

AN ADDRESS TO THE BULGARIAN PRIME MINISTER MR BOYKO BORISSOR

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

12 January 2010

Your Excellency, the Prime Minister of Bulgaria

Your Eminences

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Christ is born! Let us glorify Him!

We greet you during these days of the Feast of the Nativity, when the Church throughout the world rejoices with the angels at the birth of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

You have come to the Holy Land and to the Patriarchate at a time when the world looks to Bethlehem and to the promise of the Prince of Peace, and we encourage you in your pilgrimage.

We wish to convey through you our fraternal greetings and prayers to His Holiness Patriarch Maxim and to all the faithful of the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria. We know the deep Christian faith of the Bulgarian people, and we appreciate the growing number of pilgrims who are coming to the Holy Land now after many years in which such pilgrimages were not so easy to make.

In the Holy Land, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem represents in a special way the entire Christian world, and in a unique way the Orthodox Christian world. By God's providence, as the

Local and Senior Orthodox Church of this region, it is our great blessing and privilege to be the guardians and servants of the Holy places, and it is our duty and our joy to embrace without discrimination all Orthodox Christians who either visit here or who live here, regardless of their national origins and languages.

In his First Letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul reminds us of that diversity in unity that is of the essence of the Church: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord" (I Cor. 12:4). In the Holy Land, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem lives not only the magnificence of the Orthodox Faith in all its fullness; we live also the life of the Church in all its fullness, for we embrace our diversity within the unity that is the gift of Christ to the Church.

In this spirit of diversity in unity, we welcome you to the Holy Land, which is our home and the home of all people of good will. Needless to say that the Patriarchate is playing a leading role in promoting peace justice and reconciliation and maintaining the special religious cultural and social status of the Holy City of Jerusalem.

We thank you again for your kindnesses to us and we assure you of our prayers and we bestow upon you our Patriarchal blessing.