

ADDRESS OF WELCOME OF HIS EXCELLENCY VALDIMIR PUTIN ON THE OCCASION ON HIS VISIT TO THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY.

Bethlehem, 26 June 2012.

Address of Welcome His Excellency Vladimir Viadimirovich Putin President of the Russian Federation on the Occasion of his Visit to the Church of the Nativity Bethlehem.

Esteemed Vladimir Viadimirovich,

Your Eminences,

Your Excellencies,

Dear Friends,

It is written "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news". (Rom, 10:15).

Your Excellency, Vladimir Viadimirovich, this morning we welcome you with joy to Bethlehem and to the Church of the Nativity, the place where Joy burst into the life of the world Here, where the Eternal Logos became man, earth and heaven were joined, and the angels rejoiced;

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those, whom he favours", (Luk. 2:14).

In the person of the Prince of Peace and the Son of Justice, this centre of peace has become the sign to the whole world of reconciliation between God and humanity. In Bethlehem, Palestinians, both Muslim and Christian, have lived together in peace and harmony for generations. Bethlehem and Its

people, who embody the message of the Prince of Peace for our region and the entire world, are commending their aspirations for national Independence and Palestinian statehood to Your Excellency.

In recognition of your efforts, allow us to present this gift on behalf of the Palestinian people and the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

We welcome you, Your Excellency, not only as the President of a great Federation. We welcome you also as a faithful member of the Orthodox Church and as a pilgrim. You follow in the footsteps of many renowned Orthodox leaders who have come here down the ages to express their allegiance to the Prince of Peace.

“May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7), and may God bless you in the service of your beloved Russia and its people.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem