

# **CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION WORKS AT THE CHAPEL OF THE 'PRISON OF CHRIST AND THE FAINTING OF VIRGIN MARY**

On Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> /9<sup>th</sup> of July 2009 His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, escorted by Archbishops and priests of the Patriarchate, descended to the Church of Resurrection, where He was received by the Sacristan Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Isidoros and by Fathers of the Church of Resurrection, along with Mr. Theodosios Mitropoulos the Architect of the Church of Resurrection. They visited the north transept of the Catholicon (Heptakamaron-Seven Arches) where the ancient Chapel of the 'Prison of Christ and the Fainting of Virgin Mary' is located, behind the Chapel of 'Clappae'. This is where, according to ancient tradition, the Lord was being held during the preparation of the Cross at the Holy Calvary.

On the ceiling and floor of this Chapel there are architectural features from the Constantine period and from the epoch of the Patriarch of Jerusalem Modestos, after the Persian invasion of 614 A.D. These preserved elements will be distinguished and better presented as a result of the restoration that is taking place at the Chapel and will better serve the worship and liturgical needs of the believers. At this place a discussion was held regarding how the Holy Altar and the Holy 'Prothesis' (table for the preparation of the Holy Gifts) should be arranged.

After this, His Beatitude met with the participants of the organised pilgrimage of the N.G.O 'Romiosini', which occurred at the Holy Places between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of July. At the meeting they talked about and reviewed the congress held last

month, 'Romiosini throughout the centuries', and the importance of 'romiosini' as the backbone of our nation. The guests brought with them medicines as humanitarian aid for the Polyclinic 'St. Venedictos' situated in the Patriarchate's premises. During the following days the pilgrims had the opportunity to participate in a sacred devout vigilance at the Church of Resurrection and also to participate in a devout intercession to the honoured St. George the Great Martyr and Triumphant, at the Holy Monastery of St. George in the Jewish quarter of the old city. Finally they concluded their pilgrimage with visits to other Holy Shrines.

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# **PREPARING THE WAY FOR THE BAPTISM OF PILGRIMS AT THE JORDAN RIVER**

His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III visited the Holy Monastery of St. John the Baptist by the Jordan River and the traditional Biblical place where the Lord was baptised. The visit took place on Wednesday July 8<sup>th</sup> 2009 in cooperation with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Ministry of Tourism of Israel. During the visit, the Ministry was represented by its Senior Deputy Director-General Mr. Raphael Ben-Hur and his colleagues, while His Beatitude was escorted by the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Aristarchos Archbishop of Constantina, the Superior of St. Gerasimos Rev. Archimandrite Chrysostomos and deacon Rev. Fr. Athanasios.

This area has been a military zone since 1967 and the Israeli Defence Forces permit pilgrims to visit the site twice a year, on the 5<sup>th</sup> /18<sup>th</sup> of January, the eve of Epiphany, for the ceremony of the Blessing of the waters performed by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem and, on Holy Tuesday, for the traditional pilgrimage baptism of believers. This allowance resulted from a suggestion made by the late Patriarch of Jerusalem Diodoros I to the I.D.F authorities.

The I.D.F, in cooperation with the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, provided access to the site on the occasion of the Patriarch's visit to view the premises of the Holy Monastery of St. John the Baptist, partially demolished since 1967 and to assess the possibility for its renovation. Approval for renovation work already exists and in order for the project to be initiated, it requires the submission of an architectural site analysis and the goodwill of a benefactor to finance the expenses.

After the visit to the Holy Monastery, His Beatitude together with Mr. Raphael Ben-Hur, the General military Commanding officer of Jericho Mr. Itzik Deri, the General military Commanding officer of Bethlehem Mr. Iyad Sirhan, the civil engineer Mr. Ofer Meital and the architect Mr. Ron Margolin, visited the place of the Baptism at the Jordan River and inspected the works carried out by the I.D.F, namely the support of the river bed for the safe access of pilgrims to the river waters and the construction of a stone platform and stone roofing for the performing of the Blessing of the waters ceremony by the Patriarch. This platform and its surroundings is the Patriarchates' property.

The Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III conveyed appreciation for the cooperation between the Ministry of Tourism and the Israeli Defence Forces which led to this facilitation, an event that preludes the gradual and permanent prevalence of peace, enabling the more frequent and easy

visitation of pilgrims for their customary baptism and sanctification at the traditional Biblical place of the Lord's Baptism.

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# **INAUGURATION OF THE RESTORED OLIVE PRESS OF THE CHURCH OF RESURRECTION**

On Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 2009 at the Church of Resurrection the ceremony of the Blessing of the Water was performed on the occasion of the inauguration of the restored part of the Church known as 'doheo'.

The site, located west of the Holy Sepulchre, is one of the most ancient parts of the Church of Resurrection and it is in the complete and sole sovereignty of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. At this site there is an ancient olive press, stone aqueducts for the canalization of olive oil into a reservoir or 'doheo' for preservation in order to be used for the lighting of the numerous suspended oil lamps in the Church. This olive press dates back to the early years of the Church's construction from the time of St.Helen and thus is of great archaeological importance, not just for its age but also for its functionalism in producing and distributing the oil.

This ancient part of the Church aroused the interest of His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III from when he

was ministering as the Sacristan of the Church of Resurrection and soon after His election to the Patriarchal Throne he took the opportunity and suggested to Mr. Petros Kyriakidis to undertake the cost of restoring and distinguishing this ancient olive press and its surrounding functions. Mr. Kyriakidis expressed his alacrity and donated the finances for securing and restoring the olive press, cleaning and revealing its adjacent operating parts with the supervision by the Architect and director of the Technical Office of the Church of Resurrection Mr. Theodosios Mitropoulos, along with a specialist workforce. The restoration was carried out over a year or so and was completed recently. On completion of the restoration works the sponsors were invited to Jerusalem to attend the inauguration.

On Saturday morning of 23<sup>rd</sup> May, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III descended to the Church of Resurrection accompanied by Archbishops and priests of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, the prominent guests Mr. Petros Kyriakidis and his son, together with Mr. Lavrentis Lavrentiadis escorted by the director of the N.G.O 'Romiosini', Mrs. Ekaterini Diamantopolou, a philologist and doctor in philosophy.

They venerated the Stone of Anointing and the Holy Sepulchre and walked behind it where the site of the olive press 'doheo' is located. Firstly the ceremony of the Blessing of the Water was performed and then Mr. Mitropoulos showed the guests around the restored olive press and its adjacent functions. Following this, they venerated the Holy Calvary, the Chapel of Adam and the Sacristy of the Church of Resurrection.

His Beatitude, on the occasion of Mr. Kyriakidis and Mr. Lavrentiadis' pilgrimage to the Church of Resurrection, took the opportunity and spoke about the beneficial effect

this Holy place has for the souls of believers and the role that the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre fulfils. He then commented on the renovations carried out on the Church of Resurrection, such as the Catholicon and the ones ought to, expressing the Patriarchates' gratitude to the sponsor, the Greek Government.

From the Church of Resurrection, His Beatitude, with the prominent guests and the Fathers, ascended to the Patriarchate.

In the Throne Hall His Beatitude thanked Mr.Kyriakidis and Mr.Lavrentiadis for their good intentions and their material contribution to the Holy Sepulchre and decorated each one as 'Great Commander of the Order of Orthodox Cross-bearers of the Holy Sepulchre'. This has always been the established decoration that the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre has honoured heads of Churches and States or other personalities that contributed ethically or materially to the Holy Pilgrim Places.

His Beatitude characterized the decorated guests not only as pilgrims but also as benefactors to the Patriarchate and to the Brotherhood's mission in safeguarding and preserving the Holy Places, the tabernacle of our Lord Jesus Christ who was incarnated, crucified and Risen for us, substantiates the Roman Orthodox Nation and is the source from which we derive power.

Mr.Kyriakidis and Mr.Lavrentiadis were deeply moved and thanked His Beatitude and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, stating that not only themselves but also their descendants will be forever friends and indeed supporters and defenders of the Holy Sepulchre.

After the honouring ceremony His Beatitude invited the honoured guests accompanied by Fathers of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre for lunch.

On Saturday afternoon, Mr.Kyriakidis with his son, Mr.Lavrentiadis and Mrs. Diamantopoulou visited the Grotto at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, the historic Monasteries of St. Savvas and St.Theodosios, the leaders of coenobitic and lauretic way of life in the Judean desert. On Sunday morning they participated in the Holy Liturgy at the Church of Resurrection and afterwards visited the Monastery of the Temptation of our Lord (Sarantarion) and St. Gerasimos in the Jordan desert, accompanied by clergy of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood before departing for Athens.

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