

THE FEAST OF SAINTS GEORGE AND JOHN THE CHOZEVITES

On Sunday January 8/21, 2018, after the Feast of Theophany, the Patriarchate commemorated Saints George and John the Chozevites, at the Holy Monastery bearing their names, at the Brook Chorath on the way to Jericho.

On this Feast, the Church honours St. John who left his Archdiocese in Caesarea of Palestine in the 5th century and lived in this monastery, becoming a leader of souls and the renovator of the Monastery. The Church also honours St. George from Cyprus, who comforted monks' souls and renovated the Monastery after the Persian raid damages in 614 A.D.

The All-night Vigil in this Monastery was officiated by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Archbishops, and Priests. The choir was formed by noble pilgrims who came from the Church of Greece; Leonidas Doukas, choir leader at the Cathedral of the Holy Archdiocese Iliou Aharnes and Petroupolis, Eustathios Kasteliotis, choir leader of the Holy Church of St. Paul in Athens, Gregorios Zarkos, choir leader of the Holy Church of the Holy Trinity in Pireaus and Dionysios Thanasoulis, left choir singer of the Holy Church of Panagia Faneromeni in Attiki. The service was attended by a large congregation.

The Hegoumen of the Monastery Archimandrite Constantinos addressed His Beatitude upon His reception with the following words:

“Let us praise in hymns the two leaders of our Holy Monastery, St. John along with St. George, our patron Saints and intercessors to God.”

Your Beatitude Father and Master, and Your Venerable Entourage,

Festal is our gathering tonight! It is festal because we honour the two Owners and Patron Saints of the Lavra of Chozeva, Saints John and George.

Both Saints led an ascetic life here, admonishing and supporting the three thousand Monks who also lived in asceticism in the Lava; in other words, they became leaders of the Ascetics.

The centre of our life is one! The Holy Altar! The mystical life, the Services of our Holy Church! St. George the Chozevite himself, was teaching the following while strengthening spiritually his Monks during hardships:

“Spend much time, my child, in the Church of God, giving all your strength in this effort, in silence and piety. Because it is good for one to serve his mother, which is the Church, in all reverence and meekness. All Grace comes to us from her (the mother Church), making us heirs of eternal life.”

Friend of the Saints, Father and Master!

As your Sons, we exclaim; welcome, Your Beatitude!”

His Beatitude preached the Divine Word as follows:

“The true Light hath appeared, and He giveth enlightenment to all. Christ, Who surpasseth all purity, is baptized with us; He bringeth sanctification into the water, and it becometh a place of cleansing of souls. That which is visible is earthly; which is perceived with the understanding is higher than the Heavens. Through washing cometh salvation, and through water, the Spirit. By descending into the water we ascend to God. Wondrous are Thy works, O Lord; glory to Thee”. This is what the hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians and pilgrims of the Saints of Chozeva sacred relics,

Our Father among the Saints George the Chozevite, who has invited us all in his festal commemoration, had become a communicant of the true Light that hath appeared. His Monastery witnesses the marvels of God as the psalmist says: "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works" (Ps. 71:17).

Indeed, the wondrous works of God have been declared in this Monastery until now, through the sacred relics of the Fathers and monks who have lived in ascetic striving throughout the ages in the caves on either side of brook Chorath; and especially the full relic of our Father among the Saints John the new Chozevite, the wonder worker, who became a martyr of consciousness.

The monks who lived in ascetic striving here became sons of light of our Holy Church, namely of the mystical body of Christ as the psalmist says: "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Ps. 103:17-18).

Saint George, whose sacred memory we commemorate today, lived approximately one hundred years after Saint John the Bishop of Caesarea in Palestine who also lived in this Monastery. St. George, who experienced the barbaric Persian raid, undertook both the gathering of the scattered monks and ascetics and the reconstruction of the monastic and coenobitic life in the Lavra of Chozeva. "The height of his virtues and the miracles he worked with his holy prayers placed the Monastery above all others in Palestine, which after his death received the name of St. George the Chozevite. Because he is its patron Saint and his tomb became the most honoured place at the Monastery", according to the epistles of St. John the New Chozevite.

The height of the Saint's virtues is expressed clearly by the hymn writer who says: "Neither lengthiness of the road nor severity of the place could avail to weaken thy strong and fiery zeal to make thy journey to God; and when thou joyously hadst arrived at the places that were trod by the feet of our Lord and God, thou leftest nothing undone till through thy labours and ascetic deeds thou camest unto the Sion in Heaven's heights."

St. George linked the fiery zeal, namely his most fiery journey to the Lord, with the places that were trod by the feet of the Incarnate Logos of God in the cave of Bethlehem, by the pure blood of the Ever-Virgin Mary; the places in the river Jordan district, where St. John the Baptist preached repentance and baptized the people in the water (Luke 3:3). And our Lord Jesus Christ was baptized by John in the river Jordan (Mark 2:9). "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mat. 3:16-17) according to the Evangelists' witness.

Bearing in mind the witness of the Holy Apostles and Evangelists and heeding to St. Paul's words: "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:4-6), St. George came to this biblical sacred place of Chozeva, and made it a natural and spiritual font; where we foretaste the bathing of the baptism, "the bath of palingenesis" (concept of rebirth or re-creation), namely the resurrection. "For this is the meaning of palingenesis...the second birth", Ecumenios says.

In other words, my dear brothers and sisters, "the grace of

God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). The grace which overshadowed those Saints in Christ who lived in ascetic striving before and after St. George in Chozeva, is no other than the Holy Spirit that came down on the beloved Son of God our Lord Jesus Christ in the bodily form of a dove, at the river Jordan.

As our Father among the Saints George the Chozevite became participant and communicant of this salvific grace, we are also called to partake of it, having the Saint as an example to imitate. And with the hymn writer let us say: "Thou didst pass thy life on earth like a bodiless being, O though who art truly great; wherefore, thou wast united to the choirs of the bodiless hosts, singing thrice-holy songs unto the Creator and receiving His illumination." Amen.

The Hegoumen and renovator of the Monastery Archimandrite Constantinos offered a monastic meal after the Divine Liturgy.

From Secretariat-General

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THE CHRISTMAS FEAST AT THE PATRIARCHATE

The Feast of Christ's Nativity was celebrated by the Patriarchate according to the tradition and order at the Basilica of the Nativity and the God-receiving Cave in the town of Bethlehem, on Sunday December 25, 2017/ January 7, 2018.

The Feast began with the Service of Matins at 10.30 p.m. on the night of Christmas Eve, December 24, 2017/ January 6, 2018 with the entrance through the Baptism Gate and the welcome of the officiating Patriarchal Commissioner Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias.

The formal descend to the Holy Cave began with the Matins Hymn "Come, ye faithful, let us see where Christ the Saviour hath been born". The Archbishops and the Priests dressed in their liturgical vestments preceded the procession which was officiated by His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, having the President of the Palestinian State Mr. Mahmoud Abbas Abu-Mazen on His right hand side, the representative of His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan, Interior Minister Mr. Ghaleb Zu'bi on His left hand side, and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, the President of the Church Affairs Committee of the Palestinian State Mr. Hanah Amire, the Palestinian Presidential Adviser Mr. Ziad Al-Bandak, and other Officials of the Palestinian State and on either side other Governmental and Police Force Officials of the town of Bethlehem and diplomatic representatives of countries.

Once in the Cave, the Hymns of Ascent were chanted, the Gospel narrative of the Nativity was read in Greek and Arabic, and the Patriarchal Christmas Message was read by Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverent Archbishop Aristarchos of

Constantina as follows:

*“He that was begotten of the Father before the
morning star without a mother, is today on
earth become incarnate of thee without a father;
wherefore, a star announceth the good tidings to the
Magi; and the Angels with shepherds hymn thy seedless
childbirth, O Full of Grace.”*

(Kontakion: Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos)

During the joyous and glorious period of the Holy Twelve-days the Church as much as the whole of humanity celebrate a divine and heavenly event, an event that is at the same time splendid and marvelous, strange and paradox. We celebrate the event of God’s peaceful visit and healing intervention in man’s life. The Church proclaims the event of the incarnate Epiphany of God in the world. It confesses that God, who has created man according to His image and likeness, remodeled him by the Son’s resemblance to man according to the divine beauty given to him before the fall. In the presence of His Only-Begotten Son and Word, God became incarnate, He was made flesh, He became human. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1.14) Through the Incarnation and nativity in the flesh of His Son by the Ever-Virgin, during the reign of Caesar Octavius Augustus in Bethlehem, God revived and pulled man out of the depths of his fall and corruption and lifted him in the heights of heaven, making him “partaker of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1.4). For this offering, grace and unspeakable joy given to humanity, the Church chants with the hymn writer today: “the Lord hath sent forth redemption to his people”; with the Evangelist: “a Saviour has been born to us today, who is Christ”; and with the hymn writer: “Our Saviour

from on high hath visited us” and “Christ is born, give ye glory, Christ is on earth, be ye exalted”.

Eye-witnesses to this unheard of mystery, namely God’s incarnate presence in the world, are; the Ever-Virgin, who contributed to this reality, and conceived by the Holy Spirit, became pregnant and gave birth in the flesh and swaddled Christ; Joseph the elder, her companion from Nazareth to Bethlehem for Caesar’s census, from Bethlehem to Egypt on their escape, and to their return in Nazareth, from which the Lord was called a Nazarene. Eye-witnesses are also simple farmers, shepherds watching over their flocks, who drew nigh in order to see and experience the mystery, after the invitation and the vision of angels, who were chanting in heaven the angelic hymn: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2.14). Moreover, eye-witnesses were men of science, Magi Kings from Persia, researchers of the universe. They were called from afar by a star in heaven, to herald the beginning of the Church of nations, so that from the idolatry of the stars they would come to the worship of the Sun of Righteousness. And indeed, in this simple and humble Cave they beheld in ecstasy “the babe lying in a manger” (Luke 2.16), and recognizing Him they bowed and worshiped the Incarnate God made man in the flesh by the Virgin, and offered Him their gifts of reverence “gold, and frankincense and myrrh” (Matthew 2.11).

In this manner did the wealth of Christ’s Divinity shine upon men, in the humility of the Cave and the poverty of the swaddling clothes. Christ took upon Himself the form of a man, humbling Himself, so that in this form He would sanctify and glorify man. “Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Cor. 8.9). Being true God, strong and mighty, He took on the feebleness of the human flesh and became God-human, one person in two natures, “who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10.38).

This philanthropy of God is preached in the Holy Spirit by the Church, the Body of the Incarnate God, our Lord Jesus Christ who was Crucified in the flesh and Resurrected from the dead for the salvation of the world. Christ has bequeathed the Church with the perpetuation of His peace-making, reconciling, sanctifying and salvific mission in the world. The Church manifests and preaches His mission to its members, but also to all those who by their free will do not accept the message of the Lord of peace, but act remorselessly and inhumanly instead, just like Herod did to the new-born King and the infants. They neither sharpen their plows for plowing, nor their sickles for reaping; on the contrary, they sharpen their swords in order to rend each other to pieces. They spend the wealth of God's creation to compatible and incompatible weapons and wars, they sacrifice hundreds of thousands of innocent people through atrocious terrorist acts and they dare say this is done in the name of God. The Church speaks to them in love. It teaches peace, to those near and afar. It sanctifies the people, tames their morals and remains an oasis, a paradise and the visible manifestation of the Kingdom of God on earth. It shares its spiritual and material goods with the people philanthropically. It tolerates persecution; being slandered, it forgives and prays. It calls everybody, saying: "come and see" (John 1.46).

This is done also by the Church of Jerusalem in the Holy Land, which defends and preserves the Holy Shrines and of course the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem, built by Constantine and Justine the Emperors. The Church of Jerusalem prays from the God-receiving Cave for the peace of the whole world, peace in the Middle East and the Holy Land; it prays especially for its Greek Orthodox congregation which lives in the Palestinian State, but also for all Palestinian people and supports with all its strength and by all peaceful means His Excellency the President Mahmoud Abbas Abu-Mazen, who honours with His presence our Feast; so that He may successfully complete His mission of sustaining the political and religious Status Quo

in Jerusalem, as it is recognized by the International Community, and that He may accomplish the full recognition of the Palestinian State by all nations worldwide.

*In the Holy Town of Bethlehem, **CHRISTMAS 2017***

Fervent supplicant for all before God,

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

The Message was also read by the Press Representative of the Patriarchate for the Arabic M.M. Dean Priest Issa Mousleh in Arabic.

Afterward, there was the veneration of the Nativity place and the Holy Manger, followed by the ascent through the North Gate of the Cave and the litany three times around the Basilica was concluded at the centre of the Basilica with a special prayer.

After the prayer, His Beatitude started the Katavasiae "Christ is born" and coming down from the throne, the Service of Matins was continued at the singing of the choir leader of the All-holy Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos on the right in Greek and the Bethlehem choir on the left in Arabic. At the same time, the Divine Liturgy was being celebrated in the Holy Cave, led by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis.

Having finished the prayer, the Divine Liturgy started at the Catholicon, officiated by His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias and the Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Priests of the Patriarchate and other churches, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Anastasios. The choir leader of the All-holy Church of the Resurrection Archimandrite Aristovoulos sang on

the right in Greek and the Bethlehem choir on the left in Arabic under Mr. Lawrence Samour. The Service was attended in contrition by many pilgrims from Russia, Greece, Romania, Ukraine and other countries as well as local pilgrims. The Divine Liturgy was also attended by the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and the Consul Mrs. Katherine Tzima.

After the Divine Liturgy, a meal was offered to the Patriarchal Entourage, the Archbishops, Priests and the people by the renovator of the Monastery Most Reverend Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan, for the glory of God Who permitted and accepted this Feast.

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DEACON'S ORDINATION AT THE PATRIARCHATE

During the Divine Liturgy on Tuesday to Wednesday night, November 29 to 30/ December 12 to 13, 2017, the Hagiotaphite Monk Patrick, who has graduated the Patriarchal School of Zion, was ordained a Deacon. The ordination was held by Geronda Sacristan, Most Reverend Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis.

Before the ordination the Archbishop addressed and congratulated the ordained for his forthcoming ministry in the Church of the Resurrection in Fatherly words as follows;

"Dearest Subdeacon Patrick,

Today our Holy Church honours the memory of St. Andrew the first-called Apostle. He and his brother Peter are the first Apostles who accepted the Lord's invitation: "Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people". There was no need for a second word, because "at once they left their nets and followed him" (Matt. 4:19-20).

This day was chosen by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the Holy and Sacred Synod to call you to follow the footsteps of the Holy Apostles and serve the Church of Christ. They have honoured you especially, by placing you at the centre of our faith, the All-holy Church of the Resurrection of our Lord.

Here, you will be strengthened by the power of the Sacred and Life-giving Cross in the Horrendous Golgotha and the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb will shed its grace upon you. You will serve the incoming noble pilgrims in a spirit of humility, you will stand firm and defend the rights of our Brotherhood as a faithful guardian, in self-denial against the heretic wolves who come in sheep's clothing. You will be vigilant and keep the prayer in a clean heart and a contrite spirit, "for our sins and the for the ignorance of the people".

The top priority of your ministry will be your participation in the great Sacrament of the Eucharist, with which you will be sanctified and give sanctification to those who proceed nigh in fear of God, faith and love.

You cannot succeed in all the above if you don't prepare and furnish yourself with the appropriate spiritual supplies. The arena of the spiritual fight that is before you is not easy at all. The malicious devil will set many traps for you. You owe to be ready to recognize and avoid them, without any spiritual harm.

The only way to achieve this is the daily study, first of all of the Holy Bible, so that you will be enlightened and shown the example of the great and infinite love of God towards us, His ultimate humility and eternal care to re-establish us in the paradise of bliss.

Moreover, you will study the writings of the Holy Fathers of our Church, setting as your priority the Ladder of St. John of Sinai, so that your will practically learn the acquisition and

keeping of the virtues and the avoidance of sin.

You will also study the history of the Church of Jerusalem, to learn the struggles of the previous Hagiotaphite Fathers, many of whom shed their blood as martyrs in the altar of the ministry of the All-holy Shrines.

The study will help you examine yourself better and progress in the spiritual life. The cultivation of obedience will be the basis for the acquisition of the holy humility. The memory of death will strengthen you towards the acquisition of apathy. The prayer which will be in contrition of heart and hope in God will strengthen your faith and comfort you in times of temptation.

The grace of the Holy Spirit which you are about to receive in your ordination as a deacon, will change you, and it will give you the strength to minister the Holy Altar in fear of God.

His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch along with the Holy and Sacred Synod will council and guide you, they will advise and stand by you in every step you take.

All the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood participates in today's joy and wishes you to increase the "bags of gold" (in Greek "talanto") which you are about to receive, to receive and offer sanctification to others."

The ordained was escorted by Hagiotaphite Fathers, Archbishops, Hieromonks, Deacons, Monks, Nuns, and noble pilgrims who hailed "Axios" to him.

After the ordination and the dismissal of the Divine Liturgy the newly-ordained Deacon offered a reception to all who honoured him at the office of Geronda Sacristan.

From Secretariat-General

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THE 12TH ENTHRONEMENT ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS

At 10:00p.m. on Wednesday 9th/23rd November 2017, there Ceremony with the Doxology took place at the All-holy Church of the Resurrection on the completion of twelve years since the Election and Enthronement of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

The Doxology was led by His Beatitude, with co-celebrants the Archbishops and Hieromonks of the Patriarchate, and the participation in prayer of the noble congregation of monks, nuns and laity members of the Greek Community and the Arab-speaking congregation, and the honouring presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and the representative of Romania in Ramalla. After the Doxology the Patriarchal Entourage returned in the Patriarchate. Therein, Geronda Secretrary-General addressed

His Beatitude as follows:

Your Beatitude Father and Master,

The Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of Churches, along with our venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, commemorates and celebrates the 12th anniversary of Your Beatitude's election as the Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem, according to the official voting of the Holy and Sacred Synod. This celebration is in the manner of a thanksgiving Doxology and fullness in participation of monks, nuns, clergy and laity, who form the base and of the structure of the holy body of the Church and strengthen its unity in peace, especially at a time that it is being severely tested.

Through the decision of Your election and Enthronement in 2005, the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood denounced illegal contracts mortgaging priceless for its material and more significantly cultural value land and estate property of the Patriarchate, contracts which confound the over the centuries established Status Quo in the Old City of Jerusalem and seriously wound its Christian Churches. At that time, faithful to its mission over the centuries to safeguard the Holy Shrines, the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre stood up for this and protested strongly. Instead of corruption, it chose transparency and placed Your Beatitude an experienced captain of the ship of the Church which began with Saint James the Brother of God, and despite the disintegration and the storm it was not submerged.

Having accepted this mission, Your Beatitude has worthily worked for these twelve years, undertaking decisions and actions which establish the Patriarchate locally as well as in all Orthodoxy and Christianity, as a Church with a leading role among the Christian Churches of the Holy Land, in their mission for the protection of the Christians' rights and the peaceful co-existence with their Jewish and Muslim fellow citizens.

Proof of the leadership and reconciliation of the Patriarchate among the Christian Communities is the participation of Your Beatitude as the representative of all Christians of the Holy Land in the Conference for the peace in the Middle East in New York last July, with the initiative of the peacemaker Rabi Melhior; and above all, recent restoration and renovation project of the Sacred Edicule by the National Technical University of Athens, which was initiated by Your Beatitude and was completed only in a few months, despite the numerous difficulties, with the full co-operation of the Christian Communities.

As far as the Ecclesiastical property is concerned, irrefutable proof of Your Beatitude's interest in its favour is Your attitude towards the recent wrongful decision of the District Israeli Court, giving effect to the illegal contracts of the Jaffa Gate hotels that belong to the Patriarchate. Ever since, Your Beatitude has not hesitated about neither toil, nor financial cost for the removal of this court order, which if applied, can be destructive for the established since the reign of Constantine the Great Christian Quarter.

In order to protect the Christian Quarter, Your Beatitude has mobilized the Christian Churches of the Holy Land, visited the King of Jordan, the Ecumenical Patriarch, the President of the State of Israel, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, the Pope of Rome, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of Cyprus and the President of the Democracy of Cyprus. This issue was also raised by Your Beatitude at the Conference of the European Churches in Cyprus, and the ongoing Meeting of the World Council of Churches hosted by the Patriarchate in Amman. In all aforementioned meetings Your Beatitude has been warning on the consequences of the implementation of the court decision, and has received serious commitments for its removal and the support of the Patriarchate in its efforts to preserve the Status Quo of the Old City of Jerusalem which guarantees the peaceful co-existence of its citizens in the traditionally

set districts for each Quarter.

Praising Your Beatitude for all these, we the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood declare our intention to engage and join You in this mission, subjugating our personal will to the collective and ecclesiastical one, so as with the harmony and sequence of the members of the human body, we operate harmoniously, bearing fruit to our Sacred Community and the Greek Orthodox Arab-speaking Congregation.

Raising my glass on behalf of the Holy and Sacred Synod and all the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, I wish Your Beatitude many happy returns, in peace, joy, steadfastness and health, with a governmental strength guided from on high, for the increase of Your noble works, for the praise of our blessed nation and the glory of our Trinitarian God. So be it.

The Consul General of Greece as follows:

Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences,

Reverend Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen

In feelings of joy and great honour, we participate today in the festive celebration of the twelfth enthronement anniversary of His Holy Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, here in the See of the Mother of Churches.

Today is a festive day for the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, the Patriarchate, for Orthodoxy and for Greece.

This day is also a chance, Your Beatitude, to express the respect, love and gratitude on behalf of Greece for your great pastoral work, for the important national work of preservation and highlight of the Holy Shrines in the Holy Land and for the defense and projection of the ecumenical values of Orthodoxy.

Your Beatitude,

Your devotion in this sacred mission, Your focus in this very important work, quite often under adverse conditions, Your tireless efforts, within and outside the borders of the region for the defense of the Status Quo which has guaranteed the peaceful co-existence of the Religious Communities in the Holy Land for centuries, Your materialized vision and determining initiative for the restoration of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre, the cornerstone of the Shrines that reconciles the peoples, nations and civilizations, as well as your steadfast promotion of peace-making, mutual understanding and moderation in a turbulent area which continues to face great challenges and where many are those who talk about peace, but very few the ones who honestly and effectively work towards its achievement, establish this Holy Institution a point of reference with a significant role.

For Greece, the defense of the Institution of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, and of its lawful rights is a priority of prime importance. The Mother of Churches symbolizes our long-term presence in the Holy Land, as well as the attitude of friendship and cooperation with all other peoples, according to the ecumenical values of Orthodoxy.

Your Beatitude,

The Greek Government and the faithful Greeks surround You always with their love and devotion. Greek Officials and civilians flock to the Patriarchate as pilgrims annually, highlighting the indestructible historic bond with it, as well as the importance they give to Your mission, Your work and the work of the Hagiotaphite Fathers.

Feeling the burden of Your responsibilities and sharing Your anguish, the staff of the General Consulate of Greece stand by Your side and pray as humble pilgrims that You may have health, strength and longevity to continue Your work, for the

benefit of the Patriarchate, the Brotherhood, Orthodoxy, Your Greek-Orthodox Congregation, for the peace in the region and for the Nation of Greeks.

His Beatitude thanked and blessed them for their addresses and replied as follows:

Your Excellency Mr. Consul General of Greece,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved Christians,

Noble pilgrims

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).

Today, on the completion of the twelve-year ministry since Our climb to the indeed martyr’s Patriarchal throne of our Church of Jerusalem, we went to the All-holy Church of the Resurrection along with the venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood in order to praise the Trinitarian God in a thanksgiving Doxology, “for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Phil. 2:13).

This festive twelve-year anniversary does not refer to Our unworthiness, but to the God-founded Institution of the Church in the Holy Spirit, “which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:9-10) according to St. Paul.

Our spiritual and pastoral responsibility on the Hagiataphite established Mother of Churches so far, has aimed at nothing but the keeping of the Sacred and Apostolic consignment of our

holy, immaculate and unadulterated Orthodox Faith, according to the order of the Apostle of Nations: "Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us" (2 Tim. 1:14). Moreover, Our aim has been the preservation and ministry of worship of the all-holy and most sacred shrines and the inalienable privileges and lawful rights over them of the noble nation of the Roman Orthodox people.

In addition, hearing the words of Prophet Isaiah: "For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her vindication shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch" (Isaiah 62:1), We have set on an international campaign for the preservation of the existing multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and interreligious, namely Judaic, Christian and Islamic, Status Quo of the Old City of Jerusalem, which is being threatened by radical partisan groups and messianist settlor movements.

We do this by our Patriarchal and Moral Mission of "peace in Christ by which God has called us to live in" (1 Cor. 7:15). "God is not of disorder but He is the God of peace" the wise Paul preaches. And this is so because the Holy City of Jerusalem is the universal spear and eternal emblem of the blood of divine righteousness, namely of the prophets and especially our Lord Jesus Christ, who "died, the righteous for the unrighteous" (1 Peter 3:18) according to Apostle Peter.

Today's twelfth anniversary on the Patriarchal Enthronement calls us not to boast in the things that have been done by Us, but to give "glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God" (Romans 15:17). "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience" (2 Cor. 1:12). At the same time, this anniversary calls us to be alert in view of the current clutter in the world in general and in our region of the Middle East in particular. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be

done with charity" (1 Cor. 16:13-14), St. Paul orders us.

In this sacred mission of Ours we have as collaborators and communicators Our reverend and dear Hagiotaphite Fathers and brothers, Archbishops, Hieromonks, Deacons and Monks, with whom, as the God-inspired St. Ignatios says " we take care to work all things in unity, under the Lead of the Bishop who is according to God, and the Presbyters who are according to the mind of the Apostles and the Deacons...who have been entrusted the ministry of Jesus Christ, Who had been with the Father before all ages and in the end was made manifest to us" (Vol.2, p.269).

Truly we say along with St. Paul, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). This truth is more obviously witnessed by the history of the Church of Jerusalem, namely of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, being surged on the waves of falsehood and slander but not submerged under them.

Let us pray to the Father of Lights "that He may guide our footsteps in the work of His commandments" by the prayers of our Most Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and the intercessions of our Father among the Saints Nectarios of Pentapolis. And the Grace of the All-holy and Life-giving Sepulchre of our Saviour Jesus Christ fortify us in the ministry of the All-holy Shrines, the irrefutable witnesses of our faith, and in pastoring our pious Christian congregation.

For all these, we call upon all those who prayed along with Us and have honoured this feast, the strength from on high, the grace of the Holy Sepulchre, patience, and every blessing coming from God, expressing heartfelt thanksgiving to those who addressed Us namely; Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, who spoke on behalf of the members of the Holy and Sacred Synod and our

Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, the Most Reverend Archimandrite Leontios, representative of our Brotherly All-holy Church of Russia, who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril, the Reverend Archimandrite Theophilos, representative of the Brotherly All-holy Church of Romania, who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Romania Daniel, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, who spoke on behalf of our Parish in Nazareth, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Benedict of Philadelphia, who spoke on behalf of our congregation in Jordan, the Most Reverend Archbishop Damascene of Joppa, who spoke on behalf of our congregation in Joppa, the School Director of our Patriarchal School of Zion, who spoke on behalf of the School, the Reverend Fr. Charalambos Bandour, who spoke on behalf of St. James Cathedral Parish, the Reverend Mr. Abu Aeta, representative of the Community of Beit Sahour, Archimandrite Narkissos and Fr. Jouseph Hodali, who spoke on behalf of the Community of Beit Jalla, as well as all participants in the celebration of this Enthronement Anniversary.

To the health of all of you!"

The reception at the Patriarchate was followed by lunch.

From Secretariat-General

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HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM A GUEST AT THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE MIDDLE EAST IN ATHENS

From Sunday 16th/29th to Tuesday 18th/31st October 2017, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos participates as a guest at the “2nd Athens International Conference on Religious and Cultural Pluralism and Peaceful Coexistence in the Middle East” organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece. In this Conference, His Beatitude was escorted by Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Archdeacon Mark and the Exarch in Athens Reverend Archimandrite Damianos.

Upon His Beatitude’s arrival at “Eleftherios Venizelos” Athens airport by El Al airways, He was welcomed by the Exarch of the Holy Sepulchre in Athens Archimandrite Damianos and the representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece.

On Monday morning, 17th/29th October 2017, His Excellency the

President of Greek Democracy Mr. Prokopios Pavlopoulos declared the opening of the Conference, welcoming the members of the Conference and underlining that the conflict among civilizations may be dealt with and surmounted in the blessed country of Greece, where the spiritual values of democracy and civilization were conceived and born.

Man is the epicentre of civilization, the carrier of the Values of the human rights.

The address of His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem in this Conference is displayed in the link below:

<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2017/10/30/35549>

From Secretariat-General

ADDRESS OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM AT THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN ATHENS

**Remarks at the 2nd Athens International Conference on Religious
and Cultural Pluralism and Peaceful Coexistence in the Middle
East**

**His Beatitude Theophilos III
Patriarch of Jerusalem**

30 October 2017

Your All-Holiness,

Your Excellency, Mr Kotzias,

Your Eminences,

Respected Members of the Government and the Diplomatic Service,

Fellow Participants in this conference,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are honoured to be present at this important conference, and we bring you greetings from the Holy Land and from the many peoples who make up the rich tapestry of our common life in the Middle East.

The subject before us is a complex one, and within the scope of this conference we would like to focus on the subject of peaceful coexistence. For millennia the Middle East has been thoroughly pluralistic, both religiously and culturally. Of this there is no doubt, and the historical evidence is clear. The principal question before us, therefore, is not whether the Middle East is a pluralistic society. The principal question before us is precisely how we shall live with the reality of this pluralism in a way that respects the dignity of every human being and ensures the well-being of the different communities that make up our society. Our pluralism is a great gift, and it is urgent that we come to a place where we honour this pluralism, and no longer regard it as a problem.

The Middle East is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious mosaic. But the design of this – or any – mosaic is not random. Mosaics are delicate, often intricate compositions, with each tiny piece contributing to a magnificent, and much larger, picture.

The synthesis that makes up the mosaic of the Middle East is

the synthesis of overlapping and inter-related histories, cultures, and religions. This synthesis has created the milieu for our co-existence for generations, and we have learnt that where there is peaceful coexistence, this is so because true co-existence is dynamic, and not static. This dynamic, this energy, of true co-existence occurs when there is a genuine mutual respect and honour of the one for the other, and where there is a deep appreciation of our common humanity and our common destiny. Where this dynamic exists, there are strong, enduring human communities where the rights and uniqueness of all are allowed to flourish.

We have known this dynamic of co-existence in the Middle East. Yet in our day, instead of building on a long history of this way of living, there are powerful forces at work in our region to destroy this fundamental basis of our life, and to bring any concept of co-existence and pluralism into disrepute. We are the witnesses of this undermining and destruction, for it is happening in our region even as we meet here in Athens, and it is a very serious matter indeed.

Jerusalem has been, and remains, the great symbol and embodiment of this co-existence. This is the beauty of Jerusalem, and the evidence of her nobility. This is also her divine vocation. And yet instead of supporting Jerusalem in this light, instead of enabling Jerusalem to be revealed as the Holy City that it genuinely is, there are those who are determined to undermine her. We forget that we do not possess Jerusalem; Jerusalem possesses us.

In order to illustrate our point, let us imagine for a moment Jerusalem without this religious and cultural pluralism. There would, in fact, be little or nothing there. Without the richness of our several human communities and our histories; without the evidence all round of the divine-human encounter in the sites that are holy to Jews, Christians, and Muslims; without the variety of daily experience of worship in every quarter, there would be no Jerusalem as we have come to know

the Holy City. We are witnesses to the fact that Jerusalem is big enough for all who call her their spiritual home.

On the one hand we know all this to be true. On the other hand we seem unable to live and work except in ways that militate against this truth. This is more than a tragedy; it is an offense against both humanity and God.

So what are we to do now?

Discussions about the life of the Middle East are endless. The pressing question before us today is this: when shall we commit ourselves to a new kind of action, to a new way of doing business? When shall we give ourselves to the genuine and life-giving dynamic that is the real basis for our peaceful co-existence? We must face our fears, our hurts, our prejudices, and deal with them, openly and honestly, and most of all with a real commitment to the re-establishment of that societal synthesis that is the great strength of co-existence.

These actions are the beginning of the restoration of the true multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious mosaic that is Jerusalem, the Holy Land, and the Middle East. We know what we must do, but have we the courage? And are we able to insist that it is time to cease speaking about the complexity of the Middle East in the negative? We would be much better speaking the truth that the Middle East is the birthplace for human civilisation of all that it means to value other cultures and religious expressions.

There is no more data that we need to know in order to be able to act. Let us not allow a desire for more information cripple us from action that we can take now to re-establish peace and mutual respect.

As we meet in this conference, therefore, let us be resolved not just to our important discussion, but also to a new commitment to a right understanding of the history and integrity of the nature of our multi-ethnic, multi-cultural,

multi-religious Middle East. And let us be further resolved to support this and allow this fundamental quality of our society to flourish for the well-being of all.

Thank you.

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM VISITS HIS HOLINESS THE POPE OF ROME

On Monday 10th/23rd October 2017, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III visited His Holiness Pope Francis of Rome at the Vatican.

His Beatitude's entourage on this visit were Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and Archdeacon Mark.

Upon His arrival at the airport of Rome on Sunday evening, 9th/22nd October 2017, His Beatitude was welcomed by the Most Reverend Bishop Farrell and Reverend Fr. Andrea Palmieri.

In the meeting, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem raised with His Holiness the Pope the recent problem of all the Christian Churches of the Holy Land, caused by the two recent issues; namely: the proposed bill by 40 Members of the Knesset which, if passed into law, would deny the rights of the Churches to freely deal with their land properties; and the recent decision of the Israeli District Court in Jerusalem, which gave effect to the unauthorised and illegitimate contracts relating to the Jaffa Gate properties that belong to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

His Beatitude asked for the support of His Holiness the Pope regarding the efforts to solve the aforementioned problems and for the preservation of the Status Quo especially in the Old City of Jerusalem, which has always guaranteed the rights and customs of Jewish, Christian and Muslim quarters in the Old City. This issue is more accurately explained in His Beatitude's address in the link below:

<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2017/10/23/35398>

His Holiness Pope Francis listened attentively to the presentation of His Beatitude and stated that the Status Quo in the Holy City must be defended and preserved. The points of His Holiness address are stated in the link below:

<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2017/10/23/35400>

His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III thanked His Holiness Pope Francis and wished Him the grace of the Holy Sepulchre in the performance of His pastoral work as the head of the Roman Catholic Church; and He offered Him the icon of the Nativity of Christ.

This problem which concerns not only the Patriarchate of Jerusalem but also all the Christian Churches of the Holy Land were raised in detail by His Beatitude in other meetings that He had during His stay in Rome; namely: with His Eminence Archbishop Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States; with His Eminence Cardinal Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity; with His Eminence Cardinal Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and with His Eminence Cardinal

Parolin, Secretary of State.

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III expressed His thanks to His Holiness Pope Francis for these meetings, for His hospitality in the Vatican hotel "Domus Sanctae Marthae"; as well as for the meal which he enjoyed with His Holiness.

His Beatitude departed for Jerusalem on Wednesday morning 12th/25th October 2017.

From Secretariat-General

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ADDRESS TO HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS TO THE VATICAN

23 October 2017

Your Holiness,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

We greet you, Your Holiness, with the blessings of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and we bring with us the hopes and

aspirations of the many peoples of our region who long for peaceful co-existence and the restoration of the true integrity of our multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious society.

We recall with great joy your pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 2014 with His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch, which marked the 50th anniversary of the joint pilgrimage of the late Pope Paul VI and the late Patriarch Athenagoras. We remember especially our joint witness before the All-Holy and Life-Giving Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ. We also have in mind today the gathering here a month later with President Shimon Perez and President Mahmoud Abbas, in which the multi-religious nature of our region was highlighted.

We are here today for this fraternal visit on a pastoral mission. We have come to Rome to express our concern to you, Your Holiness, about the profound threat that has been developing in recent years to the integrity of the Holy Land and the Middle East. As Your Holiness is aware, the Middle East is, by its very nature, evidenced by our history and the presence of the holy sites of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, a pluralistic society. For millennia we have lived a common life in which our many cultures, ethnicities, and religions have flourished in mutual respect and co-operation.

In recent years we have seen fresh attacks on the very nature of our society and the well-being of various religious and ethnic groups. We have seen the rise of new persecutions, and an increase in displaced populations. All this is well-known and well-documented.

We come now to share with you the new and deeply disturbing situation in the Holy Land, in which the historic rights of the Christian community are being undermined. Recently there has been introduced into the Knesset a proposed bill which, if passed into law, would change fundamentally the rights of the Churches over their land and property. This would encroach

on historic and legal protections that have supported our multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious society for centuries and that have been upheld without challenge by successive governmental authorities in our region.

Furthermore, we now face a direct affront to the integrity of the Holy City in a wrongful and, we believe, unjust judgement against the Patriarchate, and in favour of right-wing settlor groups, with respect to some of our historic properties in the Christian Quarter of the Old City. We hold that the judgement in favour of the sale of these properties is incorrect, and we are engaged in an appeal through the proper channels. However, we are deeply concerned about the path of both these actions, and the threat that they represent to the well-being of the Christian presence in the Holy City in particular, and the Holy Land in general.

In this regard we have come to Rome not in our capacity as the Patriarch of one Church only, but in the name of all the Heads of the Churches and Christian communities of the Holy Land. We to whom the pastoral oversight of the Christian communities of the Holy Land have been entrusted have met and are fully united in opposition to what we see as an attempt to change the provisions and the spirit of the historic Status Quo and the delicate balance that must exist if the Holy Land is to be sustained in its integrity as a region where many peoples can live and flourish and be witnesses to the divine-human encounter of which the holy sites are a tangible sign.

We are asking all those who love Jerusalem and the Holy Land, and all people of good will, around the world to join us in opposing these incursions on the life of the Christian community, and we wish to inform Your Holiness in person of these matters. We are encouraging all to assist us in opposing the draft bill and to rectifying a wrongfully concluded judgement, thus giving a clear message of international support to the Christian presence in the Holy Land and the wider Middle East. In this way we shall help in

the best way we can to ensure that our region remains what it has always been, a place where peoples of many cultures and religions may live in peaceful co-existence and mutual regard.

Thank you.

REMARKS OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM AT THE OFFICIAL RECEPTION IN CELEBRATION OF THE 170TH ANNIVERSARY OF MISSIA IN JERUSALEM

Notre Dame Hotel, 22/10/2017

“Your Eminence Metropolitan Juvenalii,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Archimandrite Alexander,

Respected Members of Governmental Agencies and the Diplomatic Service,

Reverend Fathers,

Beloved Monastics,

Sisters and Brothers in the Lord,

Ladies and Gentlemen

We wish to send our Patriarchal greetings to this festal gathering on the occasion of the 170th anniversary of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem. As we do so, we wish to extend a warm welcome to the Holy City especially to you, Your Eminence, our dear brother Metropolitan Juvenalii. You have been associated with the Mission, and so we consider you a Jerusalemite. We also welcome their Eminences and Graces who have served the Mission in the past, and who now have been called to other high office in the Church.

We acknowledge also the dedicated service of Archimandrite Alexander, the current Head of the Mission, and those who work with you, dear Father, in the important work of the Mission especially in these critical times in serving the many thousands of pilgrims of the Russian Orthodox Church to the Holy Land every year.

As we keep this blessed anniversary, we recall with thanksgiving all who have contributed to the life and work of the Mission down the decades. We remember the late Bishop Porphyrios of blessed memory, who was instrumental in the founding of the Mission, and the late Bishop Cyril of blessed memory, who re-established the Mission in 1858 after the Crimean War, and under whose leadership the Mission established its home in the Russian Compound. Over the years the Mission has been dedicated to encouraging pilgrimage and providing facilities for pilgrims, and furthermore it took over the care of several holy sites, especially Gorny in Ein Karem, both in Jerusalem and in the rest of the Holy Land.

More importantly, the Mission has placed itself in the service of the Church of Jerusalem, helping in every possible way the Local Church in our diakonia of service and witness to the Gospel of peace and reconciliation.

The many thousands of pilgrims who come here throughout the

year are a living testimony that Jerusalem serves the great purpose of being the most important spiritual centre in the world. It is our mission, entrusted to us by Divine Providence, to give ourselves to ensure that Jerusalem sustains its unique multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious character, that embraces Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and that the Christian presence here remains strong and vital. Without all this, Jerusalem and the Holy Land will lose their essential identity.

Needless to say, Jerusalem is the guarantee, by virtue of the holiness and her spiritual significance, of the Christian presence in the Holy Land and the Middle East. This is why this celebration is of paramount importance, for it shows your contribution, together with our Sister Orthodox Churches, in sustaining this Christian presence.

Whenever Hierarchs gather in Jerusalem with the Local Church, we show the unity and our oneness in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This unity and presence of the ecumenical Orthodox Church is a great encouragement not only to the Patriarchate, but also to our indigenous Christian community, which does not feel abandoned or forgotten.

We cannot emphasise too strongly the need for our unity of purpose in this regard. Our faith in the hope of the resurrection of our Lord compels us to live out our mission always to declare Jerusalem to be the heavenly as well as the earthly symbol of peaceful co-existence and harmony. Time and again we can say that the Patriarchate of Jerusalem that represents Orthodox Churches and nations has remained firm in its mission, which is religious, spiritual and pastoral. This is why the Church enjoys the respect of all, including other Christian communities and the communities of other faiths, because we have held all others in respect.

We congratulate you on 170 years of faithful service and we pray to Almighty God that you will be given grace for your

ongoing life and work in the Holy Land in the years to come under the pastoral care of the Mother Church of Jerusalem.

We now wish to raise our glass in a toast to His Holiness Patriarch Cyril, to His Excellency President Putin, who will always be remembered for his generous financial contribution to the restoration of the Church of the Nativity in and throughout our Patriarchate.

Thank you.”