

HIS BEATITUDE SPEECH AT THE BAPTISM SITE AT BETHANY.

**The Baptism Site at Bethany-beyond-the Jordan, 3 September
2013**

Your Excellencies, Your Eminences, Dear Friends,

We gather today at this Holy Site in the aftermath of an important conference organized by His Majesty King Abdullah II on the situation of Christians in the Middle East.

We are living in a delicate time of the history of the Holy Land and of our region. On this occasion we wish to emphasize the crucial importance of the much needed resolution to the conflicts in Syria, the delicate situation in Egypt and not in the least the renewed dialogue and peace process between Israel and Palestine. We know, as His Majesty the King has recently stated, that dialogue is the way to a secure and sustainable peace, and we must all wholehearted support all processes of reconciliation that are underway.

The way of dialogue is always complicated, and it requires of all participants a large measure of patience and sensitivity. But let us never forget what is at stake. For at stake is the very character of the our beloved Land, as well as the well-being of men, women and children, families and communities, and our rich and irreplaceable heritage.

We who are spiritual leaders and people of faith look to the future with hope, for we trust in the promises and the providence of God. This very Holy Land is a living witness to the God of our sacred history, who has made himself known here

in a unique way. We proclaim our God to be the God of peace and reconciliation, and it is in this spirit that we support all efforts by people of good will to establish peace and reconciliation among all.

“Blessed are the peace-makers”, says our Lord. May God bless every good work that is done in the service of humanity.

We welcome you in our humble monastery and may God enlighten all our hearts.

His Beatitude,

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem