

## A monk of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission takes part in festive service at Jacob's Well in Sichem



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On November 29, the commemoration day of the holy martyr Philoumenos, hieromonk Filofey (Artyushin) of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission took part in the services celebrated in the church of St. Photina at Jacob's Well in the ancient city of Sichem (mod. Nablus).

The service was celebrated by His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine. Among those who assisted the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem were Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth and Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Arabic-speaking clergy of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, clergy of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, a representative of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, and pilgrims in holy orders. At the end of Matins, His Beatitude blessed bread, wine, and oil.

Praying at the Divine Liturgy were archimandrites Bartholomew and Justin, abbot of the monastery at Jacob's Well, worshippers from the Orthodox Greek and Arab communities in the Holy Land, workers of the Mission, and numerous pilgrims.

The service was celebrated in Greek, Arabic, and Church Slavonic. The liturgical hymns were sung by a local choir in Greek and Arabic, website of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission reports.

After the Liturgy, His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilus III delivered a sermon and led the procession of the cross around the church.

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Nablus, an Arabic version of its original name 'Neapolis', is the ancient biblical city of Sichem (Shechem). It is located in the northern West Bank of the Jordan River within the Palestinian territories in the historical region of Samaria.

Here God spoke to Forefather Abraham (Gen. 12:6-7) and Forefather Jacob settled here and dug a well (Gen. 33:18-20; Jn. 4:12). Centuries later, the Lord Jesus Christ held conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well about living water and revealed to her that He was the Messiah (Jn. 4:1-44). After her meeting with the Lord, Photina, as the Samaritan woman was called, believed in Him with all her soul and began to preach the Gospel. She suffered martyrdom for Christ in Rome in 66 AD.

In the Roman era, the Roman colony of Flavia Neapolis was established in the vicinities of the ancient Sichem, where St Justin, Christian apologist and Philosopher, was born about 100 AD.

Nowadays, there is a Greek monastery on the site of the Saviour's conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well. A Byzantine church was built here in the 4th century and ruined in the 6th century. In 1914, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem began the restoration of the church with the financial support from Russia, but it was interrupted by the First World War. The church was in full completion and consecrated in 2008.

On 29 November 1979, archimandrite Philoumenos (Hasapis), abbot of the monastery at Jacob's Well in Samaria, was brutally murdered by religious fanatics when celebrating Vespers. On 11 September 2009 he was canonized by the Church of Jerusalem as a holy martyr. He is commemorated on the day of his martyrdom – November 16 (Old Style)/November 29 (New Style). This year marks 45 years since his martyrdom.

After the demise of archimandrite Philoumenos, the traditions of this place have been kept alive by archimandrite Justin (Mamalos), the new abbot of the monastery. He made best efforts to restore the beautiful church of St. Photina and the chapel of the holy martyrs Philoumenos and Justin the Philosopher, who suffered martyrdom about 160 AD.

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