

H. B. ADDRESS TO THE DELEGATIONS OF THE LOCAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES TO THE MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES.

Amman, Jordan, 2 July 2011

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Reverend Fathers,

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Christ is in our midst!

We greet you in love in the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and we bring to you the spiritual blessings of the Holy Places.

The opportunity of this meeting in preparation for the General Assembly enables us to emphasize the crucial importance of the renewal of the Middle East Council of Churches. We are keen to encourage this work and to state clearly our commitment to the mission of the Council, which is to make possible the united voice of the Christian communities in the Middle East.

This mission is as urgent now as it has ever been, and we believe that this mission is paramount. The message of the Council of peace and unity is a life-giving witness, especially in this critical time for our region.

We as the Orthodox Church have a leading role to play in

ensuring that the Council remains focused and clear in this mission. It is essential that we do not become distracted by loyalties or prejudices that compromise our collective witness to Our Lord Jesus Christ and the sacrificial work of the Church and all her members.

In preparation for the General Assembly, it is our hope and expectation that we shall pay particular attention to the points that have been raised for us in the documents for this meeting. Among them we should like to underscore especially these matters:

- 1) We must clarify the issue of the Secretary General, and establish terms of office.
- 2) We must call upon all leaders to attend the upcoming General Assembly as a priority.
- 3) We must pay close attention to the report of the delegation from the Patriarchate of Alexandria on the latest developments on the work of the Council in Syria.
- 4) We must give our best efforts to the examination of the record of our recent past meetings with respect to the work of the Task Force.

As we do this work to strengthen the effectiveness of the Council, we cannot overstate the weight that we assign to the significance of the renewal of the Council. We live in stern times, and we must be resolute in ensuring that we offer to the world a clear and united Christian voice. This is the greatest gift that the Council can give to our region and the world, and it is our dearest hope that this will be the focus of all our endeavors.

As we gather, we give special thanks to His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan for his encouragement and support of the work of this Council. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan remains a shining example in our region of democracy, progress and

peaceful co- existence, where Christians enjoy real freedom of worship. May God richly bless the Kingdom and all its peoples.

My sisters and brothers, we assure you of our deep gratitude for your hard work and your commitment to the Council and its mission. These are not easy times for our region or for the world. Each of our local Orthodox Churches faces both challenges and opportunities and our role in the Middle East Council of Churches is of the utmost significance.

We have a God-given responsibility to be a living witness of the “grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit”, so that the world may know the saving Gospel in our own day.

We ask for God’s mercy and help and we assure you all f our Patriarchal blessing and our Love in the Lord.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem