

GRANTING OF THE NATIONAL DECORATION OF THE ORDER OF “MANUEL AMADOR GUERRERO” IN THE TRADE OF GREAT CROSS TO H.B. THEOPHILOS III PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

Holy City of Jerusalem, 27 of June 2012

Granting of the National Decoration of the Order of “Manuel Amador Guerrero” in the grade of “Great Cross” to

His Most Godly Beatitude, the Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and all Palestine, Syria, Arabia, beyond the Jordan River, Cana of Galilee, and Holy

Zion, THEOPHILUS III

“Good Morning, His Most Godly Beatitude, the Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and all Palestine, Syria, Arabia, beyond the Jordan River, Cana of Galilee, and Holy Zion, Theophilus III,

Eminences and Brothers and Sisters in Christ of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchy of Jerusalem,

Distinguished Guests and Friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great joy that I extend a fraternal greeting to all gathered here today, in representation of His Excellency Ricardo Martinelli Berrocal, President of the Republic of Panama, His Excellency Roberto Henriquez, Minister for Foreign

Affairs of the Republic, and in the name of the people of my country, in order to award the Republic of Panama's National Decoration of the Order of "Manuel Amador Guerrero" in the grade of "Great Cross" to His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilus III.

As Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Panama to the United Nations, and particularly as a devout member of the Orthodox Faith, allow me humbly express the profound sentiment of honor that it is to be in this sacred city and before your Holy

Beatitude, as an envoy of the people of Panama in the justified granting of our Nation's most distinguished decoration.

The Order of "Manuel Amador Guerrero", named after the first president of our Republic, was created by the Government of Panama on 29 October 1953, marking the fiftieth anniversary of our Independence, to award exceptional civil, scientific, artistic and humanitarian services and merits.

This National Decoration represents the Government of Panama's recognition of His Holy Beatitude's relevant merits, exemplary personal integrity and His outstanding contribution to the Orthodox Church around the world, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchy of Jerusalem's custodianship of the Holy Land and its historic, cultural and natural heritage, which are a patrimony of all mankind.

The Government of Panama welcomes His Holy Beatitude's religious leadership, and His advocacy for peace and interfaith dialogue is duly recognized as an extension of God's work on Earth and a dissemination of the Lord Jesus Christ's message of unconditional love and reconciliation. In these times of international tension, sociopolitical upheaval and economic hardship, the agency and goodwill of the Orthodox Church is of critical significance. Panama duly acknowledges

His Holy Beatitude, Theophilus III's vital role in inculcating this Word of Faith that leads the way to moral rectitude, redemption and salvation, across all borders and social barriers. For that, our people will be forever grateful.

Panama harbors a growing community of around one thousand strong-and-growing members of the Orthodox Church. This community, tracing its roots to the construction of the Panama Canal and one of many convivial Panamanian ethnicities, is known by the Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs as one of Central America's largest and most organized. Our first Greek Orthodox

Church, in honor of Saint Anthony, was built in my hometown of Colon in 1937.

It is for these and many more reasons that it pleases His Excellency Ricardo Martinelli, President of the Republic of Panama, to bestow upon His Holy Beatitude, Theophilus III, the Order of "Manuel Amador Guerrero" in the grade of "Great Cross", and it is my profound honor and pleasure to present it to Your Holiness in the name of my Government and our people. It is the hope of the Government and peoples of our Republic, that the bonds of friendship and cooperation we share with the Orthodox Church continue to grow, develop and strengthen, now and forevermore".

Words by His Excellency Pablo Antonio Thalassinis, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of The Republic of Panama to the United Nations.