

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM DECORATES THE FRANCISCAN CUSTOS OF THE HOLY LAND

On the morning of Monday, the 17th/30th of May 2016, His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, welcomed the Custos of the Holy Land, Rev. Fr. Pierrebattista Pizzaballa, on the occasion of the twelfth anniversary of his diaconate and his 25-year stay in the Holy Land.

At the meeting, the Custos thanked His Beatitude on the collaboration between the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and the Patriarchate with the Franciscan Fraternity. Patriarch Theophilos addressed f. Pierrbattista in English, see link: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2016/05/31/24028>

As a token of appreciation, His Beatitude offered the Franciscan Custos the honorary distinction of Supreme Taxiarch of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

Touched, the Custos thanked Patriarch Theophilos and pledged to maintain his interest in the Holy Shrines and carry on the harmonious collaboration between the Rum Orthodox Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and the Franciscan Fraternity of the Roman Catholic Church, in alignment with the Lord's commandment to "love one another" and for the sake of joint testament in the Holy Land and the support of its Christian residents.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/MGzWVMSN8n8>



SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN AT THE PATRIARCHATE (2016)

On Sunday, the 16th/29th of May 2016, the Patriarchate observed the feast of the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well in Nablus, Samaria.

The feast commemorates the meeting of our Lord Jesus Christ with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well, which had been hewn by Jacob the patriarch between the mountains of Yeval and Yoresin.

After that meeting, the Samaritan woman believed in the Lord, both she and her house, as the Lord revealed to her that "He, who spoke with her, was the Messiah, Christ". The event is related by the Evangelist John in the fourth chapter of his gospel.

In the church built over the Well by Archimandrite Ioustinos, dedicated to St Photini the Samaritan, the Hagiotaphite St Philoumenos had suffered a martyr's death. There, His Beatitude Theophilos served the divine Liturgy on the day of the feast, having as concelebrants: Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, Demetrios of Lydda, and Philoumenos of Pella; Archimandrite Nektarios as leading priest, the hegumen of Raffidia, Archimandrite Leontios, the hegumen in the Village of the Shepherds, priests visiting from Greece, and Arabic-speaking priests from the nearby towns of Nablus. Elder nun Mariam sang in Greek, with hieropsalts in Arabic, in the presence of Consul-General, Mr Vasileios Koinis, and other members of the Greek Consulate. Residents of adjacent towns attended the service, as well as pilgrims from Greece, Russia, Ukraine and Romania.

To the pious congregation the Patriarch delivered a sermon in Greek, saying: *“Today we celebrate the New Testament in the honest blood of Christ our Saviour, namely Pascha, the resurrection of Christ from the dead, so that “If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!” (Corinthians 2, 5, 17) according to the Apostle Paul. This is why, when talking to the Samaritan woman, the Lord replied: “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4, 13). This spring of eternal life Christ has offered us through His crucifixion and resurrection. And this spring of eternal life did the Samaritan Woman recognize in the face of the Messiah”, His Beatitude said.*

The Patriarch’s speech was also read in Arabic, see link: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2016/05/29/21902#more-21902>

The divine Liturgy was followed by procession thrice around the Church, and the blessing of the Patriarch.

After the Apolysis, guests were hosted to a reception at the hegumeneion and, later, to festive lunch, courtesy of the monastery’s renovator, Archimandrite Ioustinos. During lunch, Halil Yanam of Zababdeh addressed His Beatitude in Arabic.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/PPCw8c77HpQ>

<httpv://youtu.be/yAsVba1B0Ng>



THE SECOND DAY OF PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS' OFFICIAL VISIT TO HUNGARY

At noon of Tuesday, the 11th/24th of May 2016, Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem visited Hungary's Parliament.

The House of the National Assembly is housed at a 19th c. building of fine architecture, on both the interior and the exterior, a traditional cultural jewel of Budapest. The various sections of the building feature different periods from the history of Hungary, as well as aspects of its political, cultural, social, rural and war life.

The building includes the semi-circular assembly hall, equipped with contemporary online tools for the sessions.

Upon entering the Parliament, His Beatitude talked to Hungary's state TV channel, saying among other things: "We have been invited by the Hungarian Government, for the second time since 2012, to bring to the Hungarian people the hopeful resurrectional message of Jerusalem. We met, yesterday, with the distinguished representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Metropolitan Arsenios of Austria-Hungary, and members of the Greek Community in Budapest. Today we have the honour of meeting with Mr Zsolt Semjen, representing Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who is unfortunately ill, and to whom we extend wishes for recuperation by the grace of the Most Holy and Life-giving Sepulchre".

"The Church of Jerusalem", said Patriarch Theophilos, "has remained through the centuries a witness of the Lord's Crucifixion and Resurrection. Today, the holy city of Jerusalem has become the apple of discord, but it can be the key to the resolution of the political problem, given that its

holiness and sacred history for the three religions is respected”.

“The Patriarchate of Jerusalem is recognized as the indigenous local Church by the governments of Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Autonomy”.

“We recommend the exchange of pilgrimages for the spiritual strengthening of pilgrims and for the sake of peace in the Holy Land, as well as for the prosperity of its inhabitants”.

The interview was followed by a guided tour of the Patriarchal Entourage along the various departments of the Parliament. Of special note, beyond the aforementioned Assembly Hall, is the restaurant featuring a large handmade carpet that depicts scenes of fishing and hunting. The Holy Crown is kept in a special showcase at the centre of the building. According to the Hungarian tradition, the crown, said to belong to Constantine the Great, was delivered by Pope Silvester to the first Christian king of Hungary, St Stephen, a saint of the common undivided Church of the first ten centuries.

After the tour, Patriarch Theophilos met with Mr Zsolt Semjen. At the meeting, the country’s deputy Prime Minister expressed joy over the Patriarch’s second visit to Hungary, immediately after the signing of a special agreement between Hungary and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the first Orthodox Church, playing a coordinating role amongst the other Churches in Hungary, Russia, Romania, Serbia and Bulgaria. Metropolitan Arsenios of Austria-Hungary serves as the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s official representative.

In His reply, His Beatitude underlined the peace-making role that Jerusalem can take on for the resolution of the Palestinian Problem, if viewed by political leaders in the light of its holy history.

On the occasion of this visit, His Beatitude offered Mr Semjen an icon of Panaghia Jerusalemite, and an icon for Prime

Minister Urban.

Mr Semjen offered the Patriarch a replica of a 12th c. Hungarian coin.

Subsequently, the Patriarch, His Entourage and Metropolitan Arsenios sat at lunch hosted by Mr Semjen in the presence of the Hungarian ambassador to Ramallah, Mr G. Mihailyi, and the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

During lunch, an interesting discussion took place on the Churches of the Holy Land and the Middle East, and on the need to have its Christian flocks enhanced by European states. Mr Semjen talked of his country's attitude vis a vis the refugee crisis, as well as of the adversities imposed by the Hungarian people by its different conquerors through time.

In the afternoon, Doxology was led by Patriarch Theophilos at the Chapel of the Patriarchate of Serbia in Budapest, in the presence of Metropolitan Silouan, representing the Patriarchate of Serbia, Metropolitan Lucian, representing the Patriarchate of Moscow, and a priest representing the Patriarchate of Russia. During Doxology, His Beatitude addressed guests in English, see link: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2016/05/24/23929>

Doxology was followed by a guided tour at the Museum of Church Art. After a relevant question, the Patriarch also spoke of the Great Synod of Orthodoxy, scheduled to convene in Crete, as a testament to the unity of the Orthodox Churches.

This completed the second day of the official visit of the Patriarch of Jerusalem to Hungary.

From the Secretariat-General



REMARKS AT THE FESTAL DOXOLOGY AT THE ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL IN SZENTENDRE, HUNGARY

24 May 2016

Your Eminences,
Your Graces,

Respected Government Officials,

Beloved Monastics,

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Christ is risen!

It is a great honour for us to return to this beautiful country of Hungary for this fraternal visit to our Christian brothers and sisters, and to the Orthodox Church in particular and to have this occasion to participate in this Festal Doxology with our concelebrants in the Lord from all the Orthodox communities here. The joy of this Paschal Feast has brought us together, the Feast of Feasts that has united earth and heaven, and divinity and humanity, in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The roots of Orthodoxy in Hungary go back many centuries, and the Orthodox Church has a long and significant history of contributing to the multi-cultural and mufti-ethic life of this region. In our own day Orthodox Christians from several different national Churches live together in this country, and we see today the strength that is ours as we live in the truth of our diversity in unity. Today we experience a true Pentecost as we worship together in many tongues and from many lands.

The Orthodox Church is a witness to the uncreated light of the resurrection. This light, which first shone on Mount Tabor, now shines from the Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ, is a guide to the blind, and a beacon of hope to so many in our world who are plagued with fear, despair, and confusion. Our world is in such need of this spiritual mission, for we know the truth of the words that were spoken by our Lord when he was tempted:

“Man does not live by bread alone, hut by every word that comes from the mouth of God,”

(Matthew, 4:4)

It is the mission of the Church, and therefore our mission, to offer to the world precisely this spiritual food, food for which every soul hungers, and which is the food of eternal life.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Mother of all the Churches, places this spiritual mission at the heart of our life. In this regard we are glad to announce that the spirit of the celebration of the resurrection has indeed inspired the hearts of the three Communities i.e. of our Patriarchate, the Franciscans, and the Armenians, to join our efforts in the task of the renovation of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre. The Sacred Edicule is the holiest of Sites, and Divine Providence has given us the responsibility of ensuring that this site, and all the Holy Sites in the Holy Land,

remain places of worship and sources of spiritual refreshment that are accessible to all without distinction. Thousands of people come to worship at these Holy Sites, including many faithful Christians from Hungary. Here is the place of our common witness.

We cannot but give thanks to our Lord, who through the Holy Spirit has put it into our hearts to gather in the upcoming Holy and Great Synod in Crete and we pray that He will guide us in his own way in order to glorify his Name.

We greet you all, therefore, both the leaders of the Church, as well as the leaders of the

Government, who extended this gracious invitation, with deep gladness as the Church continues to live in the light of the resurrection and the love of Christ. We thank particularly His Excellency Mr. Geza, the Hungarian Representative in Ramallah, for his kind assistance.

May God bless you all in your spiritual pastoral and Church Mission in this region, and may God bless all the peoples of your beloved Hungary.

Christ is risen!

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

SUNDAY OF THE MYROPHORAE AND JOSEPH OF ARIMATEHA IN REMLI

On the 2nd/15th of May 2016, Sunday of the Myrophorae, the Patriarchate observed the memory of St Joseph of Arimathea and of the Myrophorae in the town of Remli, the ancient Arimathea.

Upon His arrival from Jerusalem, the Patriarch was courteously welcomed as Boy Scouts paraded.

The feast was led by Patriarch Theophilos, having as concelebrants: Archbishops Damascene of Joppa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor; Archimandrite Ieronymos, hegumen in Fhes, as leading Archimandrite; Archimandrite Claudius, hegumen at the Monastery of the Holy Cross, visiting clerics from the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and Archdeacon Evlogios and deacon Markos. The Community Choir sang in Arabic and Greek in the presence of Messrs. Gennimatas and Boumas, representatives of the Greek Embassy to Israel, for the Orthodox people of Remli.

During Communion, His Beatitude delivered a sermon, pointing out that the feast commemorates the eighth day since the resurrection of Christ from the grave, when “the times reached their fulfilment, and brought unity to all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth” according to Paul (Eph. 1, 10) And, according to the Apostle Peter: The Prophet David, seeing what was to come, spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it” (Acts 2, 31-32).

“So should we” said His Beatitude, “proclaim and confess the name of the Crucified and Resurrected Lord, with our entire soul and intellect. We should seek Christ with our hearts and

mind, as instructed by the wise Paul: If you resurrect with Christ, seek for heaven above, there where Christ is seated on the right of God”.

After the Apolysis, the faithful received the antidoron and eulogias-icon from the hands of Patriarch Theophilos.

On the conclusion of the divine Liturgy, a reception followed at the hegumeneion, where Archimandrite Nephon, the Monastery’s renovator, extended thanks for the Patriarchate’s moral and material support. As a token of gratitude, he offered the Patriarch an icon of the Last Supper. Patriarch Theophilos praised the Chairwoman of the Community, Ms Frida, offering her an icon of St George.

