

THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM OFFICIATES IN TURAN COMMUNITY, NEAR TIBERIAS

On Sunday, the 5th/18th of September 2016, His Beatitude Theophilos of Jerusalem led the divine Liturgy at St George church of the Rum Orthodox Arabic-speaking Community of the town of Turan, near the Tiberian sea and the city of Kana, numbering approximately 700 members.

The divine Liturgy was performed in memory of St Zacharias the Prophet, father of the Forerunner, and on the occasion of the completion of the Community's church on behalf of the Patriarchate.

Co-officiating were Metropolitan Kyriakos Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of former Zambia, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the head of the Community, f. Spyridon, and Hierodeacon Markos acting as Archdeacon. The Nazareth and Turan Choirs sang for the Orthodox faithful attending in piety and joy.

To enhance their Christian Orthodox feelings, His Beatitude preached the word of God during Communion, saying that Christ is the head of the body of the Church for we are "members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones" [Ephesians 5, 30] according to the Apostle Paul. "This", the Patriarch said, "means that the restoration of this church pertains essentially to the restoration of the body of each and every one of us, according to Paul: *Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.* (1 Corinthians 3, 16-17). It is precisely this temple of God that the devil hates and wants to destroy,

prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. (1 Peter 5, 8-9)".

On the conclusion of the divine Liturgy, His Beatitude distributed Jerusalemite blessings among the faithful.

The service was followed by a small reception in the events hall, then lunch hosted by the Community Council, during which the Patriarch addressed attendants in Greek.

"The annunciation of Christ's love and justice, as well as peace and reconciliation, and respect to every human being beyond discriminations constitutes the essential purpose of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem", the Patriarch said, adding: "The dispersed presence of Christian Communities, either large or small in numbers, provides tangible and visible testament to the centuries-long existence of local or indigenous Christians, both in the Holy Land and in the wider region of the suffering Middle East".

The Rum Orthodox Patriarchate is the one that guarantees the Christians' identity and stay in their ancestral homes, His Beatitude said, which "was clearly demonstrated during the recent meeting of the General Assembly of the Middle East Council of Churches in Amman, Jordan".

In closing, Patriarch Theophilos thanked the Very Reverend Archimandrite Timotheos, for tirelessly and with self-sacrifice serving the Christian Community in Turan, as well as to all those having worked for the completion of the restoration works, especially Archimandrite Hilarion, hegumen at the Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Saviour on Mount Tabor, and the contractor, Mr Nander Nassar. He then offered an icon of Theotokos to the Community and hieratic vestments for f. Spyridon.

From the Secretariat-General

httpv://youtu.be/9aPDLTjx6_8

<httpv://youtu.be/wFSYv-0yKAI>



START OF THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR AT ST SION SCHOOL

On the morning of Monday, the 30th of August/12th of September 2016, the new school year 2016-2017 was launched with a blessing-of-the-water rite at the Patriarchal Hieratical School on the Hill of St Sion. The rite was performed by H.B. Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, in the presence of the Greek Consul-General to Jerusalem, Mr Christos Sofianopoulos, the President of the School Board, His Eminence Isidoros of Hierapolis, the Elder Secretary General, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Zambia, Hegumen Constantinos of Hozeva Monastery, Principal N. Souliotis, teachers and students.

At the ceremony, Patriarch Theophilos advised students to be diligent during the new school year and cultivate the Christian ethos in preparation of their participation in the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood.

In his address, the Greek Consul-General, Mr C. Sofianopoulos, said that significant national work is performed at the Patriarchal School of Sion, as children are taught the Greek education by means of an especially valuable educational process that promotes the unity of knowledge and faith. "The Greek and ecclesiastical education acquired here", said Mr Sofianopoulos, "is closely linked to the future of our

Patriarchate, for which it constitutes a supreme asset, whilst being a valuable skill for each student, enabling them to tackle, in the best possible way, the many and great contemporary challenges". In closing, the Greek Consul-General pledged support on behalf of the Consulate, in order for the School to carry on achieving its elevated purpose.

The ceremony was followed by reception at the School Office, hosted by the Principal, Mr N. Souliotis.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/0uHiajrcVqk>



11TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

From Tuesday the 24th of August/6th of September 2016 to Thursday the 26th of August/8th of September 2016, the Convention of the 11th General Assembly of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) takes place in Amman, Jordan, at the Royal Hotel, under the protection of His Majesty Abdullah II King of Jordan. The Assembly is hosted by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

In attendance at the meeting were all members of the MECC, namely:

1. **The Orthodox Family**, comprised of the Patriarchates of

Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and the Holy Archbishopric of Cyprus;

2. **The Pre-Chalcedonian Family**, comprised of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Cilicia, the Coptic Orthodox Church of St Mark, Alexandria, and the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch;
3. **The Evangelical Family**, comprised of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, the Coptic Evangelical Church (Synod of the Nile), the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East, the National Evangelical Church in Syria and Lebanon, the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Church in the Near East, the National Evangelical Church of Lebanon, the National Evangelical Church of Kuwait;
4. **The Catholic Family**, comprised of the Syrian Catholic Church of Antioch, the Maronite Syrian Church of Antioch, the Melkite (Greek) Catholic Church of Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem, the Chaldean Catholic Church and the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The General Assembly was so far headed by His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, as Chairman of the Orthodox Family; the Armenian Catholic Patriarch Aram of Cilicia for the Pre-Chalcedonian Church; Lutheran Bishop Munib Younan for the Evangelical Family; and Patriarch Ignatius Youssef of Antioch and All the East for the Catholic Family. Maronite Fr. Michel Jalakh serves as General Secretary of the MECC.

Each Orthodox Church was represented by its Head, namely: Patriarch Theodoros of Alexandria, Patriarch John of Antioch, Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem and Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus.

The deliberations of the General Assembly began on Tuesday the 24th of August/6th of September 2016.

Following a prayer allowed in such meetings, and the National

Anthem of Jordan, His Beatitude Theophilos addressed participants in English, see link: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2016/09/06/26263>

Addresses were also delivered by the other three Chairmen of the MECC, namely Patriarch Aram of Cilicia, Patriarch Ignatius Youssef of the Roman Catholic Church and Bishop Munib Younan of the Lutheran Church.

Other heads of Churches also took the podium, e.g. the Patriarch of Alexandria, the Archbishop of Cyprus and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew – the latter's speech delivered by Metropolitan Benedictus of Philadelphia.

On the conclusion of the opening ceremony, deliberations began, regarding administrative issues, the assignment of roles, the setting up of Committees e.g. the Representation Committee for a four-year tenure, the Nomination Committee, Committee of Finances, Mass Media Committee etc.

The report of the MECC General Secretary, Fr. Michel Jalakh took the stage at the event and may be reached here: www.mecc.org

Along general lines, the report covered the current situation of the MECC, one of administrative and structural healing with the support of the Churches of the aforementioned Families towards repayment of debts, the conclusion of trials running against it, restoration of the donors' trust, creation of a new website (www.mecc.org), the continuation of the dialogue between Christianity and Islam, and humanitarian help to Syrian refugees by means of the collaboration between the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Church of Cyprus, with the help of the Patriarchate's Office in Amman, directed by Miss Wafa Goussous – who has hosted eight out of eleven meetings of the MECC Central Committee and General Assemblies.

Fr Jalakh extended his gratitude to all four Chairmen, as well as the King of Jordan, pointing out that the MECC remains the

valid institution for the voice of Christians in the Middle East and their protection against manifestations of violence in the region and elsewhere, and towards reconciliation, peace and justice.

During the second session of deliberations, remarks, both positive and negative ones, were expressed in relation to the report, followed by addresses of partners and financial supporters.

The first day of deliberations closed with dinner hosted by Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem, having Prince Emir Ghazi as a guest. His Beatitude's address, in English, may be reached here: <http://www.jp-newsgate.et/en/2016/09/06/26265>

From the Secretariat-General



REMARKS AT LUNCHEON 11TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE M.E.C.C., AMMAN, JORDAN.

6th of September 2016

Your Royal Highness,

Your Holiness,

Your Beatitudes,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Distinguished Delegates to this Assembly, Sisters and Brothers,

As we gather for this luncheon, we experience the truth of the words of the Psalmist:

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

(Ps.132 <133>: 1)

It is our honor and pleasure to welcome you to this blessed gathering here in Amman, which is a crossroads of the historic religious cultures that have formed and nurtured our common home in the Middle East for millennia. Here the monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as well as others, have dwelt together for so long.

We wish to welcome especially to this luncheon His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi. We thank you, Your Highness, for all that you have done and continue to do, in the crucial work of dialogue and reconciliation, and your presence with us is a tangible reminder that we are not alone.

It is also for us a special privilege to be in the midst of such highly respected Church leaders, as well as consummate diplomats.

We are thankful to Almighty God that in the midst of the turmoil that rocks our region we have managed to gather here to send a message to the world that we are determined to remain and to flourish in the land of our forebears. They established the foundations of our present civilization, and articulated and lived its values, and we are an affirmation of

the undeniable reality of Ex Oriente Lux – that the Light comes from the East to a world wrapped in darkness and despair.

This gathering is a sign of hope that, even in the face of all the threats to our region and our peoples, there is the capacity to restore peace, co-existence and Justice among our various ethnic and religious communities. The monstrous inhumanity that we see every day has helped us to see once again what we are always trying to tell the world, that we all share a common humanity and a common destiny. And we know that we are not the masters of history or creation, but rather servants.

With this reflection we would like to propose a toast to the success of our Assembly. We pray fervently to our Lord to enlighten our minds, so that we may walk in the steps of His commandments that lead to life.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

**OPENING ADDRESS TO THE 11TH
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE**

MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES.

6th September 2016

Amman, Jordan

Your Holiness Patriarch Tawadros,

Your Beatitudes,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces, Your excellencies

Distinguished Delegates to this Assembly

Ladies and Gendlemen,

It is a joy and an honour to welcome you all to this, the 11th General Assembly of the Middle East Council of Churches. We bring with us to all of you the blessings of the Holy Land and especially of the Holy Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ and the greetings of the Christian community there.

Let the Psalmist have the first words:

Great is the Lord and exceedingly praiseworthy and his greatness has no limits.(Ps. 144(145):3)

We gather here not by virtue of our own strength, but by virtue of God's grace and providence, and we give thanks to God, who is great and exceedingly praiseworthy, who has brought us together from accross our region and the world,

just as the holy Apostles were brought together by the Holy Spirit from the Council in Jerusalem from their ministry among those of many nations and languages. We give God thanks and praise for this sacred opportunity to be together and we commend all our deliberations to his mercy and the sustenance of his excellent greatness.

We live, as we all understand in a new age of *martyria* – in a new time of Christian witness. Christians, along with many other innocent men, women and children, face persecution once again, and once again our *martyria*, our witness, is of ultimate importance for the Churches and for the world.

The *martyria* of the Christian presence in our beloved Middle East has been the living *martyria* of the Gospel of truth, life, love and righteousness. Our *martyria* has been the witness to the Light of which the Scriptures speak so eloquently:

The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light.

And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned. (Matt. 4:16).

This is our spiritual mission as servants of the Gospel and as torchbearers of the Light of Christ. This is our divine calling in the midst of the significant challenges that face us both globally and locally.

We all keenly aware of the reality that we are all experiencing on our door-steps in our beloved homelands. The situation that we face is unprecedented in our life – times, and our response must not be- it cannot be- the response of a cowardly spirit. This is putting it strongly, but we do so because we know that our struggle is not against a human

force. As Saint Paul reminds us in the Epistle to the Ephesians (6:12):

We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

It is this that makes the challenges we face so serious and life-threatening, and it is precisely with this understanding that we as Churches and Christian communities across the Middle East have joined our spiritual forces to spread the message of the goodness of the Lord and His mercy and of hope – the hope of the resurrection, the hope of the new life that comes from the Tomb.

So we affirm the theme of this Assembly to give thanks to the Lord for He is good, for 'His mercy endures for ever', (Ps. 135 (136): 1).

Our Assembly has actually emerged from the fiery crucible, because in the midst of this present time, we have never lost hope and faith. This means that we are now summoned individually and collectively to assume fully and without reserve our responsibilities and moral obligations before our fellow human beings and before God.

Our task is first and foremost, to work with all our heart and all our mind to protect our Christian identity, to ensure the Christian character in the region, and to nourish the roots of our Christian community, so that the Christian presence here may always be vital and vibrant.

This is our responsibility. And this means, among other things, that we cannot and must not expect others to do this for us. As pastors and leaders, it is our obligation to nourish and water our deep roots in this region, so that the Christian presence may continue to flourish. And we do this as Saint Paul encourages us (Eph. 6:13):

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

We are, he says, to gird ourselves with truth, and the breastplate of righteousness. We are to put on our feet the preparation of the Gospel of peace, and take up the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. And we are to do all this with prayer. Herein lies our strength, and with these we shall be able to shoulder those responsibilities and obligations that are rightfully ours to bear.

As we face the dire circumstances in which we find ourselves, we must overcome our human weaknesses. There has never been a place for antagonism of rivalry in the Christian life, and therefore our present circumstances in which our fellow human beings and our communities are living and struggling leave us absolutely no room for such attitudes and behaviours. Evil respects no boundaries, and huge suffering affects us all. Good must have no boundaries, and we must show in our life together the evidence of this. It is right to remind ourselves of this, and to be re-committed at the outset of our work together to this understanding of our common life.

A tangible illustration of this common purpose is the ongoing restoration of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Tomb that is the fruit of consensus that has been reached between our communities after 200 years. If we can come together to save one of the most contested of the Holy Sites, we can certainly come together to accomplish the goals of this Assembly and our common mission. Needless to say, a new consensus among us would be of inestimable inspiration in resolving current disputes.

We consider this Assembly a blessing, because it presents us with the strength and the spiritual means to be on the alert, and not to allow the evil powers, both visible and invisible, to discourage us or make us fainthearted. As Saint Paul

advises in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, (5:14):

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

This is our responsibility to each other.

Now to some specifics of our work.

Given the present situation and the harsh conditions throughout our region, it is imperative that our Assembly focus specifically on the alleviation of the human suffering all around us: the reality of homelessness, migration and starvation; The lack of the basic necessities of life, clothing, and health care; And attention to the rehabilitation from psychological trauma, especially in children and youth.

Most importantly, we must take care not to become entangled in bureaucratic distractions.

We are the community of the self-emptying love of Christ and so we always bear in mind our Lord's example and His commandments. His commandments are clear: we are to love our neighbour, and we are to love our enemy.

These commandments are fundamental for us, if we are to take our place in the re-building of our communities, our societies and our motherlands. We ourselves are firmly committed to the mission of the Middle East Council of Churches that we have been serving and supporting throughout our tenure as the President of the Orthodox Family.

As we begin our Assembly, it would be a serious omission not to express our gratitude to His Majesty King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, who has been instrumental in accommodating, hosting and supporting not only this Assembly, but all our efforts towards peaceful co – existence and reconciliation. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan remains a

shining example in our region of maintaining the natural fabric of mutual good relations between peoples of different faiths, ethnicities and cultures.

We also thank His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi for his presence and his support. And we wish to thank all those governmental agencies and offices that have spared no effort to facilitate our Assembly here in Amman.

We acknowledge with gratitude the many societies, agencies, and groups from the United States, Europe, and the rest of the world who have been supporting and continue to support materially, spiritually, and morally the communities of displaced persons that are hosted here in Jordan. Especially the director and her colleagues of our office here in Amman.

Let us now comment this Assembly and our work together to God. May God bless us in all that we do in His name, and may the work of this Assembly be another positive step forward in our unity in Christ and in the peace of our beloved Middle East. Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM ADDRESSES “RESTORATION, CONSERVATION OF RELIGIOUS MONUMENTS AND SITES OF VENERATION” EVENT

On the afternoon of Wednesday, the 17th/31st of August 2016, an event entitled “Restoration, Conservation of Religious Monuments and Sites of Veneration” was hosted by Metropolitan Timotheos of Bostra at the Exarchate of the Holy Sepulchre in Nicosia, organized by Professor A. Moropoulou, project co-ordinator for the restoration of the Aedicula of the Holy Sepulchre.

The aim of the event was to promote the significance of restoring religious monuments, not only for the monuments as such, but also for the enhancement of environmental management and protection of cultural heritage in the region of the SE Mediterranean and beyond.

In attendance at the event were approximately one hundred guests. Addresses were delivered by H.B. Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem; H.B. Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus – the address read by Assistant Bishop Porphyrios of Neapolis, Director of the Office of the Church of Cyprus in Brussels, in the presence of Assistant Bishop Gregorios of Mesaoria; the Minister of Communications and Works, Mr M. Demetriades; the Minister of Education and Culture, Mr C. Kadis, and others.

