

The Name Day of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III



On Saturday of the Cheese fare week of the Triodion, March 3/16, 2024, the Patriarchate celebrated by transference for pastoral reasons the Name Day of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, on the commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs, one of whom is Saint Theophilos (celebrated on 9th March).

This feast was celebrated according to the Typikon of the Church of Jerusalem and the Status Quo, with Great Vespers on Friday afternoon at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with the welcoming reception of His Beatitude and the veneration of the Holy Sepulchre. This was followed by the incense offering around the shrines, the Great Entrance and the blessing of bread. The service was presided over by His Beatitude, with the participation of the Holy Sepulchre High Priests, Hieromonks and Hierodeacons.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated likewise in the Catholicon on Saturday morning, presided over by His Beatitude, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitans Isychios of Kapitolias and Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Archbishops, Damascene of Yaffo, Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia, Dimitrios of Lydda, Isidoros of Hierapolis, Nectarios of Anthedona, Philoumenos of Pella,

Metropolitan Joachim of Helenopolis, and Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, the Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, Fr Vassianos from the Church of Moscow, Fr Ioannis from the Church of Romania, Priests from all places of the Patriarchate's jurisdiction, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacons Eulogios and Dositheos, at the honorary presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos, the Ambassador of Russia to Israel Mr Anatoly Victorov, and the participation of faithful Christians from Jerusalem and other cities.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by Doxology and the reading of the prayer for the boiled wheat in honour of the Forty Martyrs.

After the return to the Patriarchate Hall, the Elder Chief Secretary Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina addressed His Beatitude as follows:

"Your Beatitude Father and Master,

By the Grace of God, we have already completed the third pre-fasting Week of the Triodion, tomorrow is the Cheese Fare Sunday, and after this we enter the First Week of the Great Lent, to enter "the stage of virtues, which is being opened", as brave athletes. We are fortified today by the example of the geniality and determination of the Holy Forty Martyrs, who confessed Christ, against the persecutor King Licinius in 320; the martyrs who were exposed to the frost of the lake of Sebastia of Pontus overnight, and had their legs torn apart in the morning; they fought well and were crowned.

Today, the entire Church throughout the world honours these all-lauded holy martyrs, for their example to the members of the sacrificial living faith in Christ, while the Mother of the Churches of Jerusalem held a solemn Divine Liturgy and a Doxology in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, especially honouring their co-martyr, Saint Theophilos, in whose name Your Beatitude is honoured.

In honour of these martyrs and of Your Beatitude, we gathered all the members of our Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, High Priests, Hieromonks, Deacons, and Monks, as well as the pious clergy and the Christ-named congregation from the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate in Israel, Jordan and Palestine and in the Holy Eucharist, we prayed for Your health, stability, and strength in the Pastoral Patriarchal work entrusted to You by God.

In our prayers in the Church, here in this historic Hall of the Patriarchate, we add our prayers and thanksgiving for what Your Beatitude has accomplished and continues to accomplish for the good and benefit of our Holy Common.

Let us say at first, that Your Beatitude successfully brought together again under Your leadership in the Patriarchate, the Leaders of the other Christian Churches of the Holy Land and took the initiative to jointly find a way of modest celebration of the Christmas and New Year Feasts while maintaining the Status Quo and taking into account the difficulties that the Christian Community and the entire people of Gaza are going through as a result of the raging war. In their joint statements, the Christian Churches called for an end to all hostilities and asked for permission to send humanitarian aid for food, sustenance, and survival of those affected by the war, the wounded, the starving, and the homeless. This was particularly underlined by Your Beatitude during the customary visit on the 1st of the New Civil Year to the President of the State of Israel, recalling the continued provision of asylum to the members of our Community in Gaza in the Monastery of Saint Porphyrios. The fruit of this cooperation with the other Churches, at the initiative and leadership of Your Beatitude, was the lifting of the impasse of the interruption by the Armenians of the exchange of holiday visits with us, and the support of the Churches to the Armenians' problem of the opaque multi-year lease agreements for strategically important land within the boundaries of their Patriarchate. The Patriarchate also extended a hand of closer cooperation to the WCC, of which it was a founding member, when its General Secretary Mr Jerry Pillay came and met on the 17th of February in this same hall with all the leaders of the Christian Churches and by Your Beatitude's address, he visited the President of the State of Israel. Hence, a new chapter was opened in their relations for the support of the Christians of the Holy Land and the assumption of a mediating role of the WCC in the prevailing and unhelpfully intensified Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To the representatives of the European Union and other countries who frequently visited You, Your Beatitude recommended and conveyed a spirit of dialogue and reconciliation as a solution to the political problem, whereas, many times, to the Orthodox church leaders You stressed the need to restart the dialogue for the return of the Orthodox Church to the normal way of its existence and life, that is, Solidarity.

Regarding the Pastoral care of the Patriarchate for its flock, let us remember that despite the financial need created by the war. However, falling short at times, financial assistance came to the needs of the flock of its communities for the completion of renovation works of Churches and adjacent halls of meetings. For the Community of Zdeide in northern Israel, the purchase of a piece of land that increased and protected the property of the Church. Nevertheless, more important than the flock-building projects was the solution of reconciliation provided by Your Beatitude to the prevailing chronic division of the Kufr Smea Community of northern Israel. This was sealed by a solemn Patriarchal Divine Liturgy on the 10th

of the past month of February at the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, which was built in many toils and troubles, where many Orthodox prayed and representatives of other religions also attended. Let us also mention that despite the difficulties of transportation, as from the war, Your Beatitude reached all the desert Monasteries of the Patriarchate, and presided over their feasts.

At the same time, there was the interest of Your Beatitude in the uninterrupted continuation of the conservation of the books of the historical Library of the Holy Cross Monastery and its building premises by the expert conservator of icons and manuscripts from Cyprus Mr Stavros Andreou to house the Research of the Theological Studies Centre in collaboration with the Theological Schools of the Universities of Athens and Thessaloniki. For the promotion of these conservation projects as well as the conservation of the woodcarvings of the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, many efforts were made to find the required resources, thanks to well-disposed donors such as Mr Athanasios Martinos and Mrs Maria Georgallidou.

The things that have been said, Your Beatitude, happen to be only a few words taken from the rich pastoral care of the Patriarchate, mentioned not in a mood of boasting, since we follow the Apostle of the nations saying, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14), but with a disposition to strengthen hope, so that in hope we the Holy Sepulchre Fathers, may continue, inspired by Your example, meeting in brotherly love with each other, obeying You and moving from better to the best, fulfilling and perfecting our sacred mission of Christian Rum Orthodox testimony in the Holy Land.

Raising the glass, Your Beatitude, on behalf of the Holy and Sacred Synod and the Brotherhood, I pray for unfailing health for many years to come and governmental power from on high, so that You may lead the Patriarchate from progress to progress and from glory to glory to the praise of our blessed nation and glory to our Triune God. So be it."

The Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Dimitrios Angelopoulos delivered the following address:

"Your Beatitude,

I have the honour and pleasure to submit to you the warmest wishes of the Hellenic Republic and me personally and my associates on Your venerable Name Day. As we

celebrate Your Name Day, we reflect with feelings of profound respect on Your work and Your struggle, during Your long journey in the Holy Land and at the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

You devoted Yourself from a young age to the Church and to a high and arduous mission, to which you have diligently dedicated Yourself with self-denial, serving for decades the work of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, to conclude to the holy Jerusalem Patriarchal Throne. Your conscientious efforts to preserve the tradition, heritage and rights of the Patriarchate, to strengthen its prestige and radiance and to protect and restore the holy places of the Holy Land, rightly enjoy international recognition and respect.

In the same way, your high pastoral work is recognized with admiration, for the benefit of the spiritual guidance of a flock that over time faces extremely increased trials and challenges.

We celebrate today under difficult and depressing circumstances, while the war conflict that erupted last October is already in its sixth month, with no visible prospect of an end, the crisis is still threatened to spill over to other fronts and a worsening humanitarian crisis is plaguing the Gaza Strip. Your flock there honours this day under dire circumstances, which threaten the existence of the entire Christian community in Gaza. Our thoughts turn in particular to the Monastery of Saint Porphyrios, in which numerous of our fellow human beings have found precious refuge. I assure you, Your Beatitude, that we will continue to act to protect and assist them.

At this dark time, we express our appreciation and gratitude for Your unceasing efforts in favour of settlement, moderation, peace and alleviation of suffering from the wounds of war. In the Holy City of Jerusalem, Your work to promote unity among the Christian Churches, but also in favour of the peaceful coexistence of the three monotheistic religions, is a guide against intolerance and religious rivalry.

Greece will continue to surround Your Beatitude, the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood and the Patriarchate with its sincere respect and support for Your work.

Please also accept my personal thanks for the always warm and cordial welcome and for our cooperation, for the common benefit of the Holy Institution and the Hellenic Republic, for which the preservation of the rights of the Patriarchate and the Christian presence and heritage in the Holy Land is historically an important priority of all Hellenism.

Together with my colleagues at the Consulate General of Greece in Jerusalem, I

wish You, Your Beatitude, health, longevity, success in Your mission, and many blessed returns."

Consequently, addresses to His Beatitude were delivered by the Ambassador of Russia to Israel, Mr Anatoly Victorov, His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth on behalf of the community of Nazareth, His Eminence Metropolitan Benedictos of Diocaecarea on behalf of the community of Bethlehem, His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Yaffo, on behalf of the community of Yaffo, the representative of the Moscow Patriarchate, Archimandrite Vassianos, the representative of the Patriarchate of Romania, Archimandrite Theophilos, His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba with the Russian-speaking members of Beer Sheba community and of Haifa, Archimandrite Ignatios on behalf of the Beit Jala and Beit Sahour communities, Mr Yusef Nasser on behalf of the Kufr-Smea community, Priest Stavros Aranki on behalf of the Bir Zeit community, Mrs Panagiota Kafetzi on behalf of Saint Dimitrios School, Priest Farah Bandour on behalf of Saint James Cathedral.

To these all His Beatitude delivered the following address:

"Truly blessed is he who martyred, so that he may be a martyr to the occasion and conclude to be worthy of the same rewards as theirs, without persecution, without fire, without whips, without being scourged" Basil the Great says.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece Mr Dimitrios Angelopoulos,

Dear Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The sacred memory of the Holy Forty Martyrs and their co-martyr Theophilos, who martyred in the city of Sebastia, has dawned like a light in the Holy Land, which is being tested under the darkness of war, where our Lord Jesus Christ God "being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2,8).

Imitating Christ's humility and obedience unto death, the admirable Forty Martyrs also became "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1,10). Because they are recognized as true witnesses of the mystery of reverence, as Saint Paul preaches saying: "All that will live godly in

Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). "For there is not a man of virtue, that is, of piety, leading the path of virtue, that is of reverence, without experiencing sorrow, pain, temptations", Saint Chrysostom says. "Though condemned to pass the night in the freezing cold in the open air because of the persecutor's insensate fury, the athletes sang a hymn of thanksgiving unto God" the hymnographer exclaims (Matins, Ode 5, Troparion 1).

Because truly the holy Forty Martyrs had exercised their devotion to Christ and brought forth their love for God, "a hymn of thanksgiving to God without ceasing" and thus denounced the fury of their tyrant, listening to the Lord's word: "Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh" (Lk 6:21).

Basil the Great, praising the saints, the Forty Martyrs, says: "We do not admire one, not two alone, not up to ten the number of those who are blessed, but forty men, as having one soul in divided bodies, in one mind and unity of the faith as they showed both the inclination towards suffering and resistance for the sake of truth".

According to Basil the Great, the martyrdom of the Forty Saints is divided into two parts, on the one hand "in the unity of faith", and on the other "in the resistance for the sake of truth". Both faith and truth refer to the Son and Word of God the Father, our Saviour Jesus Christ, saying: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). And in another verse, he says: "I am the way and the truth" (Jn. 14,6), "I was born into this and came into the world to testify to the truth." Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice" (Jn. 18,37).

This means that faith and truth in Christ constitute the foundation of the Church of Christ, and death through martyrdom is the confirmation of Christ's resurrection. In other words, the holy Forty Martyrs sealed the truth in Christ with their blood, i.e. the resurrection of Christ, conforming to the preaching of the wise Paul saying: "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13,14). And "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection... Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him" (Rom. 6, 5, 8-9).

The holy Church of Christ especially honours the memory of the holy Forty Martyrs, because as Basil the Great says, these "freely of the voice, boldly and courageously, not being suspicious of the men, not overwhelmed by the threats, they declared themselves Christians". This confession also introduced the holy Martyrs to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem and to a myriad of

angels, who celebrate and spread joy (cf. Heb. 12,22-23).

This glorious day of the feast of the holy Forty Martyrs and especially of their co-martyr Theophilos, whose name Our Mediocrity bears, is, according to the expression of Athanasios the Great, “a type of the joy above”, namely of the heavenly joy of the Angels. And this is because those who loved Christ and were born of His (Christ’s) martyred blood “passed from death to life” (cf. 1 Jn. 3:14), and the life is Christ according to His own testimony: “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25).

The recognized father of the Church, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, proceeds to praise the holy Forty Martyrs, “so that [we] may be convinced that the Martyrs live and are satellites and guardians of God, who today serve and adorn the Church”. According to Saint Asterion of Amaseia, “the holy Martyrs, men immortal by a good death, living forever for they despised life, have changed the kingdom of the blood and transformed the harmful flesh beneficial to the soul”.

Our holy Church in joy and gleefulness honours the martyrdom’s birthday of the holy Forty Martyrs as well as of their co-martyr Theophilos and held in it the place of the Crucifixion, the three-day burial and the Resurrection of our Saviour Christ, the divine eucharist and bloodless sacrifice, presided over by Our Mediocrity and surrounded by the choir of the honourable members of our Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, High Priests, Priests, Hierodeacons, with the participation in prayer of pious Christians from our tested pious flock.

Moreover, we rendered thanksgiving praise to the Holy Triune God on the occasion of the Name Day of our Mediocrity in the name of the holy Martyr Theophilos, and we blessed Christ the Saviour; “This, the Son of God we worship, while the martyrs, as disciples and imitators of the Lord we love, since they have worthily found insurmountable favour of the king and teacher Himself” the holy martyr Polycarp of Smyrna says.

We should point out that today’s feast of Saint Theophilos, the co-martyr of the Forty Saints, does not only refer to Our Mediocrity but mainly to the Apostolic Throne of James the Brother of God and the God-given institution of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church, which is the body of Christ.

Therefore, we call upon all our brethren in Christ, the Heads of the Orthodox Churches in all places, so that we may work together for the restoration of the community of the Churches according to Saint Paul’s advice: “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3), but also according to

the voice of the great Athanasios “I beg you for Christ’s sake, do not allow the members of Christ to be divided, do not believe in prejudices, but prefer the peace of the Lord”.

This is exactly what we, my beloved brothers, have been called to, “to the ministry of salvation, indeed of peace, given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18). Let us seek and pursue this peace and settlement of the Lord, especially during the blessed stage of the fast of the Holy and Great Lent, so that by the intercessions of the blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary together with the prayers of the Holy Forty Martyrs and their co-martyr Theophilos, we may be granted to reach the glorious Resurrection of our God and Saviour of our souls, in repentance and peace.

Therefore, we appeal to all those praying with Us and honoring this solemn memory of the holy Martyrs, the power from on high, the free gift of the Holy Spirit, the grace of the Holy and Life-giving Sepulchre, “And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed” (cf. Rom. 5:4-5), expressing warm thanks to those who addressed Us, the Elder Chief Secretary, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, speaking on behalf of the members of the Holy and Sacred Synod and our Holy Sepulcre brotherhood, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece Mr Dimitrios Angelopoulos, the Reverend Archimandrite Vassianos, representative of the brotherly Holy Church of Russia, conveying to us the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril, His Holiness Archimandrite Father Theophilos, representative of the brotherly Holy Church of Romania, conveying to us the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Romania, Daniel, His Eminence the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, speaking on behalf of our flock in Nazareth, His Eminence Metropolitan Benedictos of Diocaecarea on behalf of the community of Bethlehem, His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Yaffo, on behalf of the community of Yaffo, the representative of the Moscow Patriarchate, Archimandrite Vassianos, the representative of the Patriarchate of Romania, Archimandrite Theophilos, His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba with the Russian-speaking members of Beer Sheba community and of Haifa, Archimandrite Ignatios on behalf of the Beit Jala and Beit Sahour communities, Mr Yusef Nasser on behalf of the Kufr-Smea community, Priest Stavros Aranki on behalf of the Bir Zeit community, Mrs Panagiota Kafetzi on behalf of Saint Dimitrios School, Priest Farah Bandour on behalf of Saint James Cathedral and all those who participated in this feast.

To the health of you all!”

The reception was followed by a meal at the refectory of the Patriarchate.

From Secretariat-General





