At noon, Archimandrite Nephon and the Town Council hosted guests to lunch.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/MBZ3sZeTth0>

httpv://youtu.be/lc4nTrJ_Z0k



THE FEAST OF ST GEORGE THE TROPHY BEARER IN ACCRA, 2016

On Saturday, the 1st/14th of May 2016, the Patriarchate observed the memory of St George the Trophy Bearer in Accra – ancient Ptolemais – at the Patriarchate’s homonymous church.

Accra, at the northernmost edge of Israel, is one of the most ancient Bishoprics of the Patriarchate, and includes twelve towns, namely the Arabic communities of Rame, Kufr Yasif, Sahnin, Kufr Smea, Sfaamer, Abelin, Makker, Zdeide, Tarseeha, Pkea and Abu Snan.

Upon the Patriarch's arrival in Accra, He was warmly welcomed by the town's Boy Scouts. His Beatitude went on to lead the divine Liturgy at the ancient church of St George, having as concelebrants: Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Zambia, Hieromonks i.e. the hegumen in Tiberias, f. Dionysios, the Presbyters of the Arabic-speaking communities near Accra, in the presence of the Greek Consul-General to Jerusalem. The Accra Choir sang under the Patriarchal Commissioner in Accra, Archimandrite Philotheos, for a crowd of Orthodox faithful.

To the pious congregation the Patriarch preached the Word of God, saying that the commemoration of St George verifies the global event of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. "Let no one be afraid of death; for the Saviour's death has liberated us", proclaims St Chrysostom. And this because, according to Paul: "All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Romans 6, 3-5). "It is precisely the Resurrection of Christ that the Church of Jerusalem proclaims", His Beatitude added. "And this salvaging message it has preserved, pure and clean of every spoliation and besmearing. The message of the apostles, we are now called upon to protect if indeed we want to resist our contemporary Diocletians and Pilatuses", said the Patriarch.

In Arabic, the Patriarch's address may be reached here: en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2016/05/13/21624

A great crowd participated in Communion, whilst the faithful received the antidoron and eulogias from the Patriarch's hands. After the divine Liturgy, a procession followed thrice around the church and in front of the tomb of St George of Cyprus the Neomartyr, who suffered a martyr's death in Ptolemais in the 19th c.

During the reception that followed at the hegumeneion, renovated by Archimandrite Philotheos, addresses were delivered by the President of the Accra Community, the Chief of Police in Accra, the Sheikh in Accra, the Sheikh in Baane, the representative of Bahai, the representative of the Youth, the representative of Judges, Ms Tanous, and Archimandrite Philotheos.

The reception closed with the Patriarch's address (to be uploaded soon).

At noon, the Patriarchal Entourage were hosted to lunch hosted by Archimandrite Philotheos.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/FJx5iPdaHNk>

<httpv://youtu.be/4ZFTrvr5HcY>



GRADUATION CEREMONY AT THE SCHOOL OF BEIT SAHOUR (VILLAGE OF THE SHEPHERDS)

On the afternoon of Monday, the 26th of April/9th of May 2016, the Graduation Ceremony of the Patriarchate's Lyceum in the Village of the Shepherds took place at the School's hall of events.

The ceremony was honoured by the presence of H.B. Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem. The Patriarch was accompanied by Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Archdeacon Evlogios and other Hagiotaphite Fathers, i.e. the Chairman of the Patriarchate's Schools in Israel, Archimandrite Ieronymos, the Patriarchal Commissioner in Bethlehem, Archbishop Theophylaktos of Jordan, the representative of the Greek Consulate in Jerusalem, Mr Vasileios Koinis, and the hegumen at Beit Sahour Monastery, Archimandrite Ignatios.

The ceremony began with the parade of the Graduates, hymns, and the excerpt on the Resurrection from the Gospel according to John.

The School Principal, Mr George Saante, then addressed guests, praising the Patriarchate's contribution to the School, that began with its establishment in 1990 and continues to this day. The School, which incorporates the teaching of the Greek language, includes a Nursery, a Primary School, a High School and a Lyceum. Mr Saante made special reference to the contribution of teachers and parents in providing graduates with the necessary skills to carry on their studies or their professional careers.

Three graduates then addressed guests in Greek, English and Arabic.

Traditional Palestinian dances and songs were performed during the event.

On the conclusion of the ceremony, f. Issa Mousleh, the Patriarchate's liaison with Arabic-speaking media, and teacher at the School, read the Patriarch's address.

From the Secretariat-General



REMARKS AT THE EASTER RECEPTION FOR THE PRESIDENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL AT THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE.

9 May 2016

Your Excellency, Mr. President,

Your Beatitudes,

Your Eminences

Your Graces,

Esteemed Governmental Officials,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for us to greet you, Your Excellency, during this holy season, in which we share in our celebrations of Pesach and Pascha. Once again, we are united in the reality of our common humanity and our common cultural heritage. This is a clear witness of our common Abrahamic roots in our beloved Holy Land, and this season is a source of joy and inspiration for us all.

We celebrate Jerusalem as the mother earth of our common religious, cultural, and spiritual traditions. The Abrahamic traditions bear witness to the sacred history, a history that gives meaning and purpose to every life. This message is of paramount importance, especially at a time in our present history, when in the world as a whole and in our region in particular humanity is experiencing confusion, fear, and violence. It is precisely in these circumstances that the witness of Jerusalem must deliver us from every prejudice.

We see evidence of our shared heritage in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, where Saint Peter quotes the words of the Prophet Joel.

In the last days it will be, God declares,

That I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,

And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

And your young men shall see vision,

And your old men shall dream dreams...

Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved, (Acts 2: 17,21)

During this season of Pesach and Pascha, in the triumph of

light over darkness, of freedom over slavery, of righteousness over evil, of truth over falsehood, Jerusalem calls on the name of the Lord and Saviour. Jerusalem embraces all humans and is the spiritual home of everyone who loves the God of love. Our shared joy at this time of the year comes from our passing over from the drought of the desert to the sweet waters of a green and pleasant land, from bondage to liberty, from the ashes of death to the fullness of life- a promise that the Prophet Joel declares that God offers to all who hope and firmly believe in him.

Recently ,we have celebrated this hope of renewed life in the agreement between the three Communities for the restoration of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Tomb. This is a worthy project in itself, but it represents a deeper commitment to maintain the Holy Sites as meeting places between God and man where, in the spiritual renewal that they give us, we pass over from despair to hope, an experience that touches countless pilgrims from every nation and every religious and cultural expression.

Time and again, Your Excellency, we are deeply appreciative of your Presidency and your steadfastness in your public condemnation of all forms of prejudice, violence, and terrorism, from whatever quarter it comes. We also applaud your commitment to freedom of worship and religious expression for all the peoples of the Holy Land.

As we celebrate together this season of our common hope in God for a new future for the human family, we take this opportunity to wish you well in your ongoing service. It is our fervent prayer that during your time in office peace and reconciliation may come to prevail in our region.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM OFFICIATES IN KANA, GALILEE

On Sunday, the 25th of April/8th of May 2016, the Sunday of Thomas, the Lord's miracle of turning water into wine and blessing the wedding in Kana, Galilee, was celebrated in the aforementioned town as the first sign of His miraculous power.

At the Holy Monastery of St George the Trophy-Bearer, Patriarch Theophilos led the divine Liturgy, having as concelebrants: Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Zambia, the hegumen in Kana, Archimandrite Chrysostomos, the hegumen in Tabor, Archimandrite Hilarion, the head of the Ay Labun Community, Archimandrite Sophronios, the former hegumen in Tiberias, f. Timotheos, and the current hegumen, Archimandrite Dionysios, Arabic-speaking Presbyters from the adjacent towns, the overseer of the Monastery in Capernaum, Monk Irinaios, Archdeacon Evlogios and Hierodeacon Markos. The Kana Choir sang in Arabic and Greek for a pious Orthodox flock from Kana, Galilee.

During Communion, Patriarch Theophilos preached the Word of God, saying among other things that our Lord Jesus Christ offered His blood as ransom and through His death He annulled the devil and "freed those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Hebrews 2, 14_15). "Thomas", the Patriarch said, "Christ's disciple, believed in Him as his

Lord and God. We too owe to believe in Christ, not as a man who became God, but as God who became a man, according to the words of the Evangelist John: “And the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us” (John 1, 14).

