

The Holy Monastery of the Holy Archangels in Joppa

Since the antiquities the Monastery of the Holy Archangels is at the Mediterranean seafront, built at the foot of Andromeda hillock. Due to its location at the main port of Palestine in the city of Joppa, the monastery offered hospitality to all pious pilgrims mounting in thousands annually from all Orthodox countries, Greece, Cyprus, Serbia, Bulgaria, Rumania, and mostly from Russia. In order to accommodate the everlasting multitude of pilgrims, the Patriarch of Jerusalem Cyril ii refurbished and redecorated the monastery in 1852.

It was compulsory for all newly arriving pilgrims to present themselves to the Hegoumen of the monastery who was considered the first ranking Hegoumen of the Jerusalem Patriarchate due to the large congregation of Joppa, but also due to the great mission of being the first to receive the worldwide noble pilgrims who piously and faithfully wished to worship the God-trodden land of our Lord Jesus Christ. After reposing at the monastery from their tiring journey, they would form groups accompanied by Kavasides to start their six month pilgrimage on foot. Having completed their purpose, they would return to the monastery before disembarking on the first available ship at the Joppa port to depart for their countries, sanctified by the Orthodox Shrines in Palestine, such as the Holy Sepulchre, the horrendous Golgotha and the Nativity Cave.

Apart from the hospitality offered to worldwide Orthodox Christians, the Monastery served simultaneously another purpose. It was the spiritual centre of the bountiful Orthodox community of the time, numbering 35.000 Orthodox Christians. However, partial inactivity followed with the foundation of Israel (1948). The vast majority of that Orthodox congregation was forced to migrate due to the surrounding war zones, while the Joppa port became inoperative and ceased trading after a

three- thousand year activity. This was the result of the operation of the new and more fundamental port of Haifa and the international airport of Tel Aviv. Moreover, the splendid Monastery of the Archangels caught fire unexpectedly and was completely destroyed a few days prior to Christmas in 1961. After that significant event, the monastery was gradually deserted, with the construction site almost completely ruined. The only person that remained onsite was the Hegoumen, who was the appointed priest of the Orthodox parish church of Saint George in Joppa. The monastery remained at that state until 1994, when the present Hegoumen Archimandrite Damascenos started its restoration. The Hegoumen is a faithful keeper of the tradition of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood who recurrently restore the Holy Shrines on their own expense and hard toil. By God's providence, Father Damascenos inherited from his step mother, Mrs Matina Dariva from Athens, the amount of \$500.000 which was needed to rebuild the monastery of the Archangels within a six month period. Of course the refurbishment did not involve only the church building, but also the rest of the monastery areas (cells, synodikon, archondariki, court room of the Orthodox community, embellishment etc).

The tomb of Tabitha in Joppa

Joppa is not connected to the life and work of Christ but to Apostle Peter, who resurrected Tabitha and saw the heavenly vision of the clean and unclean animals, which ordered him to accept the idolaters in the Christian community. Today in Joppa (Yaffo in Hebrew), pilgrims can visit the Russian monastery of Saint Peter and the tomb of Tabitha who is named Dorkas in Greek.