

Centennial Pilgrimage Continues in Jerusalem



GOARCH Centennial Pilgrims made their way to the Holy Land on Thursday after paying respects to the Mother Church at the Phanar last week. The Holy City, Jerusalem, is the place where “the mystery of our salvation took place,” His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros said, addressing the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III, during the pilgrims’ private audience with His Beatitude on December 2. “For me personally, it’s the first time I’m in the Holy Land— and for many among us— but even for those who are not [here] for the first time, it’s the same feeling; it’s the same sentiment of deep respect and of humble feelings [as] we see, we walk, we enter the holy sites where everything that is written in the Holy Gospels took place.”

Patriarch Theophilos also emphasized that Jerusalem’s status as globally recognized “holy city” derived from more than the sheer number of sacred sites the world’s three Abrahamic faiths share there. From Moses’s encounter with the Lord on Mount Sinai, to the nativity of Christ and His crucifixion, passion, and resurrection, to the burial of His very body in the earth, “here the divine-human encounter took place,” His Beatitude said.

“This part of the earth is full of divine energy,” he said, and pilgrims’ encounter with it would be through a “pilgrimage of vision,” or one through which they would

bear witness to the city's sacred history with their own eyes.

As participants travelled through the Old City, they met this “divine energy” around every corner on the Via Dolorosa, or the Way of the Cross, and in every stone of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the site of Christ's death and resurrection. At the entrance of the Church, for example, stands a column split open by the Holy Fire in the 1500s to reach the Orthodox patriarch and believers after Ottoman authorities refused to let them inside.

The scent emanating from the Stone of Anointing, upon which Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus washed the body of the Lord after taking it down from the cross; the handprint of Jesus, at the Fifth Station of the Cross, where He had placed his hand on a wall to steady Himself as He bore His punishment; and even the sounds of the hymns sung by Ukrainian Orthodox pilgrims also walking the Via Dolorosa, made for a powerful, if not overwhelming, encounter with Jerusalem's sacred and living history.

Photos: GOARCH/Brittainy Newman

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