

H.B. PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III ADDRESS TO THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION.

Jerusalem, 20 January 2014

Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Members of the Brotherhood of Saint James, Dear Brothers,

We greet you with congratulations on the celebration of the Feast of the Nativity, according to the Armenian calendar, and we proclaim with you the great words of Saint John,

The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father's only son, full of grace and truth (Jn. 1:14).

As your celebration of the Nativity and our celebration of the Theophany coincide, we recognize that this is indeed one and the same feast, the feast of *the True Light that enlightens all people* (cf. Lk 2:32).

We extend to you, Your Beatitude, and to the whole Brotherhood of Saint James, our special greeting on this Christmas in your ministry as Armenian Patriarch and the spiritual father of the Armenian community in the Holy Land.

It has been by God's grace and help that, despite the turbulent affairs of the world and our region, the celebrations of this holy season have been uneventful and as a

consequence they have been of genuine spiritual refreshment to our people. This sends a message near and far that the newborn Christ is the only sure ground for hope, justice, and peace. When we as the Churches of the Holy Land celebrate the great feasts of the events of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, we make clear the bright hope of God to all those who live in desperation around the world.

This is our sacred, spiritual mission that we must always keep before us as we endeavor to maintain our co-operation. We cannot underestimate the importance of this. In this way we strengthen our role in shaping the developments of this Holy City and of our beloved Holy Land.

In the spirit of this season, we wish to take this opportunity, Your Beatitude, to express to you, to your brother bishops, to the members of the Brotherhood of Saint James both here in Jerusalem and in other parts of the world, and to the Armenian community of the Holy Land, our Christmas wishes.

And we wish for you, Your Beatitude, health and strength for your ministry, and a peaceful and spiritually fruitful New Year.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem.