

ADDRESS OF H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR OF JERICHO ON THE OCCASION OF THEOPHANY

Jericho, the 5th/18th of January 2014.

Your Excellency, the Governor of Jericho,

Your Eminences,

Your Excellency, the Consul-General of Greece,

The Holy Land and especially the Land of the very ancient city of Jericho, with its sacred river Jordan, is inextricably linked with the holy history, and specifically with the historical event of the Baptismal of our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who founded and established the Mother of All Churches, namely the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and of all Palestine.

The array of monasteries in the vicinity of Jericho and the river Jordan, as well as the Churches on sacred sites, bear testament to the Presence of God on earth on the one hand, and on the other hand to the revelation of the divine light, that is the Holy Spirit, on men. Furthermore, they are tangible evidence of the social and religious setting of peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims, forged through the centuries by the great National and Religious Leaders, our predecessor, Patriarch Sophronios, and Khalif Omar ibn Khattab.

It is this very event that we celebrate today in your

historical city, in order to share with you the joy and delight of the Universal feast of Holy Theophany.

And this we say because today's feast celebrates the revelation of the divine light, the light of love, peace and justice that dawned on those living in the land of the shadow of death, (Matthew 4,16), the "powers of this dark world" according to the Apostle Paul.

It is this revelation of the divine and never-setting light of justice that we have come here to declare in prayer, through the ceremonious blessing of the waters of the river Jordan. We thank you for your brotherly welcome and hospitality, and profoundly wish that the divine light, the light of justice, shall reign on earth, especially in this Holy Land and on the Palestinian people. May health and power be offered to our dear President Mahmud Abbas Abu Mazen so that he may guide his people to the fervently desired complete independence and freedom.

Many happy returns.

Theophilos of Jerusalem.