

SPEECH TO THE MAYOR AND THE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT OF JERUSALEM.

Holy City of Jerusalem, 24 January 2012

Your Excellency, Mr Mayor,

Honorable Members of the Municipal Authority,

Your Eminences,

Distinguished Guests,

We greet you with joy and hope as we begin this New Year. We are honored to be amongst our fellow Jerusalemites and on behalf of the Christian Churches, the communities of Jerusalem and all people of faith and good will, we express our best wishes to you, Mr Mayor, and to the members of the Municipal Authority for your important tasks serving our beloved Holy City.

Jerusalem is considered to be the special Capital for the whole world, and Jerusalem is the only city in which inter-religious dialogue is a lived and living reality. Here Jews, Christians and Muslims have been living together for generations; a fact that prompts us to overcome challenges that lie ahead of us.

We cannot underestimate or disregard the example that is ours to set. All over the world, people know trouble, uncertainty, violence and distrust as they face an unpredictable future. They are looking for hope, for a concrete example of what is possible for the human community.

To be this beacon of hope is the vocation of Jerusalem, its civic and religious leaders, and all her inhabitants. In her

unique mission, Jerusalem should shine as a genuine example of respectful co-existence. We of diverse heritages should be able to show the world that peoples of different faiths, cultures, and ethnicities can live together in peace and harmony.

We appreciate the efforts of the municipal authorities to ensure safety, order and quiet living conditions for all, and for helping to guarantee freedom of worship for all. Inclusiveness in this and every regard, not exclusiveness in any form, should be the maxim of our city.

Our different religious, ethnic, and cultural communities are the flavour of Jerusalem. They are what give this city its very distinctive "life". Just as Jerusalem is a city for all; its well being is the responsibility of all. Therefore, it is the moral obligation of all who represent common religious values and principles to join forces, if we are genuine in our search for peace, prosperity and reconciliation for all.

The building of bridges and the healing of wounds demand a sacrifice – the sacrifice of the self. This is an understanding that lies at the heart of the Abrahamic traditions, and we know that violence can only be eradicated by this powerful act of humble self-sacrifice for the sake of the good of all.

In this spirit must we act. Pilgrims testify to us of the mystical power of Jerusalem, not only as a city in which our local communities live together in diversity, but also to the power of Jerusalem to stand as an example for the rest of the world, to live fully our common human nature, and realize our common human destiny. As the great Desert Father of the Holy Land, Saint Anthony said, 'Our life and our death are with our neighbour.'

Once again, we wish to extend to you, Mr Mayor, to your family, to your colleagues and to the members of the Municipal

Authority of Jerusalem, our best wishes for this New Year, and to assure you of our commitment to preserving the idiosyncrasy of our beloved Jerusalem.

Hag Sameach and Shanah Tova.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem