



Axios ! Axios ! Axios ! – Holy Land



PASTORAL MESSAGE OF ARCHBISHOP JOB OF TELMESSOS

TO THE CLERGY, MONASTICS AND FAITHFUL OF THE ARCHDIOCESE
OF RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN WESTERN EUROPE

Dear beloved Fathers, Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with great emotion that I come before you today, on the feast of the Holy Apostle Andrew the First Called, the day of my ordination to the episcopate by His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch and the bishops who concelebrated the service, as was once the custom among the Metropolitans of the Russian Church. Our Mother Church has entrusted me with a weighty responsibility, which will demand ceaseless work, effort and commitment on my part, and I hope that you will all give me the support and assistance I need for the task. To that end, I ask you to pray for me, that I may be a worthy successor to those who have gone before me: Metropolitans Evlogii and Vladimir and Archbishops George, George, Sergius and Gabriel.

As directed in the holy canons, my name should be commemorated in all liturgical celebrations in all of the churches in our exarchate, starting this evening. A few days from now, I will be enthroned in Paris, in the cathedral of Saint Alexander of the Neva, where I had the joy of serving as a deacon for seven years with the late Archbishop Sergius and later of being ordained a priest by the late Archbishop Gabriel. My years spent serving the Exarchate gave me the opportunity to personally get to know many of its clergy and faithful, and I will be very glad to see you again, and to meet those of you I don't yet know, during my pastoral visits. In years past, our Exarchate has played a key role among the Orthodox diaspora in Western Europe. While it was initially founded to serve the Russian community, from its very beginnings under Metropolitan Evlogii it has borne witness to the Orthodox faith in Western Europe and has been open to other Christian churches, partaking in a dialogue of truth. Today, we must remain faithful to that heritage, and continue to promote the unity of the Orthodox diaspora. While we fall under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, our pastoral work requires close cooperation with the other Orthodox dioceses in Western Europe, through the Assemblies of Bishops and in the spirit of the decisions of the Fourth Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference. In order to promote unity within the Orthodox Church, we must first be united among ourselves, thus fulfilling our Lord's will as He expressed in His prayer "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that the world may believe that You sent Me." (John 17:21)

My greatest responsibility and care is to shepherd the flock that has been entrusted to my care and to encourage its spiritual development. Our Saviour tells us that the salvation of a single

human soul is more precious than the whole world (cf. Matthew 16:26). The spiritual duty of the Church and its pastors is to bring the spiritual lives of the faithful to fruition by strengthening them in the unshakeable truth of Christ. It is therefore particularly important to tend to the life of our parishes, where through the experience of the liturgy and the sacraments, men and women of different backgrounds and opinions gather around the Altar and are united in Christ, forming a single Body through their common faith and prayer, as the Holy Apostle Paul teaches us: "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28) The bishop, the clergy, the monastics and the faithful must therefore work hand in hand to fulfil our vocation and to overcome the challenges of contemporary life.

"The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (2 Corinthians 13:13)

† Job, Archbishop of Telmessos,
Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate
Phanar, 30 november 2015



EPISCOPAL ORDINATION OF ARCHBISHOP JOB OF TELMESSOS



ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2013, THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE CELEBRATED THE FEAST OF ST. ANDREW THE FIRST-CALLED OF THE APOSTLES, DURING WHICH TIME THE EPISCOPAL ORDINATION OF OUR NEW ARCHBISHOP JOB TOOK PLACE.

On Friday evening, His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew I presided over Solemn Vespers in the Cathedral St. George in the Phanar in Istanbul. On Saturday morning, Matins began around 8:30 am, and St. George Cathedral was gradually filled with faithful and Orthodox delegations who arrived to participate in the Feast of the Church of Constantinople.

In accordance with the traditional practice of the exchange of official visits with the Church of Rome, a delegation led by Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, was sent by His Holiness Pope Francis to attend at the party. The Patriarch received him on Friday morning and official discussions continued before a visit to the Institute of Theology at Halki in the afternoon.

Many people came for the occasion: the hierarchs of the Ecumenical Throne arrived a few days earlier for the November session of the Holy Synod, during which time two new Orthodox saints were inscribed on the calendar, saints Porphyrios and Meletios. The Holy Synod also elected Bishop Athenagoras of Sinope as the Metropolitan of Belgium.

The Divine Liturgy was presided over by Patriarch Bartholomew I, and concelebrated by the ten bishops present: Metropolitans Demetrios of America, Basil of Konstantia and Ammochos (Church of Cyprus), Emmanuel of France, Gennadius of Sasime, Athenagoras of Belgium, Cyril of Rhodes, Evangelos of New Jersey, Eugene of Rythymnon, Nathanael of Koos and Nisyros, and Archbishop Meletiy of Khotyn (of the Church of Ukraine - Moscow Patriarchate). Two priests, Archimandrite Bessarion and Archpriest Eugene Czapiuk as well as six deacons also concelebrated.

Many other bishops were also present: Bishops of the Church of Constantinople, delegates from other Orthodox churches who came to participate in the feast, as well as bishops who came especially for the ordination of Archbishop Job, including Bishop Irenée of Quebec, Bishop Meletiy of Ukraine and Father Igor Kutash, also from Canada, who baptized His Grace Job and accompanied him during the early years of his life.

Our Exarchate was represented by a group of priests, deacons, nuns and lay people from France and other countries under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese, including Father Eugene Cziapuk and Mr. Serge Runge of the Council of the Archdiocese, Fathers André Svyarov, Christoforos Schuff and Yannick Provost, as well as sisters of the Monastery of Bussy and faithful from different parishes.

It was a very beautiful liturgy, full of emotion and fervor. When "Axios!" resounded in the cathedral, we felt great joy: the Church had given us a new bishop. At the end of the Liturgy, His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew I offered a beautiful red crown to Archbishop Job, who then mounted the throne to give, for the first time, his Episcopal blessing unto all the congregation.

After the Liturgy and the exchange of speeches between SS Bartholomew and HE Cardinal Kurt Koch, the delegations and the faithful were received in the Throne Room at the Patriarchate. In his homily, Archbishop Job stated:

«I feel a holy fear of the magnitude of this heavy responsibility, because I know the number and complexity of the problems of the ecclesial body of the Orthodox diaspora. But I also know that, thanks to the charity of the holy and priestly Spirit that guards the institution of the Church, weaknesses will be addressed and deficiencies corrected, in order to ensure that diakonia of the faithful be according to the Lord, not to human desire as St. Ignatius of Antioch said... However, the diakonia of the first, as the visible head, extends throughout the body of the Archdiocese, according to canon 34 of the apostles, so that all members are in full agreement with his diakonia and holy altar that they put aside all national distinctions, racial, linguistic, political or other, thereby surpassing worldly divisions.»

In the homily delivered in response to Archbishop Job, His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew I recalled the close ties between



the Mother Church of Constantinople to our Exarchate, stating:

«God of all goodness has granted us, at the same time as the Feast of the Patriarchate's patron saint, to celebrate the ordination of your Eminence, to be the pastor of our beloved faithful of the parishes of Russian Tradition in Western Europe, in obedience with the Mother Church of Constantinople... It is well known that for Christians, and the Ecumenical Patriarchate in particular, that ethnicity is not important, all that matters is spiritual kinship... First of all, fight and pray to keep your flock united around the slain Lamb, the Lamb of God, who sacrificed his life, and at each Divine Liturgy, offered himself as food. You must primarily take care of the unity of our Church... Now, the unity of parishes entrusted to you, with each other and the Mother Church, is among the tasks of the diakonia sine qua non of which you are responsible... We pray to the Lord, to the holy vocation which you answered, to strengthen you in this position of responsibility, to enlighten you and support you in difficult times, to soften any pain and affliction of your life as a bishop, and to make you worthy to lead the Orthodox faithful in unity, in the pasture of imperishable and eternal wellness, where the joy of the righteous lies and the angelic powers, in endless thanksgiving, say: Holy God, the Eternal Father, Holy Mighty, the co-eternal Son, Holy Immortal, the Paraclete, have mercy on us. Amen. Axios!»

Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Job then invited sixty people to a fraternal lunch in front of the Phanar on the other side of the Golden Horn. The day ended with a magnificent concert of Byzantine chant, given by the choir of St. Irene's Church of the Archdiocese of America, near St. Sophia where the second Ecumenical Council took place in 381. Hundreds of guests were present.





ENTHRONEMENT OF ARCH. JOB OF TELMESSOS

THE ENTHRONEMENT OF ARCHBISHOP JOB TOOK PLACE ON 5 DECEMBER 2013 AT THE ST ALEXANDER NEVSKY CATHEDRAL IN PARIS, PRESIDED OVER BY METROPOLITAN EMMANUEL OF FRANCE, THE ENTHRONEMENT WAS PRECEDED BY THE CELEBRATION OF THE VIGIL FOR ST ALEXANDER NEVSKY PRESIDED OVER BY ARCHBISHOP JOB, ACCOMPANIED BY ARCHBISHOP MELETIUS, PRIESTS FROM THE CATHEDRAL AND DEANS OF THE ARCHDIOCESE.

The enthronement was held at the end of the celebration of the Vigil. Following a short hymn of praise, archpriest Alexis Struve, dean of the cathedral, read out the letter of the Patriarch and the Holy Synod announcing that at its meeting on 2 November 2013 archimandrite Job had been raised to the rank of Archbishop, thus ratifying the choice made by the general assembly of the Archdiocese on 1 November. After this, metropolitan Emmanuel gave a homily which archbishop

Job responded to. After the exchange of letters, HE Emmanuel presented Archbishop Job with a crozier, who then blessed the assembled people to the singing of 'Ton despotin'. The archdeacon Vsevolod Borzakovsky then intoned 'Many Years' to his Holiness the ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. To the new archbishop Job and to all the assembled guests, clergy and the faithful.

Were present

Mgr Jeremiah Switzerland and Makarios auxiliary Lampsacus metropolitans Nektarios of Petra (Crete), Athenagoras (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg), and Ignace (Patriarchate of Antioch), Mgrs Nestor of Korsun (Moscow Patriarchate) Marc (Patriarchate of Romania), fathers Slavisa Sanic (Bishop Luka, Serbian Patriarchate representative) and John Jillions (representing the Metropolitan Tikhon of Washington) .

Cardinal André Vingt-Trois, Archbishop of Paris, Mgr Eric de Moulins-Beaufort, Auxiliary Bishop of Paris, Mgr Boris Gudziak Exarch for Ukrainian Greek-Catholics, Rev. January Stranz, representing the President of the Protestant Federation of France, pastor Jean-Noel Perez, director of the Institute of ecumenical study Paris, Fr Matthew Harrison, president of the Anglican Church of Paris, Bishop Louka, Bishop of the Coptic Church in France .

Civil authorities, decision makers of Religious Affairs and Worship Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs, Mr. François Lebel, mayor of the 8th arrondissement.

Addition, there were professors of the Institute of Advanced Studies at the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambésy, the Higher Institute of Liturgy (ICP), the Orthodox Theological Institute of St. Sergius Paris, the Institute of St. Vladimir Orthodox Theological New York.



Enthronement and first Liturgy of Archbishop Job

We arrived to a crowded Cathedral for the Vigil: bishops, priests, deacons and servers from all over the archdiocese and other parts of the world, clergy from other denominations, and of course the people, and there was our new Archbishop adorned in his Episcopal cloak and later his crown. At the end of the Vigil after the speeches and singing Mnogaya Leta, we came to greet our new Vladyka and he gave us icons of St Job.

The golds and silver on the vestments, the beautiful singing and the feel of everyone together welcoming our new Vladyka made the next morning's Liturgy a very special occasion.

At the end, after receiving gifts from America, Archbishop Job spoke in Russian, French and English thanking everyone for coming.

There were times during the services that Archbishop Job had to stand in the middle of the church with all eyes on him, and I wondered how he must be feeling – a little nervous maybe. I was impressed by his calm dignity and also his ability to switch languages easily when he spoke to people with a twinkling smile.

Afterwards there was a wonderful feast in the marquee, and this was a lovely opportunity to chat to old friends and meet new ones.

When my husband and I left we said 'We are completely broke but we're so glad we came' - something we repeated to our fellow parishioners at our parish feast on Sunday.

*Celia Olsson
Delegate & parishioner, Holy Prophet Elias, Devon (Exeter)*

5 o'clock am – Liege is waking up!

Friday, December 6th. Our children, all children in Belgium, Holland, Alsace-Lorraine and Luxemburg, are eagerly expecting Saint Nicholas (according to the Gregorian calendar). But it is also the day of saint Alexander Nevsky, of whom I know only this strong sentence, so full of sense nowadays: «*He в силе Бог, а в правде!*» «*God is not in strength but in truth!*»

My Thalys leaves at 5.30. *Schnell!*

The joy of the celebration, of being again with brothers, of discovering our new Archbishop at his first Divine Liturgy, all this competes with sheer curiosity, with a certain nervousness stemming from the incredible, ludicrous pre-election affair.

Paris-Gare du Nord, 9.00 am. I spend a long time in the subway with hard-working Parisians, and then I reach Courcelles and Daru. All is quiet, people are scarce.

Then everything moves on quickly. The great pontifical pomp in several languages (too few), lots of bishops, priests, faithful, magnificent chants (a bit too operatic at times), the ease and the command of Vladyka, who blesses and paternally welcomes namely all those he knows, the colourful performance of Deacon Vsevolod.

Strong words are said. I am particularly struck by the insistent appeal to unity (in particular with the other dioceses present in Western Europe), and to love. I also keep in my mind the words and the gift of the American delegation from the OCA. Both Fathers, representing the Synod and the Saint-Vladimir Institute of New York, insist on how close their Church and our Diocese are, mainly because they share the same pastoral and missionary concern of the Church here and now. Their gift marvellously stresses the point: it is an icon and a fragment of the relics of Saint German of Alaska, who was the apostle of America and a great missionary.

This is the beginning of all !

Serge Maraite, Belgium

HOMILY OF ARCHBISHOP JOB OF TELMESSOS ON THE DAY OF HIS CHIROTONIA



Your Holiness and Master,

I stand before your Holiness, your Eminences Bishops, the Reverend Members of the Clergy and the scholars who partici-

pate in this customary ceremony meant for the unbroken continuity of the "apostolic principle of the episcopate" in the ecclesial life. I am full of emotions and thanks for all the gifts, great and gracious, that Your venerable Luminary has offered and still offers to my humble person, to hold the sacred position within the ecclesial diakonia. My feelings to your Holiness and to the Holy Synod of the Mother Church which surrounds you are justified, considering the scope of the responsibility that has been laid upon me, and the gratitude I feel for the great honour made to me.

I praise, glorify and magnify the very holy Name of our Trinitarian God: He has expressed His will and His condescension to me: through the decision taken by your Holiness and the Holy Synod surrounding you, I have been allowed, after I have served the ecclesial body for a long time, to occupy the high post of Archbishop in the Exarchate of the Archdiocese of Russian

Orthodox churches in Western Europe, under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

I must confess to Your venerable Luminary, that I am fully aware of how heavy is the responsibility laid upon me, not only in front of the faithful flock of the Archdiocese, but also in front of the Mother Church who has so honoured my humble person. I am fully aware of the importance of this mission for the adequate and canonical administration of inter-orthodox relations and of all the Orthodox Diaspora in the world.

I must recognize, though, that I feel a holy fear of the magnitude of this heavy responsibility, because I know the number and the complexity of the problems of the ecclesial body of the Orthodox Diaspora. But I also know that, thanks to the charity of the holy and priestly Spirit "that guards all in the institution of the Church", weaknesses will be addressed and deficiencies corrected, in order to ensure that the diakonia of the

faithful be "according to the Lord, not to human desire" as St. Ignatius of Antioch said...

At last, I very well know that, for my weaknesses to be healed with the help of God's mercy, to rightly hold the high dignity as a bishop, I need first of all to apply all my synergies in it; this is why I shall devote myself, humbly and fully, to the fulfilment of the task I have taken over. Thus, as an echo to my sacerdotal conscience, I hear the graceful words of Saint Paul, the Apostle of all nations, addressed to those who take over the great responsibility of the "apostolic principle of the episcopate": "Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy." (1Co 4:1-2). However, this requirement for a faithful service to Christ is tightly bound with the faithful handling of the mysteries of God: indeed the sacerdotal authority,

About St Alexander's Newsky feast day

This year, the feast day of st. Alexander Newsky, patron saint of the Cathedral, was particularly brought out. Our new archbishop Job celebrated, indeed, the divine liturgy in his cathedral. Although we often were present in Paris this very same year, it truly was a pleasure to partake of this celebration. I unfortunately was not able to attend the enthronement on Thursday evening and, this way, I experienced this first liturgy with a particular feeling.



Though this enthronement took place on an ordinary workday, one could notice the numerous bishops, priests and laypeople gathered around the new archbishop. A lot of participants from orthodox background thus came to Paris and it always is deeply moving to be able to celebrate with bishops, priests and deacons originating from different countries. It was in a profound prayer atmosphere that we were surrounding our new archbishop.

The priests and the faithful of the German deanery wish their shepherd God's help and blessing, lots of strength and courage to face the many problems he will have to tackle. They grant him their prayers. We ask the Lord to bless him in his task... for many, many years !

father Michael Buk, dean of Germany



Saint Basil the Great says, "is a gift of God and an offering made by the Saviour" (canon 90). Furthermore, because its implementation is true only if, according to the 36th Apostolic canon, it consists in "the ministry, and the care of the people".

Obviously, the "liturgical principle of the episcopate" requires from the person thus honoured to serve with full humility the whole priestly body entrusted to him, while remaining faithful to the will of the divine Donator of this grace, our Lord Jesus-Christ; He reminded his apostles that "whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave". However, the diakonia of the first, as the visible head, extends throughout the body of the Archdiocese, according to canon 34 of the apostles, so that all members are in full agreement with his diakonia and holy altar that they put aside all national distinctions, racial, linguistic, political or other, thereby surpassing worldly divisions.

Therefore, at this sacred moment, I confess that I fully accept the doctrines adopted by our holy Orthodox Church in the dogmatic decisions taken during the Ecumenical councils, and in the theology of the Church Fathers concerning all questions of faith, liturgical tradition and canonical order, indispensable for the unity of the Church in the communion of the faith bestowed, as well as a bond of love. In the same time I reject all the doctrines condemned as deviations by the Church during the ecumenical councils or the major councils, for they are a danger not only for the unity of the Church, but also for the salvation of the faithful. In this spirit, I refer to the exceptional examples of the Apostles and the Church Fathers, as kept and confessed by the Mother Church. Hence I shall do everything to demonstrate myself as skilled as possible in the important pastoral mission entrusted to me, to reinforce the holy charity and to support as best as possible the exceptional mission of the Ecumenical Patriarchate within the Orthodox Church.

Your Holiness,

With this in mind, I stand today in front of your Luminary to receive from your venerable hands the divine gift of the episcopate. Therefore I want once more to express all my gratitude to your Holiness for your permanent, paternal, and generous and countless support towards my ecclesial diakonia, to the Holy Synod of the Mother Church for the ratification of my election, and to the General Assembly of the Archdiocese of Russian Orthodox Church in Western Europe for their vote. I wish to thank Metropolitan Emmanuel of France for his coherent implementation of the canons and the statures of the Archdiocese during the election

procedure, and all the venerable members of the clergy and of the faithful for their support to my ecclesial diakonia.

Your Holiness, I pray you to receive me today, after all the good deeds you bestowed to me in the synergy of the sacerdotal Holy Spirit. I am called to receive from the venerable hands of your Luminary the supreme benefit of the ultimate and divine gift of the episcopate. Therefore, I surrender myself to your Holiness, and I cry to the Lord and Giver words from the prayer at the communion: "Overlook my faults, O Lord..., and purify my heart, and make it a temple for Your spotless Body and Blood. Let me not be rejected from Your presence, O You Who have infinitely great mercy", but "as from the highest heaven You did humble Yourself for our sake, so now conform Yourself to my humility" because "it is good for me to cling to God and to place in the Lord my hope of salvation."

† Job, Archbishop of Telmessos,
Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate
Phanar, 30 november 2015

Feeling



All the pomp and brilliance Orthodoxy is able to express has been used. The event was worth all the splendour of the ceremonial. For the numerous priests present in the sanctuary around the archbishop, and despite the incessant meery-go-round of the deacons and the repeated moves of the thurifers and altar servants, the sphere was serene, sober and prayerful. In the first ranks of the faithful who pressed each other as far as the nocks and crannies of the cathedral allowed, some bishops, metropolitans or archbishops, representatives from other christian confessions were present. There also were guests who came from faraway America, most probably witnesses of the new archbishop's personal relationships but as well, beyond his person, due to the place the exarchate takes in international orthodoxy. It surely is a particular place carved by its parishes and that should be living in this world where, above all, to bear witness to the holy gospel that is needed.

Avoiding the cliché of the «historical moment», the general impression truly was that it was not a simple sheet of the history of the dioceses that was turned over but rather a new era tahtn was beginning. The quite young age of the recently enthroned one might forecast a ruling, surely based on firmness without authoritarianism, listening without yielding but, mainly, with new accents. This only would be a burden more on vладыка Job's shoulders : the one of some rooted hopes.

father Guy (Fontaine), dean of Belgium



PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND 2013

WITH VLADYKA EMMANUEL'S BLESSING, THE YEARLY PILGRIMAGE OF OUR DIOCESE TOOK PLACE ON THE END OF OCTOBER 2013. ABOUT FIFTEEN PEOPLE TOOK PART TO THIS EVENT ; YOU WILL FIND HEREAFTER SOME TESTIMONIES OF SOME PILGRIMS WHO PARTICIPATED TO THE TRIP.

VLADYKA JOB HAS ALREADY GIVEN HIS AGREEMENT TO THE RENEWAL OF THIS PILGRIMAGE BY THE END OF OCTOBER 2014 AND, MOST PROBABLY, WILL COME WITH THE PILGRIM'S GROUP.

If you want, you may already get in touch with father Yannick Provost either by phone : ++33 (0)6 08 54 72 96 or by mail yannick.provost@gmail.com.



Memory Eternal!



Mother Elizabeth, of the Monastery of Our Lady of All-Protection, Bussy-en-Othe (Yonne), died in the Lord, Sunday,

November 10, 2013, at the age of 91 years. His funeral was celebrated Thursday, November 14, 2013.



Mother Maria 1937 - 2013, fell a sleep in the Lord 13th July. The Funeral were celebrated at St Nicholas Orthodox Church Oxford on 22th July. Mather Maria

born Marigold Rule, was of mixed French and English parentage. Both of her parents were atheists.

As a teenager she was baptised in the Anglican Church. After going to Serbia to oversee the restoration of the historic convent at Gradac, she became Orthodox and later was elected Abbess of the convent. She translated many Orthodox church texts into English, including the six-volume Synaxarion published by Simonopetra Monastery on Mount Athos. Mother Maria will be sadly missed by those who knew and loved her, but her work and prayer continues. May her memory be eternal!



Sir John Tavener fell a sleep in the Lord 12th november. The Funeral was November 28, 2013 at Winchester Cathedral. John

Tavener was one of Britain's best known and best loved composers. After meeting mother Thekla, an Orthodox nun who became one of his librettists, he was received into the Orthodox church by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh in 1977. Many of his compositions were based on texts and melodies of the Orthodox Church, such as *Mary of Egypt*, *The Protecting Veil* and *the Song for Athene*.

At the Edge of Lake Tiberias

...It was perhaps at this very spot that Jesus fled in a boat from the crowd that wanted to touch him. And now twenty centuries later, Father Yannick suggests we read the Gospel. We take turns to read the words Jesus pronounced at the water's edge, the parable of the sower. The moment is simple and humble. Each person, through his voice, his fragility, his conviction, contributes to the reading. We have not traversed the Mediterranean only to skim carelessly over the Word, and we must fight against the thousands of thoughts that bombard our prayer. The very tranquility that occupies the places we visit for a moment drives me to distraction. I quickly become aware of my recklessness and attempt to harness my thoughts. [...] Our differences of culture, age, and spiritual walk are erased by the one Faith we all share in common, which has, in this moment, bound us together in Christian fraternity. *Benoit*

Jordan

...The River Jordan is rather narrow at this time of year, stretching all the way to Jordan. Pilgrims dive in from each side for symbolic reasons, but to cross it is out of the question; Tsahal (Israel Defense Forces) is on guard with its guns. We visited the Dead Sea where you float in the brine, and met with Patriarch Theophilus III of Jerusalem who gave us words of peace. We then met with Father Emile Soufani, a priest at Nazareth who explained the difficulties of the Christians in the area, and the tension between the three religions... In St. James Cathedral, the Arabic parish of Jerusalem, we celebrated a Panikhida in Archbishop Gabriel's memory... *Hervé*

Monasteries

Places such as the three monasteries we visited in the desert made me want to stay longer. Meeting monks, interacting with them, walking with them in these beautiful deserts. Aside from the numerous and significant visits, I very much enjoyed living among the group, meeting people from all over France, and two priests from the United Kingdom. There, there was the group and the Holy Land, and I lived this experience in its totality, without thinking about life in the West. *Louis*

Relive the Bible

We had the opportunity, during our pilgrimage in the Holy Land, to relive the Bible as we had never lived it, [...] Thanks to this powerful force that we received during our pilgrimage we are able to overcome all the circumstances of our lives... *Evguenia*

Prayers

The week we spent in the Holy Land was extraordinarily rich in emotions. We had a wonderful group and a packed agenda of holy sites. I loved the Sea of Galilee, beautiful, peaceful and unspoiled where you could meditate and easily imagine the fishing boats which would have sailed in Christ's days. Equally I loved the desert of Judea where many chose to live a life away from the world in prayer. Celebrating the Liturgy in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem was very special. We learned of Archbishop Gabriel's falling asleep in the Lord just before attending the midnight Liturgy at the Church of the Resurrection. Where better to be on earth to pray for his soul. And walking in the old town of Jerusalem, this most amazing small city where Christianity, Judaism and Islam have co-existed for centuries was extraordinary. I believe every Christian should try and visit the Holy Land at least once in their lifetime if they have the opportunity. *Father Stéphane (Maikovsky)*

Our Era

...I was very impressed by this pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It was an unforgettable and deeply moving experience. All the places we visited breathe spirituality. One has the impression that time is standing still, you find yourself back at the origins of our era. ...

Hypodiacre Victor

Gospel

...Our trip did not follow the Gospels in chronological order, but it wasn't important. What mattered was to live and pray there, where scenes from the Gospels really took place : to bathe in the Jordan where John was baptizing, to sit at the water's edge at the Sea of Galilee where the disciples distributed the bread and the fish, to pray in Bethany with Martha and Mary near Lazarus' tomb... *Guy*

Miracle Icon

...Other amazing things include enormous Byzantine basilicas, monasteries aside the canyon (such as St. Sabbas), the Oak of Mamre or the fig tree Zacchaeus climbed to see Jesus. At the Russian monastery, the place of the oak of Abraham, there is a miracle-working icon of the Mother of God that produces fragrant oil. This was the first time I have ever seen anything like that, and I was very impressed... *Ivan, 14 ans*