

A TEAM OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS VISIT THE PATRIARCHATE.

On Tuesday 14th / 27th of July 2010, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III received at the Patriarchate Rabbi Dr. David Rozen with a team of scientists of various disciplines, Christians and Jews. The visit's purpose was to accomplish a constructive discussion on religious, social, political, and other topics of the region of the Middle East as well as other regions. Rabbi Dr. David Rozen is well known amongst the Christian circles for his broad knowledge, erudition and for his active participation in and contribution to the dialogue between Judaism and Christianity as well as between Orthodoxy and Judaism under the aegis of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Rabbi Dr. David Rozen commended His Beatitude for His active participation in the inter-religious dialogue, His pacifying role in the Middle East peace process and for the time He has devoted to this.

During the discussion, His Beatitude explained to the members of the visiting group the position and the efforts of the Patriarchate in the Holy Land and the Holy Shrines, from the very beginning during the early Christian times and also during the Byzantine times when the great Churches were built, namely the Church of the Resurrection and the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the great historical Monasteries of the desert.

«This period» His Beatitude clarified «ended with the surrender of Jerusalem, in 638 AD, to the Muslim Caliph Omar Hatamb by the Patriarch of Jerusalem Sophronios, who, at that time, assumed the role of the Ethnarch. Upon the signed agreement at that time- *Achtiname*, the relations were founded between the Patriarchate and Islam, during the era of the Arab

and Turkish rule».

« In accordance with this agreement, the Patriarchate protects the shrines, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim. The Patriarchate has spiritual wealth, that is to say its religious and cultural heritage, but also tangible wealth such as residences and other land holdings for the maintenance of its flock and for the support of its institutions».

«The relations between the Patriarchate and Judaism are both close and deep in the context of the relationship between the two Testaments, Old and New, but also the liturgical life of the Church. The prophecies and the psalms are recited during the ceremonies of our Church along with the Gospels and the Epistles of the New Testament and the ecclesiastical hymns».

Replying to a pertinent question His Beatitude explained that the Patriarchate, from its revenues and from the donations of charitable Societies, Non Governmental Organizations and pious worshipers, maintains and preserves the Holy Shrines, establishes and runs schools and philanthropic foundations, and takes an active role in resolving problems that arise due to the political tension.

With respect to the political problem of Jerusalem and the Middle East, His Beatitude replied that the Patriarchate maintains that Jerusalem should be an open city with free access for all followers of all religions to their Holy Places. Furthermore, His Beatitude elaborated that the Patriarchate, along with the other Churches, actively and religiously participates in the advancement of the peace process.

«If the above is not achieved» stated His Beatitude, «that is, the reciprocal mutual acceptance of both nations also on a religious basis, then no political solution will be viable. The Patriarchate and the other Christian Churches of the Holy Land contribute towards the advancement of peace to prevail,

mainly through the work of the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land. Due to this contribution, the Patriarchate is visited by diplomats, representatives of states, peace missions and political figures, such as the former President of the USA, Mr. Jimmy Carter, a year ago».

«If no regard is paid to the religious parameters particular to Jerusalem, then no political solution will either be achieved or founded in a viable manner. The Patriarchate follows with commiseration the consequences of the political tension and participates in the suffering of its victims with prayer, dialogue and endeavours of peaceful existence and with the propagation of a message of apology, love, forgiveness, conciliation, and peace».

At the conclusion of this meeting, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III presented each one of the members of the aforementioned group with the book by Mr. Votokopoulos on the illustrated manuscripts of the Central Library of the Patriarchate.

Chief Secretary's Office.

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