

GREETINGS TO THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE FOR THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY ACCORDING TO THE ARMENIAN CALENDAR.

Jerusalem, 21 January 2013

Your Eminence Archbishop Aris, Patriarchal Locum Tenens,
Your Eminences,
Reverend Fathers,
Members of the Brotherhood of Saint James,
Dear Brothers in Christ,

We are glad to be here today to congratulate you on your celebration of the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the great and ineffable mystery of his Epiphany, which you also keep at this time. On this occasion we recall the beautiful words of a great saint of the Armenian Church, Sain Nersess Lampbronatsi, who in a prayer to the Only-Begotten Son said:

O Christ, for our sake you became bearer of sin that we may become righteous for you.

For our sake you became earthly that we may become heavenly.
For our sake you became bread that we, by partaking of you, may be sanctified.

You are hope. You are light. You are life. You are forgiveness itself. You are, indeed, immortality.

We join with you today in exultation at the birth and baptism of the One who is hope, light and life for the world, and we remember also the stirring words of our predecessor Patriarch Sophronios, who said of the Feast of the Epiphany:

For today the time for feasting has come.

Today the grace of the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove,

came upon the waters. Today the uncreated One is by His own will touched by the creature.

Today the waters of the Jordan are turned into healing by the presence of the Lord. Today all creation is watered by mystical waters. Today our sins are washed away in the waters of the Jordan. Today Paradise is thrown open to humankind and the sun of righteousness shines upon us. Today the water that the people under Moses found bitter, is turned into sweetness at the Lord's presence.

Today the heavenly joins the earthly in celebration and that which is below holds discourse with that which is above.

It is this joyful spirit of the Nativity and the Epiphany that we are here to greet you, Your Eminence, the Brotherhood of Saint James and the entire Armeninan community of the Holy Land.

We would also like to take this opportunity to assure you and the Brotherhood of our fervent prayers for the upcoming meeting of your Holy Synod this week. We pray that, guided by the Holy Spirit, you may choose a fit and worthy Patriarch to succeed His Beatitude Patriarch Tarkoom of blessed memory. We do not need to tell you of the serious responsibility that is ours as the Brotherhoods to whom the guardianship of the Holy Places has been entrusted. Our ecclesiastical and spiritual leadership is crucial for our mission to ensure the Christian character of Jerusalem and to encourage the Christian community of the Middle East. We need look no further than to our neighbor Syria and the crisis and horrible bloodshed there to have a visible and disturbing reminder of the urgency of the task before us.

We must make a firm resolve. Let us come to our senses. Our unity of purpose in this mission must be at the heart of our life as those who call Jerusalem our home. And as we are faithful to our God-given responsibilities together, we shall show forth the glory of God the glory of the Churches and the glory of this Holy City, Jerusalem.

Thank you for this opportunity to greet you. May God bless you, the Brotherhood of Saint James, and the Armenian community of the Holy Land in this festive Nativity season.

His Beatitude
THEOPHILOS III
Patriarch of Jerusalem