20/04/2022

BROTHERHOOD VISITS FOR THE EASTER FEAST OF THE WESTERN CHURCHES



On Holy Tuesday morning, 6/19 April 2022, the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood according to the custom and contributing to the peaceful pilgrims' coexistence, visited the Franciscan Fraternity Custodian in the Holy Land for the Feast of Easter.

For this visit, the Hegoumen of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed all present as follows:

"Your Paternity, dear Father Francesco,

Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

We greet you today as you celebrate the Feast of Easter with joy and in Paschal hope. As Saint John of Damascus says on this feast:

For it is meet that the heavens should rejoice,

and that the earth should be glad,

and that the whole world, both visible and invisible,

should keep the feast;

for Christ, our everlasting joy, hath risen.

(The Canon of Pascha)

We celebrate the Paschal Feast with joy and hope, even in the face of so many challenges around the world and throughout our region. We celebrate the Paschal Feast with joy and hope, even in the face of conflicts and wars around the world. We celebrate the Paschal Feast with joy and hope, even in the face of grave difficulties facing our communities in this Holy City.

For we are privileged to celebrate Easter on the very spot where the blood of the Righteous One was shed and in the very place from which He was raised from the dead. This alone is a cause of joy and hope.

We remind ourselves at Easter that ours is an apostolic mission as the guardians and servants of the Holy Places, a mission of prayer, peace, reconciliation, and salvation.

And we have seen remarkable fruits of this mission in our common work to continue and complete the restoration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. At no time in our history have our two Brotherhoods been in closer alliance and collaboration, and this is itself a cause of both joy and hope. We wish to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to you for your unwavering commitment to this work.

In our common mission, we continue to work to defend the rights of Christians to worship at the Holy Places and especially in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre during this holiest of seasons in the face of the attempts by the authorities to restrict the number of worshipers. Together, we are standing against increasing threats from Israeli radical groups at Jaffa Gate and at New Gate, which have been exacerbated by the trespass into the Little Petra Hostel. And these incidents are in addition to the increase in the daily insults and intimidation to which our clergy and people are subjected.

As we celebrate this joyful and hopeful Paschal season, we recommit ourselves to our shared responsibility to do all in our power to preserve the Christian character of Jerusalem and to make it possible morally, spiritually, and materially for Christians to remain here in Jerusalem and in the Middle East. This is our home, and the power of the witness of the Gospel of peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation in our broken and confused world depends on a vibrant Christian presence in the Holy Land.

We wish you, dear Father Francesco, your Brotherhood and the communities that you serve, a joyful and hope-filled Easter.

Christ is risen!

Thank you."

After this visit, the Brotherhood visited the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem, under the leadership of its Patriarch, Mr Pierre Batista Pizabala. During this visit His Beatitude delivered the following address:

"Your Beatitude, dear Archbishop Pizzaballa,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers,

We greet you, Your Beatitude, on the occasion of your celebration of the Easter Feast with the joyful words of the hymnographer:

Rejoice, O peoples, and be glad.

An angel sat upon the stone of the tomb;

He himself proclaimed the glad tidings to us, saying:

Christ is risen from the dead,

the Saviour of the world,

and he has filled all things with fragrance.

Rejoice, O peoples and be glad.

(Matins of Bright Week)

We keep this joyful Paschal season at a time of great difficulty. Around the world, in our region, and in this Holy City, the human family faces a tremendous challenge. There are wars and conflicts abroad, and here at home, the Christian communities are enduring unprecedented threats to our very existence and to the integrity of the true character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

And yet, we keep the Paschal Feast with joy and confidence. We are bound together in our common mission here, and we have shown our united witness in the face of those who would undermine both our way of life as well as the historic and universally recognised basis of our rights and privileges as those who have lived and worshipped here for centuries. We are the living witness that Jerusalem and the Holy Land belong to one community exclusively; this is a home to peoples of diverse faiths and traditions, and our mission is to ensure that all may live and worship in Jerusalem and the Holy Land safely and in harmony.

We wish to take this opportunity to commend you, Your Beatitude, for your ongoing commitment to your own pastoral work and mission. In times like the present, when our people are living under such tremendous pressure, the pastoral vocation of the Church I sour the utmost importance. We have the responsibility to do all that is in our power – morally, spiritually and practically – to support and help our communities so that Christians are able to remain here in their homes and with their livelihoods. At no other time in recent history has the health and strength of the Christian presence here been more vital.

The good relations that we share and the common witness in the face of challenges that we show are of crucial importance in maintaining the Christian presence here. We are committed to deepening these relations and strengthening our common witness so that the world may know and understand the seriousness of our mission.

Among these commitments is the defence of the rights of Christians to worship at the Holy Places and especially in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre during this holiest of seasons in the face of the attempts by the authorities to restrict the numbers of worshipers. Also, we stand together to protect the Christian Quarter against increasing threats from Israeli radical groups at Jaffa Gate and at New Gate, which have now found a new extreme in the trespass into the Little Petra Hostel. And we continue to raise our collective voice in the face of increased daily insults and intimidation to which our clergy and people are subjected.

Our shared commitment to defend and preserve the Christian presence here gives

us joy and confidence in this Paschal season, and this is why we can rejoice, even in the face of all that is happening in our world and in our region. For in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead we have been given the assurance of the ultimate victory of life over death. As Saint Paul reminds us,

I am convinced that neither death,

nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present,

nor things to come, nor powers,

nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,

will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Romans 8:38-39)

We wish you, Your Beatitude, and your communities, the joy of this Easter Feast, and the confidence that is our in the resurrection. MAY God bless you and you care for those who are entrusted to your pastoral oversight.

Christ is risen!

Thank you.”

Finally, His Beatitude, accompanied by the Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos and Geronda Secretary-General, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina visited the Apostolic Delegate, representative of the Vatican in Jerusalem and the Archbishop of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem Most Reverend Naoum Housam.



From Secretariat-General

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