

28/03/2021

The Nameday of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III was celebrated



On Saturday 14/27 March 2021, the Name Day of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III was celebrated by transference as “Parresia” (Boldness) according to the Status Quo at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

In the afternoon of the previous day, after the reading of the ninth Hour at the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen, the Patriarchal Entourage marched in Procession to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where Vespers was officiated in the Catholicon by His Beatitude, with Hagiotaphite Archbishops praying inside the Altar and the co-celebration of the Service was held by Hagiotaphite Hieromonks.

On Feast Day, the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom was officiated by His Beatitude at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Co-celebrants to His Beatitude were their Eminences; Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the

Archbishops; Damascene of Yaffo, Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Theodosios of Sebastia, Demetrios of Lydda, Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis and Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, Archdeacon Mark and other Deacons. The chanting was delivered by the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod Hierodeacon Simeon, the Patriarchal Representative in Acre-Ptolemais Reverend Archimandrite Philotheos and Mr Vasilios Gotsopoulos, at the presence of the Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras, Monks, Nuns and members of the Greek Community of the Patriarchate's flock.

After the Divine Liturgy, there was a Doxology for the commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs and the event of the celebration of His Beatitude's Name Day.

The Doxology was followed by the return to the Patriarchate Headquarters, where Geronda Secretary-General addressed His Beatitude as follows:

"Your Beatitude Father and Master,

The commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs, who confessed the Name of Christ and were brutally tortured, suffering martyrdom at the glacier of the lake Sabastia of Pontus during the reign of Licinius in AD 320, projects the 9th March as a bright station of spiritual supply of courage and hope for the faithful, in order to continue the fasting and every other virtue in their course towards the experience of the Holy Pascha.

These Martyrs, who fought well and received the crown of victory are festively honoured by the whole Church today because they considered death as nought, and through death, they exchanged the earthly life with the unending eternal one. "They lost their souls, their lives for the sake of Christ and found it again in Him" (Matt. 10:39). They are more festively celebrated by the Mother of Churches and the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood because Your Beatitude bears the name of one of them. Honouring these Saints today, and as a Martyr, the Church of Jerusalem offers its deep respect to Your Beatitude, the owned honour and the monastic and Hagiotaphite obedience in Christ. Following the Status Quo, we celebrated the Divine Eucharist with a Doxology at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Body and Blood of Christ were united, and by this power, there was intercession for the unity of faith and the communion in Christ in its bosom and among the Orthodox Churches of God. We firstly prayed for the health and stability of our Father and Shepherd. We asked God that He may "grant Your Beatitude to the holy Churches in peace, sound, righteous, healthy, in long life and keep the word of truth right".

By the dwelling in us of the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth from the divine Eucharist,

we truly address Your Beatitude in this historic hall of the Patriarchate, remembering all things of good fame, zeal and tireless Pastoral care You have accomplished for our Patriarchate.

Initially, it is mentioned that Your Beatitude has made every effort so that the holy Shrines, which suffer unprecedented consequences in their long history due to the lack of pilgrims within the covid-19 pandemic, still function as places of worship with the keeping of all Liturgical Services according to the Status Quo, with few or more Monks, Nuns or local faithful Christians, after the agreement with the Health Authorities of each area of the Patriarchate's jurisdiction.

The unavoidably influenced by the pandemic spiritual and administrative communication has been conducted through the internet with the well-known by now "zoom", either for the resumption of the dialogue to strengthen the unity between the Orthodox Churches, or for the activation of issues of participation of the Patriarchate at the World Council of Churches or the Middle East Council of Churches, or for the meetings of the Heads of the Christian Churches in Jerusalem under the care of the Patriarchate, or for the operation of the Synodical institution, enabling thus the participation of the members of the Holy and Sacred Synod who live in Greece and Jordan.

As far as the financial issue is concerned, yes, there have been delays in the payment of the monthly blessing of the Hagiotaphite Fathers, the clergy and teachers' salaries, as well as of other employees of the Patriarchate, mainly due to the pandemic, resulting in difficulties of money transactions by the banks, however, there have not in any case been any pay cuts nor layoffs. Relevant to this, we should mention in gratitude that the granted financial aid to Monks and Clergy by the Greek General Consulate in Jerusalem, through a noble source a few months ago, came like the dew of Hermon in the existing financial draught.

For the needs of the Holy Churches of our Rum-Orthodox Arab-speaking flock, our Patriarchate responded through the aid of donors, as in the case of the iconostasis and the icons of the Holy Church of Saints Constantine and Helen in Kufr Smea and of the Holy Church of the Dormition in Sahnin Community of Acre-Ptolemais area in northern Israel.

The care and persistence You showed from the beginning for the securing of the real estate of the Patriarchate continued with the recent payment of City Hall tax, known as “arnona” of 2.000.000 Nis, for the securing of Petra hotel by Jaffa Gate, which has unjustly been involved in the opaque illegal and catastrophic for the finances of the Patriarchate agreement of 2003.

