23/11/2021

THE SIXTEENTH ENTHRONEMENT ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM



On Monday, 9/22 November 2021, the Patriarchate celebrated the sixteenth election and enthronement anniversary of His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos at the glorious throne of the Mother of Churches.

For this joyful and important event, there was a Doxology at the Catholicon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at 10.30 a.m. The Doxology was led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with co-celebrants the Hagiotaphite High Priests, Hieromonks and Deacons, and the participation in prayer of Monks and Nuns from all areas of the Patriarchate's jurisdiction, along with laity faithful, and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

After the Doxology, bells tolling, everybody returned to the Patriarchate Headquarters.

At the Great Hall, Geronda Secretary-General, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina addressed His Beatitude on behalf of the Holy and Sacred Synod and the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood as follows:

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

A rather joyful and important event has gathered today the reverend members of our Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood and the Christian congregation of the Church in a gathering of Doxology at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

This event is Your Beatitude’s election and enthronement at the glorious and martyr’s throne of the Mother of Churches, sixteen years ago, by the canonical and unanimous voting of the members of the Holy and Sacred Synod and the representatives of our Rum Orthodox Arab-speaking flock. This happened after a period of harsh testing which endangered but did not destroy the vessel of the Church. Then the Brotherhood stood up to its height and the demands of its mission, condemned and renounced the illegal agreements of deporting property of the Patriarchate of incalculable material and cultural value, undermining the Status Quo of the Old City of Jerusalem and placed Your Beatitude on the Patriarchal Throne, to guide the vessel of the Church from the stormy sea of foggy corruption in the prosperous port of honesty, justice and transparency.

Having received the order, Your Beatitude did not waste any time, nor hesitated on toils and pains and efforts, but on the contrary, rushed with all Your might to costly court trials and meetings with local and foreign people of authority and influence for the refutation of the illegal agreements which were signed without the approval of our Holy and Sacred Synod and the knowledge of the Brotherhood. This interest You Beatitude extended to the utilization of the property of the Holy Sepulchre in Greece through a system of financial transparency, able to bring to the Patriarchate income corresponding to its heavy costs. With the same responsibility and sensitivity, Your Beatitude was also responded to the financial reports submitted by the Exarch of the Holy Sepulchre in the Church of Cyprus.

Your Beatitude exhibited also a lively, practical and effective interest in the preservation of the Pilgrimage rights of the Brotherhood and our nation in cooperation with the Custody of the Franciscans in the Holy Land, through the reverting of attempts to create permanent situations by the Armenians, such as the case of the placing of curtains by us at the God-receiving Cave in Bethlehem, the cathode of the Orthodox Icon in the Cave during our Vespers when our Feast of Epiphany coincides with the Armenian Christmas and it is a Sunday or a Monday.

Moreover, the removing of the barriers the Armenians illegally placed on the façade of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the exercising of our right to offer incense inside the altar of the Armenian chapel of Saint Helen and our attitude regarding this matter on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the cessation of the Armenians' work at their chapel of Saint John the Theologian in the courtyard of the Holy Sepulchre until an agreement among the Three Major Communities is reached.

The actions and efforts of Your Beatitude for the preservation of the Church property and the Pilgrimage rights of the Patriarchate did not in the least divert You from exercising the pure Pastoral work through Your title as the Hegoumen of the Brotherhood or as the Patriarch of the Rum Orthodox Arab-speaking flock of ours. Over the past years and during the current one of the pandemic, Your Beatitude visited the celebrating Holy Monasteries and Communities and strengthened the mindset of the Monks and the faithful either by words or by financial help. Similarly, You have received at the Patriarchate Priests and caretakers of the flock and guided them to the most convenient for them solution to their Communities' problems. However, the most tangible support of Your Beatitude and the Patriarchate to the flock has been the recent agreement between the Patriarchate and the international company Raouabi, after the gaining of the relevant licence by the Jerusalem Municipality, for the construction of the "Al-Quds Lana" in Bir Nabala Beit Hanina in East Jerusalem on property that belongs to the Patriarchate. This will include four hundred flats, a school, shops, offices, a mall, recreation areas and parking spaces and will offer great relief in the suffocating housing problem of the Community of Jerusalem.

The new radiographic machine donated to the clinic 'Saint Benedictos' by Mr Athanasios Martinos by Your Beatitude's actions and those of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras will contribute to the better medical care of the flock members and of every ill person, regardless of religion and nationality.

For the prosperity of the Christians in the Holy Land, the cooperation between the local Christian Churches was cultivated by the care of Your Beatitude at the Patriarchate. We have maintained the community in Christ among the brotherly Orthodox Churches, with Your Beatitude always stressing the necessity of continuation of the dialogue for the solving of pressing issues.

For the continuation, increase and enrichment of the God-pleasing work of Your Beatitude, the Holy and Sacred Synod and the whole Brotherhood stand by Your side and walk along with You, with each member offering his own qualifications, experience, education, love in Christ, obedience and respect to the Patriarchal institution and to You, its Primate, who “stands in type and place of Christ”.

On behalf of the Holy and Sacred Synod and the Brotherhood, I raise my glass on a toast Your Beatitude, wishing You many happy returns, peaceful, joyful, stable and fruitful, in strong governmental power, by the Holy Spirit, and in jubilation of Your children, as fruitful newly planted olive trees, surrounding Your table, for the praise of our blessed nation and the glory of our Trinitarian God. So be it.”

Then the Consul General of Greece Mr Vlioras addressed His Beatitude, followed by the representatives of the communities of the flock, the representative of the Russian Church and others.

Thanking all those, His Beatitude addressed all as follows:

“I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name forever and ever” (Psalm 145:1), King-Prophet David chants.

Your Excellency Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Evangelos Vlioras,

Reverend Holy Fathers and Brothers,

Beloved Christians,

The vineyard of the Lord, namely the Holy Church of Jerusalem, “which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself” (Psalm 80:15-16), celebrates today the sixteenth anniversary of the settlement of Our Mediocrity at the Apostolic Throne of the Holy and righteous James the Brother of God and its First Hierarch.

This festal anniversary does not refer to Our unworthiness, but to the God-founded and Apostolic institution of the Church “and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28), according to the Evangelist Luke.

That is why, along with the Reverend members of the Venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, we went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where we rendered a thanksgiving Doxology to our Holy Trinitarian God, “which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13) according to Paul.

Our care and ministry so far of the Patriarch, Hegoumen, Monastic and Shepherd “on the throne of grace of the High Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, who came from Heavens, from Whom we receive mercy and grace” (ref. Hebrews 4:14-15), that is the throne of the Mother of Churches and the Holy Zion, the dwelling place of God, has only one purpose; the keeping of the God-given Apostolic tradition and the consignment of the healthy faith and the keeping the word of truth right, through Jesus Christ, according to the witness of Saint John the Evangelist; “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).

Moreover, to the preservation of the All-holy Shrines which are the tangible and true witnesses of the great mystery of reverence (1 Tim. 3:16), but also to the holy places of the logical worship as well as the defence of the irrefutable and sovereign rights of the noble and royal nation of the Rum Orthodox Christians.

Nevertheless, hearkening to the Lord’s command: “that you should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me” (Acts 1:4), we have not ceased raising our voice toward all directions in this country and internationally in favour of the non-alteration of the multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic character of the Holy City of Jerusalem, which is the spiritual capital of the whole world, especially for the moral and material strengthening of the Christians living in the Holy Land.

This is what we do under the care of the Holy Presence, the leading institutional role of our Venerable Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the internationally recognized, in the exercise of its spiritual and religious mission, but also in the care for the preservation of the existing Status Quo, both in its pilgrimage and demographic character in the Holy City of Jerusalem, threatened by those who lurk for its deterioration. “Casting all your care upon him; for He careth for you”, Saint Peter advises (1 Peter 5:7).

This sixteenth enthronement anniversary of Our Mediocrity calls us not to boasting, but to vigilance. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8), the Chief of the Apostles Peter says. “For our boast is in Christ”, Saint Paul preaches, “the

testimony of our conscience” (ref. 2 Cor. 1:12).

Keeping “this rule” (Gal. 6:16), namely Paul’s word, “the testimony of our conscience” we are called to complete our ministry, to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5), in the contemporary world of globalization through which “the mystery of iniquity doth already work” (2 Thess. 2:7), namely, “blasphemy, pride, foolishness” (Mark 7:22).

In Our ministry as a Patriarch and Hegoumen at the Apostolic and martyr’s throne of Saint James the Brother of God, We have as colleagues and co-celebrants our reverend and dear in Christ Fathers and Hagiotaphite brothers, the High Priests, Priests, Hieromonks, Deacons and Monks, distinguished for their Godly zeal and sacrificial Hagiotaphite self-sacrifice, who hear to the words of the Holy Hieromartyr Ignatios of Antioch: “Let us love one another in unity, and let no one see his fellow man according to the flesh, but in Christ Jesus. Let there be nothing among us able to divide us; but be united with the Bishop, submitting to God through him in Christ”.

Truly we say that our struggle is a struggle against the craftiness of deception (Eph. 4:14) and division, namely the schism of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of the Ecumenical Orthodoxy. “… every city or house divided against itself shall not stand” (Matt. 12:25) the Lord says. That is why we who serve in the holy places of the Nativity, Crucifixion and Resurrection of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, “by whom we have now received the atonement” (Romans 5:11), do not cease praying for the keeping of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

These methods of delusion, division and falsehood of the devil are recorded in the sacred history of the past, but also of the present era, of the Church in general and of the Church of Jerusalem in particular, that is, of the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which is calumniated but not vanquished by the sons of the darkness of this century (Luke 18: 8).

Let us entreat our God the Father of lights and truth, “to guide our steps to the working of his commandments” through the intercessions of our Most-Blessed Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, and of our Father among the Saints Nectarios of Pentapolis. May the grace of the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb of our Saviour Christ fortify all of us in the ministry of the All-holy Shrines, the true witnesses of our faith, and of the shepherding of our Christian flock which is tested by the pandemic plague of coronavirus.

For all these, we call upon all who prayed along with Us and honoured with their presence this enthronement anniversary of Ours, wishing them strength from on high, the enlightening power of the Holy Sepulchre, patience and every blessing from God, expressing also Our warm thanks to all who addressed Us; Geronda Secretary-General, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, who spoke on behalf of the Holy Synod and our Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, His Excellency the Consul General of Greece Mr Evangelos Vlioras, Reverend Archimandrite Alexander the representative of the Brotherly Holy Church of Russia, who conveyed 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 the Archbishop Damascene of Yaffo who spoke on behalf of our flock in Yaffo, Reverend Father Charalambos Bandour who spoke on behalf of Saint James Cathedral, Reverend Archimandrite Philotheos who spoke on behalf of the Community of Acre-Ptolemais, the Principal of Saint Demetrios School of the Patriarchate Mr Samir Zananir and the teachers Mrs Kafetzi and Mr Kongos, Mr Moris Sabela who spoke on behalf of the polyclinic ‘Saint Benedictos’, His Eminence Archbishop Aristovoulos of Madaba who spoke on behalf of the Russian-speaking community in Ashdod, Mr Athanasios Abu Eta and Ode Issa, the Hagiographer Gabriel and all who participated in the celebration of this enthronement anniversary.”

After the ceremony at the Patriarchate’s Hall, there was a monastic meal at the refectory of the Patriarchate.

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