

HIS BEATITUDE ADDRESS TO THE DELEGATION FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF HUNGARY ON THEIR VISIT TO THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM.

2 December 2014

Your Excellency, Dr. Zsolt Semjén Deputy Prime Minister
Distinguished Members of the Delegation,
Dear Friends

We welcome you warmly to the Holy City of Jerusalem and to our Patriarchate, and as we do so, we remember with warmth and gratitude our own visit to your beloved country two years ago. At that time we were impressed by the commitment of the government and the people of Hungary to the Holy Land, and we are glad that the ties that bind your country to this region are deepening.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem shoulders the mission of preserving the integrity of the Holy Land. This integrity is predicated on the well-being, security, and flourishing of all our peoples. Here Jews, Christians and Muslims and others have lived together for millennia, and here we must forge a future in which all these communities can live in an atmosphere of peace, justice, and reconciliation. There is no other possible future here that respects the true identity and integrity of the Holy Land.

This means, of course, a stable and flourishing Christian community. We Christians are native to this region, and the Christian community appreciates deeply the support that we

have received from the Hungarian government over the years. In addition to many other things, your government has supplied much-needed and valuable scholarships to young people in our Palestinian Christian communities, and we know the transforming effect that education has on our young people.

In this way, the Patriarchate forms a living bridge of spiritual encouragement between the government and people of Hungary, the Palestinian Authority and the State of Israel. At a time when our region is experiencing the breakdown of so many structures and traditional relationships, along with ensuing chaos, war, and terribly acts of terrorism and brutality, these bridges of hope are all the more crucial for us to build and maintain. We are deeply thankful for the efforts of your government in this work, and we are always delighted to welcome pilgrims from Hungary to the Holy Places, where they find spiritual refreshment.

Thank you for the honour that you have bestowed upon us, which we receive with humility and gratitude not on our own behalf, but on behalf of the Patriarchate, the Brotherhood of the Holy Tomb, and all the faithful of the Rum Orthodox Church in the Holy Land, and in recognition of the important bonds between the Patriarchate and our people in this region and the people of Hungary, we wish to bestow on you, Your Excellency, the Cross of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

May these mutual recognitions be signs of the commitment that we all must have for peace and reconciliation in the Holy Land and throughout the Middle East. May God bless your visit to the Holy Land, and may God bless all the peoples of your beloved country of Hungary.

Thank you

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem