

HIS BEATITUDE ADDRESS IN HONOUR OF CHURCH LEADERS AT THE ORTHODOX HEAD OF CHURCHES MEETING IN AMMAN-JORDAN.

31 July 2011

An Address at the Dinner in honour of His Beatitude Ignatius IV, the Patriarch of Antioch, His Beatitude Chrysostomos II, the Archbishop of Cyprus, His Grace Bishop Nicholaos, the Representative of His Beatitude Theodoros II, the Patriarch of Alexandria and Representatives of the Royal Family and the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Your Beatitudes, my dear Brother Primates,

Your Eminences,

Yours Graces,

Reverend Fathers,

Your Royal Highnesses,

Esteemed Members of the Government,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters

“Your children like olive branches around your table. Thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.” (Psalm 127:3).

It is a great honour for us to host this dinner for all our distinguished guests with us this evening, who are like olive branches around this table. We come here as those who fear and love God, and who seek to serve God faithfully. This gathering is of paramount importance because it takes place at a

delicate time for our region, as we experience unrest and change.

This evening we remember our forebears, Patriarch Sophronios and the Caliph Omar ibn al-Khattab, and the foundation that they laid in the Al-'Udha Al-'Umariyyah In the year 637 for the peaceful co-existence of Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land. We recall that Patriarch- Sophronios acted not simply on his own behalf, but as the recognized leader of all Christians in the region. And the Caliph Omar, too, entered into this treaty on behalf of the Islamic leadership as a whole. As a consequence, this treaty has formed an historic basis for the relationship between our Christian civilization and our Arab Muslim civilization and our life together in the Holy Land for many centuries.

We who are here this evening are the heirs of Patriarch Sophronios and Caliph Omar. The presence of leaders of the Rum Orthodox Church of our region demonstrates the united witness to the historical relationship of the Church to the land and all our peoples. The presence of representatives of the Jordanian Royal Family and the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan this evening is an eloquent testimony to the ongoing guardianship of the religious heritage of our region that is yours.

We sit round this table today as the descendants of Patriarch Sophronios and Caliph Omar ibn al-Khattab, We inherit their awesome responsibility, and we are acutely aware, as the Scriptures remind us, that we "bear one another's burdens" (Galatians, 6:2).

This great foundation, on which our present work is based, is once again threatened. The religious; cultural, and historic principles and circumstances of co-existence that have shaped and formed us are at risk. It is to ensure that this crucial heritage is preserved that is the primary motivation for our gathering.

To the Rum Orthodox here this evening we would like to emphasize the urgency living out the unity that is ours as we provide leadership in our region. We are called to join with our fellow leaders of other Christian churches and communities for the sake of the well-being of all. And we are further called to act together with our Muslim brothers and sisters who are our compatriots in our respective countries.

To our Muslim brothers and sisters here with us this evening we have a similar challenge. As you look to the beginning of the holy season of Ramadan, a time of recollection and re-commitment, we encourage you to be leaders in a new collaboration on behalf of peace and justice for all our people.

Whether we are Muslim or Christian, we cannot allow the forces of division to disrupt our historic relationship. And let us not forget that as we share this meal together, this common food is a powerful and effective sign of our common nature as members of the human family and our common destiny.

Thank you all for being at this dinner this evening, and for showing such solidarity for the sake of our region and all our peoples.

And now would you please rise and join us in a toast to His Majesty King Abdullah, under whose gracious encouragement we meet, and who has been instrumental in following in the footsteps of Omar ibn al-Khattab to ensure the great heritage of the Al-'Umariyyah that has been handed on to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Your Beatitudes, Ladies and Gentleman – the King.

Please would you join me in a second toast to His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius, His Beatitude Archbishop Chrysostomos, and to the other Church leaders here who labour diligently in our mission of safe-guarding not only the spiritual freedom of our people, but also in protecting and maintaining national order

and unity in a time of great difficulty,

Dear friends, I give you Their Beatitudes and our fellow
leaders.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem