

THE SUNDAY OF THOMAS IN THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, April 29 / May 12, 2024, the Sunday of Thomas was celebrated in the Patriarchate.

On this feast, the event of the appearance of the Lord on the 8th day since the Resurrection was celebrated when Thomas was also with the other Disciples and he recognized the Lord and confessed the Lord and said: "My Lord and my God" (John, 20,28).

This feast was celebrated in the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with Vespers on Saturday afternoon and the Liturgy on Sunday morning which were officiated by the Patriarchal Commissioner, His Eminence Metropolitan Isychiosof Capitolias. Co-celebrants to His Eminence on Sunday morning at the Holy Sepulchre were their Eminences, the Archbishops Theodosios of Sebasteia and Dimitrios of Lydda, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks with the Master of Ceremonies Archimandrite Bartholomew first in rank and Hierodeacon Simeon. The chanting was delivered by Priest Ioannis Antoniou and the Patriarchal School of Zion students as the service was attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos and pilgrims from various Orthodox countries.

After the Liturgy, the Episcopal Entourage returned to the Patriarchate Reception Hall where His Eminence addressed those present as follows:

"The Apostle Thomas was absent when Christ, after His Resurrection, visited His Disciples in the Upper Room, where they were confined. When he was informed about the visit of Christ, he asked to see Him and feel the wounds of the Cross in His hands and side. When Christ visited His Disciples again after eight days, invited the Apostle Thomas to feel the marks

of the wounds on His Body. Then the Apostle Thomas recognized Him and confessed Him as his Lord and God. He recognized Him from the wounds of the Cross, which are a sign of His love, but also of His power. The Holy Fathers call the confession of Thomas 'redeeming'. And truly, it leads to salvation for all those who address it to Christ, humbly seeking His mercy.

The fact that the Apostle Thomas was initially absent during the appearance of Christ to His Disciples, seems to have been God's economy, to make the miracle of the Resurrection believable and to dissolve any kind of doubt.

The Apostle Thomas, after Pentecost, preached the Gospel to the Parthians, Persians, Medes and Indians and had a martyr's end.

I raise a glass to the health and longevity of our Father and Patriarch, Theophilos III and all of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood. Christ is Risen. Many happy returns!"

From Secretariat-General

THE EPITAPH SERVICE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Good Friday night, April 20/ May 4, 2024, the Epitaph Service took place at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The canon of Holy Saturday was sung at the beginning of the service until the Patriarch and the High Priest would get dressed in their mourning liturgical vestments.

At the end of the 9th Ode, the Patriarchal Entourage came out

of the Catholicon and went up to the Horrendous Golgotha via all the Shrines outside the Catholicon at each of whom there was a stop with a supplication.

Then the 7th Gospel of the Holy Passion was read, which narrates the Lord's Cross (Mat. 27:33-54), and there was a prayer followed by veneration, with the participation of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos and the Consul Mrs Anna Mantika, under the chanting of the Choir of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

After the narrative, four Archbishops took the silk corporal which symbolizes the body of Christ, and placed it on the slab of the Holy Deposition, having completed three circles around it, and the Patriarch read the Gospel of Deposition, according to St. John.

This was followed by the procession three times around the Holy Sepulchre, with the Archbishops holding the silk corporal. After the procession, the silk corporal representing the Body of the Lord was placed on the slab of the Holy Sepulchre.

At the end of the procession, the three stasis of the Epitaph Lamentations began; 1. "Thou who art the Life was laid in a tomb Oh Christ..." 2. It is right to magnify Thee, Giver of Life..." 3. "Every generation, O my Christ, offers praises at Thy burial..." with the Patriarch starting the first one, the second His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Capitolas, the third His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerash and His Eminence Dorotheos of Avila. Participants in the prayer were the Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks and Priests from the Orthodox Churches.

The sermon of the day was delivered by Geronda Secretary-General, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina as follows;

“I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste” (Isaiah 28,16).

Your Beatitude, Father and Master,

Reverend Chorea of Hierarchs,

Your Excellency, Consul General of Greece,

Reverend Priests,

Pious pilgrims,

This luxurious and chosen stone, the cornerstone and honourable, through whom the prophet Isaiah foretold that God would place Him in the foundations of Zion, is the same whom Simeon the God-receiver recognized as “the salvation of God” and said, “ is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against” (Luke 2, 30-34). The fall of those who deny Him and the resurrection of those who accept Him. It is He through whom the Apostle of the Nations says, “ God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Cor. 5,19) and that “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2, 9).

He is God’s Only Begotten Son and Word, incarnate by the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin. He is the one who receives our human flesh, the one who brings us together as God and man, as God-man. He is the one witnessed by John the Baptist as “the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Joh, 1, 29). The Father Himself, when Christ was baptized in the Jordan, revealed Himself through a voice from above, “You are my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased” (Mark. 1, 10) and the Spirit “descending upon Him in the form of a dove (Mark. 1, 10) anointed with the “Theurgical oil of rejoicing”.

Anointed with the oil of the Holy Spirit by the Father’s grace, He took upon His shoulders the salvation of us humans.

“In His person, the human race saw the Father (Jn. 14, 8). He is, as He assured us, “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14, 6). He taught us the true way of life, as a life of offering and love to the neighbour, even to the enemies. He healed the deaf and dumb, braced the dead limbs of the paralyzed, gave sight to the blind, healed those possessed by unclean spirits and raised the dead, including His friend Lazarus the four-day dead, “confirming the general Resurrection before His passion”.

Out of immeasurable mercy and unspeakable philanthropy, He concluded with the sacrifice on the Cross for us. He willingly accepted the Cross for us. According to the apostle Paul, “Yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die” (Rom. 5, 7). “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5, 8). In free and self-willed obedience, He undertook “to finish the work that the Father gave him”(John 17, 4). The Lord experienced His death as a cup, saying “This cup, which the Father has given me, do I not drink it?” (John 18, 11). He absolved our death by His very death. Death was “overcome by death”, as the Church sings day and night. His death was true. It was dishonourable, shameful, painful and bitter. The Lord cried out loud from the Cross, “I thirst”, but mankind, in the person of the descendants of the sons of the law and the sons of the nations, offered Him “vinegar mixed with gall” (Jn. 18, 29) ” and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink” (Matt. 27, 34). In the philanthropy of God, the man returned inhumanity, because according to the approved Theologian, the blessed Elder George Florovski “the whole outburst of rage against Christ was inhuman and demonic”.

Through the Cross, the Lord descended into Hades, however, the immaculate body of the redeemer of our souls “did not see the grave and corruption”.

By His own power, as God, he released from Hades those under his eternal bonds, saying “Enter again into paradise”, that is, enjoy without suffering in joy and rejoicing the eternal

life. Because of this, from the Cross of the Lord and from here, as the Church proclaims on the day of Pentecost, "there is no death when we leave the body and depart to the Lord, but the transition from the saddest to the most useful and memorable and rest and joy". "Behold, joy has come to the whole world through the Cross." His life-giving blood, God's blood, as the dogmatic theology of the Church sings and as it is written on the slab of the Holy Altar of Golgotha, flowed when the stones of nature, of the Place of the Skull, split and through their cracks His immaculate blood flowed and washed away the pollution of our forefather buried in here and of all his descendants.

On His blood, the Lord founded the Church, His Body, so that "the gates of Hades will not have power over it" (Matt. 16,18). By the red dye of His holy blood He signed His New Testament, the Testament with all the peoples of the earth, "which did not come to destroy, but to fulfil the Old (Matt. 5, 17), saying "This is my blood of the Covenant, (Matt. 26, 28) and "this cup is the New Testament in my blood" (Luke 22, 20). From the death of the Cross sprang life for man, a force of life uncatalyzed, fountains of life and salvation. The blood of Christ, shed once upon a time on Golgotha, is poured into the blood of the Holy Eucharist, for the life and salvation of the world, enlivening and sanctifying our souls and bodies.

Through the Cross of His Son, God answered the Greeks who failed to know Him "through wisdom" and the Jews through the request for a "sign". God promised to save both, Jews first and then Greeks through the sign of the Cross.

In the Church founded on His blood and the New Testament signed by Him, He united the two worlds, the Jewish and the Greek. Those who believe in Him, Jews and Greeks, are one in Christ, because "in Christ there is no longer Jew and Greek, barbarian, Scythian, free man". Christ was willingly crucified for them and everyone is saved in him, even those who

crucified Him. If this is a “scandal” for the Jews and “stupidity” for the Greeks, for those who have received it in faith it is “the power of God and the wisdom of God”.

This mystery, this free gift, this benefit, is offered by Christ through the Church to the world. He offers this through His death, saying “Take courage I have overcome the world”. The Cross is the glory of Christ. Through the Cross, the Lord entered His glory. “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” (Luke 24, 27). The Cross is the glory of Christ and the boast of the Church, “I did not boast, lest in the Cross of the Lord” says Paul. The Cross is the strength of the persecuted and those at war. With the symbol, the banner of the Cross, Byzantine emperors defeated barbarians. In this place, the emperor Heraclius brought back the Patriarch of Jerusalem Zacharia from Persian captivity and raised the holy Cross. With the power of the Cross, our ancestors freed our nation from bitter slavery. The power of the cross highlighted a multitude of martyrs and new martyrs and preserved the Roman Orthodox identity of our nation.

With the power of the holy cross, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood under its Hegoumen, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, Primate of our feast, gives its fight for the protection of the undeniable Pilgrimage rights of our people against foreign fraudulence and appeals for the cessation of all hostilities and the maintenance of a spirit of reconciliation and peace in the Holy Land and the world as a whole.

On this reverend and holy day, mourning in joyful mourning, the cross of Christ according to the Holy Triodion already “illuminates the dawn of the Resurrection of Christ”, of which may everyone be worthy to rejoice in health. So be it.”

The service continued with the “evlogitaria”, praises, readings, intercession and dismissal. The return to the

Patriarchate was done under the mournful bell tolling.

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS AT THE SHRINE OF THE ANNUNCIATION IN NAZARETH

On Sunday, March 25 / April 7, 2024, the feast of the Annunciation of Our Lady the Theotokos was celebrated in Nazareth.

On this feast, the whole Church, especially that in Jerusalem, commemorates the fact that the fullness of time has come, God through the Archangel Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary in the city of Nazareth that by the Holy Spirit she will incarnate the Only Begotten Son and His Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. In parallel and according to the standard of the fixed calendar, the feast of the veneration of the Holy Cross was celebrated to strengthen us in the struggle of fasting for the reception of Holy Easter.

On the occasion of this holiday, a celebration was held for a Divine Liturgy in the Holy Church-Shrine of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Nazareth, presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Concelebrating with Him were their Eminences, the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Archbishops; Damascene of Yaffo, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks,

with first in rank the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Head of the Russian Spiritual Mission in Jerusalem (MISSIA) Archimandrite Vassianos, Priests of the area of Nazareth and Acre, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios, at the attendance of a large congregation. The chanting was delivered by the choir of Nazareth and the choir of Beersheba under the Most Reverend Archbishop of Aristovoulos of Madaba in the presence of the President of the Nazareth Community Mr Bassim Asfour, the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel Mr Cezar Marjieh, the representative of the Greek Embassy to Tel Aviv Mr Nikolaos Mavroedis and the representative of Russia to Israel Mr Vladimir Victorov.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us (Isaiah 7,14 / Matt. 1,23), Isaiah prophesized and the Evangelist Matthew interprets.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit which overshadowed the Virgin Mary has gathered us all in this holy place of the biblical city of Nazareth to celebrate the great and redeeming mystery of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, as the psalmist says: “Sing unto the Lord, bless His Name; proclaim from day to day the good tidings of His salvation” (Ps 95,1).

These words of David, “the salvation of God”, are no other than the reply of Archangel Gabriel to the wondering Mariam “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” (Luke 1,34),

“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore, also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1,35).

Both the Old and the New Testament are the holy history, the revelation, the revealing of the eternal wisdom and will of God, which is no other than “the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (Romans 16,25), which was announced to the Virgin Mary, revealed in Christ and preached by the Apostles. This is the One who “shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest” (Luke 1,32). The greeting of the Archangel Gabriel, “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (Luke 1,28), and Mariam’s words, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1,38), made Mariam the Mother of God, a partaker and contributor to “the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever” (Romans 16,25-27), Saint Paul preaches. And in more detail; this mystery has been revealed now, and it has been confirmed by the prophesies in the scriptures and has become known to all the nations by God’s command, so that they may display the obedience befitting to faith. Such an example of obedience of faith was the Virgin Mariam, obeying the words of Archangel Gabriel, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1,38). “Obedience is displayed by faith, not by much knowledge. And when God commands to obey, one should not examine how”, Saint John of Damascus says.

Moreover, the Lord Himself “became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Hebrews 5,9), while the Virgin Mariam was “Holding the mystery of the faith in a

pure conscience" (1 Tim. 3,9). That is why the Archangel told her, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus" (Luke 1,30-31). Saint Theophylaktos says about this, "Righteously He was called Jesus, who came for the salvation of our race; for this name in Greek means salvation, therefore Jesus means salvation".

But what is the salvation, and what does the word saviour mean? "Salvation" is the correction of the foremother Eve's fault, as Saint John of Damascus says, "Rejoice, Mary, thou the only one blessed among women, who has corrected Eve's fault". "Rejoice the only one blessed among women, thou who has raised the humble race of the fallen women". "Rejoice, for through you we have been saved from an unspeakable curse and have been filled with joy".

"Saviour" means the new Adam, that is God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was conceived in flesh from the Holy Spirit by the pure flesh of the Virgin Mary. "Rejoice, thou who art full of grace", thou who are above all joy and name, from whom the unspeakable joy Christ, is born unto the world and has become the healing of Adam's sorrow", Saint John of Damascus exclaims.

Adam's sorrow is the sin, the death, which befell upon humankind through the first created Adam, while salvation is bestowed through Jesus Christ, who is the "healing", the new Adam, who was born unto the world, the Son and Word of God. He was conceived in a manner incomprehensible to any mind from the pure flesh of the Virgin Mary, that is why the hymnographer of the Church says, "Today the preludes of universal joy move us to sing the prefestal hymn; for behold Gabriel cometh, bringing the good tidings to the Virgin, and shall cry to her: Rejoice, thou who art full of grace, the Lord is with thee" (Apolytikion).

It is noteworthy that the grace Mariam received from God is

the same grace that God has given to the members of the Church, "Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1,23) according to Paul. In other words, in the most blessed Virgin Mary the Theotokos, we see the mystery of the Church which God loved and sanctified, "as His bride" (cf. Eph. 5,32). "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom" (John 3,29), John the Evangelist says. The bride is the humankind, which is wed to Christ through the Virgin Mary, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says.

This event, my dear ones, shows the strong bond of the mystery of the Virgin Theotokos and of the mystery of the Church. That is why Saint John of Damascus exclaims, "Rejoice, thou who art full of grace, through whom we have become members of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church".

We praise and magnify today the Virgin Mary who received the annunciation, "of the salvation of God" and ask her and the theologian John of Damascus: Extend thy mercy most pure Lady, to those who know thee, and look favourably down upon thine servants and their works, and guide them in the path of peace, for all people's eyes are turned unto thee in hope, and have your intercession to your Son and God and our God, to whom be all glory the power and the might, together with His Father without beginning, and the Holy Spirit of the same one essence, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen. Have a blessed Lent and a holy Pascha, through which Adam returned to Paradise".

At the end of the Liturgy, there was a supplication for the donors of the renovation of the shrine and the whole Church, followed by the scouts' parade.

A small reception followed in the hall of the Metropolis.

At noon, a meal was hosted by the Holy Metropolis in a restaurant in the city. His Beatitude addressed those present

at the meal through His following address:

“Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (Luke 1,28).

Your Eminence, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth,

Honourable President of the Ecclesiastical Council and respected members,

Dear companions

Today our holy Church celebrates the great universal event of the Annunciation of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and the Adoration of the Precious and Life-giving Cross of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Annunciation of the Theotokos is the “chapter of the salvation of humankind”, while the Precious Cross refers to the salvation of the souls of the people. “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8,36) the Lord says. “Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven” (Ps. 85,11), the psalmist proclaims.

This message of truth and righteousness is proclaimed by the Gospel of Christ, which has been preached all over the world by the Holy Apostles of Christ. The Mother of all Churches, our Church of Jerusalem has received this Gospel, as the holy consignment from the Holy Apostles, especially from its first Hierarch, James, the Brother of God.

We say this, because Christ says, “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness” (John 12,46). This light was granted to the world by the Mother of God, who is praised and magnified today. This unwaning light shines in Christ and through Christ in His Church, and in the Church of Jerusalem, which is founded upon

the redeeming blood of the Son of God on the Cross.

This event of the mystery of the Divine Providence and reverence is witnessed throughout the centuries by the Christian presence in the Holy Land, in the cities of Jerusalem Bethlehem and Nazareth.

No one can deny nor refute this truth, that is why we, my dear ones preach and confess the God of love and utmost philanthropy, the Sun of Righteousness and peace and are called to remain steadfast and unshakable in our holy mission. This is what the incarnate from the pure flesh of the Virgin Mary Son of God ordered His disciples, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5,16).

We do not exaggerate in saying that the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the guarantee of the safekeeping of our faith, intact and unblemished, and the undivided unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. In the Holy place of the Church of Jerusalem, at the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate, "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1,17). And in the blessed place of Nazareth, the Virgin Mary became a receiver of God's grace, hearing the words, "Rejoice, thou who art full of grace".

Many happy and peaceful returns, and a Blessed Pascha!"

Following this, His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth addressed His Beatitude as follows:

"Your Beatitude, Father and Master,

"Today is the Gospel of joy, virgin festival, those below are joined to those above, Adam is renewed, or Eve is freed from the first sorrow"! The philanthropy of our Triune God towards us who are made of earth is an inexplicable and unspeakable mystery! The "eternal secret and unknown to angels" through our Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, to us on earth

was revealed here, in the Holy City of Nazareth through the Archangel of the Heavenly Powers Gabriel, who was sent to *“bring... the word of salvation”*.

Today we welcome, our Father and Patriarch, like another Archangel Gabriel *“proclaiming the word of truth”*, sealing the archangelic hymn *“Hail, thou who art full of grace”* and presiding over the Feast!

Your Beatitude, we express from the bottom of our hearts gratitude to Your grace, for everything you have contributed to the support of this God-given province. The renovation works in the Holy Shrine of the Annunciation and in the Metropolitan Holy Church of Saint George, following the blessing and exhortation of Your Beatitude, are commemorated here, works which will remain indelible in time, testifying to the glorious governing of the Church of Jerusalem by Your Holy Beatitude.

Your Beatitude, we wholeheartedly pray that the Lord our God, through the intercessions of the Most Gracious Theotokos Mary and the Archangel Gabriel, grant You good health to continue the wise steering of the mental ship of the Mother of all Churches, the Holy Zion! Many returns.”

From Secretariat-General

THE FEAST OF THE ADORATION OF THE CROSS AND THE

ANNUNCIATION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD IN THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

On Sunday, March 25 / April 7, 2024, the feast of the Adoration of the Holy Cross and the Annunciation of the Theotokos was celebrated by the Patriarchate in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

In the context of movable feasts, the Feast of the Cross was celebrated as a veneration of the Holy Cross for the strengthening of the faithful in the middle of the fasting period of Holy and Great Lent, and the Feast of the Annunciation in the context of immovable feasts on March 25 as the joyous news from God through the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary that from the Holy Spirit she will incarnate the Son and Word of God.

This feast was celebrated with Great Vespers on Saturday afternoon in the Catholicon of the Church of the Resurrection, presided over by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-prayer of the High Priests and the co-celebration of the priests. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon and Priest Ioannis Antoniou.

The feast was also celebrated in the morning with a Divine Liturgy in the Holy and Life-giving Tomb, presided over by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, with the co-celebration of their Eminences the Archbishops, Theodosios of Sebasteia and Demetrios of Lydda, and Archimandrites of the Brotherhood. The service was attended by local believers, in the presence of the Consul Mrs Anna Madika.

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a litany three times around the Holy Sepulchre and once around the shrines.

At the end of the litany, the Episcopal procession went up to the Patriarchate where His Eminence spoke to those present and a festive treat was served.

The address of His Eminence follows below:

“Exercising the virtues is not an easy task. Beyond personal strong will, the sanctifying power of our Church is also necessary. Thus, the holy Fathers decreed, in the middle of the holy period of Great Lent, that the Holy Cross of the Lord should be worshipped, so that the faithful may receive from it grace and strength to continue with strength our spiritual struggle.

The Cross of Christ is the pride of our Church and the invincible weapon against the forces of evil. Upon it, the kingdom of the devil was crushed and his power was annihilated. From him came redemption and immortality to the human race. Our Church sings triumphantly: “Lord, your cross is our weapon against the devil...” and “Now that the Cross is appearing, it provides strength amid fasting, we willingly honour it with reverence”.

From a murderous and hateful means of execution of criminals, it changed into a means of sanctification and a mental shield of protection from the counsels of Lucifer and his dark fallen angels. Others liken it to a strong breakwater against the shocks of life, which are caused by evil and sin. The physical fatigue of fasting and the mental laziness of the spiritual struggle are two main factors that can inhibit the believer’s ascetic journey. The sanctifying power of the Cross is the antidote to this situation.

The Cross of Christ, apart from being a divine symbol of our Church, also has a moral significance for every believer. As the Lord brought His own Cross to Golgotha, burdened with the iniquities of the entire human race, the believer of Christ carries his personal cross, the struggle for salvation and

completion. The road to salvation is a real Golgotha and requires self-denial from those who climb it. The Lord confirmed it: "Whoever wants to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34). The holy period of the Triodion is par excellence a crucifixion and a conceivable crucifixion of our passions.

That is why our holy Church dedicated this Sunday to the veneration of the Holy Cross. The faithful, drawing grace from it, now strengthened and renewed, we resist the obstacles set up by the wicked and we walk the heavenly road unscathed, guided by the joy and longing to meet our Risen Lord Jesus Christ on the holy and brilliant day of His resurrection.

Today, however, the great feast of the Adoration of the Cross coincides with another great feast of the Theotokos, the Annunciation of the Virgin and according to the evangelist Luke (1' 26-38), the Annunciation of the Virgin happened six months after the miraculous conception of John the Forerunner by Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias, when the archangel Gabriel was sent by God to the Virgin Mariam (Mary), to announce to her that she would give birth to the Son of God. At that time, Mary lived in Nazareth of Galilee and was betrothed to the carpenter Joseph. Gabriel suddenly appeared before Mary and greeted her: "Hail, thou who art full of grace, the Lord is with thee". It was reasonable for the young woman to panic, but the archangel reassured her: " Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son and shalt call his name Jesus".

As soon as she recovered from the turmoil, Mary full of wonder asked the archangel how she would conceive, since she did not know a man. Gabriel answered her that the Holy Spirit would cover her like a cloud and would invisibly and mysteriously initiate the conception of the Son of God. To make himself more believable, he invoked Elizabeth's miraculous conception of John the Forerunner. Mary was convinced by the words of

Gabriel (“Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done unto me according to your will”) and the archangel Gabriel “left”.

I raise a glass to the health of His Beatitude our Patriarch, Theophilos III, all of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and all of you. Many happy returns!”

From Secretariat-General

DOXOLOGY ON THE NATIONAL ANNIVERSARY OF MARCH 25, 1821

On Monday, March 12/25, 2024, at 10.30 a.m. a Doxology was held in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on the national anniversary of March 25, 1821.

This Doxology was held as a prayer to God for the repose of the souls of the heroes and all the fighters of the holy war of 1821 and as a prayer of thanksgiving to God for His help to our nation, to shake off the unbearable yoke of Ottoman slavery and conquer not only freedom in Christ but also human freedom.

H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos presided over this Doxology, with the co-celebration of High Priests of the Patriarchate, at the honorary presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos and members of the Hellenic Parish.

His Beatitude addressed those present in the Patriarchate Hall with the following address:

“It is time to shake off this unbearable yoke, to liberate the Motherland... to raise the mark by which we always win! I say the Cross, so that we may avenge our Homeland and our Orthodox Faith from the impious contempt of the impious.” From the proclamation of Alexandros Ypsilantis in Iasion, February 24, 1821.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos,

Dear Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved brethren in the Lord.

The uprising of March 25, 1821, the anniversary of which we are celebrating, holds a prominent timeless position in world history. And this is because the Greek Revolution marked the ethno-religious rebirth of the Roman race from the ashes of the tyrannical slavery of the Ottomans on the one hand, and awakened the consciousness of peoples and nations deprived of their national freedom and independence on the other.

The enslaved Greeks, inspired by the order of the Apostle Paul: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5,1), rebelled against the unbearable Turkish yoke “Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine” (Ps. 78,65), as the psalmist says, exclaiming with a loud voice, “Freedom or Death”. Bishop Palaion Patron Germanos declared the beginning of the liberating struggle blessed and exalted the Banner of the Revolution, whose slogan according to the “Elder of Moria” Theodoros Kolokotronis was “now the struggle for the holy faith of Christ and the freedom of the country”.

This irrefutable fact is also proven by the proclamation of Alexandros Ypsilantis in Iasion on February 24, 1821, in which he declares: “It is time to shake off this unbearable yoke, to liberate the Motherland... to raise the mark by which we always

win! I say the Cross, so that we may avenge our Homeland and our Orthodox Faith from the impious contempt of the impious”.

The special feature of the Revolution of 1821 is the fact that heroes of Patriotism and martyrs of the Faith emerged, so the Greek Romans are recognized as genuine imitators and indisputable continuations of their ancestors, but also guardians of the moral values and truths of the Greek-Christian tradition.

All the enslaved Greek land and space turns into a field of rebellion and hostilities. The now invincible desire for redemption from the sufferings of slavery overcame the fear of a foreign and non-religious conqueror.

It is worth noting that today's anniversary of the national rebirth of 1821 is not only about the celebration of this historical memory but mainly and primarily about the “beginning of knowledge” of this moral and even to the point of blood sacrificial, ethno-religious achievement. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge... and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge” (Prov. 1,7,22), the wise Solomon says.

We say this because the Revolution of 1821 remains an eternal bright light, in our modern world of confusion, ignorance and the desires of hubris, of common universal moral values, especially of national freedom “from the bones of the sacred Greeks” according to the great poet Dionysios Solomos.

The contribution of the Church to the above-all national struggle was universal and decisive through the active participation of its clergy, including members of our Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood. Countless Hierarchs, such as Palaion Patron Germanos, the Bishops Isaiah of Salona and Joseph of Roga, the Archbishop Kyprianos in Cyprus and priests such as the Holy Martyr Cosmas Aetolos and simple monks, watered the tree of freedom with the blood of their martyrdom.

Our Venerable Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, gratefully honouring and dutifully participating in the sacred memory of the rebirth of our pious Roman race and nation, came to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre of our Saviour Christ, where we rendered thanksgiving praise to the Holy Triune God. Moreover, we prayed fervently for eternal rest in the land of the living for the blessed souls of those who fought heroically for Faith and Country and fell gloriously, in the holy struggle of our nation.

Therefore, allow Us to raise our glass and exclaim as we should:

Long live March 25, 1821!

Long live the pious and royal race of the Rum Orthodox!

Long live Greece!

Long live our Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood!

This was followed by the address of the Consul General of Greece as follows:

“Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences,

Your Excellency Representative of Cyprus in Palestine,

Your Excellency Representative of Ireland to the Palestinian Authority,

Respected fathers and members of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood,

Dear compatriots and friends,

It is easy today, 200 and 3 years after the National Uprising of 1821, to often consider the Revolution and its happy outcome as an inevitable development, which was bound to come, to achieve the liberation of the Greeks and the fulfilment of their desire for independence. This certainty is, in one sense, a measure of the success of our country, which has managed, through the intervening two centuries, to ensure the stability that allows us to look towards the future, stepping on solid foundations.

However, two centuries ago, none of this was a given. Neither the Revolution nor much more its outcome was a necessity imposed by the flow of History. Our Nation's noble Struggle for freedom was undertaken in an international environment of adversity. The agreement between the Great Powers of the time, at the base of the Congress of Vienna, the Holy Alliance, aimed at maintaining the status quo, the absolutist order of things, after the experience of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. Every revolutionary movement, whatever its motives, was a threat and had to be suppressed.

Unfavourable were also the circumstances of our Nation, which, for four centuries of cruel tyranny, struggled to preserve its identity, its faith and its values, its very language and its historical consciousness. The work of the Church in this regard was of decisive importance and the gratitude of Hellenism is due to it. As well as the work of numerous learned personalities, inside and outside the Greek territory, and of all those who with patience and self-sacrifice dedicated themselves to the rebirth of Greek education and intellect and to the Greek Enlightenment movement.

The available resources were also weak at the beginning of the Revolution. Little money, equipment and supplies, against the forces of an empire. The compensation for these shortcomings was the patient preparation of the Revolution, the military experience of a few but capable men, the careful utilization of every opportunity offered by the international situation

and above all the mobilization of all the forces of the Nation, in the revolted country and abroad, for the realization of the vision of freedom. And boldness, with unwavering faith in the justice of this vision.

Under these conditions, the Struggle began, in 1821. Its unexpected military successes shook the certainty that it would be crushed. With the mobilization of the forces of the Greek diaspora and people favouring Greece, who believed in the principles of freedom, the developments on the battlefield gradually established the prospect of its success. The Church contributed the most to the support of the Struggle, on a material and spiritual level, as well as personalities who played a leading role in its success. Its sacrifices were similar, from the martyrdom of Patriarch Gregory V to the battlefields.

This is the most brilliant epic of our modern history, which founded modern Greece. Simultaneously with the war on land and sea, modern political institutions were being born, in an era dominated by autocracy. From the very first year of the Revolution, the insurgent Greeks drew up Constitutions, which established a democratic state, with provisions for the separation of powers, individual and political rights, absolute abolition of slavery in Greek territory, and for foreigners who would resort to it. The struggle of the Greeks for their freedom was associated from the beginning with universal values, which throughout time defined the identity of Hellenism.

But let us not forget that it was an inconclusive fight to the end, long, hard and covered in blood. Greek populations in the Greek area, the coasts of Asia Minor, Cyprus and elsewhere suffered massacres in retaliation for the Revolution. And here, in the Holy Land, Greeks, Christians and the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood paid their own price of persecution.

We must also not overlook that the revolutionary struggle has

not only bright pages but also painful, dark chapters. The discord sowed its pernicious seed also during the Revolution, which also experienced civil conflicts, while its survival hung by a thread. Let us also look at these mistakes face to face, soberly drawing their lessons.

The long struggle of Hellenism succeeded. The vision of freedom was fulfilled and in 1830 Greece officially took its place among the sovereign states. After nine years of war, the country was devastated, with widows, orphans, the homeless and the disabled in need of immediate care. Within suffocating borders, with $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Greeks left outside them. The new Greek state began its course in history, small, poor and bruised.

However, it had been born. In the two centuries that followed, a time of intense developments for all of humanity, Greece, with the same devotion of its citizens that characterized the fighters of the rebirth, managed to overcome, grow and develop, cope with many other challenges and emerge stronger.

Today, it enjoys international respect for its place in the world, with strong friendships and alliances. It progresses by preserving its traditions and its values. Its course is the best justification for the labour and blood of our ancestors, who in 1821, against all odds, attempted what was considered impossible.

Greece can look to the future with confidence equal to the pride with which it reflects on its past. With the same sober confidence, it can work for the promotion of the values of Hellenism in the world and the defence of its timeless priorities and interests. Among them, Your Beatitude remains the preservation of the Christian presence and heritage in the Holy Land and the rights of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

As we celebrate our national anniversary today, let us wish for peace to come to the Holy Land. The war conditions in our region and the respect for human suffering, especially the

weak, do not allow solemn celebrations. But they urge us to reflect on the historical experiences of our own country. From this stems its steadfast support for peace and justice among nations.

Many happy returns. Long live Greece.”

From Secretariat-General

THE NAME DAY OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III

On Saturday of the Cheese fare week of the Triodion, March 3/16, 2024, the Patriarchate celebrated by transference for pastoral reasons the Name Day of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, on the commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs, one of whom is Saint Theophilos (celebrated on 9th March).

This feast was celebrated according to the Typikon of the Church of Jerusalem and the Status Quo, with Great Vespers on Friday afternoon at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with the welcoming reception of His Beatitude and the veneration of the Holy Sepulchre. This was followed by the incense offering around the shrines, the Great Entrance and the blessing of bread. The service was presided over by His Beatitude, with the participation of the Holy Sepulchre High Priests, Hieromonks and Hierodeacons.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated likewise in the Catholicon on Saturday morning, presided over by His Beatitude, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitans Isychios of Kapitolias and Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Archbishops, Damascene of Yaffo, Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia, Dimitrios of Lydda, Isidoros of Hierapolis, Nectarios of Anthedona, Philoumenos of Pella, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, and Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, the Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, Fr Vassianos from the Church of Moscow, Fr Ioannis from the Church of Romania, Priests from all places of the Patriarchate's jurisdiction, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacons Eulogios and Dositheos, at the honorary presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos, the Ambassador of Russia to Israel Mr Anatoly Victorov, and the participation of faithful Christians from Jerusalem and other cities.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by Doxology and the reading of the prayer for the boiled wheat in honour of the Forty Martyrs.

After the return to the Patriarchate Hall, the Elder Chief Secretary Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina addressed His Beatitude as follows:

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

By the Grace of God, we have already completed the third pre-fasting Week of the Triodion, tomorrow is the Cheese Fare Sunday, and after this we enter the First Week of the Great Lent, to enter “the stage of virtues, which is being opened”, as brave athletes. We are fortified today by the example of the geniality and determination of the Holy Forty Martyrs, who confessed Christ, against the persecutor King Licinius in 320; the martyrs who were exposed to the frost of the lake of

Sebastia of Pontus overnight, and had their legs torn apart in the morning; they fought well and were crowned.

Today, the entire Church throughout the world honours these all-lauded holy martyrs, for their example to the members of the sacrificial living faith in Christ, while the Mother of the Churches of Jerusalem held a solemn Divine Liturgy and a Doxology in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, especially honouring their co-martyr, Saint Theophilos, in whose name Your Beatitude is honoured.

In honour of these martyrs and of Your Beatitude, we gathered all the members of our Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, High Priests, Hieromonks, Deacons, and Monks, as well as the pious clergy and the Christ-named congregation from the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate in Israel, Jordan and Palestine and in the Holy Eucharist, we prayed for Your health, stability, and strength in the Pastoral Patriarchal work entrusted to You by God.

In our prayers in the Church, here in this historic Hall of the Patriarchate, we add our prayers and thanksgiving for what Your Beatitude has accomplished and continues to accomplish for the good and benefit of our Holy Common.

Let us say at first, that Your Beatitude successfully brought together again under Your leadership in the Patriarchate, the Leaders of the other Christian Churches of the Holy Land and took the initiative to jointly find a way of modest celebration of the Christmas and New Year Feasts while maintaining the Status Quo and taking into account the difficulties that the Christian Community and the entire people of Gaza are going through as a result of the raging war. In their joint statements, the Christian Churches called for an end to all hostilities and asked for permission to send humanitarian aid for food, sustenance, and survival of those affected by the war, the wounded, the starving, and the

homeless. This was particularly underlined by Your Beatitude during the customary visit on the 1st of the New Civil Year to the President of the State of Israel, recalling the continued provision of asylum to the members of our Community in Gaza in the Monastery of Saint Porphyrios. The fruit of this cooperation with the other Churches, at the initiative and leadership of Your Beatitude, was the lifting of the impasse of the interruption by the Armenians of the exchange of holiday visits with us, and the support of the Churches to the Armenians' problem of the opaque multi-year lease agreements for strategically important land within the boundaries of their Patriarchate. The Patriarchate also extended a hand of closer cooperation to the WCC, of which it was a founding member, when its General Secretary Mr Jerry Pillay came and met on the 17th of February in this same hall with all the leaders of the Christian Churches and by Your Beatitude's address, he visited the President of the State of Israel. Hence, a new chapter was opened in their relations for the support of the Christians of the Holy Land and the assumption of a mediating role of the WCC in the prevailing and unhelpfully intensified Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To the representatives of the European Union and other countries who frequently visited You, Your Beatitude recommended and conveyed a spirit of dialogue and reconciliation as a solution to the political problem, whereas, many times, to the Orthodox church leaders You stressed the need to restart the dialogue for the return of the Orthodox Church to the normal way of its existence and life, that is, Solidarity.

Regarding the Pastoral care of the Patriarchate for its flock, let us remember that despite the financial need created by the war. However, falling short at times, financial assistance came to the needs of the flock of its communities for the completion of renovation works of Churches and adjacent halls of meetings. For the Community of Zdeide in northern Israel, the purchase of a piece of land that increased and protected the property of the Church.

Nevertheless, more important than the flock-building projects was the solution of reconciliation provided by Your Beatitude to the prevailing chronic division of the Kufr Smea Community of northern Israel. This was sealed by a solemn Patriarchal Divine Liturgy on the 10th of the past month of February at the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, which was built in many toils and troubles, where many Orthodox prayed and representatives of other religions also attended. Let us also mention that despite the difficulties of transportation, as from the war, Your Beatitude reached all the desert Monasteries of the Patriarchate, and presided over their feasts.

At the same time, there was the interest of Your Beatitude in the uninterrupted continuation of the conservation of the books of the historical Library of the Holy Cross Monastery and its building premises by the expert conservator of icons and manuscripts from Cyprus Mr Stavros Andreou to house the Research of the Theological Studies Centre in collaboration with the Theological Schools of the Universities of Athens and Thessaloniki. For the promotion of these conservation projects as well as the conservation of the woodcarvings of the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, many efforts were made to find the required resources, thanks to well-disposed donors such as Mr Athanasios Martinos and Mrs Maria Georgallidou.

The things that have been said, Your Beatitude, happen to be only a few words taken from the rich pastoral care of the Patriarchate, mentioned not in a mood of boasting, since we follow the Apostle of the nations saying, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14), but with a disposition to strengthen hope, so that in hope we the Holy Sepulchre Fathers, may continue, inspired by Your example, meeting in brotherly love with each other, obeying You and moving from better to the best,

fulfilling and perfecting our sacred mission of Christian Rum Orthodox testimony in the Holy Land.

Raising the glass, Your Beatitude, on behalf of the Holy and Sacred Synod and the Brotherhood, I pray for unending health for many years to come and governmental power from on high, so that You may lead the Patriarchate from progress to progress and from glory to glory to the praise of our blessed nation and glory to our Triune God. So be it.”

The Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos delivered the following address:

“Your Beatitude,

I have the honour and pleasure to submit to you the warmest wishes of the Hellenic Republic and me personally and my associates on Your venerable Name Day. As we celebrate Your Name Day, we reflect with feelings of profound respect on Your work and Your struggle, during Your long journey in the Holy Land and at the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

You devoted Yourself from a young age to the Church and to a high and arduous mission, to which you have diligently dedicated Yourself with self-denial, serving for decades the work of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, to conclude to the holy Jerusalem Patriarchal Throne. Your conscientious efforts to preserve the tradition, heritage and rights of the Patriarchate, to strengthen its prestige and radiance and to protect and restore the holy places of the Holy Land, rightly enjoy international recognition and respect.

In the same way, your high pastoral work is recognized with admiration, for the benefit of the spiritual guidance of a flock that over time faces extremely increased trials and challenges.

We celebrate today under difficult and depressing circumstances, while the war conflict that erupted last October is already in its sixth month, with no visible prospect of an end, the crisis is still threatened to spill over to other fronts and a worsening humanitarian crisis is plaguing the Gaza Strip. Your flock there honours this day under dire circumstances, which threaten the existence of the entire Christian community in Gaza. Our thoughts turn in particular to the Monastery of Siant Porphyrios, in which numerous of our fellow human beings have found precious refuge. I assure you, Your Beatitude, that we will continue to act to protect and assist them.

At this dark time, we express our appreciation and gratitude for Your unceasing efforts in favour of settlement, moderation, peace and alleviation of suffering from the wounds of war. In the Holy City of Jerusalem, Your work to promote unity among the Christian Churches, but also in favour of the peaceful coexistence of the three monotheistic religions, is a guide against intolerance and religious rivalry.

