

The Patriarchal School of Sion

Since the first centuries of Christianity and through immense adversities, the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood has had the blessing and honour to keep the Orthodox witness of the Christian faith in the Holy Land, directly related to the world-saving event of the Presence of our Lord. In this much afflicted area there has been an unceasing battle to sustain and fortify the stronghold of our faith with constant vigilance, courage and combativeness. The educational institutions of our Patriarchate have played the leading role in this fight.

The Hagiotaphite Brotherhood has kept various schools for the education of worthy for its high mission clergy since the beginning of its institution. The Church of Jerusalem had the remarkable Theology School of the Cross in mid 19th and beginning of 20th centuries, which highlighted a multitude of exceptional theologians, among whom were even Lecturers of the University of Athens. Noteworthy is the fact that his Beatitude the present Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos iii was a student in the Patriarchal School of the Holy Sepulchre. He was admitted in July 1964 and graduated in June 1970.

At present the Brotherhood features the Patriarchal School which is High school and Lyceum equal to the Greek public schools of secondary education, authorised by the government since 1911. The Patriarchal School follows the full program of the Ministry of Education, enriched though with subjects which fulfil its special role. The teaching Staff is comprised of seconded teachers from Greece and educated clergy of the Patriarchate. The School which is also a Boarding School is hosted in a Patriarchate building on the hill of Holy Zion, nearby the Yperoon (Upper Room) where the Last Supper took place and the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostles on Pentecost

day. The Patriarchate accommodates fully all material and spiritual needs of the students during their education at the School.

The students follow their teaching program in the mornings, study in the afternoons, and participate in the majestic ceremonies of the Church of Jerusalem. The School is the seminary ground which qualifies the future Hagiotaphite Fathers. Its goal is to coach young men to become capable of bearing the high mission of the national and spiritual Hagiotaphite heritage.

The School graduates decide on their free will to join the Brotherhood and the Patriarchate sponsors their higher education in Greek or foreign Universities. If they decide to leave, they have the right to take the university exams, or if they have completed at least four years of training in the School they can take the favourable expatriates' exams.

The School welcomes whoever student keeps the Christian beliefs and who would like to begin or continue his studies in the Holy City of Jerusalem, from Greece, Cyprus or expatriates. All these prove an undeniable fact; the obvious help of our Patriarchate in education, because Christianity lives and discovers ways to highlight chosen people, capable of bearing worthily our spiritual and moral life. We therefore live this complex reality, which enables us to lead the spiritual life without refuting ourselves. The spiritual reaping of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem is resplendent and unique in the world history. It fortifies with its presence and active participation the educational process, and sustains the organic combination of knowledge with faith. It provides the rich experience on matters and conditions of which it has had a genuine knowledge through the recurrent problems and obstacles.

It is a moral duty for all of us to support by all means the pious mission of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem,

which strongly feels that Church education contributes to the moral and spiritual growth of the person, making him free and capable of facing the contemporary challenges. Likewise, the education cultivates humanity, love, honesty, respect towards other men, achieves the transformation of consciousness, places man on the right path before God. It is an eternal good, superior to wealth, glory or beauty, noble birth and physical strength. It endlessly accompanies the person in all his spiritual and moral life, leading him to immortal deeds.

From the very beginning, being a spiritual community, our Orthodox Church took up the education of young people and significantly contributed to the shaping of their personalities. The Three Hierarchs Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom were the most important Christian educators, bequeathing us great spiritual gifts. These gifts have strengthened us in our fight, gave us vision and prospect and protected us from multiple adversities, providing us with prototypes and high expectations. Let us therefore imitate their deeds and their justified God-pleasing course.