

THE UNDERTAKING OF DUTY OF THE PATRIARCHAL REPRESENTATIVE IN NORTH JORDAN

On Saturday July 15/28, 2018, according to the Synodical Decision, the appointed Archimandrite Raphael undertook his official duty as the Patriarchal Representative of North Jordan, in the town of Irbet.

This was serviced during the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of St. George in Irbet. The Service was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants the Most Reverend Metropolitan Benedict of Philadelphia, and the Most Reverend Archbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina and Secretary-General, Christophoros of Kyriakoupolis, Aristovoulos of Madaba, Philoumenos of Pella, and the established Archimandrite Raphael as the Patriarchal Representative in North Jordan, the Ministering Priests of Irbet, Priest Abdullah and Priest Jordan, Deacon Eulogios, and the Deacon of Madaba Shrine Fr. George. The parish choir delivered the hymns in Arabic and Greek and many faithful attended the service, participating in the prayer for their new Pastor.

His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon to this congregation;

“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 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 Peter 5:1-3), St. Paul commands the Priests.

Reverend Archimandrite Raphael,

By Our Patriarchal proposal Our Holy and Sacred Synod has appointed you Patriarchal Representative, at the North Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at the town of Irbet, having considering your long-term fruitful ministry at the holy shrine of the God-receiving Cave in Bethllehem, along with your zealous pastoral activity,

You are called to undertake this new pastoral ministry at the vineyard of our Holy Church of Jerusalem the Mother of all Churches, hearkening to the words of the chief of the Apostles Peter who says: "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (1 Peter 3:13).

And we say this because "the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few" (Matt. 9:37), and "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word [of the Lord's Gospel]; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22), as it is being revealed by the signs of the time.

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem, having as its first Hierarch the Holy Apostle James the Brother of God, who was ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ, and received the lot of this spiritual jurisdiction at the Promised Land on either side of the River Jordan, has never ceased to evangelize the kenotic love of Christ on the cross, hearkening again to St. Peter words who says: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that

judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:21-24).

Irrefutable witnesses of the Evangelism of Christ's love are the Greek-Orthodox monuments which have been preserved throughout the ages in the inward parts of the blessed land of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the living Christian Greek-Orthodox Communities which enjoy the respect of their religious identity and the total freedom of exercising their church services. This truth is witnessed in this town (Irbet) and its outskirts by its inhabitants, the Christians who live in harmony with their fellow citizens who follow other religions.

The venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood which has been established by God's providence as the guardian and minister of the Holy Shrines and our Christian Congregation, continues its mission following St. Paul's commandment to his disciple Timothy: "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5).

Therefore, you, Father Raphael, genuine child of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, bring to a good end the ministry that has been given to you in the Church. Multiply the gift you have received by the Holy Spirit to be a steward at the house of God, continuing the God-pleasing work of your predecessor Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella "being an example to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3).

And honour your elders "as the congress of God and league of the Apostles" (St. Ignatios). "For Priesthood is ranked at the top of every good thing among men; and the one that is enraged towards it does not dishonor any man, but God and Jesus Christ, the first-born and the only High Priest by nature. Do therefore every single thing in good order in Christ. Let the

laity be subject to the deacons; the deacons to the priests; the priests to the Bishop; the Bishop to Christ, as He was subject to the Father” St. Ingatios orders (BEP, vol. 2, p. 315).

It is precisely this good order in Christ what is being suggested by the care of the Spiritual Shepherd and especially of the leading Priests, to whom St. Paul says; “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:9-10).

Indeed, in this did all the saints and the martyrs of Christ’s love bear witness, just like today’s commemorated Saint Ioulita with her son Kyrikos, who became “bright stars at the fixation of the sky, brightening the whole world by their wonders” according to the hymn writer.

Let us entreat them, so that along with the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary they may intercede to our Lord and God to grant us, Father Raphael, a leading and pastoral Spirit, mercy and peace to our souls, and to our Reverend King Abdullah II and His family and the Hashemite Kingdom of our beloved Jordan, strength, health, and longevity. We also pray for every good thing for the people of this country and for the preservation of the holy places and the Holy City of Jerusalem which are under the custody of His Majesty.

And now, reverend Archimandrite Father Raphael, receive the Precious Cross of the Lord, the weapon against the devil, so that by It, you may guide the footsteps of your flock to the working of the Lord’s commandments. Amen.”

The Patriarchal Representative replied to His Beatitude’s words as follows;

Your Beatitude Father and Master,

On behalf of the holy clergy and the people, we welcome You today in Irbet, the seat of the Patriarchal Region of North Jordan, with feelings of deep honour, due respect and spiritual joy, and we say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord", along with the words of Prophet Isaiah: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (in Romans 10:15).

Your presence is a great blessing to us, because You come from the Holy City of Jerusalem bringing us the grace and the blessing of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb and of all the Holy Shrines of the Holy Land. Your blessed presence strengthens and supports us and also denotes the unity of our local Church.

Your Beatitude, in confession may I say, that obeying Your command and the decision of the Holy Synod, I came to this blessed place, repeating Christ's words, "I have come to minister". I have come to minister the mystery of the salvation of the flock and offer God's blessing freely. I came to share with these people their joys and sorrows. Since my first day in this blessed place I felt at home. I found open doors and hearts. I found blessed Priests who work for the good of the Church and the congregation silently, and who welcomed me with much love. I found noble people who respect and honour the clergy. But especially I found children, young men and women who love Christ and His Church. Your Beatitude, I came to minister this holy clergy and people of God, and I will stand by their side praying that God may grant them health and every good thing.

This sacred hour, before You, I call all of them to cooperate with me for the glory of God and His holy Church. I call upon the Priests the members of the Ecclesiastical councils, our choir singers, the laity who work for the Church, men and women, those in charge of the Young and the Church Schools, the Scouts and all who work for the Church and I ask them to

continue their work with the same zeal as before.

All together in the body of the Church should participate actively and use the gifts they have received from God. Today there is a new beginning at the ministry of our Region and they are a part of that. I will not be able to do a single thing by myself. We should do the best we can together. That is why I want them to be with me, the Clergy and the laity who work for the Church, I ask for their prayers, help and cooperation.

I strongly feel the need to thank from the depths of my heart all here present at the Church of St. George. I thank all the holy Bishops who came to participate at the beginning of my new ministry and ask for their prayers for me the unworthy. I also thank all the Priests, the choirs, the young people, the scouts and all of you, and I ask you to pray for my unworthiness.

I also would like to thank all the security forces, who have joined us since early in the morning. And we glorify God for the blessing of this security in our blessed country, which is owed to the wise Hashemite leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah bin Al-Hussein II.

Your Beatitude,

Especially I thank You from the depths of my heart, for Your trust in me, Your Fatherly advice and love, and I would like to ask You to pray that I may perform my duties in fear of God.

I ask Your Patriarchal blessing and as You son, I pray that the Trinitarian God may grant You many years to come, steadfast health, strong faith and a mind set in both the Cross and the Resurrection, so that guided by the Holy Spirit You may lead the Christian Congregation of the venerable Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem in continuous spiritual fruition and radiate the Light of the Cross and the

Resurrection in our time.”

Consequently there was a reception at the reception hall.

This was followed by a meal at a town restaurant offered by the Patriarchate. During the meal, His Beatitude addressed the guests as follows;

“Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Romans 12:9-10) “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:17-18), St. Paul orders.

Dear and Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We thank the Holy and Most Merciful God, Who has deigned us worthy to celebrate the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of St. George on this blessed occasion of the undertaking of duty of Reverend Archimandrite Raphael, our Patriarchal Representative at the town of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Irbet and its outskirts.

We are especially glad because the pastoral care of the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem in its spiritual jurisdiction on either side of the River Jordan is being continued without any hurdle. This is owed to the free exercising of the religious and worshipping events that all the religious and thus the Christian Communities in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan enjoy.

The mission of the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate, namely the Jerusalem Church, is based on the Lord’s commandments: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all

thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22:37-39).

The one who loves God "with all his heart" cannot help but love his neighbour also, as St. Paul preaches: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18).

The All-holy Shrines which have been ministered throughout the centuries in self-denial and self-sacrifice by the monastic order of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, evangelize and preach peace among men.

The contribution of the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate and its Hagiotaphite Brotherhood to both the preservation of the Holy Land as a place of worship and prayer, and the peaceful co-existence between Christians and Muslims, and of the Abrahamic religions in general, is recognized by all and especially by our reverend King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Abdullah bin All-Hussein II, since the Christian and Islamic shrines in Jerusalem are under His custody.

We, hearkening to the words of wise Paul: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Romans 14:19) have come to the appointment by our Holy Synod of the Patriarchal Representatives in Amman, Madaba, Irbet and elsewhere, in order to provide for the spiritual and social needs of our Christian congregation and to also reinforce the difficult but God-pleasing pastoring work of our beloved reverend Priests.

For all these, we think we should express our heartfelt thanks to all of you, who have honoured with your presence our reception, and especially the local civil authorities, the military and police forces and much more the reverend and most dear to Us King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Abdullah bin Al-Hussein II, whose leadership is a guarantee of

stability and peaceful co-existence of the different cultural and religious communities living in this country and in the Middle East. Long live the King!

Finally, We should not fail to praise the pastoral and social work of the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella during his ministry as our Patriarchal Representative in Irbet. To both Archimandrite Raphael and the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella, we wish success in their new ministry and mission. Amen”.

From Secretariat-General