02/03/2026

The Sunday of Orthodoxy at the Patriarchate



On Sunday, 16 February / 1 March 2026, the Patriarchate celebrated the Sunday of Orthodoxy.

On this day, the Church commemorates and solemnly celebrates the restoration of the venerable holy icons to the sacred Churches, as testimonies and witnesses to the divine Incarnation and the earthly presence of the Son and Word of God, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

This restoration was accomplished by the Empress Theodora and her son, the Emperor Michael, during the Patriarchal Office of Saint Methodios the Confessor, after one hundred years of harsh and painful persecutions, the destruction of many icons, and their removal from the holy Churches. This event is perpetuated by the Church of Jerusalem, which celebrates it festally with the “Parrhesia”, in accordance with her Church rites and Status quo.

Due to the outbreak of war between the United States of America and Iran, and because of the bombardments by Iran within the territory of Israel, and particularly in the Holy City of Jerusalem, the Vespers of this Sunday of Orthodoxy was not celebrated in the usual order in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, as it has been closed for security purposes, but rather in the Patriarchal and Monastic Church of

Saints Constantine and Helen. His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III, presided, concelebrating with the Holy Sepuchre Fathers serving the Church, and with the Hierarchs participating in prayer.

Likewise, the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning was again celebrated in the Monastic and Patriarchal Church of Saints Constantine and Helen. His Beatitude, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III, officiated, and concelebrating with him were their Eminences, Metropolitan Hesychios of Capitolias, Archbishop Dorotheos of Avila, and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, together with the clergy of the Church, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Prodromos. The chanting was led by the chief cantor of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Deacon Efstathios. The service was attended by nuns, a few Jerusalemite faithful, and a small number of pilgrims, in the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos.

After the Divine Liturgy, the procession of the holy icons took place upon the terraces of the Central Monastery, followed by the reading inside the Church of the “Synodikon”, that is, the proclamation of “Ever-lasting remembrance” for those who defended the holy and sacred icons, and “Anathema” upon those iconoclasts who expelled them from the holy Churches and upon all heretics.

This was followed by the procession to the Patriarchate Hall and the customary festal reception.

To the few pilgrims and local Christians, His Beatitude addressed the following greeting:

“Being by nature uncircumscribed in Thy divinity, O Master, in these last times Thou wast pleased to become circumscribed, having taken flesh; for by assuming the flesh Thou didst also assume all its properties. Wherefore, depicting the likeness of Thy form, we reverently venerate it, being raised to Thy love and drawing from it the grace of healings, following the divine traditions of the Apostles.”

Your Excellency, Consul General of Greece, Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos,
Reverend Holy Fathers and brethren,
Pious Christians and pilgrims,

A day of joy and gladness has dawned upon us today, on the festive commemoration of the restoration of the holy and venerable icons, accomplished by the ever-memorable Emperors of Constantinople, Michael and his mother Theodora, during the Patriarchal Office of the holy Confessor Methodios.

The Holy Church of Jerusalem, founded upon the redeeming blood that was shed in the crucified Passion of our Saviour Christ and upon the faith of the holy Apostles, confesses that the uncircumscribed Word of the Father, through the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, became circumscribed by taking flesh and assuming a human body, and thus restored the defiled image of man to its ancient and original beauty, uniting it with divine glory. For this reason, she especially honours and venerates the restoration of the holy icons.

The veneration and restoration of the holy icons do not constitute merely a historical event, but pertain to the great mystery of the divine and redeeming Providence. Therefore, despite the present war crisis (and its consequence, that we were unable to go to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre), we proceeded to the Church of our Central Monastery of the holy and God-crowned Great Constantine and Helen, where we celebrated the “Great Parrhesia” of the First Sunday of the Fast, that is, the Patriarchal Divine Liturgy, concelebrated by the honourable members of our venerable Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood—Hierarchs, Priests, and Hierodeacons—with monks, nuns, and devout visiting pilgrims participating in prayer.

Our venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem, together with the order of the venerable Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, safeguarding the sacred and Apostolic institutions of the Church and following the teachings of her God-bearing and renowned great Fathers, honourably venerates the holy icons of Christ, of the Most Blessed Theotokos, and of all the Saints, engraved upon walls, panels, and sacred vessels, heeding the inspired teacher of the Church, Basil the Great, who says: “The honour shown to the image passes to the prototype.” “The prototype is that which is depicted, from which the representation is derived,” as Saint John of Damascus observes.

Giving thanks to the Holy Triune God for this benefaction, namely, the shining forth of the grace of truth, we pray to God and our Saviour Christ that we may be counted worthy to complete the course of self-restraint in patience and peace. Amen. Many years of peace, and a blessed Pascha.”

From the Chief Secretariat

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