

The Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos at the Patriarchate



On Monday, 25th March / 7th April 2025, the Patriarchate celebrated the Theotokos' Feast of the Annunciation. On this feast, the Church commemorates the event when the Archangel Gabriel, who had previously appeared in the Old Testament as the angel of the Mighty God, visited the maiden Mary in Nazareth and announced to her that, by the Holy Spirit, she would conceive and bear the Son of God, the awaited Messiah. In response, despite her confusion and fear, Mary answered: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38, KJV), revealing the holy pattern of humility and obedience by which the mind and sin of the former Eve were overcome, and the way was opened for the incarnation of the Son of God, in accordance with the divine plan for the regeneration and salvation of humankind. Thus, Mary revealed to the world that she is indeed the highly favoured Virgin, of whom the Prophet Isaiah had prophesied: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14, KJV).

This feast marks a turning point in human history and embraces all of humanity. By

demonstrating such humility, the Virgin Mary calls all people to recognise her Son, Christ, and thus she becomes more honourable than the Cherubim and more glorious than the Seraphim. This universal character was present in the celebration of the Annunciation at the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which was as follows:

1. At the Shrine of the Annunciation in Nazareth in Northern Israel, at the Holy Metropolis of Nazareth, where our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Theophilos, travelled with his esteemed entourage. There, His Beatitude was warmly welcomed by His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, with the Scouts leading the procession along the road from the Holy Metropolis to the exact site of the Annunciation, where the Church of the Annunciation stands.

The Divine Liturgy followed in the outdoor area of the Church, presided over by His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III, with the co-celebration of their Eminences; Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, Metropolitan Hesychios of Kapitolias, and the Archbishop Damaskinos of Yaffo, along with the Holy Sepulchre monks, led by the first-ranked Elder, Archimandrite Nektarios, and the Archimandrites Leondios, Silouanos, and Christodoulos, and the representative of the Patriarchate of Moscow, the head of the Russian Spiritual Mission in Jerusalem, Archimandrite Vassianos, priests from the region of Nazareth and Acre, as well as priests from the Orthodox brotherhood of Churches, the Archdeacon Mark, and Hierodeacons Eulogios and Simeon. The chanting was delivered in Greek by the Byzantine choir of the late Balogiorgos from the Holy Metropolis of Trikala and in Arabic by the choir of the Holy Metropolis of Nazareth, with the participation of Orthodox faithful and pilgrims, in the presence of the General Consul of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos, the Ambassador of Greece to Israel, Mrs Solomou, the Honorary Consul of Haifa, Mr Konstantinos Zinovios, the Ambassador of Russia to Israel, Mr Anatoly Viktorov, and other diplomatic representatives from Russia, representatives from the Franciscan and Anglican Churches, Arabic-speaking mass media, and representatives from the Patriarchate's media, with many faithful from various regions of Israel, monks, and devout pilgrims.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude delivered the following sermon:

“In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary... And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women... thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus” (cf. Luke 1:26-31,

KJV), says the Evangelist Luke.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

Devout Christians and pilgrims,

The grace of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Most High, which overshadowed the Virgin Mary in this holy place of the biblical city of Nazareth, has gathered us all here today, in the midst of the darkness of the war crisis, and in the midst of the season of the Holy Fast, so that we may celebrate the great mystery of godliness, that is, the Incarnation of the Word of God from pure blood, as the divine Paul proclaims, saying: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Timothy 3:16, KJV).

This great mystery of godliness, the divine providence, the manifestation of God in the world, is testified to by Saint John the Theologian in his Gospel, saying: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1, KJV), and “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, KJV).

According to Saint Cyril of Alexandria, “the Word became flesh” means that “the Word became man,” consisting of body and soul, as the Holy Scripture says: “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7, KJV). And because of the transgression, man was punished (Genesis 4:20), and thus he heard “for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:19, KJV). Rightly hearing this, he was deprived of the grace of life. The breath of life, that is, the Spirit, “who saith, I am the life” (John 14:6, KJV), departed from the earthly flesh, and the living being fell into death by the flesh alone, with the soul preserved in immortality, as only the flesh heard the words, “for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

Furthermore, because Adam was punished due to transgression of the commandment, he rightly heard, “for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,” and thus hearing, he was deprived of grace. The breath of life, that is, the Spirit of God, “who saith, I am the life” (John 14:6, KJV), departed from the earthly flesh, and the living being fell into death by the flesh alone. However, the soul was preserved in immortality, as the flesh alone was told, “for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

And this very flesh, fallen into death, was taken up by the Word of God from the

Virgin Mary and united incomprehensibly with His own flesh, that is, His Body, the Word of God, who gives life to all, our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, Saint John Damascene, extolling the “Hail, thou that art highly favoured” of the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, exclaims: “Rejoice, O Lady Theotokos, through whom the bodiless One becomes incarnate, the One who is without beginning begins, and the Incomprehensible is contained. Rejoice, through whom the One of mercy, being made man for mankind, is made manifest, Rejoice, O Lady Theotokos, through whom the Son of God and the Word, the Son of man by His will, has been revealed.”

According to Andrew of Crete: “Today there are glad tidings of joy; it is the festival of the Virgin. Things below are joined to things above. Adam is renewed and Eve is set free from the ancient sorrow and the tabernacle of our nature, which the Lord took upon himself, deifying the substance He assumed, is become the Temple of God... Rejoice Oh full of Grace, the Lord is with thee, from whom Christ God, our Salvation, hath assumed our nature, restoring it to Himself” (Vespers, Stichera, Glory, both now).

In these words of Saint Andrew of Crete, the hidden mystery of God’s Divine Providence, which was foretold by the Holy Prophets and hidden for ages, is clearly and precisely articulated. This mystery is none other than the Annunciation of our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.

The wise Paul says, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:8). And we ask, what is this unsearchable wealth of Christ? (Ephesians 3:8)

This wealth of Christ, my beloved brothers, is none other than the name of the Lord, blessed by the prophetic David, which heralds His saving grace,” (Psalm 95:2). This Davidic command, the “saving,” namely, of the Lord, which signifies the boundless philanthropy and condescension of God for the salvation of the whole human race, was proclaimed also by the Holy Apostles of Christ, (cf. Matthew 28:19).

And the unfathomable contribution of the Most Gracious Virgin Mary to the “unsearchable riches of Christ,” (Ephesians 3:8) is entirely due to her word: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word,” (Luke 1:38), through which, as it is written, “The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen,” (Psalm 97:2). It is noteworthy in this instance that the salvation of God’s people is closely related to His righteousness. This is because God’s righteousness is the cause; salvation is

the result for His people. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," (Matthew 6:33), says the Lord. "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son," (Psalm 71:1) says the psalmist.

Today, all of creation, both earthly and heavenly, rejoices, and so we offer the divine and bloodless sacrifice of praise to the Holy Word of God, who assumed flesh from the pure blood of the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, for our salvation.

Let us pray to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, the Ever-Virgin Theotokos, who received the Annunciation from Gabriel, that through her intercessions, her Son and God may grant peace to the world, and especially to our afflicted region. And with the hymn-writer, let us say to her: "Since thou art a well-spring of pity, count us worthy of compassion, O Theotokos. Look upon a sinful people; show forth as always, thy power. For hoping in thee, we cry Rejoice unto thee, as once did Gabriel, the Supreme Commander of the bodiless hosts" (The Great Horologion, Sixth hour, Monday Theotokion). Amen, wishing you a peaceful and blessed Pascha."

The procession of the Sacred Icon around the road of the Shrine took place, with the Scouts leading the way, followed by many faithful and residents of the city, regardless of religion and creed, demonstrating the significance of this joyful festival, which serves as a sign of their unity.

At noon, His Eminence the Metropolitan of Nazareth, Mr. Kyriakos, hosted a banquet at a city restaurant for His Beatitude, his entourage, the professor at the Hebrew University and archaeologist, Mr. Joseph Patrick, the officials, and others.

2. At the Theotokos memorial in Gethsemane, led by His Eminence Archbishop Theophanes of Gerash, with the participation of the Hegumen of the shrine, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenopolis, and co-celebrating Holy Sepulchre Monks, including the Archimandrites; Dionysios, Amphilochios, Nicodemos, the Priests Charalambos and Nectarios, the first cantor Deacon Eustathios, and the monks of the shrine, as well as the General Secretary of the Greek Diaspora, Mrs. Myra Myrogianni, and the nuns, locals, and pilgrims, all praying for the intercessions of the Theotokos and her help in all their struggles, so that we may reach the day of the Holy Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

After this feast, a festive refreshment at the rectory was hosted by His Eminence Joachim.

3.At the magnificent Church of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in the village of Rafidia, led by the parish priest, Father Isaías.

From the General Secretariat













































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