

Official reception for His Beatitude the Patriarch of Bulgaria and Metropolitan of Sofia, Daniil, at the Patriarchate



Following his arrival at Ben Gurion Airport at midday on Friday, 25 September 2026, where he was received by representatives of the Patriarchate, namely the Patriarchal Commissioner, His Eminence Archbishop Hesychios of Capitolias, and the Elder Dragoman, Archimandrite Mattheos, and following a brief midday rest at the American Colony Hotel, the official reception of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Bulgaria and Metropolitan of Sofia, Mr Daniil, and his entourage took place at 6:15 p.m. at the Gate of David (Jaffa Gate), with the honours accorded to the Primate of a Church.

His Beatitude was accompanied by His Eminence Metropolitan Seraphim of Nevrokop; His Grace Bishop Gerasimos of Melnik, Chief Secretary of the Holy Synod; Archimandrite Theophilos Andreev, interpreter from the English language; Archdeacon Deyan Kopunovski; Dr Alexander Smotchevski, physician and Patriarchal Counsellor; Dimitar Goranov, interpreter from the Greek language; Angel Karadakov, Director of the Patriarchal Private Office; His Excellency Mr Plamer Economou, Diplomatic Representative of the State of Bulgaria, and Mihail

Taskov.

At the reception, there were also present His Eminence Archbishop Hesychios of Capitolas, the Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, the Primates and Heads of the Local Churches in Jerusalem, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos, members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps, and Diplomatic Representatives of other States.

Accompanied by all those present, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Bulgaria, Mr Daniil, and his Patriarchal entourage proceeded to the Patriarchate, where, at its entrance, they were received by His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III, together with the Hierarchs and Hieromonks of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood. Led by the staff-bearers, accompanied by the drumming of the Scout Corps and the ringing of the bells, they proceeded down the Christian Quarter Road to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Before the Holy Stone of the Unction, the veneration and censuring took place, while the First Cantor of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Deacon Eustathios, chanted "I will enter into Thy house". Thereafter, the two Primates venerated the Holy Stone of the Unction.

Then, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem, together with His Beatitude the Patriarch of Bulgaria, Mr Daniil, proceeded towards the Holy Tomb.

Before entering the Holy Sepulchre, the Patriarch of Bulgaria read the Second Resurrection Gospel of the Matins in Bulgarian, and a prayer of supplication was offered.

Thereafter, the Doxology was chanted in the Katholikon, and the addresses appropriate to the occasion were delivered, namely that of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem, as follows:

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 132:1), exclaims the divine David.

Most Blessed Metropolitan of Sofia and Patriarch of Bulgaria, in Christ our God dearly beloved and most longed-for Brother and Concelebrant of Our Modesty, Mr Daniel,

This Davidic saying assumes today a particular ecclesiological significance in the Holy City of Jerusalem, where, with spiritual joy and gladness, we welcome Your Beatitude, who comes for the first time, following Your election to the Patriarchal

Throne of the Most Holy Orthodox Church of Bulgaria, to Holy Jerusalem and to the Most Holy Places of the divine Incarnation and Providence.

This Peaceful Visit of Your Beatitude is not merely an important ecclesiastical event, but is a confession of our common faith and a living testimony to the unity in Christ of the Holy Orthodox Church. You, as Primate of a Sister Most Holy Orthodox Church of ours, come to those places where the mystery of salvation in Christ was revealed in history and where “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14).

The feet of Your Beatitude stand upon the city of the Great King, Holy Jerusalem, upon Golgotha, where the Word of God, Who became man, “bowed His head, and gave up the ghost” (John 19:30); here is the New Tomb, from which the unfading light of the Resurrection arose; here is the foundation of the Church, the Apostolic See of Saint James the Brother of the Lord, the first Hierarch of Jerusalem.

The divine Chrysostom, marvelling at the indestructible attraction of the Holy Places, says to the faithful: “Consider for what reason the whole inhabited world hastens together, to see a tomb which contains no body; what power draws those from the ends of the earth, that they may see where Christ was born, where He was buried, and where He was crucified.” (Homily 89, PG 55.)

In this spirit, We, together with Our Holy and Sacred Synod and the honourable members of Our Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, greet Your Beatitude in the Lord, together with Your esteemed entourage, and once again express our joy at Your presence in the Holy Land.

We pray that our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was crucified upon the Horrendous Golgotha and, after three days, rose from the Holy and Life-giving Tomb, may strengthen Your Beatitude in Your lofty Patriarchal ministry, preserve the Most Holy Orthodox Church of Bulgaria and her devout people, and further strengthen the holy and fraternal bonds between the Most Holy Churches of Jerusalem and Bulgaria, to the glory of the Triune God and for the edification of the Body of Christ.

Welcome, Your Beatitude and Holy Brother, to Holy Jerusalem, to the Mother of the Churches, and to the All-Holy and Life-giving Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The response address of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Bulgaria, Mr Daniil, is as follows:

Your Beatitude,

We offer thanksgiving and doxology to our All-Merciful Lord and God, Who has deemed us worthy to be here, in the Most Holy Church of Jerusalem, from which all the Local Churches proceeded. We also express our heartfelt gratitude to You, Your Beatitude, both for Your fraternal invitation to undertake this peaceful visit to the Venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem under Your care, and for the warm words of Your address. We heard them with profound emotion in this most venerable place for all Christians, the Church of the Resurrection of Christ, before the All-Holy and Life-giving Tomb. Permit us, therefore, first to express our profound spiritual joy, which fills the hearts of us all whenever we gather together with our brothers and sisters in the faith, sharing in the same hope of the Resurrection. This ineffable joy has already been extolled by the Psalmist and Prophet-King David, who blesses the brethren gathered together in communion in the Holy Spirit: "For there the Lord commanded the blessing, and life for evermore" (Psalm 132:1-3).

We come to You and to the Most Holy Church of Jerusalem in peace! In the peace which our Lord Jesus Christ left to us, when He said to His holy disciples: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you" (John 14:27). We come as witnesses to our unity in the faith and to our mystical communion in the Spirit of Truth and in the holy Chalice of the Eucharist. We come filled with fraternal love in Christ and with the deepest respect for Your most beloved and venerable Beatitude and for the glorious and martyred Jerusalem Church. Our joy is further increased by the fact that this peaceful visit to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem is taking place during the days of the great feast in which we commemorate the finding of the Precious and Life-giving Cross of Christ by the holy Equal-to-the-Apostles Empress Helen and by Your holy predecessor, Macarius I, Archbishop of Jerusalem. It is a great honour and a source of genuine spiritual rejoicing for us to celebrate with You the Feast of the Exaltation of the Precious Cross in this place, which our God-Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, sanctified through His Passion upon the Cross and His death, for the salvation of each one of us and of the whole human race.

From the time of Christ our Saviour and His disciples, of the first ecclesiastical community and the first Council of the holy Apostles, down to our own days, the Holy City of Jerusalem has been a natural centre of attraction for Christians throughout the world, and particularly for us Orthodox Christians. Thus, throughout the more than thousand-year Christian journey of the Orthodox Bulgarian people, they have preserved pilgrimage to the Holy Places as one of their most sacred and venerable traditions. Pilgrimage to the All-Holy Sepulchre has, for dozens of generations of our forefathers, been one of the most significant and precious moments of their lives. They came here with steadfast faith, sincere repentance

and deepest reverence for the most holy shrines of the Holy Land, thereby keeping alive the bond between Orthodox Bulgaria and the Holy City, and with the Most Holy Church which dwells therein.

We cannot, Your Beatitude, on this occasion, fail to mention also the traditional fraternal bonds between the Church of this Holy City and the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria, bonds of a thousand years of history, founded upon the unity of faith, fraternal love, mutual support and blessed cooperation.

It is particularly fitting today to highlight the fraternal support of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem during the difficult circumstances of the schism which afflicted our Church. We shall never forget the peace-making stance and conciliatory contribution of Your worthy predecessors, Patriarch Cyril II of Jerusalem at the Council of 1872 and, subsequently, the late Patriarchs of Jerusalem Nicodemus and Damian, who embraced our people with particular affection. We shall always remember with gratitude the mediation of the Holy Church of Jerusalem in the negotiations for the lifting of the schism during the 1930s, culminating in its definitive resolution on 22 February 1945, towards overcoming that grievous ecclesiastical anomaly. We recall the venerable figure of the late Bishop Boris of Stobios, later Metropolitan of Nevrokop, who was martyred at the hands of the atheistic regime in Bulgaria. He visited the Holy City and conducted negotiations for the lifting of the schism.

In a letter to the Metropolitan of Ptolemais Keladion in 1933, he wrote characteristically: "My stay in the Holy City and in the Holy Land shall remain unforgettable to me throughout my life... I shall remain eternally grateful and indebted to the entire Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood for the great and heartfelt fraternal care." We assure Your Beatitude that Orthodox Bulgaria and the Patriarchate of Bulgaria preserve an indelible memory of this support and love, and shall forever embrace the Patriarchate of Jerusalem with gratitude.

These firm fraternal bonds of unity and cooperation between our Orthodox Churches were strengthened and further developed over the course of time, both by Your worthy predecessors on the Patriarchal throne and by the Primate of the Patriarchate of Bulgaria who preceded us, the blessed Patriarchs Cyril, Maxim and Neofitos. With the same humble disposition and with the determination to prove ourselves worthy of our predecessors, we too have undertaken the responsibility of continuing their ministry. Therefore, we beseech our Merciful God to strengthen us in our common endeavour to consolidate pan-Orthodox unity and to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. May this present meeting, and the days which we shall spend together in prayer and fraternal communion, constitute yet another

radiant testimony to our blessed ecclesiastical unity, to the power and truth of the holy and saving Orthodox faith, and likewise to our common concern for the whole world.

Today, we earnestly and fervently pray for peace and goodwill among all the peoples and religious communities of the Holy Land, and also for the whole world, which is being tested by conflicts and bloody confrontations. This present meeting gives us yet another opportunity to raise together the voice of the Holy Orthodox Church in defence of the dignity of the human person and the value of human life. Let us bear a common witness to the Light which dawned in these places two thousand years ago through the Birth of our Saviour Christ. He was born as man, suffered for us human beings and for our salvation, and accepted death upon the Cross, that He might rise victorious over death and grant us freedom from sin and corruption, life and its fullness, according to His own words: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

The New Testament, which God established with the human race in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the Testament of forgiveness for all, of reconciliation and of love. May this love, which God Himself first revealed, steadfastly and securely guide all our thoughts and actions in our daily struggle for the building up of His Holy Church.

May the Spirit of God, poured out abundantly upon the disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem and making them Apostles and heralds of the Gospel to the ends of the world, fill us also and guide us into paths of salvation. May the All-Holy Spirit remain our unfailing Counsellor in our pastoral ministry within the Holy Church of Christ our Lord, the Chief Shepherd, to the glory of God and for the benefit and spiritual advancement of those children entrusted to us by Him, and likewise of all humanity throughout the world.

May the peace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ and the communion of the All-Holy Spirit be with us all!"

The addresses were followed by the veneration of the Horrendous Golgotha, after which the procession proceeded up to the Patriarchate main Reception Hall, where the appropriate addresses were once again exchanged, as follows:

Of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III:

"Your Beatitude and Most Holy Patriarch of Bulgaria and Metropolitan of Sofia,

Beloved and dearly cherished Brother in Christ our God,

Concelebrant with Our Meekness, Mr Daniil,

Venerable Entourage of Your Beatitude,

Holy Fathers and Brothers,

With great joy and fraternal rejoicing in Christ, we welcome Your Beatitude today to our Venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem, on the occasion of Your first Peaceful Visit as Patriarch of Bulgaria. Together with the devout faithful of the Most Holy Church of Bulgaria, we rejoice and give thanks and glory to Almighty God for raising You to the venerable Patriarchal Throne.

The Church of Bulgaria, taking pride in her profound Christian roots and her centuries-old spiritual tradition, preserves as a precious heritage the faith received by the Bulgarian people under Prince Boris I in the year 864, in the age of the Saints Cyril and Methodius and their disciples, among whom was also Saint Naum. Your Beatitude brings this rich spiritual heritage today to the Holy City of Jerusalem and to the Mother of all the Churches, together with the living witness of the contemporary Church of Bulgaria.

The blessed presence of Your Beatitude coincides with the glorious Feast of the Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross. Here, in the Holy Places, where the mystery of the Cross and the Resurrection of Christ our Saviour was accomplished, the Church proclaims together with the sacred hymnographer:

“O Thou Who wast voluntarily lifted upon the Cross, grant Thy mercies to the new polity that is called by Thy Name, O Christ our God; gladden our faithful rulers by Thy power, granting them victories over their adversaries; may they have Thy alliance, the weapon of peace, the invincible trophy.”

On this great Feast of the Lord, we commemorate not only the saving Passion and Crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, nor only the finding of the Precious Cross by Saint Helen, Equal-to-the-Apostles, in the days of our predecessor Saint Macarius, Archbishop of Jerusalem, but also the mystery of the unity of the Church.

Christ, stretching forth His immaculate hands upon the Cross, embraced through them the whole of humanity and called all to participation in His salvation. Therefore, the Cross of Christ becomes for us a “weapon of peace” and an “invincible trophy,” a sign of reconciliation, communion and unity.

Particularly today, in a world tested by wars, violence, confusion, despair and spiritual apostasy, the Church of Christ is called continually to bear witness to reconciliation, mutual understanding, hope and peace. Yet this witness is weakened by human frailty and divisions. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to labour tirelessly for the preservation and restoration of unity, “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

From Fearsome Golgotha and the Life-giving Tomb, that is, from the places of the Crucifixion and Resurrection of our Lord, we offer fervent prayer for peace and for the unity of the Church, so that our common Orthodox witness may become even stronger in the contemporary world.

Your Beatitude’s recent visit to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and now Your Peaceful Visit to Holy Jerusalem and to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, constitute a tangible witness to Your concern for the unity and peace of the Local Orthodox Churches.

Rightly appreciating the primatial ministry of Your Beatitude and Your reverence and love for the All-Holy Shrines and the Holy Land, we deem it fitting, on this sacred Feast of the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross, to present Your Beatitude with the Cross of the Holy Sepulchre, as an expression of honour and fraternal love in Christ, and, through You, to the entire devout flock of the Most Holy Church of Bulgaria.

“That He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the Cross” (Ephesians 2:16), the divine Paul proclaims. May the Precious Cross, therefore, be a source of strength and divine strengthening for Your lofty primatial ministry, that You may shepherd in a God-pleasing manner the devout flock of the Church of Bulgaria and, together with the other Primates of the Local Most Holy Orthodox Churches, contribute to the preservation of the peace, concord and unity of our Holy Orthodox Church.

May the God of peace bless and strengthen Your Beatitude and the entire devout flock of the beloved Church of Bulgaria.

Axios!

Many happy returns, Master! Mnogaya leta!”

Address in Response of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniil of Bulgaria:

“Your Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem, my dearly beloved Brother in Christ and

concelebrant, Primate of the ancient Throne of Holy Jerusalem, Theophilos,

Your Eminences and Your Graces, the Hierarchs,

Reverend Fathers,

Beloved brothers in the Lord,

With deep emotion and gratitude, we thank Your Beatitude for your warm and brotherly welcome, as well as for the words with which you have honoured us, our delegation, and the entire Orthodox Church of Bulgaria. Our first peaceful visit to Holy Jerusalem is an indescribable blessing for us. Here, before the Horrendous Golgotha and the Holy Sepulchre, we become more deeply conscious that the hope of the Church is founded upon the life-giving Cross and the life-bearing Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We were particularly moved by Your Beatitude's words concerning the centuries-old Christian presence of the Bulgarian people in these blessed lands. On behalf of the pious faithful of the Orthodox Church in Bulgaria, we convey to you their love and heartfelt prayers. Today's meeting here, at the Mother of all the Churches, renews the strong spiritual bonds between Jerusalem and Bulgaria. We also thank the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood for its tireless, undistracted, and devoted service at the most sacred Shrines of the Christian world.

During these days of the feast of the Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross, we offer a special prayer for peace in the Holy Land and throughout the whole world. May the Lord strengthen all those who are suffering from violence, grievous wars, destruction, insecurity, and fear. May His Cross, the "weapon of peace", cast out all fear and lead us also towards reconciliation, brotherly concord, and the preservation of the cherished unity of the Church.

From the depths of our heart, we thank Your Beatitude for the great honour of conferring upon us the Cross of the Holy Sepulchre. We gladly and most gratefully receive this sacred distinction as an expression of Your Beatitude's particular brotherly love towards us and, at the same time, towards the entire pious and Christ-loving faithful of the Church in Bulgaria. Be assured that it will remain for us a lasting reminder of today's fraternal meeting and of the communion in Christ shared by our Churches.

Your Beatitude, We pray that the Risen Lord may grant you steadfast health, strength, and longevity, and that He may strengthen the entire Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood in its renowned and sacred ministry. May the God of peace bless Holy

Jerusalem, our Churches, and all the peoples of the earth.

Many happy returns, Your Beatitude!”

Upon the conclusion of the addresses, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Bulgaria, Mr Daniil, was conferred with the Grand Cross of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, while His Eminence the Metropolitan of Nevrokop, Mr Seraphim, and His Grace the Bishop of Melnik, Mr Gerasimos, were decorated with the insignia of Grand Commander of the same Order.

The appropriate gifts for this festive occasion were also exchanged, in thanksgiving and doxology to God for granting this opportunity for the peaceful visit and communion in Christ between the two Churches, as a witness to the world of a message of unity, peace and reconciliation.

Finally, a dinner was hosted by His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos, at the Notre Dame Hotel, in honour of the Patriarch of Bulgaria and his entourage.



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