

# Great religious feasts

The Holy Land is the centre of Christianity and a pole of attraction for all Orthodox Christians, as this is where the incarnation of the Divine Logos and our Saviour took place. The first Church was born in the upper part of the Holy Sion. To these locations a crowd of faithful gathers in a spirit of piety to venerate and have their souls cleansed. Upon the establishment in the Holy Lands of magnificent churches and of the Church of the Resurrection, the area becomes the Patriarchate's religious centre of worship, liturgical life being an integral part of it. The Holy Sepulchre serves as the centre of the ceremonies, headed by the Bishop of Jerusalem, in accordance with the Jerusalemite *typikon*, namely the book of directives establishing the order of divine services. The present-day rites of the Church of Jerusalem do not differ in type from those of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. The great ceremonies of the Church of Sion are observed throughout the year in the Holy Sites of Veneration in commemoration of the most significant events of the Lord's life on earth. Also, the Church of the Resurrection is where Hagiotaphite Monks hold today all ceremonies performed in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. by the "Order of the Great". Aside from the Church of the Resurrection, the ceremonial centers include: the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem, the Church of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives, the Gallery on the Hill of Sion, Gethsemane, and the Tomb of the Most Holy Theotokos.

Today, the greatest rites performed by the Church of Jerusalem are: a) Christmas in Bethlehem b) Palm Sunday c) Maundy Thursday d) the Epitaph service in the Holy Church of the Resurrection e) the Holy Light f) the Resurrection and Vespers of Divine Pascha and g) the Burial of the Most Holy Theotokos in Gethsemane.