

HIS BEATITUDE ADDRESS OF WELCOME TO H.E. VLADIMIR VLADIMIROVICH PUTIN ON THE OCCASION OF HIS VISIT TO THE BAPTISM SITE JORDAN.

Jordan River, 26 June 2012.

**Address of Welcome to His Excellency Vladimir Vladimirovich
Putin, President of the Russian Federation on the Occasion of
his Visit to the Baptism Site Jordan.**

Esteemed Vladimir Vladimirovich,

Your Royal Highness,

Dear distinguished guest,

We welcome you, Your Excellency, to this Holy Site where Our Lord Jesus Christ received baptism at the hands of the Holy Forerunner John the Baptist. From the earliest days of the life of the Church, pilgrims have come here, as you have done today, not simply to commemorate the event of Our Lord's baptism, but also to re commit themselves to their own spiritual renewal.

As Your Excellency knows well, the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan have always enjoyed an intimate and historical relationship, His Majesty King Abdullah II, following in the footsteps of his late father and his late grandfather, in a heritage that extends back to Omar ibn al – Khattab and Patriarch Sophronios, honours the ministry of the Patriarch as the senior Church leader of this region, and he recognizes the pastoral and

ecclesiastical mission of the Patriarchate for all Orthodox Christians in the Holy Land, both residents and pilgrims.

Every year we welcome a great number of pilgrims to the Holy Land, many of whom come from Russia. Pilgrims to the Holy Places are an integral part of our life and mission here, and Jordan is well known for its gracious hospitality to pilgrims. His Majesty has been a consummate leader in this region in ensuring the value of freedom of worship, and the Hashemite Kingdom has supported the accessibility and the development of the Baptism Site.

As we are surrounded here by the serenity and sanctity of this place, we wish Your Excellency a successful visit to this region, and we pray God's blessing on all the people of your beloved country.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III,

Patriarch of Jerusalem