

RESPONSE TO THE CHRISTMAS GREETINGS OF THE DELEGATION OF THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE.

GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE, 11 January 2013

Your Eminence Archbishop Aris,

Locum Tenens,

Your Eminences,

Reverend Fathers,

Dear Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,

“Christ is born! Glorify Him!”

We welcome you warmly to the Patriarchate in this Holy Season, and we thank you for your greetings as we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord, Jesus Christ. At this time of the year especially, when we celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace, the world looks to the Holy Land in hope, where “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,” becomes incarnate and lives among us, (cf. Phil. 4:7).

Our Brotherhoods have been blessed with the task and mission in our beloved Holy Land of caring for and serving the Holy Places. By extension this places on our shoulders the mantle of being guardians of the Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The Christian community is native to our region and essential to the integrity of the cultural diversity of the Holy Land, and we are witnesses to this.

It is acknowledged by all, both locally and internationally, in the civic as well as in the religious sphere, that the

Churches have a unique power to ensure the well-being and the future of the Christian presence in the Holy Land, as long as we are united in our common mission, and especially, as long as we manage to keep our family disagreements internal to ourselves and solve them in fraternal dialogue.

Most recently we were able to show this to the world during the cleaning of the Church of the Nativity, where we showed that dialogue in private is better than conflict in public.

Today as never before, especially in the face of the deep uncertainty that we face in our region we, who bear such a significant responsibility must accept the task that is ours, and remember always that our togetherness reflects on the Christian community of the Holy Land as a whole. Our occasional family disputes should not be permitted to tarnish our mission, not must we ever forget the security and well-being of all Christians of the Middle East. They are our concern, for they have been entrusted to us by God as their bishops and pastors.

As we welcome you today, we know that you are preparing for the election of a new Patriarch to succeed the late Patriarch Tarkoom of blessed memory. We assure you of our fervent prayers for your Brotherhood at this time, that God may provide for you a fitting and worthy new Patriarch and Superior of the Brotherhood of Saint James and spiritual head of the Armenian community,

May God give us grace and bless us all, that we may be made worthy of the charge that has been entrusted to us. And may the Incarnate Light that is born in the cave at Bethlehem on this Feast be the same light that is born in the cave of our hearts and minds, so that the world may see our good works and give glory to our Father in heaven, (cf. Mt 5:16).

We wish you a blessed Feast of the Nativity and a peaceful New Year.

“Christ is born! Glorify him!”

Thank you.

His Beatitude

Theophilos III

Patriarchate of Jerusalem