

AN ADDRESS OF H.B. PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III AT THE MAJDANEK DEATH CAMP IN LUBLIN.

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

25 June 2010

Your Eminences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Whenever we come to a place where there has been human suffering and death, we know that we are walking on holy ground. We who live in Jerusalem understand this very well. And when we are on holy ground, we must walk with prayerful reverence.

Here at Majdanek, as well as at the other concentration camps of the Nazi regime, unspeakable inhumane and barbaric acts were carried out systematically against the Jewish people. Others, including Christians, and among them several whom we now venerate among the saints of the Church, also suffered in the concentration camps during this brutal period of the 20th century, often simply because of their national or religious identity.

Majdanek stands as a stern and compelling reminder to us that we must never forget this terrible history, because the responsibility rests on our shoulders to ensure that such things never happen in our generation or in generations to come. As the eye-witnesses of what occurred here and

elsewhere pass away, we in the next generations who have known them also have a duty to pass on to our children the great dangers that flow from prejudice and discrimination. If there is a fine line between fear and discrimination, there is an even finer line between discrimination and persecution.

Both Jews and Christians place the highest value on the human person. The Holy Scriptures assure us that we are made in the image and likeness of God, and for us Orthodox Christians this means quite simply, and yet also quite profoundly, that every human person is an icon of God himself. We bear this privilege, and this responsibility, in equal measure.

Therefore any inhumane act of one human person against another is not just a crime against a fellow human being; it is an insult against God. One might go so far as to say that such acts amount to a denial of the Creator. Violence dehumanizes all concerned, both perpetrators as well as victims. It is the moral imperative of all who desire to build a new future for the human community, based on mutual respect and peaceful co-existence, to do all in our power to break cycles of violence wherever they manifest themselves.

As we gather here in this resolve, our minds and our prayers turn to those who perished here so unnecessarily. We pray that Almighty God, in his infinite mercy and philanthropy, may give rest to the dead who bear such a witness still. May their memory be blessed and eternal. And may we, the living, learn a new commitment to forgiveness and reconciliation, for these are the firm foundation of human society.

Thank you.