

The Commemoration of the Return of the Relics of Saint Sabas the Sanctified



On Monday, 13/26 October 2026, the Patriarchate solemnly commemorated the return of the sacred relics of our Venerable Father Sabas the Sanctified to his renowned Lavra. This historic event took place on 13/26 October 1965, a day still remembered by many of the Fathers of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood who witnessed this momentous occasion.

Following the requisite preparations and pursuant to a decision of the Holy and Sacred Synod dated 20 February 1965, a Patriarchal delegation departed for Rome on 15/28 March 1965. The delegation comprised the Elder Chief Secretary, Archbishop Basilios of Jordan; the Sacristan of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Reverend Archimandrite Germanos; the Spiritual Father of the Monastery of Saint Sabas, Archimandrite Seraphim; the Hegoumen of the Monastery of Bethany, Archimandrite Theodosios, all of whom have since fallen asleep in the Lord; and the

then Deacon Kyriakos, now His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth. Following the requisite meetings and consultations, and during the pontificate of Pope Paul VI, the delegation secured the return of the sacred relics of Saint Sabas the Sanctified from Venice, where they had been kept for centuries, to the Holy Lavra which the Saint himself had founded and which bears his venerable name.

The sacred relics arrived in Jerusalem on 13/26 October 1965, being received at Qalandia Airport before proceeding to Jaffa Gate. From there, the solemn procession, headed by the late Patriarch of Jerusalem Benedictos, made its way to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where the relics remained for seventeen days, affording the faithful the opportunity to venerate them. Thereafter, they were reverently conveyed to the Holy Lavra founded by the Saint himself, to serve as a source of consolation, healing and spiritual strengthening for the Fathers of Saint Sabas who pursue their ascetic life within its hallowed precincts, as well as for the devout pilgrims who resort to this venerable monastic sanctuary. A detailed account of this historic event, together with studies by Fathers of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood concerning the history of the illustrious Lavra, may be found in Volume 60 of the Patriarchate's periodical *Nea Sion*, published in 1965.

In solemn remembrance of this historic event, an all-night vigil was celebrated, presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Joakim of Helenopolis. Concelebrating with him were His Eminence Metropolitan Makarios of Acre-Ptolemais, Archimandrite Niphon, Fathers of the Monastery of Saint Sabas and Fathers of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, together with priests serving throughout the various regions under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Patriarchate. The congregation was further joined in prayer by members of the Patriarchate's flock from Galilee and Judea.

His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III was unable to attend, being in Jordan to participate in the funeral service for those unjustly slain in the village of Hmoud, in the region of Kyriakoupolis.

Upon the conclusion of the all-night vigil, a monastic meal was graciously offered by the Spiritual Father of the Monastery, Archimandrite Eudokimos, in honour of the episcopal entourage, the assembled Fathers and the faithful who had gathered for the celebration.

As the celebration drew to its close, His Eminence Metropolitan Joakim of Helenopolis, who had presided over the feast, bestowed his blessing upon the Fathers and expressed his gratitude for their hospitality. On his return journey to Jerusalem, he duly observed the established monastic custom of stopping at the

Holy Monastery of Abba Theodosios the Cenobiarch, where he was received with due courtesy and warmth by the monastery's Supervisor, the monk Ephraim.

The historic occasion was likewise commemorated by the celebration of the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Monastery of the Archangels in the Old City of Jerusalem, which houses a chapel dedicated to Saint Sabas the Sanctified. The Divine Liturgy was presided over by the Hegoumen of the Monastery, His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of Lydda, concelebrating with the First Cantor and Deacon Efstathios. The hymns were chanted by nuns of the Patriarchate, while His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Qatar attended the celebration in the company of monks, nuns, members of the faithful from Jerusalem and a small number of pilgrims.

From the Chief Secretariat



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