Greece will continue to surround Your Beatitude, the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and the Patriarchate with its sincere respect and support for Your work.

Please also accept my personal thanks for the always warm and cordial welcome and for our cooperation, for the common benefit of the Holy Institution and the Hellenic Republic, for which the preservation of the rights of the Patriarchate and the Christian presence and heritage in the Holy Land is historically an important priority of all Hellenism.

Together with my colleagues at the Consulate General of Greece in Jerusalem, I wish You, Your Beatitude, health, longevity, success in Your mission, and many blessed returns.”

Consequently, addresses to His Beatitude were delivered by the

Ambassador of Russia to Israel, Mr Anatoly Victorov, His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth on behalf of the community of Nazareth, His Eminence Metropolitan Benedictos of Diocaecarea on behalf of the community of Bethlehem, His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Yaffo, on behalf of the community of Yaffo, the representative of the Moscow Patriarchate, Archimandrite Vassianos, the representative of the Patriarchate of Romania, Archimandrite Theophilos, His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba with the Russian-speaking members of Beer Sheba community and of Haifa, Archimandrite Ignatios on behalf of the Beit Jala and Beit Sahour communities, Mr Yusef Nasser on behalf of the Kufr-Smea community, Priest Stavros Aranki on behalf of the Bir Zeit community, Mrs Panagiota Kafetzi on behalf of Saint Dimitrios School, Priest Farah Bandour on behalf of Saint James Cathedral.

To these all His Beatitude delivered the following address:

“Truly blessed is he who martyred, so that he may be a martyr to the occasion and conclude to be worthy of the same rewards as theirs, without persecution, without fire, without whips, without being scourged” Basil the Great says.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos,

Dear Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The sacred memory of the Holy Forty Martyrs and their co-martyr Theophilos, who martyred in the city of Sebastia, has dawned like a light in the Holy Land, which is being tested under the darkness of war, where our Lord Jesus Christ God “being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”

(Phil. 2,8).

Imitating Christ's humility and obedience unto death, the admirable Forty Martyrs also became "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1,10). Because they are recognized as true witnesses of the mystery of reverence, as Saint Paul preaches saying: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). "For there is not a man of virtue, that is, of piety, leading the path of virtue, that is of reverence, without experiencing sorrow, pain, temptations", Saint Chrysostom says. "Though condemned to pass the night in the freezing cold in the open air because of the persecutor's insensate fury, the athletes sang a hymn of thanksgiving unto God" the hymnographer exclaims (Matins, Ode 5, Troparion 1).

Because truly the holy Forty Martyrs had exercised their devotion to Christ and brought forth their love for God, "a hymn of thanksgiving to God without ceasing" and thus denounced the fury of their tyrant, listening to the Lord's word: "Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh" (Lk 6:21).

Basil the Great, praising the saints, the Forty Martyrs, says: "We do not admire one, not two alone, not up to ten the number of those who are blessed, but forty men, as having one soul in divided bodies, in one mind and unity of the faith as they showed both the inclination towards suffering and resistance for the sake of truth".

According to Basil the Great, the martyrdom of the Forty Saints is divided into two parts, on the one hand "in the unity of faith", and on the other "in the resistance for the sake of truth". Both faith and truth refer to the Son and Word of God the Father, our Saviour Jesus Christ, saying: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). And in another verse, he says: "I am the way and the truth" (Jn. 14,6), "I

was born into this and came into the world to testify to the truth." Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice" (Jn. 18,37).

This means that faith and truth in Christ constitute the foundation of the Church of Christ, and death through martyrdom is the confirmation of Christ's resurrection. In other words, the holy Forty Martyrs sealed the truth in Christ with their blood, i.e. the resurrection of Christ, conforming to the preaching of the wise Paul saying: "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13,14). And "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection... Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him" (Rom. 6, 5, 8-9).

The holy Church of Christ especially honours the memory of the holy Forty Martyrs, because as Basil the Great says, these "freely of the voice, boldly and courageously, not being suspicious of the men, not overwhelmed by the threats, they declared themselves Christians". This confession also introduced the holy Martyrs to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem and to a myriad of angels, who celebrate and spread joy (cf. Heb. 12,22-23).

This glorious day of the feast of the holy Forty Martyrs and especially of their co-martyr Theophilus, whose name Our Mediocrity bears, is, according to the expression of Athanasios the Great, "a type of the joy above", namely of the heavenly joy of the Angels. And this is because those who loved Christ and were born of His (Christ's) martyred blood "passed from death to life" (cf. 1 Jn. 3:14), and the life is Christ according to His own testimony: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).

The recognized father of the Church, Saint Gregory of Nyssa,

proceeds to praise the holy Forty Martyrs, "so that [we] may be convinced that the Martyrs live and are satellites and guardians of God, who today serve and adorn the Church". According to Saint Asterion of Amaseia, "the holy Martyrs, men immortal by a good death, living forever for they despised life, have changed the kingdom of the blood and transformed the harmful flesh beneficial to the soul".

Our holy Church in joy and gleefulness honours the martyrdom's birthday of the holy Forty Martyrs as well as of their co-martyr Theophilos and held in it the place of the Crucifixion, the three-day burial and the Resurrection of our Saviour Christ, the divine eucharist and bloodless sacrifice, presided over by Our Mediocrity and surrounded by the choir of the honourable members of our Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, High Priests, Priests, Hierodeacons, with the participation in prayer of pious Christians from our tested pious flock.

Moreover, we rendered thanksgiving praise to the Holy Triune God on the occasion of the Name Day of our Mediocrity in the name of the holy Martyr Theophilos, and we blessed Christ the Saviour; "This, the Son of God we worship, while the martyrs, as disciples and imitators of the Lord we love, since they have worthily found insurmountable favour of the king and teacher Himself" the holy martyr Polycarp of Smyrna says.

We should point out that today's feast of Saint Theophilos, the co-martyr of the Forty Saints, does not only refer to Our Mediocrity but mainly to the Apostolic Throne of James the Brother of God and the God-given institution of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church, which is the body of Christ.

Therefore, we call upon all our brethren in Christ, the Heads of the Orthodox Churches in all places, so that we may work together for the restoration of the community of the Churches according to Saint Paul's advice: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3), but also

according to the voice of the great Athanasios "I beg you for Christ's sake, do not allow the members of Christ to be divided, do not believe in prejudices, but prefer the peace of the Lord".

This is exactly what we, my beloved brothers, have been called to, "to the ministry of salvation, indeed of peace, given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18). Let us seek and pursue this peace and settlement of the Lord, especially during the blessed stage of the fast of the Holy and Great Lent, so that by the intercessions of the blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary together with the prayers of the Holy Forty Martyrs and their co-martyr Theophilos, we may be granted to reach the glorious Resurrection of our God and Saviour of our souls, in repentance and peace.

Therefore, we appeal to all those praying with Us and honoring this solemn memory of the holy Martyrs, the power from on high, the free gift of the Holy Spirit, the grace of the Holy and Life-giving Sepulchre, "And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed" (cf. Rom. 5:4-5), expressing warm thanks to those who addressed Us, the Elder Chief Secretary, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, speaking on behalf of the members of the Holy and Sacred Synod and our Holy Sepulchre brotherhood, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos, the Reverend Archimandrite Vassianos, representative of the brotherly Holy Church of Russia, conveying to us the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril, His Holiness Archimandrite Father Theophilos, representative of the brotherly Holy Church of Romania, conveying to us the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Romania, Daniel, His Eminence the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, speaking on behalf of our flock in Nazareth, His Eminence Metropolitan Benedictos of Diocaecarea on behalf of the community of Bethlehem, His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Yaffo, on behalf of the community of Yaffo, the representative of the

Moscow Patriarchate, Archimandrite Vassianos, the representative of the Patriarchate of Romania, Archimandrite Theophilos, His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba with the Russian-speaking members of Beer Sheba community and of Haifa, Archimandrite Ignatios on behalf of the Beit Jala and Beit Sahour communities, Mr Yusef Nasser on behalf of the Kufr-Smea community, Priest Stavros Aranki on behalf of the Bir Zeit community, Mrs Panagiota Kafetzi on behalf of Saint Dimitrios School, Priest Farah Bandour on behalf of Saint James Cathedral and all those who participated in this feast.

To the health of you all!”

The reception was followed by a meal at the refectory of the Patriarchate.

From Secretariat-General

THE DEPARTURE TO THE LORD OF THE BLESSED ARCHIMANDRITE THEODORITOS HEGOUMEN OF KATAMON

At 10.30 p.m. on the night of Wednesday, January 25th/February 7th, 2024, the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Saint Simeon in Katamon, Archimandrite Theodoritos, slept in the Lord.

His Funeral Service was held at 10.30 am. on Thursday, January 26th/ February 8th 2024 in the chapel of Saint Thecla inside the Central Monastery, presided over by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the participation of the Holy Sepulchre High Priests and other Holy Sepulchre Fathers, at the honorary presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos, and at the joint prayer of monastics and laity of the Greek parish of Jerusalem.

The Obituary was delivered by the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, in which the details of his life and activity as a Holy Sepulchre Father and Hegoumen of the Monastery of Saint Simeon Katamon are mentioned as follows:

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

Reverend Archbishops,

Consul General of Greece,

Dear Fathers,

Beloved brethren in Christ,

We stand in tears before the tomb of our beloved brother Hieromonk Theodoritos, as our Lord stands before the tomb of his four-day friend Lazarus. We mourn the separation, like Christ’s disciples after His glorious Ascension. We humanly reflect that death is a great and terrible mystery. We wonder how the most harmonious symbiosis of soul and body is broken, how the soul is forcibly separated from the body, how man, through disobedience and the fall, brought death upon himself and heard from his Creator and Maker: “For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return”(Gen. 3, 19).

To these questions of human concern, the person, the teaching

and the work of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ comes as an answer. The fact that God condescended to our race, had mercy on us and in Christ, His Only Begotten Son became like us humans. He assumed in the Incarnation our human nature and flesh and through the Cross and the Resurrection He raised us from Hell and granted us eternal life and rest in the heavens with Him.

This truth was revealed to the holy disciples and apostles of Christ. These became eye-and-ear witnesses not only of Christ's teaching but also of His God-human person. They saw and recognized Him in His earthly life and witnessed His healing and redemptive action, but also His Resurrection "in another form" (Mark 16:12). The faith in this redeeming truth is comfort and power against the fear of death, especially of death by martyrdom. The Incarnation, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Christ compose, hold and sustain the whole body of the Church.

Our beloved, elderly and respected late brother Archimandrite Theodoritos also embraced this faith, as he was ordained as a monk at a young age in the holy Trooditissa Monastery of the Church of Cyprus. From there he came to the Israeli hospital in Hadassah for treatment of the precarious health of his eyes. Following the exhortation of his Spiritual Father, Hieromonk Pagratios, whom he greatly respected, he sought and joined our Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood shortly after 1967. He served in various ministries with zeal and devotion, overcoming the difficulty of his health. He was responsible for the students in the Patriarchal School, a ministering Priest in the Holy Monastery of the Megali Panagia for years, and a member of the Holy and Sacred Synod, as appointed by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

Mainly, he was the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Saint Simeon the God-receiver in Katamon continuously and uninterruptedly since 1979. He preserved this Monastery and its Church as the functional centre of the Greek Community of

Jerusalem in Katamon, as it had always been as a Pilgrimage centre for the adults from the Orthodox countries of pilgrimage. He also protected it from outsiders, because of its historical position.

Conscientiously appreciating the donations of the pilgrims, and not failing to be charitable to the poor, he renovated its temple and enriched its iconography. Many external repairs were carried out for its maintenance and beautification. Thanks to his perseverance and energy, the Patriarchate achieved the impossible, the acquisition of what was said to be a piece of the relic of Saint Simeon the God-receiver from the Roman Catholic Church of Croatia in 2010, kept as a treasure of the Monastery; the return of the Saint's relic is celebrated annually on the 25th September.

For these good works of his life, for his honest and virtuous monastic and priestly ethos and for his tireless patience and determination during the many years of testing due to poor health and for his care for the weekly Divine Liturgy in the Monastery and Holy Communion while bedridden, we beseech our philanthropic God, to forgive him because as a man he has sinned voluntarily or involuntarily; to rank his soul in the land of the living with the holy and the righteous in the enjoyment and rejoicing of the unwaning light of His glory; to give him the crown of righteousness, "which He shall give to all those who love Him".

May his memory be everlasting!"

The funeral procession to Holy Zion was led by their Eminences the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina and Aristovoulos of Madaba, where he was buried in the Cemetery of the Fathers.

May his memory be everlasting!

From Secretariat-General

SPEECHES OF HIS BEATITUDE TO THE FRANCISCAN CUSTODIA AND ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE FOR THE OCCASION OF CHRISTMAS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

January 9th marked the day of various brotherly Christmas greetings exchanges by the different church leaders in Jerusalem to our Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. During a separate visit, the brotherhood of the Franciscan Custodia, led by Custos of the Holy Land, Father Francesco Pattonton, conveyed Christmas greeting to our father and Patriarch of Jerusalem and our Orthodox Patriarchate, to whom His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III delivered the following speech:

Your Paternity, dear Father Francesco,

Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

Christ is born!

Glorify him!

We are pleased to welcome you to our Patriarchate in this season of light and hope, and we thank you for your kind and

gracious greetings for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Once again we are brought face to face with the great mystery of our salvation, and we sing at this time:

*In Bethlehem, in a manger of animals,
from a Virgin now is born a young Child
who is the pre-eternal God.*

O what a wonder is this!

(From Mattins of the Forefeast of the Nativity)

In this grave time, when our region is wracked by war, and where so many innocent victims are displaced and in daily danger, we cannot forget the great wonder of this feast and bear witness to the true spiritual meaning of Christmas. Even when the land of the Prince of Peace is torn by war and violence, the world looks to the Holy Land for reassurance that there is still the hope of a better future, that the human family may find the way to reconciliation, mutual respect and understanding, justice, and peace for all, both here in our region, and around the world.

Once again we wish to take this opportunity of your visit to us to emphasise the importance of our ongoing co-operation in our common work and witness. Your commitment to your pastoral mission in your communities is a testimony to your care for the integrity and well-being of a strong and vital Christian presence here – which has been for some time now under terrible pressure, and which the present conflict threatens even further.

We are also grateful for your participation in the essential renovation work in which we are engaged in the Church of the

Holy Sepulchre and that is planned for the grotto of the Basilica of

the Nativity. While we are currently focussed on the efforts to bring aid and support to those in the greatest need in our communities, particularly in Gaza at the Church to the Holy Family and at the Monastery of Saint Porphyrios, still this shared attention to maintaining the Holy Sites as places of worship and as living witnesses to our sacred history is a vital part of our ongoing spiritual mission, especially in times of conflict. As Saint Paul encourages us, Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2).

This great feast, which Saint John Chrysostom calls the "metropolis," or "mother city," of feasts, in which we celebrate the mystery of the Incarnation of the Divine Logos, who comes from the heavenly city to share in the human city, is a reminder to us all of the urgency of true dialogue as the only reliable course to robust and enduring reconciliation and peace. Admittedly this is the difficult path, and yet it is the necessary one, and as the servants and guardians of the Holy Places we remain steadfast in this commitment, and determined to work with those who are pledged to this same effort. We cannot abandon our commitment to dialogue, especially when the possibility of effective dialogue seems to be so elusive.

So we take this opportunity to repeat our call for peace and for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. The future for which we all long will not be born from violence and war, but from the steady, attentive work of mutual respect, reconciliation, and peace-building. This will mean a new spirit on all sides of the conflict, and a deeper understanding that the future of our region and our world depends on our acceptance of our mutual flourishing. For God is agathos and philanthropos. As we celebrate once again the feast when God makes his home among us, we are reminded that there is room in the Holy Land

for all who call the Holy Land their home.

May the Prince of Peace encourage you and the members of your fraternity, and may all our peoples know the peace that he came to bring to us.

Christ is born!

Glorify him!



Soon afterwards, the Armenian Patriarchate representatives also joined the rest of the Churches in Jerusalem to convey Christmas greetings to His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, to whom His Beatitude delivered the following speech:

*Your Beatitude, dear Archbishop Nourhan,
Your Eminences,
Your Graces,
Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,
Dear Fathers,*

Christ is born!

Glorify him!

We greet you warmly, Your Beatitude, and the members of your Brotherhood, as you celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of the Divine Logos in the Church of the Nativity. This is a time of deep joy, and we recall the words of the hymnographer:

O Bethlehem, receive the Mother of God:

for she has come to you to give birth to the Light that never sets.

Let everything that has breath praise the Maker of all.

(From Mattins of the Forefeast of the Nativity)

As we keep the Christmas feast of joy, hope, and light in this time of darkness in our region and in our world, we must

not refrain from appropriate rejoicing. For the Light that the darkness can never overcome has come into the world (cf. Jn 1:5), and this great feast renews our faith and trust in the God who comes to share our humanity in all its fullness.

Our spiritual mission that has been entrusted to us by Divine providence is to remain focussed always on this message of hope, especially when hope seems elusive. There is no doubt that at this present time in human history the human family is facing some of its greatest challenges, and our region is no exception. For we are under particular pressure here in the Holy Land, where so many innocent victims suffer and where so many are displaced from their homes and their lands. As we are fully aware, the Christian community is also confronted by the impact of the conflict, and there has never been a time when our shared commitment to our spiritual mission here has been more urgent.

Just as we are keeping the Christmas feast, which is the feast of God's solidarity with us, we wish to take this opportunity to express our solidarity as well with you and your community in the face of the pressures you are bearing. The situation that you face is not simply an issue for the Armenian community alone; indeed it is an issue for the whole Christian community. We recall the words of Saint Paul, If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it (1 Cor. 12:26). We are committed to remain united in our resolve to defend the integrity of the Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

We assure you, Your Beatitude, of our firm support in your endeavours to protect the patrimony of the Armenian patriarchate. As Saint Paul encourages us, we are to bear one another's burdens, and in this way...fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). We are deeply concerned at the ongoing harassment that the Armenian community is experiencing in the matter of the Cow's Garden, and we pray for a swift resolution to these

problems and the restoration of normal life for the Armenian community.

On this occasion we would like to offer our congratulations for your newly ordained bishops, and we also wish to express once again our condolences at the recent passing away of the late Archbishop Aris, who was a faithful servant of the Armenian Church and of the Christian community of the Holy Land. May his memory be eternal.

In this difficult season for the world and for our region, we must renew our resolve not to let anything distract us from our pastoral and spiritual mission to guard and protect the Holy Places and to serve and support the Christian presence here. Nothing is more important than this. We are to be vigilant for those who cause divisions among us and put obstacles in our way that are contrary to the Gospel (cf. Rom. 16:17). Let this be our special care so that we may always join our efforts and maintain our united front against those who wish to rend the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious fabric of our society.

In this blessed season of the Prince of Peace, we renew our appeal for peace and for a humanitarian ceasefire so that the innocent victims of the present conflict may receive the essential help and care that they so desperately need. And we encourage the authorities of our region and of the world to do all in their power to bring a swift end to this conflict, prevent any escalation, and engage in a process of dialogue that will lead to lasting and robust peace and security for all our peoples.

As we keep this holy season, Your Beatitude, we pray that the Light that shines from the Holy Grotto of Bethlehem will illumine the darkness of this present time, and enlighten the hearts and minds of all to seek peace and pursue it (Ps. 34:14).

Christ is born!

Glorify him!



SPEECH OF HIS BEATITUDE TO FELLOW CHURCH LEADERS FOR THE OCCASION OF CHRISTMAS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On January 9, 2024, following the Christmas Feast (according to the Julian Calendar) in Bethlehem, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem exchanged greetings to our Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, where His Beatitude delivered the

following speech;

Beloved Fellow Heads of the Churches,

Your Excellencies,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers,

Brothers and Sisters,

Christ is born!

Let us glorify him!

We welcome you warmly to our Patriarchate, and we thank you for your expressions of greeting as we keep the feast of the Incarnation of the Divine Logos. If our celebrations are restrained this year, our joy at the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ remains undiminished, and this is why the Church sings:

Heaven and earth are united today,

for Christ is born...

Therefore let us also give glory

and cry aloud to him:

Glory to God in the highest,

and on earth peace,
which your coming has bestowed on us, O Saviour.

