29/03/2020

Jerusalem Patriarchate celebrated the Name Day of Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos



On Saturday, March 15/28, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated in transference the Name Day of H.H.B. the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the Feast of the Holy Forty Martyrs who martyred at the lake of Sebastia of Pontus during the reign of Licinius in 320 A.D., as the Holy Martyr Theophilos was one of them.

In the afternoon.
On the eve of the Feast, after the reading of the 9th Hour at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, the Patriarchal entourage went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre through the staircase of St. James Cathedral, and held the Service of Great Vespers as “Parresia”. The Service with the Great Entrance and the Blessing of Bread was led by H.H.B. the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and only a few clergy, Geronda Sacristan Most Reverend Archbishop Isidoros of Hierapolis, Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos and Deacons. Their entrance was allowed by the Israeli Police in cooperation with the Patriarchate, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, from whose consequences may the Lord our God protect us.

After the Service of Vespers the Canon of the Akathist followed, with the 4th Stasis of the Salutations to the Most Holy Theotokos, led by His Eminence Archbishop

Demetrios of Lydda.

On the Feast Day
An All-night Vigil was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as the entrance was through St. James Cathedral and the Monastery of Abraham. The Service was officiated by H.H.B. the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishops Isidoros of Hierapolis and Aristovoulos of Madaba, Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, Dragouman Archimandrite Mattheos, Archdeacon Mark and Deacon Patrikios, and the participation of the Temple Fathers.

At 11.00 am the following morning, the Doxoloxy was chanted at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen with the participation of the Fathers of the Central Monastery.

Afterward, at the Reception Hall of the Patriarchate, Geronda Secretary-General Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina addressed His Beatitude as follows;

“Your Beatitude, Father and Master,

The commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs, who fought the good fight and were crowned at the lake of Sebastia of Pontus during the reign of Licinius in 320, is a feast we celebrate at the beginning of March and a stronghold of power and hope for the continuation of the spiritual fight of fasting, which concludes at the fair harbour of the bright day of the Resurrection.

If this feast is celebrated thus by the Church as a whole, it is especially celebrated by the Mother of Churches as it is also related to the fact that Your Beatitude bears the name of one of these martyrs.

Therefore, especially honouring the holy martyr Theophilos and Your Beatitude, this feast was celebrated as Parresia at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, with an All-night Vigil and the Doxology in the morning at the Monastic Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, with the participation of Hagiotaphite Fathers, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos and the Representative of the Moscow Patriarchate in MISSIA, Reverend Archimandrite Alexander, withing the limits of our ability to gather due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Having thanked the Lord in the Church and prayed for the health and stability of Your Beatitude, and now at the Reception Hall of the Patriarchate, we congratulate You for Your Name day, and offer You the righteous praise for all the good works You have accomplished for the benefit of the unity of Church of Christ in the bond

of peace, of the Pilgrimage and territorial rights of our Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and of the instruction of our reverend flock.

First of all, regarding the unity of the Church, Your Beatitude has made many efforts and actions, continuously underlining the need of the beginning of cultivating a dialogue, in order to achieve reconciliation and peace. Recognizing this contribution for the year 2018, the Moscow Patriarchate and His Holiness Patriarch Alexei II, has awarded You with the price for “outstanding activities in strengthening the unity of the Orthodox Christian nations” and “for upholding and promoting Christian values in the life of society”, at Your visit to Moscow last November after the personal invitation from the President of Russia Mr. Vladimir Putin.

As far as the works of spiritual enhancement and benefit of our flock are concerned, worth mentioning is the cooperation with the Palestinian Authorities for the renovation of the historic Church of St. Moses the Ethiopian in the Rafidia Community near Jacob’s well, the construction of the ikonostasion with the icons of the Sahnin Community in Ptolemaida-Acre district, and the activities of Your Beatitude, the founding of an Athletic Academy in Karak of Jordan and Your Beatitude’s local and international activities for the protection of the property of the Patriarchate in Jaffa Gate and the preservation of the long-term Biblical and internationally established Status Quo of the Old City of Jerusalem, for the benefit of our Brotherhood, of the flock and all the Christians and pilgrims of the Holy Land.

In order to succeed in these goals, You Beatitude has cultivated good co-operation relations with the Political Authorities. Regarding the relationship with Greece, this was made obvious with the recent President of the Greek Republic Mr. Prokopis Pavlopoulos at the Patriarchate and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, as well as that of the Minister of Tourism of Greece Mr. Haris Theoharous of the Secretary-General of the Public Diplomacy of Consulate and Religious Matters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Alexandris.

As far as the Patriarchate’s relations with the State of Israel are concerned, according to the Gospel’s words “give Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God”, Your Beatitude received at the Patriarchate the New Mayor of Jerusalem, and before the Heads of the local Christian Churches, mentioned the issue of the prominent unjust taxes on the Church properties, and at the ceremony of the Ministry of Tourism of Israel, You stressed the problem of the lack of water in the Christian Monasteries in Mount Tabor. Moreover, at the annual New Year meeting at the Presidential Residence, You asked the President Mr. Rouven Rivlin for the righteous solution of the unsolved issued of the properties of the

Patriarchate at Jaffa Gate, with the cancellation of the illegal agreements singed a few years ago.

Regarding the relations of the Patriarchate with Jordan, they were good, taking into consideration the bonds of the Royal family with the Patriarchate, the Jordanian law of the Patriarchate in 1957 and the custody Jordan exercises over the Christian and Muslim shrines in Jerusalem.

Within these relations, Your Beatitude was warmly welcomed in New Year's by the whole Mayoralty of Fhes town and His Royal Highness the King of Jordan Abdullah Ibn-Housein Althani hosted a special ceremony for our Christmas Feast, at the Baptism Site of the river Jordan, and received the Heads of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, who were guests of our Patriarchate in the brotherly meeting in Amman, for the beginning of the dialogue for the unity in the Orthodox Church, in respect of the "Primate's honour" of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and all its privileges under our Orthodox tradition.

Your Beatitude has also protected and safeguarded like "the pupil of the eye" the rights of our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and our nation, every time they were questioned, as was the case at the recent event at the Feast of Epiphany, when the Armenians unsuccessfully tried to prevent the placement of the Orthodox icon at the God-receiving Cave in Bethlehem, a right that has been established with the Status Quo for many years.

Encouraged by these, the Hagiotaphite Fathers stand by Your Beatitude's side in a common honest fight for the continuing protection of the heritage of our venerable Patriarchate and of our nation in the Holy Land, and the support of our Rum-Orthodox Arab-speaking flock, for the preservation of its identity and its development and increase towards works of common good.

Raising my glass in a toast, Your Beatitude, on behalf of the members of our Holy and Sacred Synod, and all the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, I wish You health and unshakable stability for many more years, in fruition and abundance of good works, for the praise of our blessed nation and the glory of our Trinitarian God."

The Archbishop's address was followed by addresses from the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, and the Representative of the Moscow Patriarchate, Head of the Russian MISSIA, Archimandrite Alexander.

His Beatitude thanked those present with the following address:

"Nobly enduring things present, and rejoicing in things hoped for, the holy Martyrs

said one to another: Shall we not indeed strip off this garment? Yea rather, let us cast off the old man. Bitter is winter, but sweet is Paradise; painful is this freezing, but pleasant shall be that enjoyment. Let us not waver, O fellow soldiers. Let us endure for a little while, that we may put on the crowns of victory given by Christ God, the Saviour of our souls", Basil the Great says on his sermon on the Forty Martyrs through the mouth fo the hymn writer of the Church. (Minaion March 9, Vespers, first idiomelon).

Your Excellency, Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos,

Reverend Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

"God is life, and light and those in the hands of God exist is life and light" St. John Damascene says about the souls of the saints, of the righteous ones, according to the Biblical words: "But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them" (Wisdom of Solomon 3:1) and "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His people" (Psalm 115:5).

Indeed, precious in the sight of the Lord was the death of today's honoured Holy Forty Martyrs and their co-martyr Theophilos, who martyred at the lake of Sebastia. These saints were not afraid of the threats of the tyrants, nor did they flinch by the insults of the torments, as they had the Cross of Christ their divine weapon, as the hymn writer of the Church says; we stand in owe before the struggles of the Holy Martyrs, as being in a mortal body they defeated the bodiless enemies; they were not afraid of the threats of the tyrants, nor were they intimidated by the instults of the torments; they were indeed worthy to be glorified by Christ, and that our souls may receive the great mercy.

The holy forty Martyrs were righteously glorified by Christ, because they sought the glory of God the Father rather than that of the people, as St. John the Evangelist says: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). For His sake, the Forty soldiers left every army of the world and entered the martyrdom of their blood, preaching not themselves, but the redeeming truth of Christ, Who shone into their hearts the light of knowledge of the glory of God the Father in Him (Christ), (2 Cor. 4:6).

The martyrdom of the glory of God the Father in His Only Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, Whom all martyrs along with those honoured today imitated, is witnessed and proclaimed continuously at the place of His Passion on the Cross and

the three-day burial of our Lord, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where we celebrated the sacrament of the Eucharist, of the bloodless sacrifice and praised in Doxology our All-merciful God.

The God-bearing Father of the Church Basil, praising the undefeated mind of the forty martyrs, who gladly rejected their last garments, urges us to hear their unity of faith: “We are not being undressed from our clothes, they said, but we denounce the old man in us, the corrupt by the disires of treachery. We thank Thee Lord, that we expel sin along with this garment. Because of the snake we got dressed, but for Christ’s sake we get undressed”.

The sacred commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs is calling us, my dear Brothers and Sisters, in the middle of the Great Lent, in order to become imitators of their Christ-like mind, as St. Basil the Great says: “For God is their common Father and everybody is their brother, as they were not born by a man and a woman, but by the adoption of the Spirit, adjusting in the unity through love with each other”.

Our Mediocrity, bearing the name of Theophilos, the co-martyr of the Holy Forth Martyrs, rend glory and thanksgiving to the Holy Trinitarian God on this Holy Feast, in which “we celebrate our salvation” but also our calling in this institutional mission, namely of the Shepherd of the Most Holy Church of Jerusalem, and of the Hegoumen of the Monastic Order of our Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood.

Every virtue and praise is owed to the Saints! They shed their blood, for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Who emptied Himself, taking upon Himself the form of a servant; these holy Martyrs of Christ, fighting on earth stepped upon the enemy and banished the falsehood of the idols, therefore they received the grace to heal the illnesses of the sick and while still in life and after death they work miracles, according to the hymn writer of the Church who speaks about the Lord’s words: “And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease” (Matt. 10:1).

Let us therefore pray to the Holy Forty Martyrs and their co-martyr Theophilos, who have boldness in heaven, so that by their intercesions and those of the Ever-Virgin Mary we may preach Christ Crucified, healer of our souls and bodies, and being free from the the Coronavirus epidemic, we may celebrate the bright Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For all these, we wish to all who prayed with us, those present and the absent ones

(due to the COVID-19 lockdown), strength from on high, the grace of the All-Holy and Life-giving Tomb, patience, and every blessing from God, expressing warm thanks to those who addressed US, Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, who spoke on behalf of our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, Reverend Archimandrite Alexander, Head of the Russian MISSIA and representative of the brotherly Holy Church of Russia, who conveyed the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril and all others who joined Us in this celebration.

To the health of all of you!”

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