

THE FEAST OF ST PHILOUMEN THE HAGIOTAPHITE

On Saturday, the 16th/29th of November 2014, the Patriarchate celebrated the memory of holy-martyr St Philoumen the Hagiotaphite at Jacob's Well in Nablus, Samaria, where he served as abbot until his martyric death in 1979.

Jacob's Well was where Our Lord Jesus Christ conversed with the Samaritan woman and revealed Himself as Christ, guiding her from the depths of ignorance and sin to the path of knowledge and sanctity. There, the current Abbot, Archimandrite f. Justin, built a magnificent church in the name of St Photini of Samaria, as well as a chapel dedicated to St Philoumen and St Justin the philosopher and martyr. The latter hailed from Nablus and suffered a martyr's death circa 160 AD.

Patriarch Theophilos led the divine Liturgy at the Church of St Photini. Co-officiating were His Eminence Aristarchos, Archbishop of Constantina; the Abbot, Archimandrite f. Justin; Abbots Leontios of Rafidia, Chrysostomos of Kana, and Ananios of St George, Beit-Jalla; Hieromonk Martyrios, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks and Arab-speaking presbyters from the region of Samaria. Also in attendance were Archdeacon Evlogios and deacon Markos. Monk Daniel of the Monastery of Hozeva chanted in Greek, and the Choir of Rafidia and the Community of Zababdeh chanted in Arabic. Pious pilgrims from Greece, Russia, Romania and Ukraine, and Arab-speaking faithful from Jerusalem, mostly from the towns of Rafidia, Zababdeh, Tubas and Burkin, participated in piety.

His Beatitude preached the Word of God in Greek.

In Arabic, His homily may be reached here:
<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2014/11/29/8285>

Several among the faithful proceeded to receive Holy Communion.

Mass was followed by a reception at the Abbot's quarters and, later on, lunch for the Patriarchal retinue and a great crowd.

During lunch, Law student Mr Halil Yannam, a Rum Orthodox of Zababdeh, addressed His Beatitude.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/4lgwXazNvrk>



THE TRANSLATION OF THE RELICS OF ST GEORGE OBSERVED IN LYDDA

On Sunday, the 3rd/16th of November 2014, the translation of the relics of St George the Great Martyr and Trophy Bearer was commemorated at St George Church in Lydda, Israel, which is a center of worship for the Patriarchate's Greek Orthodox Arab-speaking Community.

Commemorated on this particular feast-day is not only the Saint's martyrdom, but also the translation of his holy relics, circa 305 AD, from Rome to his maternal place of origin, to be buried in Lydda where, according to the Acts of the Apostles, an early Christian community existed from the dawn of Christianity (Acts 9, 32-35).

On top of the saint's grave in Lydda, Saint Helena built a

magnificent church between 326 and 336 AD. The church survives to this day, even though one half of the building was conquered in unknown times and is being used as a mosque to this day.

The divine Liturgy was held on the morning of the feast-day, led by H.B. Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem. Co-officiating were His Eminence Damascene, Archbishop of Joppa; the Elder Secretary-General, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Archbishop Demetrius of Lydda, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Arab-speaking presbyters, Archdeacon Evlogios and Hierodeacon Dionysius. In attendance was the representative of the Greek Embassy to Israel, Mr Alexandros Gennimatas, the Cypriot Ambassador to Israel, Mr Panagis, and the Romanian Ambassador to Israel, Mrs Andrea. The choir of the Community of Lydda sang in Arabic, while a crowd of faithful (though not as many as last year, due to heavy rain) from the town and other areas of Israel and of the occupied areas proceeded to venerate at the Saint's tomb.

During Communion, His Beatitude preached the Word of God in Greek. In Arabic, the homily may be reached here: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2014/11/16/8216>

After the *apolyxis*, the Abbot of the Shrine, Archimandrite Nicodemus, hosted guests to a reception at the Hegoumen's Quarters, thanking His Beatitude for His interest in the flock. In His reply speech, the Patriarch said that St George is an ecumenical saint for all Churches, having suffered a martyr's death for the love of Christ.

At noon, Abbot Nicodemus and the Community Council hosted lunch for His Beatitude and retinue, as well as for the Ambassadors of Orthodox states to Israel having attended mass, the Mayor of Lydda, members of the Community and other guests.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/YcvYUayj040>

<http://youtu.be/1zrzUlq5Ke4>



THE FEAST OF ST DEMETRIUS IN RAFIDIA OF THE SAMARIA REGION

On Friday, the 25th of October/7th of November 2014, the feast of the Great Martyr, St Demetrius the Myrrh-Bearer, was celebrated by the Patriarchate at the Church dedicated to him in the Greek Orthodox Community of Rafidia, a town in the city Nablus of Samaria, also home to Jacob's Well.

The Divine Liturgy was led by H.B. Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem. Co-officiating were: the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and their Eminences, Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina and Theophylaktos of Jordan. Also in attendance were Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, i.e. the Abbot at Jacob's Well and founder of the magnificent Church at the aforementioned pilgrimage site, Archimandrite Justinus, and Protosyncellus Leontios of St. Demetrius church. Priests from neighbouring towns and parishioners attended mass in piety, as the Head Cantor of the Church of the Resurrection, Archimandrite Aristovoulos, sang in Greek and the Community Choir sang in Arabic.

During the Divine Liturgy, Patriarch Theophilos preached the Word of God in Greek, saying among other things:

“St Demetrius was distinguished both for his piety and for this teaching contribution, namely the dissemination of the true faith in Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the World. Being a faithful follower of Christ and preacher of the

Gospels, Demetrius had in mind the words of the Lord to His disciples: "But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony", (Luke 21, 12-13).

Which means that all persecutions and adversities shall have as their final outcome and result the testimony you shall give for my Gospel, so that this testimony shall test those who shall not be able to justify themselves on Judgment Day, for they had no hearkened the preaching of the gospel. The day of judgment shall be the hour "when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment", (John 5, 28-29).

In Arabic, the speech may be reached here:
<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2014/11/07/8043>

After the Divine Liturgy, the apolysis, and the distribution of consecrated bread (antidoron), a reception followed at the Abbot's Quarters. At noon, lunch was offered by the town's Municipal Council.

On the conclusion of the feast, His Beatitude visited Jacob's Well before returning to Jerusalem.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/MJV-l4yFlfg>

<httpv://youtu.be/WK69ffxw1wI>



DOXOLOGY ON THE 28TH OF OCTOBER NATIONAL DAY

On Tuesday the 15th/28th of October 2014, Doxology was held at the Church of the Resurrection, in celebration of the 28th of October 1940 national day.

Doxology was performed in the form of extending gratitude to God for His help in liberating Greece from the burden of the 1940 Italian and German occupation, and of making a supplication for the repose of those heroically fallen for their faith and country.

Doxology was led by H.B. Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem, with co-officiating Prelates and Hieromonks, in the presence of the Greek Consul-General to Jerusalem, Mr Georgios Zacharoudiakis, and members of the Consulate personnel. Concelebrating with them were nuns and members of the Greek parish.

On the conclusion of Doxology, a reception was hosted at the Patriarchate, where His Beatitude addressed guests in Greek.

In Arabic, His speech may be reached here:
<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2014/10/28/7860>

In his own speech, the Consul-General of Greece said the following:

The epos of 1940 has been indelibly imprinted on our collective memory as part of our national identity and consciousness.

Today we pay minimum tribute to the worthy guardians and

keepers of our traditions, who sacrificed their lives in the struggle for the freedom of the Homeland. We stand in awe in front of the splendour of their souls, with gratitude in the face of their sacrifices, and with pride of their heroism. We honour their memory and contribution. They fulfilled their duty.

Let us now consider our own duty, and our own responsibilities vis-a-vis our History and the future of our Nation.

From the Secretariat-General



SERMON AT THE PATRIARCHAL DIVINE LITURGY – THE FEAST OF SAINT DEMETRIOS THE NEW OF BESSARABIA.

Monday, 27 October 2014

Your Beatitude Patriarch Daniel, beloved concelebrant in the Lord,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Respected Members of the Government, Beloved Monastics,

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We greet you today in this festive celebration, and we bring to you the grace of the Holy Tomb and the prayers of the Christian community of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. It is our deep joy to be with you today and to celebrate this feast of Saint Demetrios the New Martyr.

Saint Demetrios the New Martyr reminds us of the meaning of martyrdom. There have been martyrs in every age, and every local Church venerates its own martyrs who have given their lives and united their blood with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed we live even now in a new age of martyrs, as we witness the persecution of Christians in many parts of the world, especially in the Middle East, the cradle of Christianity.

To be a martyr is to be a witness. Martyrs are witnesses to us of the salvific truth of the Christian revelation. In their sacrifice we see the image of the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the prince of martyrs. The martyrs follow in the footsteps of their Lord, and they are an inspiration to us of constancy, perseverance, and faithfulness.

The martyrs are a witness to the selfless love of Christ. In their sacrifice, the martyrs show us what it means not simply to endure suffering and death, but to love as Christ loves even in the face of death. This tradition was established by Saint Stephen the Proto-martyr in the Acts of the Apostles, who, after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, out of love forgave those who stoned him. Also, we remember Saint Thekla from Iconium, a disciple of Saint Paul, who became known as the first female martyr. In her life such was her love of Christ, and such was her complete devotion to him, that she is called "Equal-to-the-Apostles."

In these two persons we can see the true meaning of martyrdom. And this is precisely why, as Saint John Chrysostom has said,

martyrdom is an encouragement to the faithful. For the martyrs teach us that we, too, are called to love others, even our enemies and persecutors, as Christ loves us, even in the face of persecution, suffering, and death. For the path of this love is the path of theosis, that is to say, of true union with God, and this is the ultimate vocation of every Christian.

We keep today the feast of Saint Demetrios the New Martyr of Bessarabia, a beloved saint and martyr of the Romanian people, and the patron saint of Bucharest. He is a further testimony of the enduring influence of martyrdom in the life of the Church. The Romanian people have had many martyrs throughout the decades of the persecution of the Church during the totalitarian regime of the 20th century. The sacred blood of these martyrs watered the seeds of the Church of Romania and today the Church is harvesting the fruits of this martyrdom in the re-birth of faith in your country. We are witnesses of this new life, and witnesses of the assurance of our Lord in the Gospel of Saint Matthew that even the gates of Hades will not prevail against the Church (cf Mt. 16:18).

But the vocation of martyrdom is not limited to those who die a physical death for their faith in Christ. The fruit of martyrdom is our martyrdom in the world, which is expressed in various forms. For example, the Church also understands that both marriage and the monastic life in Christ are types of martyrdom. This is why in the Sacrament of Marriage the husband and wife are crowned – these are the crowns of martyrs whose witness to the love of our Lord Jesus Christ makes them put another's life before their own.

We are reminded of this in the Marriage Service,

Hear us, you martyred Saints, who fought the good fight, gaining crowns: entreat the Lord to shed His tender mercy on our souls

Equally men and women monastics, by choosing the angelic life, testify to martyrdom, for they bear a distinctive witness to the life of the Kingdom of God. They point us to the vision of the words from The Letter to the Hebrews, where we read of "the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven... and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect" (Heb. 12:23).

In this way, every Christian is called to follow in the footsteps of the martyrs, for every Christian is called to be a living witness. Whether enduring persecution, living in the married state, or committing oneself to the monastic life, the Christian is always a witness, always participating in martyrdom. We emphasize this, because our world is enduring terrible suffering and peoples everywhere are crushed by war, poverty, disease, degradation, famine, injustice, indignity, and humiliation. There is everywhere a lack of respect for the human person as created in the image and likeness of God.

In our troubled world, it is the Incarnate Love of God and his resurrection that are our living beacon of hope. The Christian, as a member of the Body of Christ, that is the Church, must be a true witness to this love, and on this feast of Saint Demetrios, the patron saint of this historic city, we re-dedicate ourselves to this vocation, which is precisely articulated by the hymnographer of the Church, saying:

Your martyrs, O Lord, in their struggles received crowns of incorruptibility from you, our God; for with your strength, O Lord, they overcame tyrants, defeated demons, rendering them powerless. By their intercessions, O Christ our God, save our souls.

Saint Demetrios the New Martyr stands before us as an inspiration of strength and endurance in our modern world that suffers from confusion and loss of purpose. We say this, for the way to honour a martyr, indeed, is to imitate him, as Saint Basil says.

Let us then give praise to our Lord Jesus Christ for the great witness of the martyrs of His love. May Christ our God, through the intercessions of our Most Holy, Ever-Virgin Mary and Theotokos, and through the intercessions of Saint Demetrios the New Martyr, protect the faithful people of Romania and establish His peace in our world and in our hearts.

Amen.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

SERMON OF H.B. PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III OF JERUSALEM IN ST. GEORGE THE NEW CHURCH.

Sunday 26 October 2014

Your Beatitude Patriarch of Romania Mr. Daniel,

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Holy Spirit, that is the Spirit of Our Lord Jesus Christ has gathered us together in this beautiful and historical church of St. George the New to concelebrate the Divine Liturgy and to participate in and partake of the blood

and body of our Lord Jesus Christ, thus manifesting our unity with our Lord the Leader of our faith, and unity between our Churchest, the body of Christ.

For Us, this church is of special importance and a deeper meaning, for it symbolizes a tangible, brotherly, relationship between the Church of Jerusalem and the Church of Romania, having been consecrated by our predecessor great Patriarch Chrysanthos of Jerusalem on June 29,1707.

Our presence here amongst you is an affirmation of the continuous and unbroken bonds of love in our Lord Jesus Christ and His saints, who constitute the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the Church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, (Heb.12:22,23).

It is not accidental that Saint George the New actually bears the name of the great martyr of the love of Christ, Saint George, whose relics were transferred in the biblical city of Lod, where upon his motaf was erected a magnificent Byzantine basilica in his name. According to Saint John Chrysostom, the Church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven has triumphed over the evil powers of darkness.

Furthermore the saints together with the prophets and the Apostles decorate the undivided divine and human body of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is precisely the saints of the Church who help us to understand, by their incorruptible relics, the message of the salvific mission of the Church in a world that is subject to the influence of the death of corruption, i.e., sinfulness.

It is in this regard that Saint George the New stands as a living and visible beacon of the light of the true and enteral life that we are called to attain, since we have been baptized, and therefore clothed in Christ. That is to say, we have been imbued with His light.

Having honored Saint George the New, and having asked for the

unity of the faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit, let us entrust ourselves and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God, through the intercessions of the most-blessed and glorious lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and all the saints, Amen.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

H. B. PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM LECTURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST.

University of Bucharest,

25 October 2014

Your Beatitude Patriarch Daniel,

Mr. President Nistor,
Professor Dumitru,
Distinguished Faculty,
Beloved Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

It is an honour for us to be with you in this historic and notable seat of learning in Romania. Your roots as a centre

for education are deep in your nation's history, and it is a pleasure for us to know that when the Princely Academy of Saint Sava, the predecessor of this present university, was established in 1694 by Constantin Brancoveanu, the lectures were delivered in Greek. Today, however, we hope that you will understand that it may be easier for all if we speak to you in the modern lingua franca, that is, English!

As we know, in 1864 the former Academy was converted into the present University, and in 1884 the Faculty of Theology was established. This concern with theology now finds expression in three faculties that embrace not only Orthodox theology but Roman Catholic and Protestant theology as well. This commitment to the study of theology is essential for the well-being of the academic life of any university, and we commend you for this work.

We are also pleased to be with you because of the important and historic ties that have existed down the ages between the peoples of this region; the Holy Land in general, and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in particular. For generations, pilgrims have ventured from this part of Eastern Europe to the Holy Land to worship with their sisters and brothers who are the native Christians of the Middle East, and to find spiritual renewal and refreshment at the Holy Places. The countries that we now call Romania, Moldova, the Ukraine, Bulgaria, Serbia, and other neighboring nations, have been shaped by an ancient and common Orthodox faith and culture, and this Orthodox faith and culture, Byzantine in its roots, found a natural orientation to the Holy Land.

But the traffic has not all been in one direction. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem also reached out to this region. In various parts of Eastern Europe, the great Patriarchs of Jerusalem were present as spiritual guides among the people. The Patriarchate was supported by endowments, that is, churches, monasteries, and land from this region dedicated to the support of the Holy Tomb and the defense of the rights and

prerogatives of the Eastern Orthodox Church over it. The Patriarchs of Jerusalem sought to ensure the well-being of its people in return.

So we find in the relationship between the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Orthodox Church of these lands a long-standing, deep, and mutual kinship that it is not only our duty, but also our joy, to foster and extend in our own generation. It is for all these reasons that we are glad to be among you.

In our lecture today, we would like to make a few remarks on the mission of the Patriarchate, and we shall divide our remarks into three sections. After a look at the history of the Patriarchate, we shall make some observations on the status of the Holy Places, and then give an outline of the mission of the Patriarchate in our own time.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem in History

There can be no adequate understanding of the mission of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem today without some grasp of the place of the Patriarchate in the history of the Holy Land; for they are intimately related.

Let us remember that the Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the oldest continuous religious institution in the Holy Land. We know from the Acts of the Apostles that the Church was revealed at Pentecost, and Saint James, the Brother of our Lord, became the first bishop of the Christian community. From that great Feast of Pentecost the Church spread, initially throughout the neighboring area, and then throughout the known world.

The early years of the life of the Church in Jerusalem were difficult. The city itself suffered at the hands of the Roman emperors, and was destroyed in the year AD 70. In AD 135 the Emperor Hadrian re-built the city and it was named Aelia Capitolina after him. During this time, the Jewish population

as well as the Christian community endured persecution, exile, and other hardships. But the Church survived those trials, and by the time of the Emperor Saint Constantine the Great and his mother the Empress Saint Helena, the Church in Jerusalem was robust enough to emerge from this dark early period into a time of growth and achievement.

A sign of the health of that Christian community in Jerusalem was the memory of the Holy Places. Many of them had been obliterated by the building of Roman pagan temples after the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but their locations had survived in the traditions of the local Church. For this reason, when Saint Helena was commissioned by Saint Constantine to come to the Holy Land in AD 326, she was able to establish, with the assistance of the bishop Saint Makarios and the local community, churches and shrines at the most important sites that are associated with the birth, crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. These sites remain the heart of the Christian faith to this day, and there has been worship at these shrines, even in the face of persecution and other calamities, without interruption.

The Order of the Brotherhood of the All-Holy Tomb of Christ, first called the *spoudaeoi*, which serves the Patriarchate, came into existence in these same early days as Christian worship was being re-established in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and throughout the region. The chief purpose of the Brotherhood is to guard and serve the Holy Places, and to ensure that they are open to all people of good will who seek spiritual refreshment from them. This *diakonia* has continued unceasingly, in the face of sometimes terrible hardship, down to our own time. Many of our monasteries contain the relics of monks, nuns, clergy, and lay people who were martyred for their Christian faith during one or another of the invasions or persecutions in the area.

It was only logical that Canon 7 of the First Council of Nicea in AD 325 should attribute to the Church of Jerusalem a

special status, nor is it surprising that the Council of Chalcedon granted patriarchal status to the Bishop of Jerusalem, with jurisdiction over "the three Palestines." Saint Juvenal became the first patriarch. This decree gave formal recognition to something that had been a fact from the beginning of the life of the Church -that Jerusalem is "the Mother of all the Churches" and is the city of the King of Kings, for from Jerusalem the Gospel spread to the entire *oikoumene*. This is the basis of the life and mission of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and from this all else flows.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem continued to serve the local Church faithfully. The Church grew throughout the region, and some of the oldest Christian communities in existence, as well as the most ancient evidences of Christianity in the region, are within the boundaries of the Patriarchate.

In the Seventh Century, significant change spread through the Middle East. Initially, attacks by Persian forces, and subsequently the advance of Islam from Arabia, transformed the political, religious, and cultural landscape of the Holy Land. But the Patriarchate survived and continued to ensure the life of the local Church even under extremely challenging conditions.

In AD 638 Patriarch Sophronios handed over the keys of the city to the forces of the Caliph Omar ibn al-Khattab. The wise Patriarch, concerned for the well-being of the Church and the Christian empire, entered into negotiations with Caliph Omar, and the result was the well-known and deeply influential *Covenant of Omar*, which remains an essential and valid legal document in the maintenance of relations between Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land, and in the preservation of the Patriarchate's rights and privileges in the Holy Places into the modern era. In a famous story, the Caliph refused an invitation from the Patriarch to pray in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, saying that if he did so, it would be a reason for others to turn the church into a mosque. So the caliph

prayed nearby, where indeed later on a mosque that bears his name was constructed. But the Church of the Holy Sepulcher was preserved as a church.

The Patriarchate continued to serve and guard the Holy Places as places of worship, and to minister to the local indigenous Christian community, in this new situation. It was the *Rum Orthodox Patriarchate*, the Church of the Rum, the successors of the Eastern Romans, known today as the Byzantines, in direct continuity both with the first Christian community in Jerusalem and the great civilization of Constantinople.

In AD 1099, during the patriarchate of Simeon II, the Crusaders captured Jerusalem and set up a Latin Kingdom with a Latin bishop as patriarch. The Orthodox patriarch was forced to flee to Cyprus. During the time of the exile of the patriarch, the life of the Rum Orthodox Church in the Holy Land continued, even under complicated circumstances.

But the institution of the Patriarchate was not broken during this time.

Invasion continued through the centuries. In 1187, the Crusaders were defeated by Salah al-Din. During the later Mamluk rule over Jerusalem in the beginning of the 13th century, the stance toward the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate changed markedly in the form of extensive persecution against Christians and threats to turn the Holy Sepulcher Church into a mosque. By the beginning of the 14th century, the Franciscan Order was established in Jerusalem. The fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453 signified the beginning of a new persecution under Ottoman Turkish domination. One of the patriarchs during this Ottoman period, Patriarch Dositheos, who spent time in Constantinople by the High Port, emerged as the patriarch of the Orthodox world. His pastoral activities and contributions, as well as those of his nephew, Patriarch Chrysanthos, are well known in these lands, especially in Iasi. Subsequently, the residence of the Patriarchs was

restored from Constantinople to Jerusalem, and the centre of the Patriarchate is within the compound of the monastery at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

This very brief sketch serves to show us not just the antiquity of the Patriarchate, but also its continuity and vitality. The sands of the Middle East have often shifted over time and in many ways, but the Patriarchate has remained a constant and crucial presence.

We must understand from this that Orthodox Christianity is not a foreign interloper. Orthodox Christianity is native to the Holy Land and a part of its essence. And indeed the Patriarchate of Jerusalem has watched many others come and go through the ages.

The Significance of the Holy Places

Having established the place of the Patriarchate in the history of the Holy Land, let us now turn briefly to a consideration of the Holy Places. As it is the primary ministry of the Patriarchate to guard and to serve the Holy Places, it is important to grasp their significance.

First of all, the Holy Places are a guarantee of our sacred history, that is, the history of salvation. Furthermore, the Holy Places are the guarantee of today's Christian presence not only in the Holy Land, but also in the broader region of the Middle East. As those who believe in the Incarnation of the Divine Logos, the Holy Places, and especially those Places that are connected to the life, crucifixion, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, are a unique testimony to the truth of the Christian proclamation. Here in the Holy Land, God and humanity have walked together, and here men and women have seen God face to face in the person of Jesus Christ. The living witness of the Holy Places have inspired great faithfulness on the part of countless Christians, and the same living witness has inspired even great martyrs.

We must remember, of course, that there are not just Christian Holy Places in the Holy Land; there are also significant Jewish and Muslim Holy Places. Christians have a special veneration especially for many sites that mark sacred personalities and events in the Bible, and at or near many of these sites are either functioning churches or the remains of ancient churches that attest to the importance that the Church places on the continuity of the Old Testament with the New Covenant. When we talk about Holy Places, therefore, we must bear in mind that we are talking about Holy Places that are common to Jews, Christians and Muslims.

But the presence of the Holy Places of the three Abrahamic traditions reminds us of two further significant points.

First, although the Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the oldest religious institution of the region, there has always been a diversity of religious tradition in the Holy Land. This diversity is so ancient and so pervasive that it is of the essence of the Holy Land. It is impossible to conceive of the Holy Land without a strong Christian community, just as it is impossible to conceive of the Holy Land without strong Jewish and Muslim communities as well. This is who we are as the inhabitants of this region, and this integrity is always endangered whenever one or another of our communities is under threat.

So our Holy Places are more even than a guarantee of our sacred history. They are a guarantee of the genuine diversity of the communities that make up the mosaic of the region and have legitimate claims.

Secondly, we must also observe the universality and ecumenicity of the Holy Places.

The Holy Places are not just for Orthodox Christians, or even just for the wider Christian family. The Holy Places are for the whole world, for all who seek the spiritual refreshment

and renewal that they give to the thirsty soul. In our Holy Places we see not only Christian pilgrims, but also Jewish and Muslim pilgrims, as well as those who practice no religious faith at all. One cannot underestimate the power of the Holy Places to mediate the presence of the Divine and to transform the human heart, for Holy Places are a visible sign that this land has been watered and sanctified by the redeeming blood of Christ.

With respect to the Holy Places, we speak not of tourism, but of pilgrimage. For according to the Church Fathers, the Holy Places constitute the Fifth Gospel, since they “speak for themselves.” Pilgrimage is an inexplicable longing for experiencing the Divine presence at particular sites. This is why, in the language of the Church of Jerusalem, pilgrimage to the Holy Land is considered a pilgrimage of *theoria*.

The Mission of the Patriarchate Today

With an understanding of the broad sweep of our history, and with these few observations on the nature and function of the Holy Places, it is possible now to give a few reflections on the mission of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem today.

If the primary task and mission of the Patriarchate through the ages has been to guard and serve the Holy Places, there is other fundamental work that the Patriarchate does that is based on this.

In the first place must be our care of the local Christian community. As we have already said, the Rum Orthodox Church in the Holy Land is not a stranger, or a late-comer on the scene, or a guest. The Rum Orthodox Church and the land are inseparable in their true identity. The faithful who constitute the local Church in the Holy Land are of the land. We have lived here since the Church was revealed at Pentecost, and it is the local community of the faithful that gives a truly flesh and blood existence to the life of the Church in

the Holy Land. Pilgrims come and go, but the faithful of the local Church are our pastoral responsibility. The Patriarchate exists to ensure that our parishes, schools, clinics, and social and religious institutions have the resources to serve the communities in which the Church is rooted.

The faithful in the parishes of the Patriarchate are often the unseen heroes in keeping alive the Orthodox faith in the Holy Land against often overwhelming odds. These are those whom the outside world rarely sees, but who care for our churches, teach in our schools, run our clinics, and attempt to ensure that our young people have a viable future in our region. The pressure to emigrate is intense; but the need to ensure a flourishing local Christian community in the Holy Land is paramount.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem works with all those who seek the well-being of the Christian community of the Holy Land, and we have several flourishing partnerships that help us to provide resources at the grass-roots level. This work is never-ending, and our needs are great.

In service to the Holy Places and to the local Church are also our monastic centres. Monasticism was born in the deserts of Egypt, but by the Fourth Century, the monastic movement had spread through Gaza north to the Judean deserts of Palestine. At one time, Palestine boasted the largest number of monastic communities in the Christian world, and Mar Saba remains today one of the oldest, continuously inhabited monasteries in the world.

Monasticism, like other aspects of Christian life, has endured both highs and lows over the centuries. Many monastics perished during invasions and persecutions, especially in the seventh-century Persian invasions. And most of the ancient foundations have turned into ruins reminiscent of the past.

But monasticism continues to be a vital force in the life of

the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and several of our monasteries are healthy and growing, including Mar Saba, Saint Gerasimos, and Saint George in Wadi Qelt, where there are the incorrupt relics of Saint Ioannis the holy and blessed, the Chozebite of Romania, who was forced to flee his own land by his countrymen and who took refuge in the bosom of the Patriarchate.

High on the agenda of the Patriarchate is our witness to ensure the integrity and the Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. As we have already observed in this lecture, Jerusalem and the Holy Land have two essential characteristics. The first characteristic is our diversity of cultures, religious traditions, ethnicities, languages, and customs. One must be reminded that from the international legal point of view, Jerusalem is considered to be a *corpus separatum*, that is, a city where exclusivity does not apply, although it is admittedly considered to be the spiritual capital of the whole world. The Middle East is not a mono-religious, mono-cultural society, and it has never been this, even in antiquity. Attempts by some to conceive of the region without such diversity are both based on misunderstandings and destined to perpetuate conflict and persecution.

Flowing from the fact of our diversity is the second characteristic, which is the truth of the Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. We have touched on this in our lecture already, but the fact needs repeating. As Christians, Jerusalem and the Holy Land are our home as well. We are culturally, spiritually and even physically natives of the land, and we have an equal claim with others to live, thrive, worship, and bear witness.

To put it negatively, Jerusalem does not belong to one group alone, but to all who call the city sacred and holy: Jew, Christian, Muslim. Jerusalem bears the indelible marks of all three Abrahamic traditions, and all must thrive here for Jerusalem to live out her common and eternal destiny.

Our final remarks on the current mission of the Patriarchate today concern the work of peace and reconciliation in the Holy Land and in the world. In her very name, Jerusalem – the City of the Foundation of Peace – proclaims not only her vocation, but by extension the vocation of humanity. Our task is to build a world of peace and reconciliation, and Jerusalem is both our inspiration and our primary arena. No one who loves Jerusalem and the Holy Land can be anything other than deeply concerned about the present and developing situation in the Middle East. Fanaticism and sectarian violence threaten the fabric of our very existence, and we stand firm in defying fanaticism in all its forms.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem has been an agent of peace and reconciliation for its entire history, and we have centuries of experience both in living under differing circumstances, and in bringing our diverse communities together to ensure the well-being of all. The Patriarchate has always realized that for peace and reconciliation to flourish, the peoples of the region must thrive equally, with justice, mutual recognition, fundamental human rights, safety, and security for all.

But the peace of Jerusalem is more important than even this. For we live in a world in which there is an unprecedented level of violence and war in so many places. Human life is regarded as cheap, and terrorism and persecution are widespread. The peace of Jerusalem is crucial not only for the Holy City alone, but for the whole world. For Jerusalem remains the only beacon of hope for a beleaguered and confused world.

Therefore the peace of Jerusalem must be a priority for all of us. And it is in this respect that the Patriarchate of Jerusalem must be strengthened and supported by the Orthodox Christian world. For the Patriarchate is the physical and visible representative of the Christian world in general, and the Christian Orthodox world in particular, in the Holy Land.

Conclusion

We hope that in this lecture we have been able to expand your understanding of the history and life of the Patriarchate, the significance and mission of the Holy Places, and our work today. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem holds a unique position in the religious, cultural, and even political frame – fortunately or unfortunately – of the Middle East, and we recognize the burden of service that is placed on us by virtue of our vocation.

We continue to give our best efforts to be faithful to this inheritance of faith and to the *diakonia* of our apostolic mission. We ask for your prayers and your support, and we encourage you in your own generation to deepen the relationship between your beloved country and the Holy Land. At the same time, one should be reminded that political or national aspirations should not be confused with spiritual missionary work in the Middle East region, which can lead to unprecedented or unpredictable situations for the Orthodox Church, as has happened with the Christian presence in Iraq and Syria.

The local Christian community of the Holy Land needs both your commitment and your help. In return, we know that you will be greatly enriched by your pilgrimages and your relationships with us. For the Patriarchate remains a solid bridge between Orthodox national entities and the political domains of the region.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

H.B. PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS' ADDRESS TO PRESIDENT TRAIAN BĂSESCU.

Saturday 25 October 2014

Your Excellency Mr. President,

It is a great honor for Us and for Our delegation to be received today by you, together with our beloved brother in Christ, His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel, who was instrumental in arranging Our ecclesiastical and pastoral visit to this great and beautiful Balkan country of Romania, which in fact is not alien to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. For the historical and spiritual ties between the Romanian Church and the Jerusalem Patriarchate is well known.

Your Excellency Our visit here is taking place in a time of radical political and cultural developments, both internationally and nationally or locally. We are aware of the unpromising socio-economic situation of your country and the region. Nevertheless, we know from your last visit and pilgrimage to Israel and Palestinian State that you are aware of the turbulent situation in our region that is the Middle East, and in particular the Holy Land.

As we are sure you have personally experienced the, Christian presence in the Middle East is an indispensable component of the multi-ethnic multi-cultural and multi-religious landscape We would like to draw your attention to their plight that is a result of a declared persecution against them.

As much as Christian values and moral norms have shaped and

formed the cultural and ethical identity of your country, a member of the European Union, so much has Christianity molded the current socio-political and religious fabric of the Holy Land that includes Israel, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Palestinian State.

Since Church and State serve one and the same purpose, i.e. the well-being of the citizens, it is imperative that Church and State should enjoin their common spiritual values to withstand the destructive forces that threaten the human being, which is considered to be the very image of his creator, the Almighty God.

Invoking upon you the grace of the Holy Tomb of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ, We wish you health, both spiritual and physical, longevity, and success in your governmental and political mission. God bless you, and thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

**GREETINGS TO H.B. DANIEL
PATRIARCH OF ROMANIA AT THE**

RECEPTION OF H. B. THEOPHILOS III PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM IN BUCHAREST.

Bucharest, Friday, 24 October 2014

Your Beatitude, Patriarch of Romania and Brother in Christ Mr. Daniel,

“Behold now, what is so good or so pleasant as for brothers to dwell together in unity” Ps.132(133)

Our triune God has made us worthy of being together with Your Beatitude and with brothers and sisters of your country, which has been watered and therefore blessed by the blood of many martyrs all for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are coming from Jerusalem, which is the cradle of the sacrificial and resurrectional witness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We bring to you the grace of the Holy Tomb and the greetings of the Christians of the Holy Land.

The Church of Jerusalem has been the inexhaustible spring that continues to supply the spiritual waters to the ecumenical and the local Orthodox Churches as it has throughout the life of the Church.

The ecumenical and local Orthodox Churches, in turn, have been on one hand protecting the spiritual springs i.e. the Holy Places that bear witness to the sacred history of salvation and on other hand, nourishing the Church of Jerusalem and its faithful believers through their pilgrimages.

These blessed lands of Romania and its Church are not alien or distant to us, for Our predecessors, i.e. great patriarchs of

the Holy City of Jerusalem, like Dositheos and Chrysanthos, worked as spiritual guides in these lands , and by their pastoral spiritual and educational activities succeed to keep unadulterated the Orthodox doctrines and faith. Furthermore, they were able to safeguard the ecclesiastical traditions and the ethnic- cultural identity.

In this way, these great leaders of the Church became messengers of the Gospel of oneness and the unity in our Lord Jesus Christ. In our contemporary time, our Churches and the Orthodox nations are experiencing the challenges of a world that is in total confusion and disorientation. Our greatest call to respond is this reality, which opposes the fundamental values of the light and truth of the Gospel of God's philanthropy.

"For in Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome it". (John 1:4)

This is the mission of the ecumenical Orthodox Church and particularly the Church of Jerusalem which gives martyria to the multi-cultural and multi-religious region that is Israel, the Palestinian state, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and beyond. It is precisely this martyria of Christ's sacrificial love and reconciliation that we are called upon to pronounce to all our human fellows.

We praise and give thanks to our Lord, God the Father who through the intercessions of our most-blessed Lady and Mother of God the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and supplications of the new Martyr Demetrios the pious, protector of Bucharest, led our feet here. We are thankful for your cordial reception.

May the blessings of the Holy Land and the grace of the Holy Tomb of our risen Lord guard you and protect the Romanian Church and the Romanian people.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

OPENING REMARKS MEETING OF THE RESEARCH PROGRAM “ EARLY MONASTICISM AND CLASSICAL PAIDEIA”

Jerusalem, 22 October 2014

Professor Rubenson,

Distinguished Members of the Research Group,

Your Eminences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We welcome you warmly to Jerusalem and to this meeting of your research group as you continue your explorations into the relationship between early Christian monasticism and the *paideia* of late antiquity. This is a fruitful field of study, in which much work remains to be done, and we encourage you in your research and in your efforts to make your findings, which are so much needed in our day, well known in the scholarly world.

Over the last 40 years, the study of Late Antiquity has been transformed. Because of the work of the great scholar, Peter Brown, and his colleagues and successors in the field, we no longer view this period of history in the negative light of our predecessors. Rather, we see in Late Antiquity a remarkable richness, not least in this part of the world, which formed the Eastern Roman Empire. New discoveries and fresh readings of texts and other physical evidence have broadened the picture for us of life between the second and the eighth centuries throughout the Mediterranean world.

We have long known about the ambiguous relationship between the emerging Christian civilization and its classical predecessor. Several Christian authors wrestled with the question of how Christianity was to relate to the thought and literature of the classical world. Some early Christian writers opposed the reading of classical literature, while other, most notably Saint Basil in his well-known Letter to Young Men, saw the potential benefits of such reading under the careful tutelage of a master.

It is not surprising that we are discovering, particularly through your research, that the relationship between early Christianity and classical *paideia* is even more multi-layered and subtle than we first imagined. And since the influence of monasticism on the life of the Church from the fourth century on was so pervasive, a proper understanding of the role of monasticism, especially in the development of Christian culture, is paramount.

As Peter Brown says in his now classic book, *The World of Late Antiquity*, in this region “monasticism was the bridgehead by which the fringes of the classical world entered the culture and politics of the Roman world” (London, The Folio Edition 2014, p.74).

He also reminds us that in the East monasticism did not “stand aloof” from the community; rather, it “flowed directly

into the life of the great cities" (ibid., p.75). In this respect, Saint Justin Martyr speaks about the *logos spermatikos*, that in any cultural expression there are seeds of truth. "In every person", he wrote, "there is a divine particle, reason," and according to Saint Justin, whenever human beings use this reason, the Divine Logos is at work in them, whether they know or acknowledge this or not.

When we turn to the subject of monasticism, we see that monasticism flourished in this region from the earliest days of the movement in the fourth century. Monasticism spread north from Egypt and Gaza. Even today, for example, we have surviving evidence in the name El Arish of the famous Saint Hilarion of the Gaza region. Christians in the Holy Land who desired to make this radical and complete commitment to the Gospel found in the Judean desert an ideal environment. For here Saint John the Baptist first lived the ascetic life and his voice was heard as "one crying out in the wilderness" (Mt. 3:3).

There was a time when there were hundreds of monastic settlements in this region, and the most important of them, the Brotherhood of the Tomb of Christ, dates from the early fourth century and has given itself to the spiritual mission of guarding and serving the Holy Places ever since. Mar Sabba, one of our great monasteries, is also one of the oldest monasteries of the strict monastic *askesis* in continuous occupation in the world. Nor should we forget in this regard the monastery of Saint Catherine in the Sinai Peninsula, a monastery of equal antiquity and importance. It seems right, therefore, that here in the Holy Land the two primary aspects of your research should find a happy meeting place.

We highly commend your work in this field. The results of your research will benefit not only scholarship, but also the life of the Church. Monasticism is a living aspect of the life of the Church in the Holy Land, and monasticism is a sign to the Church and to the world of the complete giving of the self

to God. Influenced early by the classical *paideia*, monasteries have become in their turn not simply communities of celibates of destinations for pilgrims, but places where Christian culture is preserved and deepened. Without monastic communities in East and West, so much Christian culture and civilization would have been lost over the centuries.

The ultimate purpose of Christian monasticism –and this distinguishes it from the concept of classical *paideia*- is the attainment of the contemplation of the glory of God that was manifested on Mount Tabor by Christ to his disciples in the Transfiguration. The metaphysical concept of divinity of the classical *paideia* was taken up in the theological shadow (*skia*) on Mount Sinai to Moses, became incarnate in Bethlehem, and manifested as “Uncreated Light” in the glorified person of Jesus Christ.

We wish you well in your conference and in your work and we are glad to welcome you to the Patriarchate, the living embodiment of the monastic heritage of this land. May God bless you all your academic deliberations.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem