

HIS BEATITUDE ADDRESS AT THE OPENING SESSION FOR THE MEETING OF THE HEADS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES OF THE MIDDLE EAST.

The Baptismal Site

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 01 August 2011

“Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” Psalm:133.

Your Beatitude, Patriarch of Antioch Kirios Ignatios,

Your Beatitude Archbishop of Cyprus, Kirios Chrysostomos,

**Your Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of Hermopolis,
Representative of His Beatitude Patriarch of Alexandria,**

Reverend Fathers, distinguished guests, brothers and sisters,

With a joyful heart we express Our warmest greetings on this special gathering that demonstrates our unity and oneness in the Holy Spirit of Christ, which has brought us to this part of the Holy Land, that is under the protection and rule of His Majesty King Abdullah II.

We are grateful to His Majesty, our beloved King Abdulla II, and his government that were extremely cooperative in hosting us in this dear Holy Land. We greatly value His Majesty's diligence and vision in both, continuing and furthering, the freedoms that exist in Jordan and always point

to this great example of living together, co-existence and of symbiosis.

We are here, at the Baptismal site of our Lord, in order to confirm Our mission as the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic church. Our mission as the Eastern Orthodox Church, known as the Rum Orthodox Church, is to be a living witness to the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ and the saving power of His baptism, that by and through it, Christ has made us members of His Kingdom.

Our mission is to spread the message of Christ's sacrificial love and peace for God is love, "if someone says ' I love God' and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God, whom he has not seen?" John 4:20.

The Middle East region which has been the motherland of Abraham's children, Muslims, Christians and Jews, has enriched them with great religious and cultural heritage that has shaped and formed our modern civilization. A civilization that embraces freedom of expression, diversity of religious affiliation and ethnic identity which at the same time constitutes a harmonious symbiosis.

Today the very fabric of this harmonious symbiotic, cultural and religious diversity is threatened by the dark, invisible forces who want to impose their own conception of peace and co-existence.

The Christian presence that constitutes an inseparable and integral part of the Middle East countries [Cyprus included], is experiencing despair, uncertainty and difficulty and this is no more evident than in our region; but we must not fear. It is precisely for this reason that we have come to join with our Christian brothers and sisters in encouraging them to continue their lives in hope and strength and help in sustaining peace, justice, mutual respect and true co-

existence.

For we are not the masters of history. We serve the master of history, who in truth is the eschaton, fulfilment and completion of all things. It is in this context that we as ritual leaders are announcing the Middle East Rum Orthodox Churches initiative; in order to serve the good interest and concerns of the Christians of the Middle East and beyond.

I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to all the endeavours of His Royal Highness, Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad and recognise his attentiveness in further developing this Holy Site.

Allow me please to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to all those who sacrificed their time in order for this to become a reality not in the least the team here at the Baptismal Site.

Last but not least we like to thank the director of Our Middle East Council of Churches office in Amman, Miss Wafa Goussous.

Thank you all and may God bless our deliberations.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem