint John of Damascus, dazzled by the mystery of the Transfiguration, says: because the Word 'became flesh' and the flesh the Word, even though it had not come out of His divine nature. A miracle that surpasses all understanding. The body did not acquire the glory from without, but it went from within itself from the inexplicably united with Him during the existence of the transcendental divinity of God the Word.

It is worth noting that during the Transfiguration of Jesus in this holy place, "the face of Jesus shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light" (Matthew 17,2). On the other hand, "Behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice from the cloud said: This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Matthew 17:5).

According to Saint John of Damascus, the bright cloud that overshadowed Jesus symbolizes the light of the Holy Spirit. "Clouds and light overshadowed the aurora of the Spirit." Regarding the voice from the cloud, Saint John of Damascus says: "Voice of the Father from the cloud of the Spirit was heard"; "This is my beloved Son". "This is the man we see, the man born yesterday, the humble one we associate with, whose face now shines." As for the divine command "Hear ye him," he says: "The one receiving Him, receives me, the one who sent me, not in a despotic way but in a paternal way. As a man is

sent away, as God abides in me, I am in him. He who does not honour my only begotten and beloved Son does not honour the Father, who sent Him." "Hear ye him", has eternal life words. This is the conclusion of the completion, this is the power of the mystery." [And in more detail: Whoever accepts Him, Jesus Christ, accepts Me who sent Him not as Lord (authority) but as Father. He is sent as a man, in whom as God he dwells in me and I in Him. Whoever does not honour my only begotten and beloved Son, does not honour the Father, I who sent him. "He is the one you should listen to" because he has the words of eternal life. This is the conclusion of what is happening, this is the power of the mystery of the Transfiguration].

It is precisely this power, that is the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we too, my dear brothers, are called to see, not with physical eyes, but with the mental eyes of a pure mind and a pure heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they see God" (Matthew 5:8), says the Lord. To this end we are again called to imitate Christ's disciples, who "were heavy with sleep", they were overcome by heavy sleepiness, but in a little while they woke up and saw His glory. " and when they were awake, they saw his glory" (Luke 9:32).

So let us also, my beloved brothers, shake off from ourselves the sleep of ignorance; standing up after the hymnographer, let us say: " Shine forth Thou on us who are sinners all, Thy light ever-unending, through the prayers of the Theotokos. Light-bestower, glory to Thee". Many peaceful returns!"

In the morning, a Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the Central Church of the Transfiguration, presided over by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, with the co-celebration of Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks and Arabic-speaking Presbyters and the participation of local Orthodox pilgrims.

At midday, the renovator of the Monastery and of the icons of the Holy Church, Hegoumen Archimandrite Hilarion, offered a meal to the Patriarchal and Episcopal entourages and many

others.

The Feast of the Transfiguration of the Saviour was celebrated in the Holy Shrine of Gethsemane with a Divine Liturgy presided over by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolas, along with the Priests of the Holy Shrine and the Hierodeacon Eulogios at the attendance of faithful pilgrims, and of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

After the Divine Liturgy, a reception was hosted by His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Hellenoupolis at the rectory.

It was also celebrated with Vespers in the evening and Divine Liturgy in the morning in the Holy Church of the Transfiguration in Ramalah, presided over by the Most Reverend Archbishop Christophoros of Kyriakoupolis, along with the priests of the Church under the chanting by the Community Choir and the participation in prayer of the local believers.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF SAINT JOHN THE NEW HOZEVITE ASCETIC AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday, July 28/ August 10, 2023, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of our Holy Father John the new Hozevite from Romania, at the Holy Monastery of Hozeva, located at the bank of Brook Chorath, near Jericho.

On this feast, the Church, and especially the Church of

Jerusalem commemorates that Saint John came to the Holy Land from Romania in the middle of the 20th century, and lived in utmost asceticism and humility at the Holy Monasteries of the Jordan River area, and in that of Saints George and John the Hozevites, he slept in peace and was deemed worthy to work miraculous signs, that is why he was canonized among the saints by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 2016.

The feast of the Dormition of Saint John was celebrated with an all-night vigil at the Holy Monastery of Hozeva, and the Hegoumen and renovator of the Monastery, Archimandrite Constantine welcomed H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, who presided over the vigil with the following address:

“Blessed Father and Master,

The glorious feast of Saint John the New Hozevite, who came from Romania, has dawned for another year. The holy hymnographer characterizes him very successfully as the father of peace and silence and of prayer.

If we delve into the above characterizations, we will clearly perceive the work of each Monk, who, through his silent preaching, renounces the entire world. The monk leaves the world not motivated by hatred, but by love for God first and for his fellow man. He listens to the misery and pain of his brothers and effectively helps through prayer and almsgiving. And how does the monk perceive the world one could ask. But precisely through quietness and silence and prayer”, which were dominant throughout the life of the honoured Saint.

God does not ask the monks to go out into the world to help people walk, but He asks them to give them the light with their experience to lead them to eternal life. Should not the lighthouses always be placed on the rocks? What; should they go to the cities to be added to the traffic lights? The lighthouses have a different mission, the traffic lights have

another. The monk is not a traffic light to be placed in the city at one end of the street and to light the passers-by so that they do not stumble. It is a distant Lighthouse, set high on the rocks, which with its flashes illuminates the seas and oceans so that the ships can be guided and reach their destination towards God”.

Blessed Father and Master,

Being such a man, a torch flamboyant in life, Sant John even after his dormition, through his intercessions, helps, comforts, inspires, sweetens the pain, and heals the illnesses of souls and bodies, as testified by the thousands of pilgrims of every race and language, who visit him, but as we also testify that as we have been greatly benefited by the Saint many times.

Welcome!

Let us commence the feast!”

Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolias and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina. The chanting was delivered by Leonidas Doukas, Christos Stavrou, Gregorios Zarkos, Nikolaos Papadimitriou, Vasilios Papadimitriou, Pavlos Papadimitriou, as the service was attended by monks of the Monastery and other Monasteries from Jericho and Jerusalem.

His Beatitude delivered the following sermon before the Holy Communion:

“For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light (Ps. 36,9).

Because You, Lord, are the source of life and with Your own light we will see the true light, exclaims the psalmist.

Beloved brothers and fathers in Christ,

The Grace of the Holy Spirit, who enlightened and sanctified and directed the footsteps of the holy Prophets Helijah of Thesbis and John the Forerunner in this holy place of Hozeva, brought us all together so that we solemnly honour the memory of our holy Father John the New Hozevite.

Our Holy Father John had been seized by Divine zeal since his childhood, left his homeland Romania and came to the Holy Land, where he retreated and hid himself like another Elijah in the caves of Brook Chorath, near the River Jordan (3 Kings 17:2-3) and where Saint George from Leukara of Cyprus founded his Monastery, which became a fountain of divine healings for those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ who said, ““He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7,38).

This living water is none other than the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Son of God and our Saviour Christ according to the testimony of the Evangelist John (John 7, 39). This very Spirit is the source of light, as 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).

On this word of the Lord, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says: “Whoever follows me, i.e. whoever walks in the footsteps of my teachings will not be in the dark but will obtain “the light of life”, i.e. he will achieve the revelation/manifestation of the mysteries concerning me and the revelation, able to lead to eternal life”.

And we ask ourselves, what is eternal life? “Eternal life is the transcendence of the death of corruption, that is, of sin through the death of incorruption, that is, the death of the Risen Christ. In this death of Christ, our Holy Father John became a communicant and sharer, who listened to the order of Saint Paul saying: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: just

as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so, we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6,3-5).

Our sanctified Father John not only walked in newness of life but also fore-tasted the future resurrection of Christ, as his incorruptible and fragrant whole-body relic testifies before our eyes.

The incorruption of his body was achieved by the spirit-bearing John, listening and applying in theory and practice, the exhortation of Saint Paul: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Romans 12,1). Interpreting this word of Paul, Saint Chrysostom says: "What is rational worship? The things of the soul, the things of the Spirit (God is Spirit, and those who worship Him, shall worship Him in Spirit and Truth), (John 4:24); what is not seen in the body, what is not seen in the organs, is not in the places, which are leniency, sobriety, mercy, non-judgment, long-suffering, humility... "I want mercy and not sacrifice" (Hesiah 6:6)... and there are other miracles, indeed the holocausts, the bodies of the holy martyrs; there is a saint and a soul and body; that smell of fragrance is great". [And in more detail; what is rational worship? Those that are offered with the soul, with the spirit (because the Lord said "God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him, do so in Spirit and in truth"), meaning what is not needed by the body, by organs, by places. And such are; leniency, temperance, charity, non-judgment, tolerance, humility, "I want mercy and not sacrifice"... however, there are other sacrifices, the real holocausts, the bodies of the holy Martyrs. Both the soul and the body are holy there, they have a great fragrance.

Indeed, my beloved brothers, our celebrated Father John loved

God with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his mind (cf. Matt. 22,37), thus becoming a sacrifice pleasing to God. Because even the psalmist exclaims, "God is wonderful in His saints" (Psalm 67:36).

The Father of the Church, Saint Chrysostom, points out the value and power of rational worship, which leads the faithful Christian to the purification of the heart (God, create in me a clean heart – Psalm 50,12) and consequently to incorruption, says: "You can too if you want this sacrifice to be repeated... Let your body die and crucify, and you also shall receive the crown of this martyrdom", [and simpler; you can too if you want to offer your body as an instrument and then will you yourself receive the crown of this martyrdom].

Our holy Church of Jerusalem boasts of boasting in Christ (Rom. 15,17), because the Monastery of Hozeva, by the intercessions of the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and of the today honoured Saint John the New, continues to be a lodging of the holy and righteous men of God, and those who practised and are practising their monastic striving in this Monastery and Lavra "these are shining lamps everywhere on earth", according to Saint Chrysostom.

We thank the Holy Triune God and after Saint Paul, we say: "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen" (Eph. 6:24). Many happy returns."

After the dismissal of the vigil, there was a monastic meal.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE PROPHET ELIJAH IN THE COMMUNITY OF MAALOULE

On Saturday, July 22/August 5, 2023, the feast of the prophet Elijah was celebrated by the Patriarchate in his Holy Temple, in the village of Maaloule, near Nazareth.

This Holy Church belonged to the Greek-Orthodox Arabic-speaking Community of Maaloule, it was abandoned due to the events during the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, and it was maintained during the last years by the Patriarchate and His Eminence the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth with the funding of the Hegoumen of Tabor Archimandrite Hilarion, with the permission of the Israeli army and a Divine Liturgy is celebrated in it during the feast of the Prophet Elijah.

In this well-preserved Church, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, and their Eminences, the Metropolitans, Kyriakos of Nazareth and Isychios of Kapitolias, and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Fr. Simeon of the Holy Metropolis of Nazareth, at the chanting of the Acre Byzantine choir and that of Nazareth, as the service was attended by many Arabic-speaking faithful Christians, descendants of the founders of the Church and others from Nazareth.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“When thou wast united unto our God through thy virtue and unspotted life, O Prophet of renown, and hadst for this cause received from Him authority and power, then thou didst change creation as seemed good to thee, and by thy will didst shut

the gates of rain on high; and thou didst bring fire down from above, wholly consuming and impious. Do thou entreat Christ the Saviour that our souls be saved" (Matins, praises, Troparion 1).

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

"The incarnate Angel and the prophet's summit and boast, Elijah the glorious", has gathered us all in this holy place to celebrate his holy commemoration of his fiery ascension into the heavens in Eucharist.

Praising the character of Elijah of Thesbis, Sirach says about him: "Then Elijah arose, a prophet like fire, and his word burned like a torch. He brought a famine upon them, and by his zeal he made them few in number. By the word of the Lord he shut up the heavens, and also three times brought down fire. How glorious you were, Elijah, in your wondrous deeds! Whose glory is equal to yours?" (Sirach 48,1-4).

Saint James the Brother of God, referring to the power of the righteous man's prayer says in his catholic epistle: "The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest" (James 5,16-18).

And Luke and Mark the Evangelists mention the presence of the Prophet Elijah during the Lord's Transfiguration on Mount Tabor: "Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one[a] on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus" (Mark 9,2-4/ Luke 9,28-30).

The conversation among Elijah, Moses and Jesus testifies to the fact that Christ is the Lord of the Law of Moses and of the prophets and Moses appears as the representative of the Law, while Elijah is the representative of the prophets according to the interpretation of Origen and of Saint Cyril of Alexandria. "Moses appears as the man of the Law, while Elijah as that of the prophets; for He [Christ] is the Lord of the Law and of the Prophets".

Elijah was distinguished to the extent that he was the only one of the prophets, after Moses to converse with the Transfigured Christ, the Christ that they both knew on Mount Sinai; Moses knew Him as "fire and steam and darkness", while Elijah like "fine breeze of thin air" (3 Kings 19,22). They saw God with their own eyes, in the Transfigured Jesus Christ on Mount Tabor, becoming the exception to the Lord's word to His disciples: "Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it" (Matt. 13,17).

Indeed, my dear brothers and sisters, Elijah from Thesbis was especially favoured by God. And this was because as the hymnographer says: "When thou wast united unto our God through thy virtue and unspotted life, O Prophet of renown, and hadst for this cause received from Him authority and power, then thou didst change creation as seemed good to thee, and by thy will didst shut the gates of rain on high; and thou didst bring fire down from above, wholly consuming and impious. Do thou entreat Christ the Saviour that our souls be saved" (Matins, praises, Troparion 1).

This authority was also received by Christ's disciples and saints, as Saint Luke the Evangelist says: "See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you" (Luke 10,19).

Interpreting these words of the Lord, Saint Basil the Great

notes that it is impossible for man to exercise this power, if he has not cleared himself and become fortified by the Lord beforehand, the Lord who said to the apostles, behold I have given you the power to tread on snakes and scorpions.

In other words, my dear brothers and sisters, the one who hears and keeps God's commandments is able through the power of the divine Grace to become a communicant of the power of the prophet Elijah, just like the prophet Elisha, who followed him.

Behold why Saint Paul says, "Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1,27).

It is noteworthy that the prophet Elijah has a special place in both the Old and the New Testament. And this is so because Elijah is recognized as the second forerunner of the presence of Christ, meaning the last days of the Judgment. Regarding the reappearance of zealot Elijah during the last days, the prophet Malachi says about him: "Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes" (Malachi 4,4). Replying to His disciples' question, "Why, then, do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" Jesus replied, "Elijah is indeed coming and will restore all things" (Matt. 17,10-11).

According to the interpretation of the distinguished Church Fathers, the Lord here speaks about His Second Coming, of which Elijah is the forerunner. "I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but they did to him whatever they pleased" (Matt. 17,12). This second Elijah is Saint John the Baptist who came before our Lord Jesus Christ. Saint John the Baptist was very much like Elijah of Thesbis which is why the Scripture calls him "With the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1,17). Interpreting these words, Zigavinos and Origen say: "[The Scripture] named 'spirit' the spiritual gift, while power is the strength. It thus says that he has both the gift and the strength of Elijah".

As for us, who keep fervently the commemoration of the prophet Elijah, let us say along with the hymnographer: "Compassionate Lord, grant Thy people remission of sins and the great mercy, by the intercessions of the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and of the holy glorious prophet Elijah of Thesbis". Amen, Many happy returns."

After the Divine Liturgy, under the shade of the towering pines, a recreational reception was held by those who sustain the Church, Archimandrite Hilarion and those with him, while at lunch the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth hosted a meal for His Beatitude and His Entourage at the Metropolis.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE SYNAXIS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday, June 30 / July 13, 2023, the feast of the Synaxis of the Twelve Holy Apostles was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

By saying "Synaxis" the Church, means the gathering of the faithful in the Holy Churches, in order to commemorate the Twelve Holy Apostles, for the sake of the mission they accomplished, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to preach Christ crucified and resurrected and they "enchanted the whole world".

This feast was celebrated by the Patriarchate in the Holy

Monastery of the Holy Apostles in the city of Tiberias with the Divine Liturgy in the morning, presided over by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and the Archbishop of Aristarchos Constantina, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks and Arabic-speaking Priests from the neighbouring regions of Galilee. The chanting was delivered by Archimandrite Artemios in Greek and by the choir of Acre in Arabic, in the presence of the Consul of Greece in Haifa Mr Constantinos Zenovios and believers of the Galilee region.

To these believers, His Beatitude proclaimed the divine word as follows:

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28,18-20).

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit that has dwelled on the Holy Twelve Apostles has gathered us all today in this place where Jesus appeared after His resurrection, “by the Sea of Tiberias” (John 21,1), to honour their Synaxis.

The Holy Apostles are the foundation of the faithful members of the body of the Church, as Saint Paul says: “Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2,19-20).

And this because the Lord commanded them to first go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, secondly to teach the nations to observe what they had commanded them and thirdly to assure them that this Lord is with of them [the disciples] all the days until the end of the age, (Cf. Matt. 28, 18-20).

These three characteristics of the character of the apostles constitute the apostolic institution of the Church. We say this because the Apostles of Christ received the Grace of the Holy Spirit not morally but essentially. "And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit" (Acts, 13,52) during their sermon in Antioch of Pisidia, the Apostle Luke writes. And to the apostle Peter, the Lord says: "You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of heaven shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

"When the Splendour of the Spirit appeared to you in deed and verity, O wise Apostles, ye all took the fulness of it into yourselves, initiated into lofty teachings in the upper room; and now, as is meet, ye are counted blessed" (Matins, Canon of the twelve, Ode 9, Troparion 2) the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

On the foundations of the group of the Holy Apostles, those chosen by our Savior Christ, the earthly Church in the world was built, having as its citizens the Christians, who are already according to Paul "fellow citizens of the saints and householders of God » (Eph. 2:19) and "on earth they live, but in heaven they rule" according to Diognitos; On the other hand, the rule of it [the Church] in the Holy Spirit was shown, since it is the way of life of piety but also the way of governing of this, based on the Synodical system, established by the Apostles in Jerusalem according to the testimony of the author of the "Acts of the Apostles" the Evangelist Luke, saying: "the Apostles and the Elders came together to see about the word..." (Acts 15,6).

On the other hand, the Apostles were appointed by the Lord as His successors, as the holy Pachomius also says: "God the Word, ... ascending to heaven, preordained [=appointed in advance] His apostles as His successors".

The importance and content of Apostolic Succession for the Church and its salvific work is formulated precisely by Hippolytus of Rome, saying: "The Holy Spirit delivered in the Church, the apostles transmitted to the righteous believers; we, as their successors benefiting from this grace, by participating in the priesthood and teaching and are considered to be guards of the Church".

Indeed, my beloved brothers, the Holy Apostles are considered guardians of the Church, because its special component is "Apostolicity". Let us also hear the Apostle Luke, saying in the Acts of the Apostles: "As they pass through the cities, they deliver to them to keep the doctrines that were appointed by the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem" (Acts 16,4). [And in more detail: as I was passing through the cities I delivered by oral teaching to the believers in them to keep the decisions, which had been definitively judged as the only correct ones by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem].

Notable in this regard is the admonition of the Apostle Paul to his disciple Timothy, saying: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith", (1 Tim. 6, 20-21), "That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us", (2 Tim. 1,14).

Indeed, the Holy Fathers of the Church, gathered in the Holy Spirit, commemorate the "apostolicity" of the Church in the Creed, proclaiming: "I believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church". And this is because the Holy Apostles are those who sit in cities and ordain Elders and Bishops

“shepherd the Church of the Lord and God” (Acts 20,28).

So this is why the Apostles are called by Saint Gregory of Palamas “arch-shepherds or even architects of the common piety and virtue”. This is again why the schism in the body of the One, Holy and Catholic Church is a great sin: because it endangers the stability of the Apostolic succession, whose genuine and authentic bearers are the normally ordained bishops of the local Churches.

We, my dear brethren, who honour the sacred commemoration of the holy and glorious Apostles, let us join the hymnographer in the prayer: “O Good Saviour, Who by nature art the Friend of man and great in compassion, by the divine supplications of Thine all-hymned Virgin Mother, and the intercessions of Thine Apostles Peter and Paul, send unto us from Heaven Thy mercies and succour” (Matins, Canon of the Chief Apostles, Ode 9, Theotokion). Amen. Many happy returns.”

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a reception and a banquet under the well-appointed priest of the Monastery Archimandrite Parthenios.

From Secretariat-General

**THE FEAST OF THE HOLY
APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL AT**

THE PATRIARCHATE

On Wednesday, June 29 / July 12, 2023, the feast of the Holy Glorious and Chiefs of the Apostles Peter and Paul was celebrated by the Patriarchate.

On this feast, the Church honours the Apostle Peter, remembering that he heard the call of the Lord at the Sea of Tiberias and followed Him after his brother Andrew and confessed Him saying: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16,16) and denied Him, but he repented and proclaimed Him to the gathered multitudes on the day of Pentecost and in Judea, Antioch and finally in Rome, where he died by death on the cross.

The Church also honours the apostle Paul, a former persecutor, but enlightened on his march to Damascus and called to the apostolic office and preaching Christ and labouring for all others through Christ and being able to say: " I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20) and wrote his 14 letters and ascended to the third heaven.

The feast of the honour of the two Chiefs of the Apostles was celebrated in the Holy Church in Capernaum by the sea, founded by the late Patriarch Damianos of Jerusalem in 1931.

The Divine Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with their Eminences, the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, and the Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Archimandrite Sillas and Priests from the Galilee district, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Dositheos. The chanting was delivered by His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba with the choir of Beer Sheva in Greek, Russian, Arabic and Romanian, and by the Acre Byzantine choir, without Fr Philotheos. The service was attended by many faithful Christians, Greeks, Russians from Galilee and others.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation:

“Let us all praise with sacred hymns Peter and Paul the men of God, the foremost of the Apostles and the bright lights of the whole world; the preachers of the holy Faith, the trumpets of theology, revealers of divine decrees, the pillars of the august Church and the destroyers of error” (Matins, Exaposteilarion), the hymnographer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and Pilgrims

The most sacred grace of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul has gathered us all in this holy place of the biblical seaside town of Capernaum to celebrate their commemoration.

The chiefs of the Apostles, Peter and Paul, are especially honoured by our Holy Church because they were called by the Lord; Peter of faith, “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” (Matt. 16,18), while Paul as a chosen vessel, “But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9,15).

Both of them were full of the Holy Spirit and the Divine Grace, just like the rest of the Apostles, Peter, however, confessed the divinity and sonship of Jesus saying: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16,16). “Through the addition of the article [the Son], he confessed Him to be the genuine Son of God by nature”, Saint Chrysostom interprets. “He did not say this without the article, but with the article ‘the’ Son, therefore, He is the one and only...being born of the same essence of the Father”, Theophylaktos comments.

Paul received special gifts and revelations from God as he says: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12,2-4).

Peter's correct proclamation of faith and confession of Jesus Christ served as the stone upon which the Church is built, as the Ark of salvation of our souls "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you" (1 Peter 1,9-10), Saint Peter preaches.

And Paul's proclamation, "But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. 15,13-14), became the cornerstone upon which the faith of Christ crucified and risen from the dead was founded, as expressed, apostolically, theologically and in doctrine by the Holy God-bearing Fathers of the Church, through the Holy Spirit in the Ecumenical Councils, according to the precise "form of doctrine" (Romans 6,17), which is the rule of the Christian teaching, as Saint Paul says.

It is also noteworthy that the apostolic preaching and the Christian teaching of both Peter and Paul were not limited to the Jews only, but were extended especially towards the nations, namely the idolaters, following the Lord's command, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28,19). Saint Paul, therefore, confesses that he was called by God, "that I might preach him among the heathen" (Gal. 1,16). Moreover, he says to the Christians of the nations, "For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the

apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office" (Romans 11,13).

Indeed, my dear brethren, Saint Paul glorified, and honoured his ministry around the nations, preaching and proving at the same time that the Incarnate God the Word Who became man, the Son of God and our Lord Jesus Christ is "the light of the world" (John 8,12), "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14,6) and the freedom; "and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3,17). That is why Paul preaches, "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God" (1 Cor. 3,19). Similarly, Peter says, "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" (2 Peter 1,16).

Both Peter and Paul became eye-witnesses and seers of God's glory and majesty, and they are an example of repentance for the sinners, as the hymnographer exclaims: "As example of conversion, Thou hast given to them that sin Thy two faithful Apostles, Lord: the one said he knew Thee not t Thy holy Passion, but again repented; the other fiercely strove against and persecuted the preachings of Thy Name; and both of them became the chiefest of the company of Thy friends, O my Jesus Almighty Lord, Thou divine Saviour of our souls" (Small Vespers, sticheron 3).

My dear brethren, as we honour today the chiefs of the Apostles and teachers of the universe, we are called to imitate their repentance, as Saint Gregory Palamas urges us, beseeching their intercessions, along with those of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, for the salvation of our souls. Amen. Many happy returns!"

After the Divine Liturgy the renovator of the Monastery Monk Eirinarchos hosted a reception and a festal meal with fish from Tiberias Sea.

From Secretariat-General