In His address, Patriarch Theophilos said that *“Religious Architecture expresses in the best way the profound relation between Religion, as the heart of human existence and humanity’s expectations, but also of the daily life of*

contemporary people". "No one can isolate religion from life", said the Patriarch, "neither can they ignore that its role in contemporary societies is to promote conscience so that it can respond to ongoing requirements for the achievement of peace, in the words of the Apostle Paul: "Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone". [Romans 12, 17-18].

"The initiative of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem", said Patriarch Theophilos, "with the agreed opinion of the other two Christian Communities of the Holy Sepulchre – the Franciscans and the Armenians – for the implementation of the study conducted by the National Technical University of Athens on the conservation and restoration of the Holy Aedicula, underlines the role of the Church in the protection and promotion of the religious heritage of the peoples of the SE Mediterranean, not least the Christian heritage. It also underlines the fundamental contribution of Greek know-how and innovation in this direction".

"Just like you establish Unions and Chambers of Engineers, so are Churches the establishments of Engineers of the spirit", remarked Patriarch Theophilos.

Professor A. Moropoulou took the podium to talk of *"The promotion and protection of religious monuments and sites of veneration as lever of development in the SE Mediterranean".*

During his stay in Cyprus, Patriarch Theophilos visited the Holy Stavropegic Monastery of Machairas, where he was welcomed by the hegumen, Bishop Epiphanius of Ledra. In his address, Bishop Epiphanius referred to the sacred and miraculous icon of the All-holy Theotokos, one of the most ancient icons of Orthodoxy and one of the seventy painted by the Evangelist Luke. *"Every day it emits miracles and healings for all those coming to it in faith", the Bishop said. "And this Monastery, standing for more than eight centuries as part of the History*

of the Island of Cyprus, remains a spiritual fulcrum on the island of the saints”.

At noon of the same day, Patriarch Theophilos paid a formal visit to Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus, followed by lunch. During lunch, Archbishop Chrysostomos made a donation of 10.000 euros for the restoration works underway on the Aedicula of the Holy Sepulchre.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/I6NBSQhe7rs>



THE DORMITION OF THEOTOKOS CELEBRATED IN GETHSEMANE (2016)

On Sunday, the 15th/28th of August 2016, the Dormition of the All-Holy and Ever-Virgin Theotokos was celebrated at the Tomb of the Mother of God in Gethsemane.

This most glorious feast was led, in the evening, by Metropolitan Timotheos of Bostra, having Archimandrite Meletios as hieratic head. On the morning of the feast, His Beatitude Theophilos officiated, having as concelebrants Metropolitans Isychios of Kapitolias and Timotheos of Bostra, Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina and Methodios of Tabor, as well as Metropolitan Joachim of Zambia, and several priests visiting from other Orthodox Churches. The choir sang in Greek, Arabic and Russian on the right, with Archimandrite

Aristovoulos singing on the left. In attendance was the Consul-General of Greece to Jerusalem, Mr Christos Sofianopoulos, the representative of the Greek Government, Mr Terrence Quick, Deputy Minister to the Prime Minister, and a crowd of Christians from Israel and the occupied areas, the Village of the Shepherds-Beit Sahour, Bethlehem and Beit-Jala.

In His sermon, His Beatitude Theophilos said that the Church pays special honours to the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, because she became the par excellence vessel of the Holy Spirit, as attested by the Evangelist Luke: "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee" (Luke 1:35). "No one", the Patriarch added, "*can approach God but through Her and Christ the Mediator, who become God and her Son. Hence why the Melodist said: "A Virgin after giving birth and living after death, O Theotokos, you rescue your inheritance forever". This inheritance is none other than the faithful people of God, those baptized Christians in the name of the Holy Trinity. "Those who are called may receive the eternal inheritance" according to Paul (Hebrews 9:15)"*" the Patriarch added.

On the conclusion of the divine Liturgy, Archbishop Dorotheos of Avila hosted participants to refreshments at the hegumeneion.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/XIFcqg-tZy0>

<httpv://youtu.be/rW-EP3GY1bY>

<httpv://youtu.be/u3HvLqmulso>



THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE SAVIOUR AT THE PATRIARCHATE (2016)

On Friday the 6th/19th of August 2015, the Patriarchate celebrated the Transfiguration of the Saviour in commemoration of the event recounted by the Evangelists (Matthew 17, 1-8), namely that the Lord took with him Peter, James and John and led them up Mount Tabor where He was transfigured, His face shone like the sun, and a bright cloud covered the disciples and Moses and Elijah appeared before them and talked with Jesus, and the voice of the Father was heard saying from the cloud: "This is my Son whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!" and Peter said "Lord, we will put up three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah and we will stay here" – so that by this sight, namely the revelation of His divine nature, the Lord showed the beauty of man before the fall and his ability to reach divinity by grace.

The event was celebrated:

A. On Mount Tabor where a Vigil was observed on the night of the feast before Matins and the divine Liturgy, led by H.B. Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, having as concelebrants Metropolitans Isychios of Kapitolias, Panteleimon of the Bishopric of Veroia, Timotheos of Bostra, Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks i.e. Archimandrite Chrysostomos, hegumen in Kana, and Archimandrite Paisios, Rum Orthodox Arabic-speaking Presbyters and approximately 100 visiting priests from Russia, Greece, Romania and Ukraine, Archdeacon Evlogios and deacon

Markos. The Very Reverend Georgios of the Bishopric of Ilia and the Patriarchal Commissioner in Accra Ptolemais, Archimandrite Philotheos, sang in Arabic for a pious congregation of pilgrims from Greece, Russia, Romania as well as locals from Northern Israel.

To the faithful His Beatitude delivered a sermon in Greek, pointing out the significance of the day as, through His Transfiguration, Christ deified human nature that had been stained by sin, as He became the ruler of the dead and the living through His Resurrection. "Christ" said the Patriarch "by means of His redeeming Passion and Resurrection introduced our own humanity into the kingdom of His divine and brilliant glory". It is precisely this brilliant divine glory that the Lord communicated to His disciples, said Patriarch Theophilos, soon before His Crucifixion. "In other words, Christ demonstrated to His disciples that not only is He a perfect man but He is also a perfect God, of the same substance as the Father and the Holy Spirit".

After the sermon, a crowd of faithful participated in Holy Communion for atonement, blessing and eternal life. Before the *apolyxis*, the Patriarch recited the prayer of the fruit. On the conclusion of mass, hegumen Hilarion hosted the Patriarchal Entourage to a reception at the hegumeneion.

On feast-day, the divine Liturgy was led by Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, having as concelebrants Arabic-speaking Presbyters and Archimandrite Hieronymos, for a pious congregation of Arabic-speaking from Northern Israel.

At noon, Archimandrite Hilarion hosted guests to lunch with fish.

B. In Gethsemane

In Gethsemane, at the Tomb of the Mother of God, the Transfiguration of the Lord was celebrated with a divine Liturgy led by Archbishop Theophanes of Gerassa, having as

concelebrants Hagiotaphite Hieromonks headed by Archimandrite Sergios, for a pious congregation of locals and Greek pilgrims, hosted by the hegumen, Archimandrite Nektarios.

C. In Ramallah

At the Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ramallah, the feast was observed with a divine Liturgy led by Metropolitan Joachim of Zambia for a crowd of Rum Orthodox Arabic-speaking faithful from the city.

On the conclusion of mass, after the blessing of the fruit and the *apolyxis*, Archimandrite Galaktion hosted the Primate to a reception followed by lunch at a town restaurant.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/1YuFG0xmUjo>

<httpv://youtu.be/0Xl05z3H5cI>

<httpv://youtu.be/d5PlKQRZMB0>



HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM VISITS MOUNT ATHOS

On the morning of Saturday, the 24th of July/6th of August 2016, His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, commenced His already announced visit to the Agion Oros.

The Patriarch was accompanied by the Elder Secretary-General,

Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Secretary of the Holy Synod, Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, Archbishop Nektarios of Anthedon, the Exarch in Athens, Archimandrite Damianos, Hierodeacon Markos, and Mr Theodoros Yiangou, Professor in the Faculty of Theology at the Aristotle University of Salonika.

In the early hours of the aforementioned day, His Beatitude left from Salonika for Ouranopolis and from there, at 9:30 am, He sailed for the port of Daphne. Upon His arrival, He was welcomed by the representatives of the Xeropotamos and Simonos Petras Monasteries, fathers Paul and Ieronymos respectively.

From Daphne the Patriarch left for Karies, where He was welcomed by the four representatives of the Holy *Epistasia*, the Executive Committee of Mount Athos. At the entrance to the church of the Dormition of Theotokos, Patriarch Theophilos was welcomed by representatives of all twenty monasteries on Mount Athos.

There, His Beatitude put on a mantle and venerated the Gospel, as cantors of the Monasteries of Vatopedi and Simonos Petras sang the "Axion Esti".

After venerating the icon of Theotokos' Axion Esti, the Patriarch led Doxology.

The President of the Community of Mount Athos, representative of the Vatopedi Monastery, f. Barnabas, then addressed Patriarch Theophilos, and was followed by the Patriarch's reply speech.

In His address, the Patriarch spoke of the beneficial and salvaging work carried on by the Church of Jerusalem through the centuries. "With the help and protection of great emperors, e.g. St Constantine and his mother, St Helena, Theodosius the Great, Justinian and others, the Pan-Orthodox and Pan-Christian holy site, the fulcrum of our faith, the Church of the Resurrection and the Basilica of the Nativity in

Bethlehem, was first built, followed by Monasteries, Cenobia and Lavra". In these sites of veneration, Patriarch Theophilos said, the Church of Jerusalem attests to this day, among heterodox and followers of other religions, to the synergy of Christ's two natures, the divine and the human, in a single hypostasis, according to the Christological doctrine of the Fourth Ecumenical Synod in Chalcedon. In closing, His Beatitude asked for a renewal and strengthening of the spiritual ties between the Agion Oros and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, so that Fathers from Mount Athos may be informed of the Patriarchate's work and that Hagiotaphite Fathers can visit Mount Athos and learn of the cenobitic and ascetic way of life.

After the exchange of gifts, His Beatitude was addressed by the hegumen of the Monastery of Stavronikitas, Hieromonk Nathaniel. In replying, the Patriarch spoke of the inextricable ties between the Mother of Churches and Mount Athos, expressed through the flow of history by monks of Jerusalem and Mount Athos, joined by their ascetic traditions. The ecumenical ascetic figures of the Holy Land, the Patriarch said, cultivated an infertile land with their virtues and stand to this day as role models for the Fathers of Mount Athos too. "The continuous immigration of monks between these two spiritual centres [...] and above all the unparalleled contribution of both these sanctified and spiritual sites towards the formulation of Orthodox worship [...] shortened distances and joined the spirits and hearts of Mount Athites and Jerusalemites", the Patriarch remarked.

From Karies, the Patriarch returned to Daphne and from there He sailed for the Holy Skete of St Anna. There, He was warmly welcomed by Hieromonk Ioannis, hegumen of the cell of the Dormition of Theotokos, and others.

In the evening, the Patriarch walked to the katholikon of St Anna Skete, where He was addressed by the hegumen of the Monastery of the Great Lavra, Hieromonk Prodromos.

The Patriarch went on to lead the night-long vigil for the feast of the Dormition of St Anna, having as co-officiants Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, Demetrios of Lydda, Nektarios of Anthedon and a plethora of Hieromonks, Mount Athites and the Exarch in Athens, Archbishop Damianos. Monks and pilgrims, numbering approximately 500, attended the vigil.

The divine Liturgy was indeed a communion of heaven and earth, a descent of heaven to earth and rise of the earth to heaven; rise of the congregation to the kingdom of God, that was given to earth through the Incarnate, Crucified and Resurrected Jesus Christ.

The divine Liturgy was followed by lunch, during which His Beatitude addressed the hegumen of the Great Lavra, commemorating the life of the barren St Anna who neither despaired nor stopped praying to God and was therefore rewarded with a great gift, the ever-Virgin Mary who would go on to bear the Incarnate Jesus Christ. Likewise, the Patriarch said, we pray to God to allow us to bear the Orthodox testimony in the Holy Land and “to complete the already launched project for the restoration of the Aedicula of the Holy Sepulchre for the glory of God and the praise of the blessed race of the Rum Orthodox”.

From the Secretariat-General



ADDRESS TO THE LEADERCHIP OF

THE COPTIC & ETHIOPIAN COMMUNITIES OF JERUSALEM

AUGUST 3, 2016

Your Eminences,

Your Excellencies,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,

We welcome you, dear Brothers, to our Patriarchate with love in Christ and with pastoral solicitude for the well-being of the Christian communities of the Holy City of Jerusalem. On a previous occasion we have welcomed Your Eminence, Archbishop Bab Enbakom, to Jerusalem when you assumed your new duties here, and today we would like to congratulate Your Eminence, Metropolitan Anba Antonious, on your recent episcopal ordination and appointment to Jerusalem in succession to His late Eminence Dr Anba Abraham of blessed memory. We welcome you to the Holy City and to the group of the Heads of the Churches, and we assure you of our prayers for your archpastoral ministry to the Coptic community of the Holy Land and to the Coptic pilgrims who come here every year.

As the oldest religious institution in continuous existence in the Holy Land, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem takes seriously our role of leadership and our responsibility for the well-being of the Holy Places and the spiritual mission that all the Churches and Christian Communities of the Holy Land share by virtue of our presence and life here. We have been entrusted by Divine Providence with an awe-inspiring and life-

giving mission, and this mission lays upon us all a serious responsibility. Our spiritual mission and our responsibility for the life of the Christian communities of the Holy Land are paramount, and take precedence over every other concern. There is no place in this spiritual mission for pride, self-interest, or conflict between communities. Such things both weaken our mission and put our communities at risk.

In the present time especially, our Churches and our peoples are threatened. We are experiencing heightened persecution, and the Christian presence on our region is under tremendous pressure. As the Heads of the Churches of the Holy Land, we have a special responsibility before God and our people to ensure that nothing undermines the well-being of the Christian presence or the integrity of the Christian identity of the City of Jerusalem or the Holy Land.

In this regard, we take to heart the words of the First Letter of Saint John, who reminds us all:

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, 'I love God', and hate their brothers, are liars; for those who do not love a brother whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers also, (1 John 4:16-21).

These words hold us all in judgment, and they are clear about our moral and Christian responsibility. More than anything, the world looks to Jerusalem in hope, and to the Christian communities here, for inspiration and encouragement. They must see in us the embodiment of these words of love for our

brothers.

We serve the most important Holy Place in the world. When pilgrims come here, they are thirsty for spiritual refreshment. They are not edified when they see in-fighting and enmity between us, and when such things happen, we are not being faithful to our call to care for the Holy Places.

Now is the time for us to order our life according to right principles. If we are to preserve the rights and privileges that are ours, and that have been sanctioned both by sacred history and international authority and support, we must stand on our own feet in the resolution of disagreements that arise between us, or we risk the intervention of third parties. This is neither helpful nor appropriate.

We have seen the three major Communities of the Patriarchate, the Franciscan Custody, and the Armenian Patriarchate, come together to agree in the project of the renovation of the holiest and most disputed of all Holy Sites, the Sacred Edicule. This is a significant development in the relations of the Churches here, and it is a shining example to all of what is possible when we place our spiritual mission before our differences, and work to build a new relationship of collaboration between us. We cannot leave the rest of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the balance.

As the Patriarch of Jerusalem, we take this initiative to be of assistance to you in the Coptic and Ethiopian communities in the resolution of your disagreements. We are encouraged by your willingness to be here at this meeting, and we are also encouraged by the presence of members of the diplomatic missions of your respective countries. While it is never easy to resolve conflict, we to whom the leadership of the Churches of the Holy Land has been entrusted have a special responsibility to do everything we can to heal our own wounds so that we may be the agents of God's healing for others. We are willing to do all in our power to help, but all must be

willing to do this urgent work of reconciliation, and to break down the barriers that divide us.

We therefore plead with you to take the opportunity of your new leadership and the hope that this brings to overcome the differences that wound the Christian presence here in Jerusalem. We know from harsh past experience that true and generous dialogue is the only path to lasting reconciliation, and we urge you to take this new path together, not just for the good of the Coptic and Ethiopian communities, but for the good of our common spiritual witness and mission to the world.

May God bless you in this necessary and urgent work, and may God give us all the grace to be faithful stewards of this Holy Land and all our peoples.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem