

The Patriarchal Museum

The treasures of the Holy Shrines in the Holy Land and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem had often been endangered and at times they were either completely or partially destroyed during the critical periods in Palestine, Jerusalem, monasteries, churches, Lavrae and Hermitages. At present in the Museum of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem the visitors can see sarcophaguses, inscribed gravestones, lamps, blessings made of clay, embossed and plain sculptures, coins, reliquaries, miniaturized manuscripts, icons, triptychs, enamels, crosses for blessing, gospel covers, chalices, miters, vestments, epitaphs, silver trays, buckles and other gold, silver, clay, copper, glass and iron items.

Only few of the preserved icons belong to the Byzantine period. Most of them belong to the post-Byzantine period and a big number to the last two centuries. Noteworthy is the saving of the icon of Christ's Baptism which belongs to the Byzantine period of the 14th century. Several remarkable icons ornament the Church of the Resurrection, the Church of the Dormition in Gethsemane, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, the Monastery of Saint Lazarus in Bethany, the Monastery of the Transfiguration in Mount Tabor, the Monastery of the Sacred Cross, Saint Savvas' Monastery and the Monastery of Saint George Choziba. Apart from the icons, many holy artefacts are kept in the Patriarchate, in the Church of the Resurrection, in monasteries and shrines. The rich heritage of the first Christian Church is collections of holy relics from the desert fathers which are venerated in precious reliquaries, remarkable gold-filled, wood-carved, or enamelled crosses, of unique value brocaded with gold or silver holy vestments, gold, silver or copper church vessels and most especially, the Sacred Cross, the biggest preserved fragment of the Sacred Wood.

An outstanding treasure of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the almost 1750 Greek manuscripts of the Byzantine and post-Byzantine period, which are the core of the library Patriarch Nicodemus founded, with all remaining preserved literature from the recurrent arsons and lootings.