

# The Holy Deposition from the cross

The first shrine the pilgrims encounter upon entering the Church of the Resurrection is the Holy Deposition which is across the entrance of the Church. Its present form is of later construction as a result of the restoration work of 1810. This holy shrine is composed of a natural rock identified to be the same holy stone of the funerary anointment. According to tradition, a part of the original rock was transferred to Ephesos and from there to Constantinople. The emperor Manuel I Komnenos, placed it in the holy palace and later at the Monastery of Pantocrator near its monument of the tomb. Today the holy shrine is covered with reddish marble which is not only for decoration but also to protect it from the habit of pilgrims chipping off small pieces, to use them as talisman and souvenirs. This holy marble has a trapezoidal shape and measures 5,75m long and protrudes 30cm from the ground. The earlier one was destroyed during the fire of 1810 when a small pillar fell on it and shattered it.

The holy Deposition relates to the story in the gospel, according to which Joseph and Nicodemus with Pontius Pilate's permission brought down Christ's body from the cross. They then anointed it with fragrances and laid it in a new tomb. (Matt 28:57-61, Mark 15:2-47, Luke 23:50-55 and John 19:38-42). This relationship is further brought to attention by an inscription around the four sides of the monument, which states: "THE HONOURABLE JOSEPH HAVING TAKEN DOWN YOUR HOLY BODY FROM THE CROSS, AND HAVING WRAPPED IT IN CLEAN LINEN CLOTH, ANOINTED IT WITH FRAGRANT MYRRH AND LAID IT IN A NEW TOMB".

At its northern side, on the wall corresponding to the southern side of Catholicon, there used to be icons of the

Deposition. In 1993 however, under the auspices of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate this side was renovated with mosaic depictions of the Deposition, Funerary anointment and the burial of Christ. The specific gospel quotation narrating the Deposition is noted on a marble plaque on the eastern wall.

All three communities, namely the Orthodox, Catholics, and Armenians have rights to this shrine. The six candelabra, in two groups of three, are further down the marble of the Deposition, two belonging to each of the three communities, while in the past, at the same place, there were an additional six larger ones, which were likewise distributed, namely two small and two large ones to each community. Finally of the eight suspended oil lamps hanging above the holy shrine, four belong to the Orthodox, two to the Armenians, one to the Latin and one to the Copts.