(From Great Compline at Christmas)

Our gathering today is of special significance, for we are a witness together of the peace that our Lord Jesus Christ has brought to all humankind. Whatever the circumstances of our life, and especially at this time when our region is engulfed in conflict and so many innocent victims are in danger and displaced, we cannot waver from our resolve. For our mission has been throughout the ages to be a living martyrria here in the Holy Land to the unique and great gift of the entrance of the Divine Logos into our human history. As the Lord says, for this I came into the world, to be a witness to the truth (Jn 18:37).

We give thanks to Almighty God that the Heads of the Churches and our respective communities are united in this resolve and in this diakonia. Our communities in the Holy Land look to us to provide help to those in the greatest need, and Christians and people of good will the world over

look to us for encouragement and hope. Our shared commitment and our shared witness are important ways in which we seek to embody encouragement and hope, for we are instructed by Saint Paul to remember before our God and Father our work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess 1:3).

This hope is not abstract or moral, but something concrete. Time and again we proclaim the hope that is brought to us by mystery of the Incarnation by our participation in the divine Eucharistic Body, which is continually renewed in the life of

the Church for the salvation of the world, because the Church is the incarnate Body of our Lord Jesus Christ. As Saint Paul says, you are the body of Christ and individually members of it 1 Cor 12:27).

For this reason we remain steadfast in our calls for peace and justice, for this is the message of Christmas. We appeal for a humanitarian ceasefire so that urgent aid may be brought to innocent victims of the conflict, and we repeat our concern at the ongoing unnecessary suffering of so many. We urge the authorities of the region and to the international community to do everything in their power to prevent this conflict from escalating, and we repeat our firm conviction that the solution to the challenges that we face in the Middle East is not in armed conflict, but in a renewed and robust process of disciplined dialogue that is directed to mutual understanding and respect, and focussed on the establishment of true reconciliation, justice, and peace. Only in this way will we be able to ensure the future of our multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious society that has such historic roots here.

May this season of light and hope be a season in which we renew our support of our common spiritual mission to proclaim the Gospel message of hope and salvation for all peoples. May nothing undermine this, and may no difficulty or challenge that we face undo the good work of our own mutual understanding. As our Lord assures us, where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them (Mt 18;20). It is in this spirit that we can afford no family disagreements or divisions in the face of the unprecedented challenges with which we are, and have been, confronted, for some time. For the presence of the Church in Jerusalem is the beacon of light that shines before everyone (cf. Mt 5:14). Our very future, and the future of the Christian presence in the Holy Land, is at stake, and nothing can stand in the way of the deepening of our common resolve to face this future together

as those to whom Divine Providence has entrusted the pastoral oversight of our respective communities.

We wish to take the opportunity of this Christmas gathering to thank all those who understand our mission and continue to support a vibrant and flourishing Christian presence in the Holy Land. We are especially grateful to His Majesty King Abdullah of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for his steady leadership and his deep devotion as the Custodian of the Christian and Muslim Holy Places, as well as to His Excellency the President of the Palestinian State, Mr Mahmoud Abbas.

And not least we wish to acknowledge the ongoing support of His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury and other religious leaders around the world who help to keep the plight of our people before the world's attention.

We pray that the peace and justice that is brought to us by the newly-born Son of God may prevail over against the forces of darkness, which attempt to deprive the world of the incarnate light of Christ.

Christ is born!

Let us glorify him!

THE CELEBRATION OF THE 18TH

ANNIVERSARY OF THE ELECTION AND ENTHRONEMENT OF HIS BEATITUDE OUR FATHER AND PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III

On Wednesday, November 9/22, 2023, at 10:30 p.m. The 18th anniversary of the election and enthronement of His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III was celebrated.

Due to this event, a Doxology was performed in the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, presided over by H.H.B. with the co-celebration of the High Priests of the Throne, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks, Elders from the parishes of Israel and from Palestine, Archdeacon Mark and other deacons. The chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon on the right and Mr Angelos Yiannopoulos on the left, in the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos and members of the Greek community.

After the Doxology, the whole congregation went to the Patriarchate Reception Hall, where the Geronda Chief Secretary, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina addressed His Beatitude as follows:

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

The city of Gaza is honoured by its mention in the book of the Acts of the Apostles of the early Church. " A man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians" was headed to Gaza, when the Spirit of the Lord informed the apostle Philip to approach his chariot, preach to him and baptize him when they found water (c.f. Acts 8, 27-39). Subsequently, from AD 306, Gaza and its surroundings were the area of missionary, monastic and social activity of Saint Hilarion the Great, disciple of Saint Anthony. Between the years 395 and 421 AD Saint Porphyrios, who came from Thessalonica to the Holy Land, was ordained bishop of Gaza, and established Christianity in Gaza through many struggles. On these foundations from 743 AD, Cosmas of Jerusalem, the melodist Bishop of Maiuma of Gaza, developed his pastoral work for ten years.

This city, after such a glorious Christian cultural heritage, survived the political conquests and mutations of history, alas! today it is plagued and desolated by hostilities, the consequences of which are the ruins of building complexes, the loss of lives of innocent civilians, women and children, "of which there was no number", which cause a heart-rending sigh, including the 18 victims of those who took refuge at the holy Monastery of Saint Porphyrios of our Patriarchate.

Under the shadow of these gloomy and tragic events and in a spirit of participation towards the tested people and the Greek-Orthodox Arabic-speaking flock in Gaza, the Patriarchate and the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood within it is not celebrating solemnly this year. Instead, a special memorial is being made ecclesiastically, through Doxology at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, for the event of the election and enthronement of Your Holy Beatitude at the glorious Throne of the Mother of Churches, by God's blessing and the unanimous votes of the Holy Synod, eighteen years ago.

Continuing our ecclesiastical Synaxis in this historic hall of the Patriarchate, we consider it worthy and fair to mention

that this honourable but also multi-responsible Patriarchal Pastorate was taken over by His Beatitude with the burden of illegal agreements on His shoulders, from those who promised an incalculable amount of material and cultural value property of the Patriarchate, that is the Imperial and Petra hotels of the Jaffa Gate. For the cancellation of these agreements, Your adamant Beatitude went to court and other battles which demanded huge sums of money.

As one of the priorities of Your Work, Your Beatitude had the preservation of this property under the full ownership management of the Patriarchate, mainly to ensure the always unimpeded access of Christian leaders and pilgrims to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. You did not neglect the care of the dignity of the Church, through the participation of our Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood in the conservation works carried out along with the Franciscans and the Armenians of the floor of the Rotunda and the area below the Seven Arches and to the south of it. Moreover, the preservation and restoration of the old Russian-made chandeliers by special conservators from Russia, as well as donors, under the direction and cooperation of the icon-conservator from Cyprus Mr Stavrou Andreas. Mr Stavrou continues his conservation work by extension to the antiquities of the Library of the Monastery of the Holy Cross and the lower hall of the Patriarchate and to the icons of the Gallery for the purpose of their appropriate placement in the museum which is being prepared to be housed in the preserved and renovated house of the Blessed Patriarch Diodorus.

It should also be noted that the efforts of Your Beatitude were intense in rallying and mobilizing the Christian Churches of Jerusalem in a common dynamic Christian witness under the leadership of the Patriarchate, to protect the rights of Christians in their native Holy Land from verbal and physical abuse by the radical extreme Israeli elements, one of which happens to be the ongoing occupation of the property of the Patriarchate belonging to the School and the

cemetery of Holy Zion.

To the Consuls of other visitors of various countries and those of the European Union who visited the Patriarchate without interruption, you put a great effort into their understanding and consideration of the factor of the religions, Jewish, Christian and Muslim, and their doctrines, as the basis for the solution of the old political Palestinian problem, wherever the status of the Old City of Jerusalem is preserved.

Through Your actions, Your Beatitude, you promoted the Patriarchate to the position it deserved as the most ancient Christian institution of the greatest religious, cultural and pacifying offering and scope and beyond the limits of its jurisdiction in the Holy Land. This is inferred from our visit, beginning last September, to the Exhibition organized in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, to the Ecumenical Centre of the W.C.C. in Geneva, where you presented the renovated Basilica of the Nativity of Bethlehem last year as the heart and the shield protecting the identity of the Christian and the entire Palestinian people. This is also inferred from our visit to the European Union in Brussels, during which you reiterated the need to protect the rights of the Christians of the Holy Land, not least through your participation as an honoured guest at the coronation of the King of the United Kingdom Charles III with oil consecrated to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Also, from our recent visit to Pope Francis in the Vatican, when you once again appealed for the protection of the threatened Christians of the Holy Land and expressed the commitment of our Patriarchate to mediate for a dialogue for the sake of peace between Russia and Ukraine and for the sake of the dialogue of avoiding the consolidation of the schism in the disturbed unity of the Orthodox Churches.

In the dialogue with the other Christian Churches, our Patriarchate also continued to participate in order to

approach and present, despite the existing doctrinal differences, a common Christian witness to the world suffering from various problems and asking for comfort. Proof of this is the dialogue hosted by the Anglican Church between the Orthodox and the Anglican Church, which hastily completed its work, due to the onset of the war in Gaza.

It is worth noting that since the start of this disastrous war, Your Beatitude has continuously consulted with the other local Churches for joint calls for a cease-fire and declarations of condemnation of the attacks, from which the innocent victims were numerous. The victims of the Monastery of Saint Porphyrios, for the repose of the souls of whom Your Beatitude held a memorial service in the Church of the Resurrection and the victims of the Gaza Hospital of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem.

The worthily commemorated here today, Your Beatitude, are only a few contributions from the rich Pastoral activity of our Patriarchate and Your inspired guidance and prudent government management for the strengthening and encouragement of us, the Holy Sepulchre Fathers, and the clergy and the people, so that we may continue united with each other and with You in our struggle for the conquest of what is best and perfect for the praise of our blessed race and the glory of our Triune God.

Raising the glass, Your Beatitude, on behalf of the Brotherhood and the Holy Synod, I wish You many returns in good health, unbroken and stable, undisturbed, so that you may rejoice and be glad when you see the Church of Zion, the Throne of which God bestowed upon You, heading from success to success, from progress to progress and from glory to glory. So be it."

The Consul General Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos addressed His Beatitude as follows:

"Your Beatitude,

I have the special honour to express to You the warmest congratulations of the Hellenic Republic and mine personally on the 18th anniversary of your enthronement. My colleagues and I are happy to celebrate this glorious anniversary together with the Patriarchate, the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and your Flock, filled with profound respect for Your Beatitude and gratitude for Your struggle and the precious work You are doing, since the blessed day on which You ascended the holy Throne of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

No one forgets that You took on this task under conditions that were among the most demanding and dangerous in the modern history of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. But the Church always finds the strength and wisdom to face even the most serious crises. In the long and arduous journey since then, You and the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood have restored and strengthened the prestige and radiance of the Patriarchate, for the benefit not only of its high spiritual and pastoral work but also of the safeguarding of its rights, the protection of holy places in the Holy Land and of its highest mission, the guardianship of its two-thousand-year tradition in the Holy Land.

Moreover, under your enlightened leadership, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem is not only an example of ardent adherence to the guardianship of its tradition and the Orthodox Faith but also a guide on the path of moderation and dialogue. In times of constant challenges, heightened international rivalry and intolerance, you have contributed the most with your guidance, with patience and brotherly love, so as to establish admirable unity and understanding among the Christian Churches in the Holy Land. An example of global reach, but also a necessary condition for saving the Christian heritage and presence in the Holy Land.

There is no lack of challenges today and perhaps there won't be any in the foreseeable future. Jerusalem, the Holy Places and the wider region are once again at the centre of a

profound crisis, which has turned into a war. Against the pain and misery that provoke irrational and violent politics, national and religious upheavals, the Patriarchate, under your leadership, provides spiritual consolation, but also is an active and unwavering factor of stability and settlement. Above all, it is a reference point for noble moral and spiritual values, keeping unquenchable the hope that your trying flock, but also all the troubled Humanity, need.

As you know, I was called upon to take up my duties just three weeks before the outbreak of the present crisis. I am sincerely grateful to You for your undivided cooperation, but also for the wise advice you have generously provided me, valuable aids in my own mission.

Your Beatitude,

Greece surrounds you and the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood with sincere and profound respect, fully aware of your arduous mission. I have the honour to renew today on its behalf its assurances that it remains committed to its will to come as a helper and supporter of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. For the Hellenic Republic, the defence of the rights and privileges of the Patriarchate in the Holy Land, the strengthening of the guardianship of the Orthodox tradition and the safeguarding of the Christian heritage and presence, are imperatives of the utmost importance. Which concerns the whole of Hellenism, inside and outside the Greek borders, its historical path and its spiritual identity. Therefore, and its future.

On behalf of the Hellenic Republic and the members of the Consulate General, I offer You our warmest wishes for many and happy returns on the Patriarchal Throne of Jerusalem, health and continued success in Your high mission."

His Beatitude thanked all of them with the following reply:

"The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works" the Psalmist exclaims, (Ps. 144,9).

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Dimitrios Angelesopoulos,

Dear Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Dear Christians,

“My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord” (Ps. 144,21), as Holy David says, on today’s Eighteenth, the anniversary of the Enthronement of Our Mediocrity on the historical and Apostolic Throne of the holy and righteous James the Brother of God and the first Hierarch of the Holy Church of Jerusalem.

As the apostle Luke says: “The Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20,28). This Holy Spirit made the righteous James the Brother of God, shepherd and “bishop of God” (Titus 1,7), “A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Heb. 8, 2).

We say this because the solemn anniversary of this enthronement does not relate to Our Mediocrity, but to the sacred institution of the Church, of which Christ is the head, and He is the Saviour of her body (cf. Eph. 5,23) according to Saint Paul.

Because we too, being grateful for the Lord’s favours, went after the accompanying honourable members of our Venerable Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, we rendered a thanksgiving praise to the Holy Triune God “ who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth forever” (Ps. 135,4).

Recalling the words of Saint Peter: “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5, 2-3), we have not

diminished the daily care of the Christians and of the pious flock of the Rum Orthodox Communities serving under the spiritual and ecclesiastical jurisdiction our Patriarchate, saying supplications and prayers of thanksgiving for all people, as the Lord will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Tim. 2,1-4).

Moreover, we did not give sleep to Our eyes and eyelids (cf. Psalm 131,4) in order to preserve the Holy Shrines which are the visible and true witness of the iconographic history in general and of the great mystery of piety (1 Tim. 3,1-6) more specifically, but also of the holy places of logical worship as well as the defence of the indescribable privileges and sovereign rights of the pious and noble race and nation of the Rum Orthodox Christians.

Even so, following the words of the Prophet Isaiah: "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest" (Is. 62,1), we did not stop protesting and denouncing every political and diplomatic authority, locally and internationally, the subjugated alteration of the existing poly-religious and multinational character of the holy city of Jerusalem, on the one hand, and the characterization invented by the Civic Authorities and related factors, ab-antiquo recognized ecclesiastical properties and pilgrimage lands, as public gardens (National Parks), on the other. Let it be noted that for this we have the Primates and the other Christian Communities in the Holy Land as -companions.

On the other hand, with agony and deep sadness we are watching the indescribable dramatic developments of the ongoing military conflict in the Gaza Strip, the loss of innocent human lives regardless of age, as well as the precarious situation of those taking refuge in the Holy Monastery of Saint Porphyrios of Gaza for protection, as well as of our Holy Sepulchre brothers, His Eminence Archbishop Alexios of Tiberias, our Patriarchal Representative, and the Hieromonk Silas, who is the ministering Priest there, who serve our

Christian flock with self-denial. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his soul for the sheep" (John 10,11), says the Lord.

Our Venerable Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and Our Mediocrity, being faithful to our spiritual and ecclesiastical mission, which was bestowed upon us by the Divine Providence, and hearing the Chief of the Apostles Peter's advice, "brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (2 Peter 1,10), have unceasingly tried to recompense to no man evil for evil, to live peaceably with all men (c.f. Romans 12,17-18). We put in action the good tidings of love, peace and righteousness of Christ. "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14,17), Saint Paul preaches.

The eighteen-year enthronement anniversary of Our Mediocrity, celebrated today, relates mainly and primarily to the God-ordained institution of the Church of Jerusalem, founded on the redeeming blood of our Saviour Christ. For He tells us all that "the gates of heaven shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18) and "that God is indeed among us" (1 Cor. 14:25). This does not mean that the purpose of the holy Church of God is the building up in Christ and the salvation of our souls. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jud. 1:3), the Apostle Jude orders.

We say this because the mission of the Christian in our contemporary world, when "the whole world lies in wickedness" (1 Jn. 5:19) and is under the bondage of sin, is the testimony of our faith in Christ "unto the world, to bear witness to the truth" (John 18:37). This is exactly the truth of Christ, which we were called to bear witness to. "Do not receive a spirit of slavery, but receive a spirit of adoption" (Rom.

8,15) and "with freedom, Christ has set us free" (Gal. 5,1) the wise Paul preaches. The testimony of the truth of Christ is denounced throughout the world by the holy Church of Jerusalem from the place of the "Martyrdom" that is Golgotha as well as the "Empty Tomb" of our Risen Saviour Christ.

We, the successors of the apostolic office of Saint James the Brother of God, and as Saint Hippolytus says, "appointed guardians of the Church", are not alone in our Patriarchal, ecumenical and pastoral ministry, because we have as communicants and meet comforters the respected and beloved in Christ, Holy Sepulchre Fathers and brothers High Priests, priests, hieromonks, deacons and monks distinguished by the moral and sacrificial and philanthropic spirit of the Church. "Let us all love one another in unity; and I shall not see my neighbour according to the flesh, but in Christ Jesus. Let there not be among you that which may divide you, but be united to the bishop, submitting to God through him in Christ" the hieromartyr Ignatius of Antioch orders.

This enthronement anniversary of Our Mediocrity calls us all to the unity of faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit, especially with the brotherly Orthodox Churches. "Unity is achieved through love and truth and a preference for good", the great Origen points out. This "good choice" was shown very recently by the sister and neighbour Holy Church of Antioch, which restored the Eucharistic Communion with us. Let the love in Christ do this for the imitation of the brothers of the Orthodox Churches who are in misunderstanding and division.

For we too are in ministry to the saints, that is, to Christians as well as to the holy places of the Nativity, Crucifixion and Resurrection of God and our Saviour Christ, ordering ourselves "in all things grieving but not distressed" (2 Cor. 4,8) we continually thank and pray to God, that He may pacify our region, tested by the fire of the enemy, and preserve, in the hearts of the Primates of the brother Churches, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (cf.

Eph. 4,3).

Let us ask the Lord to direct our hearts "to the love of God and to the patience of Christ" (2 Thess. 3,5), through the intercessions of our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos Mary and the prayers of our holy Father Nektarios, Bishop of Pentapolis. May the Grace of the Holy and Life-giving Tomb strengthen and protect us all in everything and always, especially during these difficult days.

Therefore, we call upon, on all those praying with Us and honouring through their presence the enthronement on this feast of Ours, for power from on high, the illuminating energy of the Holy Sepulchre, and every blessing from God, expressing warm thanksgiving to those who addressed Us: His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Chief-Secretary, who spoke on behalf of the respected members of the Holy Synod and of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos, the representative of the Holy Church of Russia, Reverend Archimandrite Vassianos, who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril, the representative of the Holy Church of Romania, Reverend Archimandrite Theophilos, who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Romania Daniel, His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Nazareth, His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Yaffo, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Yaffo, Reverend Fr Charalambos Badour, who spoke on behalf of Saint James Cathedral, the representatives of our Russian-speaking flock Fr Nikolaos Koulinsky, Fr Alexander from the Beer Sheba community, Fr Stavros Aranki who spoke on behalf of Birzeit community, the Ambassador of Russia to Israel Mr Victorov, the Ambassador of Georgia to Israel Mr Lasha, Mr Ode Quas, who spoke on behalf of the Schools of the Patriarchate and Mrs Panayiota Kafetzi, who spoke on behalf of the School of Saint Dimitrios, as well as all others who have participated in this celebration of the Enthronement

Anniversary.

The reception was followed by a meal for the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood at the Patriarchate's refectory.

From Secretariat-General