

H.B. THEOPHILOS III ADDRESS TO THE COUNCIL OF THE GERMAN EVANGELICAN CHURCH.

JERUSALEM, Sunday 15 December 2013.

Your Eminence Bishop Younan Mounib,

Reverend Dr. Nikolaus Shneider, Head of the Council of the
Evangelical Church in Germany,

Reverend Propst Wolfgang Schmidt,

Dear friends,

Christ is born; glorify Him!

Christ comes from heaven; go and meet Him!

Christ is on earth; be exalted!

Sing to the Lord, all the earth!

And praise him in gladness, O you peoples,

for he has been glorified!

With this Church hymn, we celebrate the Christmas season.

It is an honor for Us to have been invited to be with you here tonight at this distinguished ecumenical gathering, so close to the very place of the crucifixion, that is to say, the place of redemption.

The supreme gift our Lord has given us with His incarnate presence in the world and redemptive work is "His peace." For as Saint Paul writes, Our Lord Jesus Christ reconciled all things to himself, whether things on earth, that is to say whether men with God and men between themselves, or those things in heaven, that is to say, the angels whom he reconciled with all of us" (Coll. 120). This great gift, he had already foretold to His disciples just before His Crucifixion, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you" (John 14:27).

Your pilgrimage in our beloved Holy Land during this Christmas season is highly appreciated. For we, the Church leadership of Jerusalem, together with our communities, look at it as a tangible sign of the solidarity that is provided by our ecumenical fellowship.

However, this fellowship is not exclusive, but rather, inclusive. For we do not speak on behalf of ourselves alone in saying that regardless of our affiliation, we are all sons of Abraham. Jerusalem, together with Bethlehem, are reminders to all of us that the Almighty God is the God of reconciliation and peace.

This very Christmas holiday is precisely the time to realize that the knowledge of God's will is imperative in order to work toward peace and reconciliation for the people of our Holy Land and for the people of our neighboring countries who are now severely suffering under unspeakable persecution.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder. His name will be the Angel of Great Counsel, for I shall bring peace upon the rulers, peace and health by Him" (Isaiah 9:6), declares the great Prophet Isaiah today and right now.

As the world looks to our Holy City of Jerusalem during this holy season for light, for hope, and for peace, let us pray

that the light of the Incarnate Divine Logos would prevail and dwell in the hearts of all of us, and especially of those who have been given the power from above to lead our world.

Merry Christmas and God bless your mission.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem