

REMARKS FOR THE VISIT OF H.H. THE MAYOR OF JERUSALEM TO THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM.

Holy City of Jerusalem, 3 January 2013

Mr Mayor,

Your Eminences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are very glad to welcome you, Mr. Mayor, and your colleagues to Our Patriarchate during this festive season and in the first days of this New Year. This is a period of hope, peace and reconciliation for us all. It is in this spirit that we greet you today.

As the oldest continuous institution in the Holy Land, the Patriarchate is an integral part of community life in Jerusalem. The Patriarchate is a living witness to the fact that the Christian community is native to this region. We are part not just of past history; we are also bound up with the well-being and true identity of the current and future life and development of Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

This is clearly evident to those who share Our common history within Our Holy City and Our Holy Land at large. The legitimacy and role of Our Patriarchate of Jerusalem has long been inscribed and recognized regionally and globally; not least by the existing heritage of the "Status Quo". In fact, these realities are amassing increasing visibility among all those beyond our borders who care for and long for peace,

stability, security and genuine co-existence.

As the guardians and servants of major and preeminent Holy Places, the Patriarchate is upheld as essential to the sacredness of the City and its history. It is not an exaggeration to say that the Patriarchate is the beacon that draws thousands of pilgrims a year to the Holy Land. In this respect the Patriarchate underscores the freedom of access to the Holy Places not only for Christians, but also for Jews, Muslims and all people of good will. The Patriarchate is especially conscious of the large number of pilgrims who come here from Eastern European and Balkan countries, like Russia, the Ukraine, Romania and Serbia.

In this mission, the Patriarchate enjoys the respect and support of all, both in our region and around the world. In upholding our spiritual and moral values, we are accepted as the primate among the Churches in our commitment to reconciliation, peace and co-existence. We seek always nothing more or less than our legitimate heritage stemming from the sacred history of the Holy Land along with the rights and freedoms that enable us to carry out our Cod-given mission.

As we mark the New Year 2013 as well as Our own Christmas celebrations according to the Julian calendar, we wish to express to you, Mr. Mayor and your administration, our sincere appreciation for all that you are doing to ensure the genuine ethnic and religious diversity of our city, and not least your support for the Patriarchate. Needless to say that for countless generations we have been a strong and firm builder of harmonious co-existence between followers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Being prudent not to enter into the temptation of isolationist thought and action, which can be distracting, We rather let the spirit of true co-operation and collaboration thrive between us in this New Year, so that we may serve all those committed to our care, and show to the world that Jerusalem is

indeed the city of peace and living religious and cultural diversity.

May Cod bless you, Mr. Mayor, in your work on behalf of all the peoples of Our beloved Jerusalem.

Happy and Blessed New Year,

Thank you.

His Beatitude

Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem