

HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS' CONGRATULATORY SPEECH TO MAYOR NIR BARKAT OF JERUSALEM.

Jerusalem, Monday 18-11-2013

Honorable Mayor Nir Barkat,

We are gathered here today to welcome your new term as Mayor, and it is our pleasure to extend to you, on behalf of the Jerusalem Christian community and on behalf of our Patriarchate, our sincerest wishes for productive municipal governance throughout your term.

We look forward to further cooperation and understanding between our Christian leadership and the municipality, and encourage you to sustain your attentiveness to the sensitivities of the various Jerusalem communities, especially our Christian communities, which have modeled the ecumenical character that defines Jerusalem.

"I am present like springtime in the mountains, like the feet of one who announces a good report of peace, like one who preaches good things (Isaiah 52:7)."

The municipality of Jerusalem holds a unique position amongst all other local governments of the world due to the holiness of this land, which has been implemented by God Almighty, and is shared by the Jews, Christians, and Muslims. It is, after all, the place where heaven and earth meet.

For this reason, the office of Mayor of Jerusalem is one that carries with it high prestige, yet at the same time bears an

equally high level of responsibility. Jerusalem, as a spiritual oasis for the whole world, calls visitors from every corner of the globe, from every faith and background. It is looked to by all as a microcosm of humanity co-existing. It is in this regard that we take so seriously the need to engage ourselves in continued interaction for the common benefit of all people.

Mr. Mayor, as we celebrate this event to honour you in the commencement of your incumbency, it should not be inappropriate to bring to your attention our concerns and reasonable expectations as an ancient presence and integral embodiment of this sacred city. We kindly request to have a meeting with the municipality administration to discuss some matters related to the religious character of Jerusalem, and of course, of practical common concern.

Since Jerusalem continues to be a living wellspring for the soul, we seek to fulfill our responsibility as co-inheritors of its sacredness, looking forward rather than to the past, in order to strengthen and support this lifesource; wherefrom peace and reconciliation emanate.

Allow us to reassure you of our commitment to uphold our spiritual and historical mission, which is to guard and serve the holy places that have been entrusted to us, and to maintain them as places of worship, accessible to all faithful without prejudice. In doing so, we also assure our commitment to Jerusalem, which is per se, a holy place of blessedness, not only for us who reside here, but for the whole world.

As Jerusalem prepares to enter its festive season, we would like to wish you and your colleagues, health, long life, and full success in your important administrative mission. Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem