

HIS BEATITUDE EASTER GREETINGS TO THE CUSTOS OF THE HOLY LAND AND SUPERIOR OF THE FRANSISCANS.

Jerusalem, Holy Tuesday the 10th of April 2012.

Easter Greetings

to the Custos of the Holy Land

and Superior of the Franciscans

Father Pierbattista Pizzaballa

Your Paternity,

Dear Brothers,

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

We are here today to give you our greetings on this great feast, the Feast of the Resurrection – the Anastasis – of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which took place here in Jerusalem. We have been blessed to be the guardians and servants of the Holy Places and the Holy Land, and at the same time to bear living witness to his saving passion and death and his glorious resurrection.

This Paschal celebration is of particular importance not only for our brotherhoods and our communities, but for the whole Christian world. Even as we experience in this life the battle of darkness against light, of falsehood against truth,

and of death against life, we proclaim Christ himself to be our light, our truth, our life and our way. Ours is the mission to show Christ's way to a world that longs for the salvation of God.

Having been entrusted by Divine Providence with this sacred trust and responsibility, our care of the Holy Places that constitute the earthly Jerusalem is a reminder to us all of the heavenly Jerusalem, which is our common longing.

As we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, we recall also the mystery of his incarnation, the eternal Logos made flesh, and his nativity in Bethlehem. Just as we are to maintain the Christian character of Jerusalem, we have an equal moral obligation to safeguard the Christian character of Bethlehem.

There the Grotto of the Nativity was ennobled by the Church of the Nativity by great and pious emperors, and there countless faithful over the centuries have unceasingly venerated the mystery of the incarnation. This testifies to our sacred and ecumenical heritage, and it falls to us to ensure that this original testimony is maintained clear and unadulterated.

Now more than ever before we are called to work together as fraternities in the name of our risen Lord Jesus Christ, as we have done for years now, to uphold all the Holy Sites as places of pilgrimage and worship. In our day the Holy Places have become the focus in international and regional affairs of unpredictable developments. However, we are confident that by safe-guarding the spiritual and worshipful integrity of the Holy Places, they will remain beacons of hope and reconciliation, and effective means of promoting peaceful co-existence among all peoples.

We wish you, Your Paternity, and the Franciscan brotherhood and your community, a blessed and joyous Pasha. May our shared and firm witness show that we proclaim to our region and to

the world the life -giving message of our Lord Jesus Christ, who assumed our common humanity and delivered us from the power of death and the tomb, that our human nature might be restored and glorified in and through his resurrection.

Christ is risen!

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem