

ADDRESS OF H.B.TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTONOMY AT A RECEPTION ON THE OCCASION OF CHRISTMAS 2013

Bethlehem, 24 December 2013/ 6 January 2014

Your Excellency, President of the Palestinian State

Honorable Representative of the King of Jordan,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The city of Bethlehem is the physical and spiritual symbol of God's philanthropy, namely of peace and justice on earth, but also of the hope of any man and people. Especially those suffering injustice and persecution, slavery and hunger, those displaced from their paternal homes by contemporary Herods, the "workers of iniquity" (Luke 13, 27).

This we say because the historical event of Christmas, the incarnation and humanization of the Logos God, expressly defeated and exposed the arrogance of the lords of this dark world, on the word of the Apostle Paul (Ephes. 6, 12).

The feast of Christmas, Mr President, is not exclusive to our Churches, but a feast of all men, especially the faithful of the three monotheist religions, chosen for the Holy Land by divine providence in order to coexist in peace and concord, "And those he predestined", says the wise Paul, those he also called". (Rom. 8, 30).

The Cavern of Bethlehem wherein lies the Church of Constantine the Great, now in the process of renovation, where the worship

is performed of the God of love, peace and justice through the centuries since the Birth of Jesus Christ, serves as undeniable testimony of the diaconate and mission of our Greek Orthodox Patriarchate; testimony respected by caliph Omar ibn Khatab and his successors to this day.

Your presence and participation, Mr President, as well as that of the representative of His Majesty the King of Jordan, in this celebration offers clear proof of the unity of our peoples and also of our religious Communities.

We wish that the God of peace, born in a cavern, grants your Excellency enlightenment from above, health in body and soul, and the administrative power to lead the struggling Palestinian people to the realization of the sacred right of complete national freedom and independence.

Many happy returns, in peace.

In the Holy City of Bethlehem, Christmas 2013

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem