

AN ADDRESS AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE “WUJOOD” CULTURAL CENTRE AND MUSEUM IN JERUSALEM

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

14 May 2010

Your Excellencies,

Your Eminences,

Reverend Fathers,

Miss Nova Court,

Dear Members of the Orthodox Society,

Brothers and Sisters,

It is a pleasure for us to participate this afternoon in the inauguration of the “Wujoud” Cultural Centre and Museum in the Old City of Jerusalem, and to bless its new and important work.

The Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the oldest continuous religious institution in the Holy Land and is therefore, in a particular way, the embodiment of sacred history. Because of our spiritual identity, the Patriarchate is the servant and the guardian of the special religious and cultural character of Jerusalem. It is the distinctive privilege of Jerusalem to maintain and to prosper unity in the

name of the God of Abraham as well as diversity in the name of our common humanity.

The “Wujoud” Centre, which we dedicate today, is a simple yet significant witness to the διακονία – the Christ-like ministry of service – that the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate and its flock have been commissioned to fulfill both here in the Holy Land and throughout the whole inhabited earth. As we read in the Second Letter to Timothy: “Be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of the evangelist, carry out your ministry – your διακονία – fully”, (II Tim. 4,5).

Throughout our history, we of the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate have known our share of afflictions. But we have also known great endurance. Ours is the living witness of the message of the Gospel of the crucified, risen and ascended Lord, which is a message of the love of humanity that we call “philanthropy”. This philanthropy finds expression in the commitment of the Patriarchate to all the people of our City without religious, ethnic, racial or cultural distinction. The Good Samaritan Centre and the Saint Benedictos Polyclinic are thriving examples of this mission and today we add the work of the Wujoud Centre. The Wujoud Centre is designed to be another guarantee of the diversity of our City as well as a place for the community to gather for important events in our life together.

As we celebrate the opening of this Centre, and as we recall our identity and mission as the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate, we congratulate Miss Nora Court and her colleagues and we express our gratitude to her and to all those whose generosity has made the Nora Court initiative a reality.

We extend to all our best wishes for the work of this Center, and we impart our Patriarchal Blessing on this endeavour, on all gathered here, and on our beloved City of Jerusalem and all her people, who long for justice, peace and respectful co-existence.

Thank you, and God bless you.