26/11/2025

The twentieth anniversary of the Enthronement of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III



On Saturday, the 9th/22nd of November 2025, the twentieth anniversary of the Enthronement of His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III, to the glorious Throne of Jerusalem, of the Holy Mother of the Churches, was celebrated by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in a spirit both festive and devout.

For this event, sealing the climate of peace and stability within the Church of Jerusalem, a Doxology was held in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, presided over by His Beatitude with the concelebration of a great number of Holy Sepulchre Fathers, Hierarchs, Hieromonks and Deacons, and Church Presbyters. The service was attended by monks, nuns, and many faithful.

Honouring this ceremony by their presence were the Minister of Education of Greece, Mrs. Sofia Zacharaki; the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr. Dimitrios Angelosopoulos; the Consul Mrs. Mantika and other members of the Consulate; the Ambassador of Russia to Israel, Mr. Anatoly Viktorov; the Ambassador of Egypt; the Consul General of Belgium; and the representative of the Russian Government, Mrs. Elena Milskaya.

After the Doxology, His Beatitude, the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, and all the congregation went to the Great Hall of the Patriarchate.

There, the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, expressed his congratulations to His Beatitude, addressing Him as follows:

“Your Beatitude, Father and Master,

A historical, highly noteworthy, and profoundly significant event is celebrated today by the Church of Jerusalem together with the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood: the election, elevation, and Enthronement of Your most venerable Beatitude to its honoured Throne, accomplished twenty years ago. This event bears particular weight for the sacramental, spiritual, and administrative structure of the body of the Church of Jerusalem, for its succession and the continuation of its life, which began in the days of its first Bishop, Saint James, the Brother of the Lord, whom the Lord Himself “first appointed as Shepherd and teacher of Jerusalem, and faithful steward of the spiritual mysteries.”

This event restored the interrupted succession of the Church of Jerusalem; it reassembled and strengthened the administrative joints of her body, which had been dislocated during that time of trial. Likewise, it repudiated opaque property agreements driven by foreign interests, agreements that had mortgaged assets of the Patriarchate of immeasurable material and cultural value and which, had they ever been implemented, would have distorted the status quo of the Old City of Jerusalem. In those difficult days, the Brotherhood stood at the height of its mission in safeguarding the Most Holy Places. It renounced the instigators and principal actors of the crisis and, based on the canons of the Church and the Jordanian Law of the Patriarchate of 1957, drafted under the late Patriarch Benedict of Jerusalem, and placed, by the canonical and unanimous vote of the Holy and Sacred Synod, Your Beatitude upon the Pastoral lampstand of Jerusalem.

In honour of this event, a festive Doxology was offered today in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with the thronging participation of the Holy Sepulchre Fathers and

of members of the flock of the Patriarchate from across its entire jurisdiction. It was offered as thanksgiving unto God, Who granted Your Beatitude as Shepherd of His Church, and also as supplication on behalf of Your health, steadfastness, and strengthening in Your manifold and God-pleasing pastoral ministry.

Having prayerfully fulfilled our liturgical duty, we now gather in this hall of the Patriarchate, this sacred “home” of ours, as the late Patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem called it, and offer unto You rightful praise for all the good and beneficent things which You have cared for and accomplished for the Patriarchate and the Brotherhood.

Truly, from the time of Your election and throughout this entire twenty-year period, Your Beatitude has repaid beyond measure to the Brotherhood and to the Church of Jerusalem the honour shown unto You by that election.

You advanced acts and initiatives that restored the reputation of the Church of Jerusalem and of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, which had been harmed. You remained faithful to the will of the Brotherhood, for despite pressures from many sides, You categorically refused to ratify the unlawful property agreements that had been concluded. On the contrary, You engaged in legal battles requiring enormous financial expenditure, as well as in diplomatic struggles that continue to this day, so that these agreements might never be implemented.

You vindicated the rights of the Patriarchate at the Most Holy Places through peaceful and steadfast dialogue. Through the studies undertaken by expert professors of the National Technical University of Athens, and through Your wise supervision, oversight, and guidance, You accomplished the work long deemed impossible, namely, the restoration of the Sacred Edicule. This same work of restoration and structural reinforcement continues, and will soon be completed, in the areas of the Rotunda, the Seven Chambers, and the Holy Deposition, by expert technicians of Sapientia University of Rome. The restoration of old icons and other precious treasures of the Patriarchate likewise continued uninterrupted under the supervision of the expert conservator of icons and manuscripts from Cyprus, Mr Andreas Stavrou, together with Mr Igol from Russia. These items are now safeguarded in the building, duly prepared as a Museum at the residence of the late Patriarch Diodoros of Jerusalem, whose inauguration will take place immediately upon the conclusion of today’s celebration.

Concerning the preservation of communion in Christ with the sister Orthodox Churches, Your Beatitude carried out Peace Visits to many of them, including the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Patriarchate of Moscow, the Patriarchate of Romania,

the Church of Poland, and the Church of Finland. You participated in significant events of their ecclesiastical life, such as the Consecration of the Cathedral of Saint Demetrios in Bucharest, the Cathedral of the Resurrection in Tirana of the Church of Albania, and the proceedings for the preparation and convocation of the Great Council of Orthodoxy in Crete. Remaining aligned with the spirit of Synodality that governs the Orthodox Church, You repeatedly and at every opportunity, most notably through the Synaxis of the Orthodox Churches in Amman, emphasised the need to restart the Inter-Orthodox dialogue, so that the rift that has arisen within the Orthodox Church may be bridged. In this same spirit, this past March Your Beatitude received the newly elected Patriarch Porphyrios of Serbia, who came on a pilgrimage visit and concelebrated the Divine Liturgy upon the Horrendous Golgotha.

As for the other Christian Churches, You strengthened the cooperation of the Patriarchate with the WCC and the MECC. You continued the theological dialogue between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches and hosted its sessions, with funding by the Patriarchate, in the region of the Lord’s Baptism by the River Jordan. Together with the local Christian Churches of the Holy Land, You activated the Council of the Local Churches, initiated by the late Patriarch Diodoros of Jerusalem, so that, in cooperation with the diplomats of many countries, it might protect the rights of the much-afflicted Christians of the Holy Land, whose position is threatened by extremist fanatic groups. Among these, the most afflicted are undoubtedly the inhabitants of suffering Gaza and those dependent upon the Monastery of Saint Porphyrios therein, for whose support and consolation Your Beatitude undertook a particularly risky visit. Worthy of remembrance and praise likewise is Your prudent, skilful, and effective handling of the recently—and regrettably—arisen issue concerning the Holy Monastery of Sinai. Through this handling, the jurisdictional rights of the Patriarchate over the Monastery and its status quo were secured, and, according to its Basic Regulations, a new Archbishop of Sinai was elected, who was ordained by Your Beatitude in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, that, within the Monastery’s inherited Autonomy and with the perpetual support of the Patriarchate, he might continue its light-bearing pan-Orthodox and pan-Christian mission.

No less did Your Beatitude promote Inter-religious Dialogue for the peaceful coexistence of peoples, as is demonstrated by Your visit to the State of Kazakhstan, from which You received its first state peace award, and likewise by the high honour bestowed upon You by the Kingdom of Jordan for Your contribution to interreligious peace. For this same purpose, and for the support of the rights of our Patriarchate, Your Beatitude recently held a meeting with the President of Turkey,

Mr Erdoğan, in Constantinople.

The matters mentioned by me, Your Beatitude, on behalf of the whole Brotherhood, are but a few fragrant flowers gathered from the rich pastoral meadow of Your Beatitude, not for boasting (particularly when the Apostle of the Nations says, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ”), but for the strengthening of us, the Holy Sepulchre Fathers, and the members of our pious flock, that we may receive a spirit of hope and optimism toward the creation of good works, through which the Name of our Triune God is praised and glorified, and our blessed nation is honoured.

Lifting the cup, Your Beatitude, I wish You, on behalf of the Holy and Sacred Synod and the entire Brotherhood, many happy returns in health, stability, and full governing power from above, that You may continue to guide the vessel of Jerusalem, the Mother of the Churches, toward the fulfilment of the work entrusted unto You by the Divine Providence. So be it.”

An address was likewise offered to His Beatitude by the distinguished representative of the Hellenic Republic, the Minister of Education, Mrs Sofia Zacharaki, as follows:

“Your Beatitude,
Revered Fathers and Members of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to be with you today in this holy place, where faith and history meet in a unique manner. For Greece, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem is not merely an institution; it is a steadfast beacon through the ages, the guardian of the Holy Shrines and of the Christian traditions in the Middle East.

This year marks twenty years since the Enthronement of Your Beatitude, twenty years that began in the midst of a great crisis for the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and which coincided with equally demanding developments in the modern history of the region: armed conflicts, tensions, refugee crises, and threats to the Christian presence.

And yet, in these circumstances, Your Beatitude, you succeeded not only in guiding the Patriarchate with patience, prudence, and determination, but also in preserving the essence of its mission: the ministry to humanity, the protection of the All-Holy

Shrines, the unity of the Church, and the respect for the multireligious and multicultural character of the Holy Land.

Your Beatitude,

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem has always been a pillar of stability and spiritual continuity in a region where geopolitical changes are often intense and unpredictable. You have consistently maintained effective channels of communication with all the states of the region, presenting the Holy Places as a point of unity. Your contribution to the preservation of peace and the promotion of dialogue is invaluable in times of trial.

I wish to assure you that Greece approaches the Patriarchate always committed to cooperation and understanding, with unwavering resolve to offer its support, proud of its indestructible bond with the Patriarchate. We come as a devoted ally, fully aware of the weight of the responsibility you bear, and desiring to continue to strengthen your work in tangible ways.

The Hellenic State stands by you consistently and substantially. We remain in steady consultation, examining ways to further reinforce your pastoral and social ministry, the schools of the Patriarchate, the communities under strain, and the people in need of hope and support. For us, unity and cooperation are not theoretical notions; they are a daily practice.

In this context, allow me to congratulate you for your important educational work, one of the most precious pillars of the Patriarchate’s presence in the Holy Places. The Patriarchal School of Zion, recognised by the Greek State, is a unique nursery of spirituality and Greek learning. As the Ministry of Education of Greece, we support this effort steadily through the provision of teachers, books, and educational materials, and through close cooperation for the implementation of the Greek curriculum. This support is for Greece, not only an obligation to the historic legacy of the School, but also a profound moral and national duty toward the future of the Patriarchate and the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood.

We also express our respect for the remarkable programme of renovations you have completed over the past two decades, as well as for the works of conservation of the Holy Shrines, with the most eminent being the renovation of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Tomb. I assure you that Greece will contribute tangibly to the additional major works you have already set in motion. I have the honour today to announce to you, on behalf of the Government of the Hellenic Republic, that through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we shall offer the Patriarchate

the necessary financial support for the beautification of the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which you have already undertaken, as well as for other major restoration works.

Your Beatitude, in these years, you have demonstrated that even in the most difficult moments, the voice of the Patriarchate remains steadfast, measured, and firmly dedicated to its high mission. You have offered support to all who sought protection and consolation, keeping the doors of the Church open to every person, regardless of identity or origin. Through your word, you remind us that peace and the respect for human life and dignity are fundamental principles that must guide us in every circumstance. This stance has been recognised internationally and stands as a source of hope in challenging times.

Allow me, on behalf of the Hellenic Republic, to renew our commitment in two points:

First, that Greece will continue to be your ally in every effort to safeguard the rights and privileges of the Patriarchate.
Second, that we shall continue to work with you, with unity, cooperation, and respect, so that the Christian presence in the Holy Places may remain alive and strong.

Twenty years after your Enthronement, Your Beatitude, we stand here not only to honour the past, but to strengthen our common journey into the future; with faith, with cooperation, with optimism.

Thank you most warmly.
Many happy returns.”

Similarly, the representatives of Russia, Georgia, and Egypt addressed His Beatitude; the representatives of the sister Orthodox Churches—Archimandrite Fr Vassianos on behalf of the Church of Russia and Archimandrite Fr Ioannis on behalf of the Church of Romania; the representatives of the Metropolis under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate—His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and His Eminence Metropolitan Makarios of Acre–Ptolemais; the Patriarchal Commissioner of Bethlehem, His Eminence Metropolitan Benediktos of Diocaesarea; on behalf of His Eminence Archbishop Christophoros of Kyriakoupolis and the Communities of Jordan, Archimandrite Fr Raphael; Archimandrite Fr

Ignatios on behalf of the Community of Beit Jala and Beit Sahour; and Dean Priest Fr Farah Badour on behalf of the Arab-speaking flock of the Cathedral of Saint James the Brother of the Lord in Jerusalem.
Likewise, Mr Dimitrios Natsios, President of the "NIKI" party of the Greek Parliament, and Mrs Maria Zozonaki, representative of the European Public Law Organisation (EPLO).

Among others, the Jaffa Scouts and the Patriarchate's Saint Demetrios School joyfully presented gifts to His Beatitude.

To these, His Beatitude responded with gratitude through the following address:

"I, however, have hoped in Thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation; I will sing unto the Lord, Who hath dealt bountifully with me, and I will praise the name of the Lord Most High" (Ps. 12:6), exclaims the psalmist of the Church.

Your Excellency, Consul General of Greece, Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos,
Revered Holy Fathers and Brothers,
Devout Christians and pilgrims,

The holy Church of Christ in Jerusalem, founded upon the redemptive blood of our Saviour Christ, poured out on the Horrendous Golgotha, celebrates today the completion of twenty years of Patriarchal Ministry of Our Beatitude upon the Apostolic throne of the holy Hieromartyr James the Brother of the Lord, ordained by the Lord Himself and the first Hierarch of Jerusalem.

This sacred occasion bears profound significance, both for the redeeming truth of Christ proclaimed by the Church in a world beset by tribulation, and for the pastoral care exercised by its spiritual shepherds. As the divine Paul declares: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

This twentieth anniversary does not focus upon our own mediocrity, but rather upon the God-established and Apostolic institution of the Church, constituted by the Holy Spirit. "Hereby we know that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit" (1 John 4:13), Saint John the Theologian declares.

In accordance with the rite of our Holy Sepulchre tradition, we went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, accompanied by the honoured members of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, where we offered a thanksgiving doxology to the Holy Triune God, to our Lord Jesus Christ: "Unto Him be glory and dominion for ever and

ever. Amen” (Rev. 1:6).

The twentieth anniversary of our enthronement, lived amidst trials and tribulations, ought to be regarded as a time of refreshment from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:20), yet also as a time of service, preserving both the Apostolic succession and the Apostolic teaching, which each Bishop and Patriarch of the Church of Jerusalem has safeguarded through the ages, fulfilling the work of the Chief Shepherd, as Saint Isidore of Pelusium teaches: “For the Bishop, being in the image of Christ, fulfils His work.”

Hearing the divine Paul: “With all conscience I have behaved myself unto this day” (Acts 23:1), and following in the footsteps of our revered Predecessors, we strive to preserve our inviolate Apostolic tradition, while attending to the spiritual and material needs of the Christ-bearing flock entrusted to us, observing the ministry “of Jesus Christ, speaking in truth”, according to Saint Ignatius of Antioch.

Furthermore, we have neglected nothing in maintaining the status of the Holy Places, which testify to the Incarnation of the Word of God, His Passion upon the Cross, and His Resurrection.

We mention this because the preservation of these sacred sites, together with the inalienable privileges and sovereign rights of the Royal Lineage of the Rum Orthodox Christians, constitutes a holy duty, entrusted by Divine Providence, to safeguard these places as centres of worship and divine service. No less, we have given no sleep to our eyes nor slumber to our eyelids (cf. Ps. 131:4), raising our voice before all authorities, ecclesiastical, civil, diplomatic, local, and international, so that the status, secured from antiquity and by international treaties, of both the religious and biblical shrines may be respected. This includes, in particular, the world-renowned shrine of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine on the God-clothed Mount Sinai, as well as the Holy City of Jerusalem itself, which embodies the Incarnation within sacred history.

“For Zion’s sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brightness” (Isa. 62:1), the Prophet Isaiah proclaims with a mighty voice.

Sustained by the mercy of the Lord and obedient to His words: “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another” (John 13:34), our hearts have not been faint to labour in a clear conscience (2 Tim. 1:3) for the cessation of the creeping schism within the Body of Christ, that is, within the One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Moreover, the message of reconciliation was likewise the

proclamation of the Gospel by the Apostles to all the world, as the wise Paul testifies: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.”

Through this festive anniversary of our enthronement, we are called not to boast, but to reflect upon the Patriarchal ministry entrusted to us, for according to the word of the Lord: “Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (cf. Matt. 12:36).

It should be noted that in this Patriarchal ministry, which manifests the Christlike work of the Apostolic mission of the martyric throne of James the Brother of the Lord and first Hierarch of the Church of Jerusalem, we are joined by collaborators and companions: the venerable and beloved Fathers and Brothers of the Holy Sepulchre, Archbishops, Hieromonks, Priests, Hierodeacons, and Monks, distinguished by their devout zeal and self-sacrificial service pleasing to God in Christ.

“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:20), let us entreat Him for peace in our afflicted region. Moreover, let us pray that the Lord guide our steps toward fulfilling His commandments, through the intercessions of our Most Blessed Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and the supplications of our holy Father Nektarios of Pentapolis. May the Grace of the Most Holy and Life-giving Tomb strengthen all of us who serve the Holy Places and shepherd the devout and Christ-bearing flock entrusted to our care.

And upon these things, we invoke upon all who prayed with Us and honoured this festal Enthronement anniversary by their presence, strength from on high, the grace of the All-Holy Tomb, patience, and every blessing from God, expressing also our warm gratitude to those who addressed Us:
His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Elder Chief Secretary;
the distinguished Minister of Education of the Hellenic Republic, Mrs Sofia Zacharaki;
the Ambassador of Russia, Mr Anatoly Viktorov;
the Very Reverend Archimandrite Fr Bassianos, representative of the sister Most Holy Church of Russia, who conveyed to Us the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow, Kirill;
the Reverend Archimandrite Fr Ioannis, representative of the sister Most Holy Church of Romania, who conveyed to Us the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Romania, Daniel;

His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Nazareth;
His Eminence Metropolitan Benediktos of Diokaisareia, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Bethlehem;
the Reverend Archimandrite Fr Raphael, who spoke on behalf of our pious flock in Jordan, as representative of His Eminence Archbishop Christophoros of Kyriakoupolis;
the Reverend Fr Farah Badour, who spoke on behalf of the Cathedral of Saint James the Brother of the Lord;
the Very Reverend Archimandrite Fr Ignatios, who spoke on behalf of the Community of Beit Jala;
His Eminence Metropolitan Makarios of Acre–Ptolemais, who spoke on behalf of the pious flock of his Holy Metropolis;
the Ambassadors of Georgia and Egypt;
the representative of EPLO, Mrs Maria Zozonaki;
the President of the “Victory” party of the Hellenic Parliament, Mr Dimitrios Natsios;
the representative of the Russian Government, Mrs Elena Milskaya;
and all who took part in this celebration.

Towards the conclusion of the event, His Beatitude bestowed the Cross of Archimandrite upon the Hieromonks Fr Dositheos and Fr Simeon, praising them for their commendable ministry to this day.

Subsequently, His Beatitude performed the inauguration of the Patriarchal Ecclesiastical Museum of Jerusalem, for the establishment of which collaborated the project manager Mr Igor Shapovalov, the museologist Mrs Natalia Gorgova, and the archaeologist Professor Stavros Andreou, through the generous sponsorship of the representative of the Russian Government and director of the Archangel Michael Foundation, Mrs Elena Milskaya.

At midday, a festive monastic meal followed.

From the Chief Secretariat





























































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