

## **Twinning of Two Cities: Bethlehem and Vladimir**

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent  
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet

**- Isaiah**

On February 13, 2013 late at night the delegation from the city of Vladimir arrived at Ben Gurion Airport.

The list of the delegation: Mayor Sergey Sakharov; Head of the department of International and Regional affairs Anna Makarova; Mayor's International relations Advisor, Chairman of the Cyprus branch of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society (IOPS), Professor, Baron Leonid Bulanov; Mayor's Advisor, I Vice-President of the Cyprus branch of the IOPS, Professor, Consul Andreas Philokyprou; deputy of Vladimir City Council of People's Deputies Albert Skvortsov, a full member of the Vladimir department of IOPS Valery Kulikov; a full member of IOPS, the editor of the website [www.ippocyprus.ru](http://www.ippocyprus.ru), Magister Evgeny Kiselev, priest of the Vladimir- Suzdal diocese, Father Sergius (Berezkin).

In the city of Bethlehem, the delegation was met by the chairman of the Bethlehem branch of IOPS , a member of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, the representative of IOPS in Palestine Daoud Matar.

The delegation checked at the «Holy Family Hotel» in the downtown.



*in the lobby of «Holy Family Hotel»  
from left to right: priest of the Vladimir- Suzdal diocese, Father Sergius (Berezkin), Mayor's international relations advisor, chairman of the Cyprus branch of IOPS, professor L. A. Bulanov, Mayor S. V. Sakharov, head of the department of international and regional affairs A. Makarova, vice chairman of Cyprus branch of IOPS, professor Andreas Philokyprou*

On February 14, 2013 the delegation traveled from Bethlehem to Jerusalem to take part in the official scheduled appointment with His Beatitude Theophilos III Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and all Palestine.

The architecture of Patriarchate in the city of Jerusalem dazzles the senses. Huge halls, vaulted ceilings, massive columns, large marble staircases, rooms decorated with frescoes and icons. From the balcony of the Patriarchate one can see beautiful views of the Old City of Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulcher spreads out before you.

At the door of the reception of the Patriarch, we met hegumen Theophanes, the abbot of Isidore - Archimandrite of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem. He was genuinely pleased to see us and said that he would send us a guide, mother Natalia, after the audience with the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III.



*in Patriarchate of Jerusalem*

*from left to right: priest of the Vladimir-Suzdal diocese, father Sergius (Berezkin), chairman of Bethlehem branch of IOPS, member of the council of IOPS, representative of IOPS in Palestine Daoud Matar, vice abbot of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, hegumen Theophan, full fledged member of IOPS V. A. Kulikov, Mayor S. V. Sakharov, Mayor's international affairs advisor, chairman of Cyprus branch of IOPS, professor L. A. Bulanov, deputy of Vladimir City Ciouncil A. A. Skvortsov, vice chairman of Cyprus branch of IOPS, professor A. Philokyprou*



*vice chairman of Cyprus branch of IOPS, professor A. Philokyprou (left)  
and Mayor of Vladimir Sergey Sakharov*



*in Patriarchate of Jerusalem  
in the photo: Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov (in the middle), hegumen Theophan (right)  
and professor L. A. Bulanov (left)*



*in Patriarchate of Jerusalem  
in the photo: Mayor S. V. Sakharov (in the middle), Mayor's international affairs advisor,  
chairman of Cyprus branch of IOPS, professor L. A. Bulanov (left) and deputy of Vladimir  
City Council A. A. Skvortsov*

After a short wait, the doors of the reception were opened and we were invited to the Patriarch.

After the greetings, His Beatitude Theophilos III invited us to sit down.

Head of Vladimir city Sergey Sakharov greeted and thanked the Lord for the reception. He emphasize in his brief speech that Vladimir is the beginning of Russian Christianity, and his intention is twinning of the two cities of Bethlehem and Vladimir and signed an agreement on cultural and business activities between the two cities.

Sergey presented gifts to the Patriarch: a picture of the Assumption Cathedral in Vladimir, a set of icons by Andrei Rublev and easter egg, hand-painted by the Vladimir masters.



*Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov gives gifts to His Beatitude Theophilus III  
in the photo: professor L. A. Bulanov (left), Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov and His  
Beatitude Theophilus III Patriarch of Jerusalem and All Palestine*



*Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov gives gifts to His Beatitude Theophilus III from left to right: deputy of Vladimir City Council A. A. Skvortsov, professor L. A. Bulanov (left), Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov, His Beatitude Theophilus III Patriarch of Jerusalem and All Palestine, vice chairman of Cyprus branch of IOPS, professor A. Philokyprou*

Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilus III said that he knows the city of Vladimir, and when he worked in Russia he visited this town.

The second one, who gave a speech and greeted the Patriarch was the priest of Vladimir-Suzdal diocese Father Sergius (Berezkin). He presented His Holiness with a book signed by Archbishop of Vladimir and Suzdal Eulogius.



*priest Father Sergius (Berezkin) presents to the Patriarch of Jerusalem a book signed by Archbishop of Vladimir and Suzdal Eulogius from left to right: Father Sergius (Berezkin), Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov, His Beatitude Theophilus III Patriarch of Jerusalem and All Palestine, vice chairman of Cyprus branch of IOPS, professor A. Philokyprou*

The Patriarch gave a Cross to the Orthodox priest.

The third one was the chairperson of the Cyprus branch of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, Professor Leonid A. Bulanov, he handed a book with an inscription and signature of his friend Athanasius (Kikkotisa), Metropolitan Kirinski and gave the icon of the Vladimir Mother of God, gifts and a film about the city of Vladimir.



*professor L. A. Bulanov presents to His Beatitude Theophilus III a book of his friend Athanasius (Kikkotisa), Metropolitan Kirinski  
from left to right: L. A. Bulanov, Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov, His Beatitude Theophilus III Patriarch of Jerusalem and All Palestine and professor A. Philokyprou*



*professor L. A. Bulanov presents to His Beatitude Theophilus III a book of his friend Athanasius (Kikkotisa), Metropolitan Kirinski from left to right: L. A. Bulanov, Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov, His Beatitude Theophilus III Patriarch of Jerusalem and All Palestine and professor A. Philokyprou*

Leonid A. presented the Jerusalem Patriarch with his books published in Russian and Greek "Manual therapy and arthropathy self-care" with wishes for health, happiness and longevity.



*professor L. A. Bulanov presents his book to His Beatitude Theophilus III*

The interpreter who helped us during the Patriarch's reception was a vice president of the Cyprus branch of IOPS, Professor Andreas Philokyprou.

After the welcoming speeches, His Holiness began to speak English, and spoke about the activities of the Jerusalem church, told about the conditions of work and about the role of the Patriarchate in the Holy Land, its responsibility and challenges.



*Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov, His Beatitude Theophilus III Patriarch of Jerusalem and All Palestine*



*at the reception by Patriarch of Jerusalem*

*in the photo: deputy A. A. Skvortsov, professor L. A. Bulanov, Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov (in the middle) and His Beatitude Theophilus III*

His Beatitude presented gifts to all members of the delegation, the second volume of work devoted to the Sacred Sepulchre, as well as icons of the Jerusalem Mother of God, and a silver icon of the Resurrection of Christ and other books.



*His Beatitude Theophilus gives presents to Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov (in the middle) and professor L. A. Bulanov*



*His Beatitude Theophilus III gives presents to Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov (in the middle) and professor L. A. Bulanov*



*His Beatitude Theophilus III gives presents to the members of Vladimir delegation from left to right: deputy A. A. Skvortsov, professor L. A. Bulanov, Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov (in the middle) and His Beatitude Theophilus III*

After a speech by His Holiness Leonid A. and Sergey came to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and Professor Leonid A. Bulanov asked the Patriarch to bless the mayor, the city of Vladimir and the twinning of the cities Bethlehem and Vladimir, held on February 15, 2013 in the municipality of the town of Bethlehem.

Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilus III blessed him with a cross.

Leonid Alekseevich and Sergey Vladimirovich thanked His Beatitude with a respectful bow.

Theophilus III offered to have a memento of the visit, a group photograph at parting.



*members of Vladimir delegation and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilus III from left to right: Father Sergius (Berezkin), A. Makarova, chairman of Bethlehem branch of IOPS D. Matar, A. A. Skvortsov, professor L. A. Bulanov, His Beatitude Theophilus III (in the middle), Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov, V. A. Kulikov, A. Philokyprou*

After a brief photoshooting, audience with the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III was over.



**Brief Biography of His Beatitude Theophilos III  
Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine  
(photo by E. E. Kiselev)**

*His Beatitude Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine Theophilos III ( Secular name Elias Giannopoulos, the son of Panagiotis and Trisevgenii ) was born in Gargaliani in Trefil - Messina in 1952. He arrived in Jerusalem in July 1964 and entered the Patriarchal school, which he finished in 1970.28.06.1970 he took the vows in the great hall of the Patriarchate and got a name of Theophilus. 14.02.2005 he became a bishop of Tabor. 08.09.2005 he was*

*elected as the Patriarch of the ancient and glorious Patriarchate of Jerusalem by the unanimous decision of the Holy Synod.*

Delegation went on a tour of the Old City of Jerusalem. With a guide, mother Natalia, we walked through Via Delarosa ( "Way of Sorrow ") - a street in the Old City of Jerusalem where Jesus Christ went towards Calvary to the place of crucifixion.



*Members of Vladimir delegation on the Way of Sorrow*

Before entering the Holy Sepulcher, we went to the store that sold icons and church symbols. Members of the delegation bought icons and crucifixes to sanctify and to apply them to the holy places in the Holy Sepulchre.

Then, we stopped on the square in front of the Temple of the Holy Sepulchre, and made a keepsake group photo.



*Entrance and front of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre*



*Bell tower of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre*



*In the yard of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre  
in the photo: professor L. A. Bulanov, priest Father Sergius (Berezkin)*



*Vladimir delegation in the yard of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre  
from left to right: A. Philokyprou, V. A. Kulikov, Father Sergius (Berezkin), professor L. A.  
Bulanov, A. Makarova, Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov, A. A. Skvortsov and Mother  
Natalia*

Mother Natalia led very interesting tour, we listened to her with a great attention.



*in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre  
from left to right: A. A. Skvortsov, professor A. Philokyprou, Mayor of Vladimir S. V.  
Sakharov, V. A. Kulikov, professor L. A. Bulanov*



*in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre  
chairman of Cyprus branch of IOPS L. A. Bulanov (right) and vice chairman of Cyprus  
branch of IOPS, professor A. Philokyprou*

The delegation went inside the Holy Sepulchre, there were a lot of pilgrims. By assent of the Greek Church, we skipped the line and entered the Edicule with a sense of awe, admiration and closeness to God.

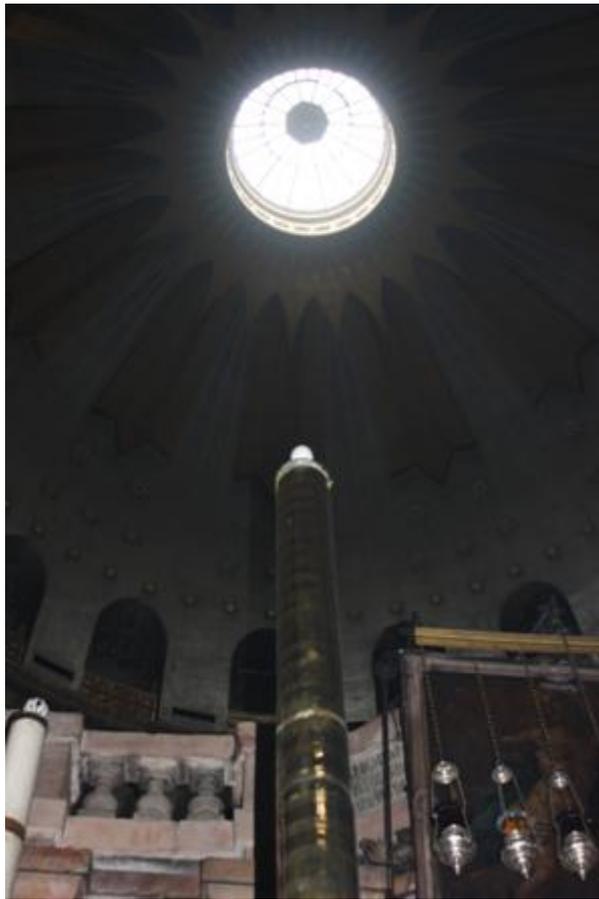
At Edicule Easter Patriarch of Jerusalem receives Holy Fire.



*The Edicule of the Tomb is the holiest object of worship for Christians*



*At the entrance to the Edicule of the Tomb stands a monk of the Church of Greece*



*The Edicule of the Tomb is the holiest object of worship for Christians*



*chairman of Cyprus branch of IOPS L. A. Bulanov talks to the monk of the Church of Greece*

*(Edicule is a small domed chapel made of yellow- pink marble located in the center of the Rotunda of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, enclosing Sepulchre, the greatest Christian shrine. There are two rooms in Edicule: the Holy Sepulchre Chapel and Angel's chapel)*

**(Matthew Chapter 28 verse 2-8**

*And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.*

*His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:*

*And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.*

*And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.*

*He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.*

*And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.*

*And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.)*

Mother Natalia took us around the temple of the Holy Sepulchre, and told us about Christian shrines such as: the Stone of Anointing - where righteous Joseph and Nicodemus put the lifeless body of Jesus; Calvary - during the life of Christ , this mountain was a place of execution; chapel of Adam, chapel of the crown of thorns; chapel of division of robes of the Lord; centurion Longinus on the chapel, on the Prison of Christ; chapel of Mary Magdalene, the Tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, about Edicule Sepulchre.

The next place of our pilgrimage was Aleksandrovscoe podvorie, where we learned a lot about the activities of Russian emperors in the Holy Land.



*Aleksandrovsckoe podvorie*



*Vladimir delegation in Aleksandrovsckoe podvorie in Jerusalem*



*Vladimir delegation in Aleksandrovscoe podvorie in Jerusalem*

Then, the delegation visited the prison of Savior (Pretoria prison), in which he was held in chains before the crucifixion, then the old Roman cisterns in Jerusalem that supplied Jerusalem with water during the time of Christ.

In a short time we came out of the old town and a beautiful view of the Mount of Olives opened in front of us.



*view of the Russian Church of St. Mary Magdalen on the Mount of Olives is the most refined church in Jerusalem*

We went downstairs, and entered the temple of "Assumption of the Virgin", where with great care and reverence we invoked the miraculous icon of the Virgin of Jerusalem at the Holy Mother of God in the Garden of Gethsemane and bowed in a cave in a place where it was buried in the Mother of God. Next up in the Garden of Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Here the Lord prayed before his suffering and was taken into custody given Judas guards.



*Vladimir delegation in the Church of Assumption of the Virgin & Gethsemane*



*the holy wonder-working Jerusalem Mother of God  
at the Tomb of Mother of God in Gethsemane*



*Gethsemane*



*Vladimir delegation in Gethsemane*  
*from left to right: Mother Natalia (with her back), A. Philokyprou, V. A. Kulikov, Mayor S. V. Sakharov, priest Father Sergius (Berezkin), A. A. Skvortsov and professor L. A. Bulanov*

After the pilgrimage tour, tired but inspired we went into a cafe, vigorously discussing over a cup of coffee per day seen by sharing experiences.



*The Golden Gate of Jerusalem*

Unfortunately, we did not have time to Gorny Convent in Ein Karem, as were officially invited Archimandrite Isidor in Russian Ecclesiastical Mission ( REM ) for the evening service and dinner.

We boarded the bus, the delegation went to the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, which is on the "Square in Moscow", near the Old Town.

At the end of the festive service on the eve of the Presentation of the Lord, which was held at the Trinity Cathedral of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission

(REM) and ended with the anointing, we headed to the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, conducting by the Secretary REM, monk, Father Anthony. He showed us the house within the Mission, spoke about Archimandrite Antonin Kapustin and its active presence in the Holy Land, about the history of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem.



*the festive service on the eve of the Presentation of the Lord in the Trinity cathedral of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission*



*professor L. A. Bulanov in the festive service in the Trinity cathedral*



*secretary of REM, hieromonch, Fatehr Antonius and Mayor's international affairs advisor, chairman of Cyprus branch of IOPS, professor L. A. Bulanov in the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission*



*in the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission  
from left to right: A. Philokyprou, V. A. Kulikov, professor L. A. Bulanov, Mayor S. V. Sakharov, secretary of REM, hieromonch, Father Antonius, Father Sergius (Berezkin), A. A. Skvortsov and D. Matar*

After we were invited to dinner.

At a dinner party were present Metropolitan Kirill of Yekaterinburg and Verkhoturysk, Bishop Tikhon of Podolsk, Head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem Archimandrite Isidore, the secretary of the Mission, Fr Father Anthony; Rossotrudnichestva representative in Palestine Sergey Shapovalov, Delegation of the city of Vladimir, headed by Mayor Sergey Sakharov and many others. Sergey thanked Reverend Archimandrite Isidor for the invitation and hospitality and informed him about tomorrow's event.

The chairman of the Cyprus branch IOPS Leonid A. Bulanov Archimandrite presented Isidore with gifts: icon of Vladimir Mother of God and his book

"Manual therapy and arthropathy self-care" and " Manual Therapy. Secrets of Longevity".

Arhimantrit Isidore handed the letter to Father Sergius, which meant to the abbot of Church of the Nativity Archbishop Theophylact of Jordan requesting for a prayer in the Church of the Nativity on the twinning of the two cities of Vladimir and Bethlehem.

After dinner we went to the office of Archimandrite Isidore, the abbot of REM in Jerusalem, where we signed the book of honorable guests. All the members of the delegation signed under the kind and sincere words of gratitude Mayor S. Sakharov.



*Mayor Sakharov wrote some kind words in the book of honorable guests of REM*



*Mayor Sakharov wrote some kind words in the book of honorable guests of REM in the photo: Mayor S. V. Sakharov and Mayor's international affairs advisor, chairman of Cyprus branch of IOPS, professor L. A. Bulanov*



*in the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem from left to right: professor A. Philokyprou, V. A. Kulikov, priest Father Sergius (Berezkin), Mayor S. V. Sakharov, head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem Arhimantrit Isidore, professor L. A. Bulanov, A. A. Skvortsov and secretary OF REM Father Antonius*

The delegation said goodbye to hospitable hosts, inviting representatives of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission to the official part of the signing of the twinning in the municipality of the town of Bethlehem. Tired but inspired, we returned to Bethlehem.



*Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov*

On February 15 , 2013 at 10:00 am at the City Hall of Bethlehem, which is located opposite the Church of the Nativity Sergey Sakharov said a solemn speech devoted to the signing of the contract on the twinning between the town of Bethlehem (Palestine) and Vladimir (Russian Federation). His speech was translated into English by the I Vice-President of the Cyprus branch of IOPS, Professor Andreas Philokyrou.



*A. Philokyprou translates speech of Mayor S. V. Sakharov*

### **Sergey Sakharov's speech**

*Dear ladies and gentlemen! Dear friends!*

*Today is a solemn event in the history of the city of Vladimir, the signing of a protocol on twinning with the city of Bethlehem.*

*Bethlehem is one of the oldest cities in the world, the cradle of Christianity and a holy place for all believers. The era of the New Testament began here, and main values of this era love and mercy have been saving the world for more than two thousand years.*

*Vladimir is not so ancient (it was founded by the Holy Apostles Grand Prince Vladimir in the early days of Christianity in Russia), but all the monuments of Christian culture of our city illuminated by the true light of the star of Bethlehem. Star ascended in the sky above Bethlehem at the time of Christ, shines so brightly for residents of Vladimir. This light inspired the ancient architects and painters to create the greatest masterpieces, that admire the whole world even today.*

*Vladimir is one of the centers of Orthodoxy in Russia. It is like a pure and precious pearl in the necklace of ancient cities.*

*Invisible links existed between Bethlehem and Vladimir today has become strong and unbreakable. This is a really important event for the people of our city who respect Christian values. Today, the citizens of Vladimir became closer to the historical place and the event that changed the history.*

*This agreement meets our desire to understand each other better, to develop cultural relations between the residents of Bethlehem and Vladimir. This is the first step towards cooperation and friendship between the two cities Vladimir and Bethlehem.*

***Mayor of Vladimir  
Sergey Sakharov***



***Mayor of Bethlehem V. Baboun***

Then the Mayor of Bethlehem Vera Baboon hold a speech. She stressed the importance of the twinning agreement of the cultural and business cooperation between the two cities of Bethlehem and Vladimir for the Palestinian people and the inhabitants of the town of Bethlehem, peacefulness and goodwill of the event.

She congratulated all citizens and employees of the City Hall with the solemn signing of the agreement on the business and cultural cooperation of Bethlehem (Palestine) and the city of Vladimir (Russian Federation). The chairman of Bethlehem branch IOPS Daoud Matar translated her speech from Arabic.



*representative of Rossotrudnichestvo in Palestine S. A. Shapovalov reads the welcome letter of the head of Rossotrudnichestvo K. I. Kosachev*

The next speaker was the representative of the Russian Cooperation in Palestine Sergey Shapovalov, who delivered a welcoming speech of Konstantin I. Kosachev, the leader of Rossotrudnichestvo. The main expert of Rossotrudnichestvo in Palestine A. Myasnikov translated the speech into Arabic.

**Welcome letter of the head of Rossotrudnichestvo Konstantin I. Kosachev**

*Dear friends!*

*I cordially greet the participants of the signing ceremony. Highly symbolic is the fact that both cities have an eventful and ancient history, played a special significance for the development of Christianity, decided to establish and develop twinning. I am sure that this important decision will give a powerful impetus to the development of mutually beneficial cooperation between the cities, the dynamic growth potential and Vladimir Bethlehem, mutual cultural enrichment, improve the welfare of residents and, of course, will make a significant contribution to the deepening of ties between Russia and Palestine.*

*I sincerely wish that the interaction of Vladimir and Bethlehem was a shining example of the development of fraternal relations between cities and their inhabitants, a powerful source of development of creativity, design and implementation of original and productive projects, the results of which will serve not only to mutual benefit, but also will be widely popular, enrich world practice of humanitarian exchanges. Please accept my sincere wishes for happiness, success, peace and prosperity.*

***Konstantin Kosachev***



*chairman of Bethlehem branch of IOPS, member of the Council of IOPS, representative of IOPS in Palestine Dauod Matar reads the welcome letter of chairman of IOPS S. V. Stepashin from left to right: D. Matar, Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov and Mayor of Bethlehem V. Baboun*

The chairman of Bethlehem branch of IOPS read a greeting letter from Sergey Stepashin, the chairman of IOPS

### **Welcome letter of chairman of Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society**

#### **Sergey Vadimovich Stepashin**

*Dear ladies and gentlemen! Dear friends and members of IOPS!*

*I greet all the participants of this signing ceremony.*

*I want cordially congratulate you on this significant event and express my hope that cooperation will exert positive influence on cross-cultural dialogue and deepening of links between our cities.*

*I am sure that execution of an agreement between Bethlehem and Vladimir will exert positive influence on future joint projects and make bilateral cooperation much more effective.*

*I would like to thank separately Vladimir, Cyprus and the Bethlehem branch of IOPS for organizing and hosting this international event and wish you success in the implementation of cultural and fraternal relations between the head of Vladimir Vladimirovich Sergey Sakharov and Bethlehem Mayor Vera Baboon.*

***Chairman of  
Imperial Orthodox  
Palestine Society  
S. Stepashin***



***Vladimir Mayor's international affairs advisor, chairman of Cyprus branch of IOPS,  
professor L. A. Bulanov reads welcome letter of Cyprus branch of IOPS***

Welcoming remarks at the signing of the agreement twinning cities of Bethlehem and Vladimir read International Advisor of Vladimir Mayor, Chairman of the Cyprus branch of IOPS, Professor Leonid Bulanov.



*Vladimir Mayor's international affairs advisor, chairman of Cyprus branch of IOPS, professor L. A. Bulanov reads welcome letter of Cyprus branch of IOPS and Russian scientists - translation by A. Philokyprou (left)*

### **Speech of chairman of Cyprus branch of IOPS L. A. Bulanov**

*Ladies and gentlemen!*

*Dear colleagues and friends!*

*Twinning of the two cities of Bethlehem and Vladimir is, without a doubt, an important geopolitical and historical event.*

*In the city of Vladimir infancy Russian Christianity.*

*Our Savior - Jesus Christ was born in the town of Bethlehem. Residents of these cities will become brothers. Historical justice will prevail. Twinning of the two cities brought together all Christians around the world and lead to a further reunion, friendship and mutual understanding.*

*I wish happiness and health to you Madam Mayor Vera Baboon and to Mayor Sergey Sakharov.*

*With deep respect and reverence,*

***International Advisor of  
Vladimir Mayor  
Chairman of the Cyprus branch of IOPS  
professor, academician, Baron  
Leonid Bulanov***

***Vice-President of the Cyprus branch of IOPS  
Honorary Consul, Professor  
A. Philokyprou***

***Vice President of Natural Sciences,  
Doctor of Historical Sciences,  
LL.D., professor  
V. Zolotarev***

The speech was translated into English by the I Vice-President of the Cyprus branch of IOPS , Professor A. Philokyprou. There was prolonged applause.



*professor L. A. Bulanov hands to Mayors of Vladimir and Bethlehem public decorations*



*Mayor of Vladimir S. Sakharov and Mayor of Bethlehem V. Baboun*

After his speech Leonid Alekseevich as organizer of this event handed to the two Mayors Mrs. Vera Baboun and Mr. Sergey Vladimirovich Sakharov documents on the twinning of two cities, and official speeches in two languages (English and Russian). He also gave the IOPS folder with the speech of chairman of Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society Sergey Vladimirovich Stepashin. Afterwords Leonid Alekseevich awarded the public decorations: «Star Peace and Friendship» First Class to the Mayor of Bethlehem Vera Baboun and to the the Mayor of Vladimir Sergey Vladimirovich Sakharov - «Star Peace and Friendship» Second Class, medal «Peace and Friendship» went to the chairman of the Bethlehem branch of IOPS Daoud Matar, and also medal «Peace and Friendship» to the Head of the department of International and Regional affairs Anna Nikolaevna Makarova.

After the official part the twinning protocol was signed. Mayors put their signatures and the official stamps of the city on the twinning protocol. All were present stand up and greeted both Mayors with applause.

After that there was an official buffet, where all congratulated each other and made photos as a remembrance. All parted friends, shaking hands and hugging each other.



*official signing of Twinning protocol between Vladimir and Bethlehem*



*hand shake*  
*Mayor of Vladimir S. Sakharov and Mayor of Bethlehem V. Baboun*



*Mayor of Vladimir S. Sakharov and Mayor of Bethlehem V. Baboun*



*Exchange of gifts*



*Exchange of gifts*



*present to Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov  
from chairman of Bethlehem branch of IOPS D. Matar  
in the photo: chairman of Bethlehem branch of IOPS, member of Council of IOPS,  
representative of IOPS in Palestine Daoud Matar, full fledged member of IOPS V. A. Kulikov  
(in the middle) and Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov*



*Mayor of Vladimir S. Sakharov and Mayor of Bethlehem V. Baboun*

At 7 pm the Mayor of the City of Bethlehem Mrs. Vera Baboun appointed the gala dinner to commemorate the ceremony of twinning of Bethlehem and Vladimir.



*from left to right: professor L. A. Bulanov, V. A. Kulikov, A. A. Skvortsov, D. Matar, Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov, Mayor of Bethlehem V. Baboun, member of Bethlehem City Council*



*from left to right: A. A. Skvortsov, A. Philokyprou, Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov, Mayor of Bethlehem V. Baboun, professor L. A. Bulanov, V. A. Kulikov*

After the signing ceremony the Vladimir delegation went to the giftshop, where they bought many icons and next-to-skin crosses for blessing in the Church of the Nativity.

At 1 pm rector of the Church of the Nativity Archbishop of Jordan Theophylactus waited for us in the church.

The Archbishop speaks Russian well, he told about the Church in detail, that the Church was originally commissioned by equal to the apostles empress Helena and equal to apostles emperor Constantine in the 4th century, showed Constantine's 4th century mosaic floor. Archbishop Theophylactus kindly suggested to make a group photo. He showed us to the Grotto, where the Star marks the birthplace of Our Saviour Jesus Christ. It is such an important place for Christians so that the birth of Christ is the emergent year on our planet.



*Vladimir delegation and Archbishop Theophylactus  
in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem*



*from left to right: A. Philokyprou, D. Matar, Archbishop Theophylactus, Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov, professor L. A. Bulanov, secretary of REM Father Antonius, priest Father Sergius (Berezkin), A. Makarova*

*(Matthew, Chapter 2 verse 1-2*

*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.)*



*silver star – place of birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem crib*

In the Church there was a greatest number of pilgrims, to make the delegation enter the Grotto police closed the entrance.



*Vladimir delegation and Archbishop Theophylactus near the birthplace of Christ  
from left to right: V. A. Kulikov, A. A. Skvortsov, A. Philokyprou, professor L. A. Bulnov,  
Archbishop Theophylactus, D. Matar*

Archbishop of Jordan Theophylactus made photo with us inside the Grotto of the Nativity. We could get the bought icons blessed. At this point archbishop took leave of us.



*Vladimir delegation and Archbishop Theophylactus*

After that the delegation visited to the Russian Scientific and Cultural Center in Bethlehem.



*Russian Scientific and Cultural Center*

The chairman of the Bethlehem branch of Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society Daoud Matar showed to us the Russian Center of Science and Culture and told us, that last June this Center was opened by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, the President of the State of Palestine Mahmoud Abbas and the chairman of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society Sergey Vadimovich Stepashin and many other officials, members of IOPS. Daoud Matar showed his office and told us about work of Bethlehem branch of IOPS.



*Chairman of Bethlehem branch of IOPS Daoud Matar shows Russian Scientific and Cultural Center to the members of Vladimir delegation*



*Chairman of Bethlehem branch of IOPS Daoud Matar shows Russian Scientific and Cultural Center to the members of Vladimir delegation*



***Chairman of Bethlehem branch of IOPS Daoud Matar shows Russian Scientific and Cultural Center to the members of Vladimir delegation***

Then Vladimir delegation and members of Bethlehem branch of IOPS had lunch in the cafe of Russian Center of Science and Culture, on invitation of the chairman of Bethlehem branch of IOPS Daoud Matar.

There were many good words said about today's event – twinning between Bethlehem and Vladimir. Speeches were delivered by Mayor Sakharov, chairman of Cyprus branch of IOPS L. A. Bulanov, chairman of Bethlehem branch of IOPS Daoud Matar, the first vice president of Cyprus branch of IOPS, professor Andreas Philokyprou, full member of IOPS V. A. Kulikov and many other members of IOPS. All marked the outstanding role of today's event and historical significance of Vladimir-Bethlehem twinning. Vladimir delegation, members of Bethlehem

branch of IOPS and Vladimir City Mayor's office found common ground and became friends.



*Vladimir delegation and members of Bethlehem City Council*

After the friendly lunch the delegation visited the Mayor of Beit Jala Dr. Nael Salman. Beit Jala is an Arabian city between Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

After exchange of greetings between two Mayors there was even a football match game held. Then at tea there was exchange of experiences and ideas on municipal management.

Hereon Vladimir delegation made a sally to the City of Hebron, where saw the Oak of Mamre and visited the Holy Trinity Church.

At 7 pm started the gala dinner in one of the restaurants in the center of Bethlehem devoted to the twinning of Bethlehem and Vladimir. Mayor of

Bethlehem Mrs. Vera Baboun, Deputy Mayors and municipal officials, chairman of Bethlehem branch of IOPS Daoud Matar and its members, Mayor of Vladimir Mr. Sergey Sakharov and Vladimir delegation, Consul of the Russian Federation in Ramallah, Palestine, representative of Rossotrudnichestvo in Palestine, director of the Russian Center of Science and Culture in Bethlehem Sergey Alexandrovich Schapovalov, secretary of the Russian Orthodox Ecclesiastical Mission, hieromonk father Antonius (Gutnik) were present at the gala dinner.

Mayor Mrs. Vera Baboun was the first, who welcomed the gala dinner guests and told about an outstanding event of today and about opportunity of friendship between two cities: *«We are always attentive to such events, especially when it is connected with Russian people»*. Vera Baboun thanked Sergey Vladimirovich for opportunity of close relationship, in connection with signing twinning protocol between two cities.

In his answering speech Mayor of Vladimir Sergey Sakharov said, that Bethlehem is the cradle of Christianity, Vladimir is the cradle of Christianity in Rus, it makes both cities closer: *«Of course, Vladimir is not so old as Bethlehem, but both cities are connected with ties of twinning»*.

The gala dinner went off in a relaxed and easy-going atmosphere, fellow diners exchanged opinions and talked about development of friendly ties.

Early in the morning next day the delegation went to Jericho for the official meeting with the Mayor Muhammad Jahlight.



*Mayor of Jericho Muhammad Jahlight (left) and Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov*

In an hour by car on a picturesque road we went down to the Jericho valley, which is over 400 m below sea level, to one of the oldest cities of the world – last year it was 10 000 years old. Consul of the Russian Federation in Ramallah waited for us at the entrance to the municipality building. The delegation went upstairs to the meeting room of Jericho municipality.



*Vladimir delegation at the reception by Mayor of Jericho*



*Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov gives present to Mayor of Jericho Muhammad Jahlight*

*from left to right: chairman of Bethlehem branch of IOPS Daoud Matar, Mayor of Jericho Muhammad Jahlight and Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov*



*Vladimir delegation at the reception by Mayor of Jericho*

Mayor of Jericho Muhammad Jahlight was the first who spoke. He told about the infrastructure of the city, problems facing the community services, water supply of the city, because Jericho is situated in one of the hottest places of the world and summer temperature may sometimes reach + 60 degrees. He greeted the delegation of Vladimir and marked that, Jericho and its municipality is open for international contacts especially with Russia. Mayor Jahlight invited the delegation to the formal dinner and city tour.



*in the Mayor's office of Jericho  
Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov (left) and professor L. A. Bulanov*



*in the Mayor's office of Jericho  
from left to right: A. Makarova, Consul of RF in Ramallah, Mayor of Vladimir S. V.  
Sakharov and professor L. A. Bulanov*



*from left to right: Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov, Mayor of Jericho Muhammad Jahlight,  
V. A. Kulikov, A. A. Skvortsov and professor L. A. Bulanov*

In his answering speech Mayor Sakharov thanked for hospitality, warm welcome and shared his experience in the municipal management. He also told briefly about the history of Vladimir.

Then delegation visited the Russian Museum Park Complex, which was build on a historical land lot of Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society in Jericho. Museum administration and staff welcomed us at the entrance. Head of the department for property management abroad under the President of the Russian Federation, member of the Russian Academy of Science Igor Zhuravlev gave a tour. On complex grounds we've seen ashes of a Byzantine temple of 5th century

AD. Here we could see the ancient Scyamore Tree - Zacchaeus' Tree. According to the New Testament Zacchaeus climbed up a sycamore fig tree so that he might be able to see Jesus going along the road.



*Russian Museum Park Complex*



*coming of Vladimir delegation to Russian Museum Park Complex*



*Vladimir delegation does Russian Museum Park Complex*



*Vladimir delegation does Russian Museum Park Complex*

***(Luke, Chapter 19 verse 1-6***

*And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.*

*And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.*

*And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.*

*And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.*

*And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.*

*And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.)*



*Zacchaeus' Tree*



*Zacchaeus' Tree*



*Vladimir delegation and members of Jericho City Council at Zacchaeus' Tree  
from left to right: staff member of museum, A. A. Skvortsov, A. Philokyprou, D. Matar,  
professor L. A. Bulanov, Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov, priest Father Sergius (Berezkin),  
V. A. Kulikov*



*at Zacchaeus' Tree  
in the photo: professor L. A. Bulanov and A. Philokyprou (right)*



*Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov at Zacchaeus' Tree*

After that delegation made photo against the backdrop of Zacchaeus' Tree, near which by the decision of the First Conference of IOPS is fixed a memorial tablet informing that evangelic Zacchaeus' Fig Tree is under the patronage of Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society.

Hereafter Vladimir delegation and accompanying people entered the museum, where the main exhibits are – restorations of Byzantine mosaic, utensils, an information poster about Byzantine Jericho, ancient buildings, and the most precious exhibit – early Byzantine mosaic of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

At the end of excursion there was made a group photo.



*Vladimir delegation inside the Museum Park Complex*



*Vladimir delegation inside the Museum Park Complex*



*from left to right: professor L. A. Bulanov, V. A. Kulikov, D. Matar*



*Vladimir delegation and staff of Museum Park complex*

Members of museum presented to Mayor Sakharov and professor Bulanov a cut of Zacchaeus' Tree.

After the Vladimir delegation accompanied by Jericho Mayor's office staff went to the Mount of Temptation, which is laid in the Judean Desert to the northwest of Jericho. We decided not to go up to the Greek Orthodox Monastery (Monastery of the Temptation or "Qarantal"), made a photo below on the back of beautiful scenery and blue sky.



*Greek Orthodox Monastery on the Mount of Temptation*

Then we leaved for the Moses's Well, which provides the city with water from the earliest times, and looked over the city dike.



*from left to right: A. A. Skvortsov, Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov, D. Matar, priest Father Sergius (Berezkin), A. Philokyprou, V. A. Kulikov, professor L. A. Bulanov*



*Vladimir delegation examined the dike of Jericho*

After excursion there was organized lunch with the Mayor of Jericho Muhammad Jahlight and Vladimir delegation. Lunch went off in a relaxed and easy-going atmosphere. Mayors exchanged their opinions on questions of interest.



*lunch with the Mayor of Jericho*



*lunch with the Mayor of Jericho*

*from left to right: Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov, D. Matar and V. A. Kulikov*

We looked over the land plot of Russian Orthodox Church, where is situated the Zacchaeus' house. There stands a small church with the Zacchaeus' icon on analogion and walls decorated with scene Zacchaeus meets Jesus Christ.



*priest Father Sergius (Berezkin) (left), Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov and Daoud Matar (right) in a small church with Zacchaeus' icon*



*from left to right: A. Philokyprou, Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov,*

*professor L. A. Bulanov, D. Matar*

On the way back from Jericho we decided to visit the place where John the Baptist baptized Jesus Christ on river Jordan. Christians consider Jordan as sacred river. From Byzantine time they believed that water of Jordan heals from diseases. Usually there are a lot of pilgrims, but this time oddly to say there was nobody. The sky was covered with clouds, but exactly here the sky was blue.

Sergey Vladimirovich, Leonid Alekseevich and Father Sergius decided to have a dip in the river where Jesus Christ was baptized.



*Jordan River*



*Jordan River*

We bathed our bodies in the waters of Jordan three times and felt the touch of vivification and energy surge. The water was cold, but we didn't feel it.



*Vladimir delegation at Jordan river*

*from left to right: V. A. Kulikov, priest Father Sergius (Berezkin), A. A. Skvortsov, Mayor of Vladimir S. V. Sakharov, professor L. A. Bulanov, D. Matar, A. Philokyprou*

***(Mark, Chapter 1, verse 6-11***

*And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;*

*And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.*

*I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.*

*And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.*

*And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:*

*And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.)*

We made many commemorative pictures even with Israeli army men and leaved for the Dead Sea.

The Sun set at Dead Sea was especially beautiful. Riffle and light wind made the sea view real and beautiful.

On the sea there were many shops with Dead Sea cosmetics which is famous worldwide as the best health and beauty products. Than is why many members of delegation bought it with pleasure.

It was high time to go to the hotel.

At 9 pm we left for airport and drove by Bethany (*Bethany was the name of a village mentioned in the New Testament as the home of the siblings Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Here stayed Jesus shortly before he enters Jerusalem*), its main place of interest is the Tomb of Lazarus of the Four Days the friend of Jesus Christ.

***(John, Chapter 11, Verse 41-44***

*Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.*

*And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.  
And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.  
And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.)*

Everybody regretted having no time to enter Bethany and decided to visit that place during the next visit to Palestine.

*(It will be remembered that on May, 11<sup>th</sup> 2012 twinning of Larnaca and Vladimir occurred, prayer service to commemorate this event was held in St. Lazarus Church in Larnaca, where his holy relics are kept, by Metropolitan Chrysostom of Citium (Larnaca)*

In the hotel we had a small meal, told kind words and shared impressions about days in the Holy Land.

Chairman of Bethlehem branch of IOPS Daoud Matar and his wife Linda accompanied us.

At 9.30 pm the delegation started to airport Ben Gurion in Tel Aviv.

On February, 17 at 7 am we were in Moscow.

We don't say farewell to Palestine, we say "see you".

**P.S.** Mayor S.V.Sakharov thanked with the official letters chairman of Cyprus branch of IOPS Leonid Alekseevich Bulanov for organization and carrying out of the visit into the Holy Land and active help in establishing the twinning links between Bethlehem and Vladimir; vice-chairman of Cyprus branch of IOPS Andreas Philokyprou for organization of the visit to gracious Patriarch of

Jerusalem Theophilus III and taking part at twinning of the two cities; full-fledged member of IOPS Evgeny Evgenjevich Kiselev for the personal commitment, for shooting the twinning ceremony and other events during the whole stay of delegation and making the photo records of important for the City of Vladimir events.

**Text by**  
**consultant of the City Mayor of Vladimir on international affairs,**  
**chairman of Cyprus branch of IOPS, professor**  
**L. A. Bulanov**  
**Photos by**  
**full-fledged member of IOPS E.E.Kiselev**