The divine Liturgy was followed by a procession thrice around St George Church, the blessing of Kana wine and the reading of the *pericope* from the gospel according to John for the turning of the water into wine.

A reception was then hosted in the forecourt, with a performance by the Catechizing Schools of Kana, and lunch at noon, courtesy of the hegumen.

On the conclusion of the feast, His Beatitude visited a family in Kana to offer His condolences on the death of one of their members. The Patriarch also visited the Director of the magazine “Light of Christ”, Mr Abu-Elias Ksheboun, and other families in Kana.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/UT-aisd1UBg>

<httpv://youtu.be/P4LS5sIpxXc>



A SERMON FOR THE FEAST OF SAINT GEORGE AT THE ROMANIAN

ORTHODOX MISSION TO THE HOLY LAND.

6 May 2016

Christ is risen.

Today, having just celebrated the glorious Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us celebrate with joy the bright Feast of Saint George the Trophy Bearer, who was, as the hymnographer of the Church reminds us, “the Great Martyr of the love of Christ.”

This love of Christ has been shown to us in the cross and in the Resurrection, The divine mystery of the Church is in fact founded on the blood of the Cross and is sealed by the empty tomb. Here is the heart of the Christian life, for as Saint Paul reminds us, “if Christ has not been raised; then our proclamation has been in vain” (1 Cor. 15:14). The empty tomb is the eloquent testimony to the love of Christ, of which Saint George is a great witness.

Indeed, it is Christ’s Resurrection that has inspired the cloud of countless martyrs and saints down the ages, and even in our own day, who turned their back on the joys and glory of this earthly life. They longed instead for the invisible and heavenly citizenship of the eternal city.

It was this same power of the proclamation of the Resurrection of which Saint Paul speaks that enabled the Holy Apostles to travel throughout the known World – the oikoumenie – to establish the Church in every place.

It is this same power of the proclamation of the Resurrection that has established us here, in the Holy Land, the land of

the martyrdom of Christ's love.

The Cross of Christ shows us Christ's complete kenosis – his complete self-emptying -and it is this martyrdom of the cross that forms us into the guardians and servants of the empty Cross and the empty Tomb. For neither the cross nor the tomb were stronger than the love of Christ, the love which turned the tree of shame into the tree of glory, and which turned the tomb into a bed of hope.

Every time we celebrate the Divine Liturgy together and partake of the Eucharistic Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, we declare our unity in this same love of Christ.

This is our experience of Pentecost, the descent of the Holy Spirit, as we participate in this mystery together with the invisible presence of the saints and martyrs of Christ surround us here.

The Holy and Great Martyr Saint George, a son of this Holy Land, has given us his blessing to be here together on this feast in the light that shines from the empty Tomb, so that we may proclaim in our generation the Good News of Christ's Resurrection and His philanthropy to all humankind. Christ's righteousness is the light of truth, and our spiritual mission is to be a beacon of that truth. Unlike Pontius Pilate, who asked "What is truth," we declare and proclaim by our very life what the truth is. The Christian presence in the Holy Land is a manifestation of Christ's truth, and the Holy Places are an eloquent witness to the truth that we proclaim.

This truth draws the world to our doorstep. This truth inspires thousands of pilgrims to journey here every year, to find at the Holy Places spiritual refreshment and the strength to persevere in a world that is filled with fear, violence, confusion, and hardship. This truth sustains our fellow Christians in the Holy Land and throughout the Middle East. This truth gives life to all who come to the empty cross and the empty tomb in search of "that peace that passes all

understanding" (Phil 4:7).

May the Holy and Great Martyr Saint George, the great witness of the love of Christ, pray for us, and by the intercession of the Most Holy Mother of God the Theotokos let us proclaim together with the great hymnographer, Saint John of Damascus, saying

The shadow of the law passed away when grace arrived;

for, as the bush wrapped in flame did not burn,

so did the Virgin give birth and yet remain a virgin,

*In place of the pillar of fire, the Sun of righteousness hath
shone forth.*

Instead of Moses, Christ is come, the salvation of our souls.

(Paschal Vespers)

May we live in the light of the love of Christ, and find the strength to proclaim the joy and the hope of the Resurrection, so that we declare our unity in Christ.

Christ is risen! Amen.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem