

## **The Jerusalem Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the First Martyr and Archdeacon Stephen**



On Thursday, December 27, 2019/January 9, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the commemoration of the First Martyr and Archdeacon Stephen at the Holy Church dedicated to him, which lies at the place of his stoning in Gethsemane and the Valley of the Cedars, near the Tomb of Theotokos.

According to the Book of the Acts of the Apostles (ch. 6-7), St. Stephen was elected by the Apostles to be one of the seven Deacons who were responsible for the ministering of the Refectories / the common meals in the first Christian Community of Jerusalem, which had Jews and Greeks Christians as members, because the widows of the Christians with a Hebrew descent were preferred in the common meals against the widows of the Greek Christians.

Stephen was full of faith and the Holy Spirit and for this reason the Jews brought him to the Sanhedrin. There, Stephen spoke referring to the history of the Jews and said he saw a vision with Jesus sitting on the right side of God the Father. Then the Jews arrested him, brought him to the Valley of the Cedars and stoned him to death, while a young man named Saul kept their garments and Stephen prayed "Lord, do not hold against them this sin".

In his Holy Church, Vespers was held in the afternoon and the Divine Liturgy in the morning of the Feast, led by the Most Reverend Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, with co-celebrants Archimandrite Makarios, Fr. Nectarios, Deacon Simeon and others.

After the Divine Liturgy there was a prayer at the place of St. Stephen's stoning and after the Dismissal Archimandrite Epiphanius offered a reception.

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