

26/06/2023

THE FUNERAL SERVICE OF THE BLESSED ARCHIMANDRITE PHILOTHEOS OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE BROTHERHOOD



At 11:00 am on Saturday, June 11/24, 2023, the funeral service for the repose of the soul of the blessed Archimandrite Philotheos Vardakis of the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood, who served as an Episcopal Commissioner at the Province of Acre – Ptolemais of Northern Israel and slept in the Lord on the evening of Thursday 9th / 22nd June 2023, after falling from scaffolding while repairing the wall of the Holy Church of Saint George in Acre.

The Funeral Service was presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with the Holy Sepulchre High Priests and Hieromonks, in the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras, Jerusalem faithful and Greek Orthodox Arabic-speaking Priests and the faithful people, who came from the communes of the region of Acre.

The obituary was delivered by the Elder Secretary-General, His Eminence

Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina as follows:

“The sudden and violent departure to the Lord of our beloved brother Archimandrite Philotheos, Hierarchical Commissioner of the Metropolis of Ptolemais - Acre, gathered us together in mourning around the completion of his funeral service. We stand in tears before his corpse, just like the Lord stood in tears before the tomb of this four-day-dead friend Lazarus, whom He resurrected from the dead. Our soul is captured by fear and cowardice before the mystery of death, but never despairing, since even our Lord was afraid before His death on the cross and begged the Father, “If it is possible, let this cup pass from Him”. Cowardice before death is one of the ineradicable human passions, which the Lord condescended to, becoming Incarnate for our salvation. Circling the dead body of our beloved brother, we are “sad for the parting” and hear the words of the hymnographer, “I mourn and weep when I think of death”.

Nevertheless, while we humanly contemplate these things, it does not distract our attention that death was redeemed through death, namely the death on the Cross of the Son of God, the God-man Jesus Christ. Our Lord willingly accepted death and through His death, He redeemed our death. He died as a man and rose as a God-man. Life arose from the grave, the grave shone bright with life. In the power and light of the Resurrection of Christ, death is only the separation of the soul from the body. It is sleep. Death is the sleep of those who sleep in hope of the resurrection. As the Holy Bible says: “those in the monuments are raised”. Those who believe in Christ pass to eternal life in the soul and in the spirit and enjoy the joy of the uncreated works of the Holy Trinity.

Moved by this faith, our deceased loved one, born in 1962, left his hometown of Charakas, Monofatsiou, Heraklion, Crete, at the age of twelve, and came to the Holy Land, in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and studied at the Holy Zion Priestly School with care and conduct excellent and praiseworthy - the speaker had this student for six years. After graduating, she accepted the monastic schema in 1979 and joined the Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood. He ministered initially as a deacon and then as a Hieromonk in various ministries assigned to him, such as that of the Hegoumen of Beit Jalla, the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Saint Charalambos, the Hegoumen of Hoseva and the Hegoumen of Haifa. He was sent by the Patriarchate for theological studies in Belgrade and after transferring universities, he graduated from the Theological School of the University of Thessaloniki.

In the years 2001 and 2002, he served as the Patriarchal Representative of the Metropolis of Ptolemais - Akris, and from the year 2003 until his death as the

Hierarchical Commissioner of this Metropolis, which had under its spiritual and pastoral responsibility twelve communes; Acre, Abelin, Sakhnin, Kufr - Yasif, Kufr Smea, Rame, Pkea, Sfaamer, Baane, Zdeide, Tarshiha, and Maker. In these, he developed in consultation with the Patriarchate for over twenty years a remarkable and praised Pastoral work of spiritual Orthodox catechesis and excellent teaching of Byzantine Music by a group of male and female Byzantine chanters, spreading contrition to the souls of the faithful in the Patriarchal liturgies of Tabor, Nazareth and others. He was esteemed and loved by all.

His main concern was the dignity of God's house and for this reason, we can pray for him saying "Sanctify them, Lord, who love the dignity of your house". In this work, he was prematurely interrupted by death, when he accidentally fell from the scaffolding, from which he was building the wall of the Holy Church of Saint George in Acre by his own hands. Asking myself why this happened to him like this, I said that "as unsearchable is His will". The Lord only knows!

Nevertheless, I found comfort in recalling that in the year 1979, the Archimandrite Modestos met his death, just after rescuing a pilgrim during the pilgrimage baptism in the Jordan River. In 1990, the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Hoseva, Archimandrite Anthony, while repairing the narthex of the Church, met his death by landslide stones that covered him. Saint Athanasios the Athonite met his death with other monks from the collapsed dome of the Catholicon of the Great Lavra Monastery, which he had climbed to inspect.

Worthily commemorating his good works in his Funeral Service today, we beseech the Most High to consider him and forgive him as a human being who sinned intentionally or unintentionally and rank his soul among the faithful and righteous in Paradise. So be it".

The deceased was accompanied by their Eminences, the Archbishops Theofanes of Gerassa and Makarios of Qatar, and all congregation to the place of his burial in the Holy Zion Cemetery.

May his remembrance be ever-lasting!

From Secretariat-General





















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