All these, Your Beatitude, are recalled, not for boasting and rest, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14), but in order to strengthen the mindset of hope and cooperation among us as members of the honoured venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, and our cooperation, the members, with our Spiritual Head of Yours, as our Hegoumen, so that we may find ourselves keeping the advice of Saint Basil the Great, “to have the love of one another in our nature” and “to prefer the social and united than the schismatic and peculiar”(Speech 8, EPE 4, p.328). Acting thus, behaving thus, living thus, we become worthy and continuators of our ancestors who spent their lives in fights, deprivations and sacrifices in order to sustain Orthodoxy and the inheritance of the nation of the Byzantine Romans in the Holy Land, who also contributed in the liberation of our nation from the bitter slavery of the four hundred years, of which we celebrate the 200th anniversary.

Raising my glass to toast, Your Beatitude Father and Master, I wish You on behalf of the Brotherhood and the Holy and Sacred Synod, many happy returns, in peace, joy, stability, in full governmental power of the Holy Spirit, in order to guide the vessel of the Church of Jerusalem and of the Brotherhood enlightened by the good works of the Gospel, to harbours of fair life and of salvation, for the praise of our blessed nation and the glory of our God in one Trinity. So be it.”

After His Eminence, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras addressed His Beatitude as follows:

“Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences,

Reverend Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today’s celebration has special importance for all of us, the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and the pious flock, among them those serving in the Consulate General of Greece, as we honour the name day of the Primate of the Church of

Jerusalem, the Mother of Churches, His Holy Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III.

It is a great pleasure for me to attend this celebration for the first time since taking office in Jerusalem.

Your Beatitude, on this occasion, allow me, on behalf of the Greek State, to express to you the respect, love and gratitude of Greece for Your great pastoral work, for the important and national work of preserving and promoting the Holy Shrines to the Holy Land and for the defence and promotion of the universal values of Orthodoxy in it.

Through a series of Your initiatives, You have been promoting the restoration and promotion of the Holy Shrines of Christianity, while taking care of the maintenance of the Status Quo in the Holy Land and the spiritual guidance and prosperity of a flock that is undergoing significant trials.

Your devotion to these sacred duties, Your dedication to this multidimensional work, Your tireless efforts, Your insight and integrity, with which You carry out Your high mission, are recognized by all, establishing the Patriarchate of Jerusalem as a leading factor of peace, reconciliation and moderation, in a troubled region that still faces great challenges and where many declare their desire for a peaceful future, but few work honestly and effectively to achieve it.

The sincere disposition of concert, reconciliation, and tranquillity that You display and systematically cultivate, not only in Your relations with other doctrines and other religions, in the particular environment of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, but also in the context of the wider effort of reconciliation and peace-making in this multi-tested area, steels the moral stature and prestige of our Patriarchate, making it a factor of moderation and stability, in an era of liquidity, instability and reorganization that seem to favour fanaticism, intolerance and controversy.

It is certain that the Holy Institution draws strength from the long history and tradition, from the unity, the deep faith and devotion of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and from its leadership, which with conscious knowledge and perception of the circumstances, with vigour and determination, cares for the present and its future.

Let me address to You our most sincere and heartfelt wishes for health, longevity and support from the Lord so that You can continue to carry out Your high mission.

I would also like to assure You and the members of the Brotherhood that our

solidarity and support to our Patriarchate, to the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and to You personally is and remains complete and essential, and to express our recognition and admiration for the significant work performed here, as well as for the devotion of the Members of the Brotherhood for the protection, with zeal and self-denial, of the Holy Shrines, which we encounter in all our visits here and which is particularly moving, especially when it is encountered in the aftermath of the current infectious disease. On this occasion, let me express our gratitude for the unparalleled hospitality we have received during our visits here.

Your Beatitude,

The great contribution of the Patriarchate and You personally to Orthodoxy and Hellenism, as a long-term custodian of a valuable religious and historical tradition, is widely known. Therefore, for Greece, the defence of the Institution of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, its rights and entitlements, is a very important priority, as recently emphasized by His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs of our country, Mr Nikolaos Dendias.

The Greek State and the Greek faithful surround with love and devotion Your work and the work of the Holy Fathers and we pray that You may have health, strength, and longevity for the good of the Patriarchate, the Brotherhood, Your Rum Orthodox Flock, the uninterrupted Orthodox Matyria (testimony) in the Holy Land and for the peace in the area.

Many happy and blessed returns!”

His Beatitude thanked all who addressed Him with the following:

“We are not going to admire only one, not even only two...but forty men, who have shown one soul in separate bodies, in one accord and unity of faith, one endurance in the sufferings and boldness for the truth,” Saint Basil says, praising the Forty Martyrs.

Your Excellency, Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brethren,

Noble Christians and pilgrims

“O Lord of hosts, who is like unto Thee? Mighty art Thou, O Lord, and Thy truth is round about Thee” (Psalm 88:8) the Holy Church of Christ cries out loud through the psalmist, on the sacred commemoration of the godly chorea of the Holy Forty Martyrs, who suffered their martyrdom in the city of Sebastia.

These Forty Martyrs, as if having one soul in separate bodies, “courageously entered the water of the lake, and while being contracted by the cold, sent up a song unto the Lord: Be not wroth with us in the rivers O Lord; be not wroth with us in the rivers O Friend of man. Lighten the burden and the bitterness of the air; for with our own blood have our feet been dyed, and Thou, O God, hast led us into Thine everlasting tabernacles, that the bosom of the Patriarch Abraham may warm us” (Minaion, March 9, Matins, Praises Troparion of 2nd Tone), their hymnographer exclaims.

The Holy Forty Martyrs said to the Lord as if having one mouth, “with our own blood have our feet been dyed”, following the true witness of Saint John the Theologian: “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). In this faith in Christ did the holy Martyrs see the true light, “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding” (Phil. 4:7) and the “unspeakable joy” (1 Peter 1:8), for these, they zealously sought the cleansing of their sins through their martyrs’ blood.

Today’s celebrated commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs and especially of their co-martyr Theophilos, as Our Mediocrity bears his name, is a blessed action by God. And this, because the Martyrs who turned the earth into heaven, became luminaries of the universe, namely preachers of the Passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on the Cross, and His Resurrection, saying along with Saint Paul: “in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death” (Phil. 1:20).

This distinctive characteristic is noted by Saint Basil the Great, by saying that the Holy Forty Martyrs “have shown one accord and unity of faith, one endurance in the sufferings and boldness for the truth”.

Our Holy Church of Jerusalem, as an eye-and-ear witness of the death on the Cross and the three-day burial and Resurrection of our Lord, honouring the sacred commemoration of the Holy athletes and Martyrs, and especially of their co-martyr Theophilos, held the “mystical blessing”, that is the great Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, officiated by Our Mediocrity,

surrounded by the members of our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, Archbishops, Priests and Hierodeacons, with the participation in prayer of noble Christians of our flock, glorifying thus the One who has glorified His Saints.

Moreover, we offered a Doxology to the Holy God in one Trinity for Our name day, with the celebration of the Holy athlete and Martyr Theophilos. "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:20), Saint Paul orders.

The celebrated commemoration of the Holy Forty Martyrs and especially of their co-martyr Theophilos in the liturgic time of the Church, does not only refer to Our Mediocrity, but especially and primarily to the Apostolic Patriarchal institution, through which it is shown that Christ "is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:17-18), "which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). The Holy Forty Martyrs became communicants and shared this very blood, the blood of Christ.

Amidst the current test of humanity by the deadly Corona disease, the honoured Holy Forty Martyrs "speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (1 Cor. 14:3). And this, because according to Saint Basil, "they are common guardians of the humankind, benign, care participants, prayer accomplices, mighty strong ambassadors, stars of the universe, flowers of the Churches". "Theirs is the voice; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place" (Psalm 66:12).

The Holy Martyrs again talk to us about "the one mind and unity of the faith", namely the unity of the local Orthodox Churches. "There was not one homeland for the Saints", Saint Basil says, "for each one retreated to a different place... As for their human nation, it was different for each of them, while the spiritual [nation] was one for all. For their common Father is God, and all are brethren, not born from one man and one woman, but from the adoption of the Spirit they have been interlocked in the concord of love with one another". In other words, theirs is the voice, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

To this calling of the testimony of unity, peace and the love of the Gospel of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ we are called, my dear brethren, especially during this blessed period of the Great Lent, having the Holy Forty Martyrs helpers, along with their co-martyr Theophilos, and the Most Blessed Mother of God, the Ever-Virgin Mary. Let us entreat them, that in peace, humility and repentance, we may be granted the luminous Resurrection of our God and Saviour of our souls.

For these, we call upon all who prayed along with Us, and honoured Us in this commemoration of the Saints, to have strength from on high, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the grace of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb, patience, and every blessing from God, expressing also warm thanks to all who addressed Us; Geronda Secretary-General, Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, who spoke on behalf of the members of the Holy and Sacred Synod and the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras, Reverend Archimandrite Alexander, representative of the Brotherly Church of Russia, who read the wishes of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril, His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Nazareth, His Eminence Archbishop Damascene of Yaffo, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Yaffo, His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba, who spoke on behalf of the newly-established Beersheba Community, Reverend Father Farah Bandour, who spoke on behalf of Saint James' Cathedral, Reverend Archimandrite Philotheos, who spoke on behalf of our flock in Acre-Ptolemais, Reverend Archimandrite Niphon, on behalf of the Community of Remla, and all who attended this celebration.

To the health of all of you!"

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Saint Joseph the Hesychast

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