

CHRISTMAS ADDRESS OF H.B. PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III TO THE COMMUNITY OF THE ARMENIANS.

Jerusalem, 9 of January 2014

Your Beatitude, Your Eminences,

Reverend Fathers and brothers of the Armenian Fraternity of Saint James,

“Christ is born; glorify Him. Christ is come from heaven; go and meet Him. Christ is on earth; arise to Him. Sing to the Lord, all you who dwell on earth; and in gladness, O you peoples, praise His

Birth. For He is glorified”

With this hymn of Saint Cosmas, the Church melodist, we greet you in this festive Christmas season, for indeed, Christ is come from heaven to be born in the cave of Bethlehem. Indeed, Christ is on earth, for He is waiting to be born in our cave, i.e. in our heart.

We praise Him, for once again this year we have gone to meet Him in His physical place of birth, where He was manifest into our human history in the cave of Bethlehem, marked by the magnificent Constantinian basilica, which continues to stand as a beacon of the divine light to the world. We also have gone to meet Him in the spiritual cave, i.e. the divine altar, for through Him we offered our humble gifts, i.e. a sacrifice of praise to God the Father; the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name (Heb. 13:15).

We glorify Him, for as Saint John says, “The Word became flesh

and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father”, (John 1:14).

It is precisely this glory of the begotten Son of God in which we now rejoice this Christmas season, especially in our contemporary world in which our fellow man is enduring injustice, persecution, starvation, displacement from their homelands and humiliation.

We, who are privileged to be servants and guardians of the Holy Land and its holy sites that bear witness to the sacred history, i.e. the divine oikonomia, and more specifically the history of salvation have been called by the Holy Spirit to be messengers of peace and reconciliation. For together with the angels we can “bring the good news of a great joy, which will come to all the people, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!” (Luke 2:14).

Your Beatitude, as we prepare to celebrate the feast of the Divine Epiphany in the Jordan River, and you also prepare to celebrate Christmas in Bethlehem, in the very cave of our Lord’s nativity, We, along with our Brotherhood of the Holy Tomb and our Rum Orthodox community, wish you from the bottom of our hearts, a Merry Christmas, a blessed holiday, and a peaceful new year.

“For he is our peace, and he came and evangelized peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father” (Eph. 2:17), so that the peace of God, which passes all understanding will keep our hearts and our minds in our newly born Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:7).

Blessed Christmas and a happy new year. Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem