

# The “Hajides”

The Holy Lands always constituted a centre of attraction for thousands of Christians who arrived and even today arrive from all parts of the planet to experience the real communion with the absolute sanctity of these places. The journey, the life's experience and the happenings are unrepeatable. It is not by chance, the fact that anybody who has carried out this tour of the Holy Lands loudly declares it and wishes to be called “hajide”. It is an Arabic word that signifies a Muslim pilgrim to Mecca and Medina. However during the period of the Turkish occupation, for the Greek Orthodox it meant a pilgrim of the Holy Places and was an honourable title. The hajides would many times fall victims to opportunists and small time crooks. For this reason the Patriarchate made an extra effort towards the organization of pilgrimage tours and the security of the guides as well as of the driver Emin Haji, while the pilgrims were provided hospitality at the metohia. The pilgrimage tours require spiritual and bodily cleansing with prayers and fasting. The pilgrimage at the holy places demands absolute devout concentration as the radiance floods the soul of the Christian with holiness and divine grace.