

ADDRESS OF GREETING TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY AT THE PATRIARCHATE ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF CHURCHES OF THE HOLY LAND.

Jerusalem Patriarchate, 26 June 2013.

Your Grace, dear Archbishop Justin,

Dear Mrs. Welby,

Your Beatitudes,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Reverend Fathers,

Members of our Brotherhoods,

Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We welcome you with joy, dear Archbishop Justin, along with your wife, Caroline, and those travelling with you, on this, your first personal pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land. For the Orthodox Church, this is the season of Pentecost, and so we recall today the unifying gift of the Holy Spirit. In our liturgy we sing:

“When the Most High came down and confused the tongues,

He divided the nations;

but when He distributed the tongues of fire,

He called all to unity.

Therefore, with one voice, we glorify the All-Holy Spirit”.

(Kontakion for the Feast of Pentecost)

All Christian Churches and confessions recognize the gift of unity as a fruit of the Holy Spirit, and it is our prayer today, in this gathering here at the Patriarchate of the Heads of the Churches of the Holy Land, that we may know afresh the power of God’s Holy Spirit to unite all faithful Christians in a common mission for the sake of the Gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

You come in the footsteps of your predecessors as Archbishop of Canterbury, all of whom have had a special care and concern for the Holy Land, for the Christian community here, for peace and reconciliation, and for mutual respect and genuine co-existence among all our peoples and traditions.

In particular, we are aware of your long-standing commitment to reconciliation from your years as a residentiary canon of Coventry Cathedral and as co-director of the International Centre for Reconciliation there. The ministry of reconciliation lies at the heart of the life of a bishop, and this experience will doubtless form a mainstay for your life and work as archbishop. All of here who bear the responsibility of leadership in our Churches in the Middle East assure you of our prayers and support as you embark on your primatial ministry.

The pilgrimage that you and Mrs. Welby are making to the Holy Land is a blessing for you, and we hope that in making this pilgrimage so early on in your archiepiscopate, you will be formed by your prayers at, and veneration of, the Holy Places. Here our sacred history becomes incarnate, for here God has entered our human life, redeemed our common humanity, and

restored our ancient destiny. May this living reality of the Holy Places be ever at the heart of your devotion, and may your memory of them be always a strength to you.

But let us not forget that your presence among us is an encouragement to the Christian community of the Holy Land. Of Christian leaders outside the Holy Land, the Archbishop of Canterbury holds a special place and is given unique opportunities by virtue of his office and the relationships with other Christian bodies, with leaders of other faiths, and with governments that few others enjoy.

We encourage you, Your Grace, to keep before the world the life and witness of the Christian community of the Holy Land, and to do all in your power to ensure the future of the Christian community here. We are native to this region, and the well-being and health of the Christian community are absolutely essential to the well-being and the true character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. We Christians in the Holy Land bear witness to the Divine love of humanity, a love that stops at nothing to accomplish our salvation, which is nothing less than the reconciliation between God and humanity, and between all the diverse members of God's human family.

This witness brings great joy, but it also comes at a cost. For witness to God's Love is nothing less than witness to the cross of Christ, where God's love for us was shown so completely. We Christians in the Holy Land seek to be the Church of the sacrificial love of Christ, and we do our best to promote mutual respect, peaceful co-existence, lasting peace and justice, not just in word, but in deed.

We know that the relationship between the Church of England and the Anglican Communion and our respective Churches represented here this afternoon has always been good. If our brothers will permit me, we wish to say how important the relationship between the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Anglican Communion has been for both our Churches.

And yet we can all say here today that your concerns are our concerns, just as we pray that our concerns will be your concerns. As Saint Paul so eloquently reminds us:

If one member suffers, all suffer together with it;

if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it, (I Cor. 12:26)

It is our common witness to the reconciling work of the cross that unites us, exemplified for you, Your Grace, in the Cross of Nails of Coventry and for us in the very place of our Lord's crucifixion that is the place of redemption. The cross is our inspiration as well as our protection, for, as we read in the Letter to the Ephesians:

***"...our struggle is not against enemies of flesh and blood...
but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places".***

(Eph. 6:12)

In token of our shared witness to the cross of Christ, we wish to bestow on you, dear Archbishop Justin, the cross of the Order of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher. May the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ be always your protection as well as your strength, and may this bind you to us in prayer and solidarity.

On behalf of the Heads of the Churches, let us once again welcome you and Mrs. Welby.

We assure you of our prayers for your pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and we pray for God's blessing upon you in your primatial ministry. And we look forward to welcoming you often to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, which is your spiritual home.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III,

Patriarch of Jerusalem.