

THE UNDERTAKING OF DUTY OF THE ARCHBISHOP ARISTOVOULOS OF MADABA AT HIS H. ARCHDIOCESE

On Sunday June 25/July 8, 2018, the recently elected and ordained Most Reverend Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba undertook his duty at his Archdiocese.

The ceremony was completed through the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of the Dormition in Madaba, which has been recently built by Archimandrite Innokentios. As it is known, inside the Church of the Patriarchate dedicated to St. George in Madaba, there is the mosaic map of the 6th century A.D. which depicts the geographical positioning of Palestine as it was at the time of Jesus Christ's Presence on earth.

The Divine Liturgy for the undertaking of duty of the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba as the Patriarchal Representative in Madaba was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Benedict of Philadelphia, the Most Reverend Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina, Christophoros of Kyriakoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, among whom Archimandrite Ieronymos, the Priests of the Shrine of Madaba Fr. Nikolaos and Fr. Joseph and Deacon George. The service was attended by the Christian congregation of Madaba in great jubilation.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this Congregation;

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also

suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21) according to St. Peter's epistle to the Christians.

Most Reverend Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba,

The Holy and Sacred Synod has elected you Bishop of the Holy Archdiocese of Madaba in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan after the Patriarchal proposal and by a unanimous regular voting. And the almighty grace of the Holy Spirit which heals the infirmities and fulfils all things has ordained you at the Episcopal Office by the hands of Our Mediocrity and Our co-celebrant Archbishops at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the Holy City of the Great King.

You have joined the venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood since your early youth, being in communion with the root and the quality of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ's vineyard, as He said; "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). And indeed, without the Bishop who is according to the type of Christ, as the Apostolic Church Fathers say, one can do nothing. "Where the Bishop is, therein let the crowd also be; just like wherever Christ is, there the Catholic Church is" St. Ignatios the God-bearer teaches (BEP, vol. 2 p.281). "The one that is placed as a Bishop is believed to be at Christ's place" (BEP. Vol.1 p.97) St. Klimis of Rome says.

In other words, the Bishop is the guarantee of the Apostolic succession and especially the succession of St. James the Brother of God, the first Hierarch of the Church.

Beloved Brother in Christ, Archbishop of Madaba

Your ministry at the All-holy Shrines in self-denial, your visible care for our Christian Congregation in Beit Jalla, your work in founding the House of Prayer for our Russian-speaking congregation in Ber Sheba, your continuous visits to

the prisoners along other pastoral activities of yours, together with your preaching of Christ, and more especially your scientific training in Byzantine singing – as David says – “I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being” (Psalm 104:33), and of course your studies in Theology, are the things that led you to becoming Archbishop of this God-saved historical and biblical county of Madaba.

“Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God” (Psalm 50:23), the psalm writer says. To this very ministry of offering sacrificial praise, in other words, of honest reverence, lies the sui genesis path of salvation. “It is befitting not only to praise God and offer the sacrifice of praise, but also to live in a likewise manner” St. Theodoritos Kyrou says.

Most Reverend Archbishop of Madaba, you have been called to this mission of care for the salvation of the souls of the sheep of the logical flock. Therefore, act as a shepherd in a good and God-pleasing manner to the flock that has been entrusted to you and teach the congregation of the Church in meek and friendly words, and bear witness to Christ’s witness, namely the Gospel of Christ’s pertaining to the Crucifixion and kenotic love.

Our Holy Order of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood boasts with the “glory of the things that pertain to God” (Romans 15:17), because having being the minister of God’s Gospel, it bore God-pleasing fruit through the renovation and maintenance of the Holy Church of St. George, known as the Church of the mosaic map. The Hagiotaphite Brotherhood has also built from the foundations the Bishop’s residence and Hegoumeneion, a Guest House of the Community Church and a building complex with a School in Hanina, a chapel with a block of flats in Ma’in and especially it founded the prototype School “Patriarch Diodoros” in Madaba, under the initiative and the

tireless work of our beloved brother Reverend Archimandrite Innokentios, who has offered himself in the pastoral care of our Greek-Orthodox Community and the people of Madaba without receiving any money for himself; he has also cultivated the Apostolic and Fatherly tradition of our Orthodox faith.

Most Reverend Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba,

“That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us” (2 Tim. 1:14). “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7), St. Paul orders. In other words, God has given us a spirit of love and wisdom in order to govern ourselves and others in prudence and reason; with the word “others” we mean the co-celebrant Priests and deacons, as well as the faithful people.

As for the yoke of obedience and the burden of the pastoral duties that you undertake are concerned, they refer to the leader and perfectionist of our faith, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:2) and His Church. For which the Lord says: “For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:30).

The hospitable people of Madaba, the pious Christian congregation of the Church, as well as the honourable members of the Church committee, welcome Us today in respect and family love, and more over the local civil authorities, the police and military forces, which are under the wise command of our respected King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Custodian of the Islamic and Christian Shrines in the Holy City of Jerusalem, His Majesty Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein, Who we thank in deep respect, and we pray to our Lord God to protect, invigorate and grant Him and the Royal Family health, longevity, for the goodness of the peaceful and harmonious co-existence of all the citizens of this country.

To you Holy Brother and Pastor of this God-saved town we pray that the grace of the Holy Spirit that was made manifest in

the river Jordan in the form of a dove upon the Beloved Son of God the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, may enlighten your mind and guide your steps towards the working of His commandments, by the intercessions of the All-holy Most Blessed and Ever-Virgin Mary, our Lady Theotokos, and of your patron Saint Aristovoulos the Apostle, one of the Seventy Apostles, as well as of today's commemorated Saint Fevronia the Great Martyr. Amen.

"Receive this Staff to shepherd the flock of Christ entrusted to you. To the obedient let it be a help and a support. With it, lead the disobedient and the wayward to admonishment and instruction."

After the Holy Communion and His Beatitude's blessing there was a reception at the Reception Hall of the Church and later on lunch at the Guest House of the Monastery of Madaba, offered by the Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba and the Community Council of the town. During the meal His Beatitude addressed the Archbishop of Madaba as follows;

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28) St. Paul commands.

Most Reverend Holy Brothers in Christ Archbishops,

Reverend Clergy and Care takers of the Church,

Honourable guests,

Our Holy Greek-Orthodox Church of Jerusalem rejoices and is glad on the undertaking of duty of the new Shepherd in the historical town of Madaba, its Archbishop Aristovoulos.

As the Shepherd of the Mother of all Churches, Jerusalem, and successor of St. James the Apostle and Brother of God, We hearken to the words of St. Paul: "Take heed therefore unto

yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28); so we have come to the decision, along with the members of the Holy and Sacred Synod to the reconstitution of the Archdiocese of Madaba.

Today, your town of Madaba with its outskirts is distinguished for the rapid development in the political and social fields, in business, tourism and especially in education. This is witnessed by the establishment and operation of many Universities, Academic Centres and Schools.

Needless to say that the contribution of the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate and of its reverend community at the Academic field of education has been sealed by the indeed meritorious initiative and actions of the Hagiotaphite Brother of Ours, Reverend Archimandrite Innokentios, to whom We are grateful.

The pastoral care of the members of Our Church and especially in the Archdiocese of Madaba and its spiritual jurisdiction refers to the evangelic words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26) as well as to the words: "That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (Luke 4:4).

This Gospel message, my dear Brothers, is a message of love, peace, reconciliation and harmonious co-existence with all our fellow men and fellow citizens, without any cultural discrimination and especially without any religious discrimination. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). And in another place: "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16).

All the citizens and all the religious communities in the

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan enjoy this practical divine love and peaceful co-existence. Therefore we consider it again our duty to express our heartfelt thanks to the Reverend King of the Hashemite Kingdom of our dearest Jordan, and wish Him every sovereign strength from God, health and longevity in this blessed country.

And to the undertaker of his pastoral and Episcopal duties Most Reverend Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, we wish that the grace of the Holy Spirit may make him worthy of his mission in the spiritual vineyard of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, through the intercessions of the Most Blessed Theotokos Mary and of the Holy Great Martyr and Trophy Bearer George. Amen.

From Secretariat-General