

HIS BEATITUDE SPEECH TO THE MAYOR AND THE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT OF JERUSALEM.

Jerusalem, 26 January 2011.

Your Excellency, Mr Barkat, Mayor of Jerusalem,

Honorable Members of the Municipal Government,

Distinguished Guest,

“ Like birds hovering overhead, the LORD Almighty will shield Jerusalem; he will shield it and deliver it, he will ‘pass over’ it and will rescue it.” (Isaiah 31:5) We thank Your Excellency for this cordial invitation as we gather here by the grace of God; with all the love and commitment for the Holy City of Jerusalem.

It is an honor and a privilege to join this distinguished gathering and to convey our best wishes to all on the occasion of the New Year.

We take this opportunity to re-assure our commitment to our mission, which throughout the ages has been to first uphold Holy Places and Shrines as places of worship accessible to all the faithful, regardless of denomination and diversity; keeping the flocking of pilgrims and visitors. This in turn had tremendous impact, not only, on bringing people together and diffusing tensions, but also on economic standards by alleviating the standard of living for our local respective communities.

Our city, which is a holy shrine in itself, is equally dear and sacred to us all: Jews, Christians and Muslims; for it epitomizes the sacred history of the Holy Land. Jerusalem is the main factor for the enchantment it raises among the people

of the world. But the city is also greatly valued for its multi-cultural and ethno-religious diversity. These attributes which synthesize the identity of Jerusalem must drive us to effect the conclusion that more effort should be exerted to join our forces for turning this Holy City into a physical and spiritual bridge for peace and reconciliation.

Here the believers of the three faiths worship at their Holy Places every day. Here, at all times of the day and night, people come to pray at their shrines. Of nowhere else can it be said with such confidence that there is unceasing prayer. Here we strive with all our energy to affirm that there is room for all in Jerusalem.

Let us be reminded that this City is not an earthly reality alone, but a reflection of the heavenly Jerusalem that has enough space to accommodate all of her children with love and forgiveness; for we all are answerable to the Almighty, who in the words of the Prophet:

“... shall rejoice over you... For there shall be no one like you, O Jerusalem...” (Isaiah 62:4-7)

Thank you for this opportunity of addressing you and this gathering. We pray every day for the peace of Jerusalem, and we pray for God’s special blessing on this Holy City. May all who love her prosper.

We wish you all a very blessed and peaceful New Year.

His Beatitude

Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem.