

H.B. THEOPHILOS III GREETING AT THE RECEPTION GIVEN BY DR UZI LANDAU & MR AMIR HALEVI AT THE MERCAZSHIMSHCN- BEIT SHMUEL

23 December 2014

**Dr Landau,
Mr. Halevi,
Your Beatitudes,
Your Eminences,
Your Graces,
Beloved Leaders of the Jewish and Muslim Communities of
Jerusalem,
Distinguished Civic Leaders,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is an honor for us to address this gathering during this holiday season on behalf of the Christian communities of the Holy Land, and we thank you, Dr Landau and MrHalevi, for bringing us together today.

At this time of the year, when the eyes of the world are focused on the Holy Land, our hearts are turned both to our local indigenous Christian communities as well as to the many thousands of pilgrims who make their way to the Holy Places, especially at Christmas. Both the local Christian communities and our pilgrims remind us of the universal significance of the Holy Places.

For all of us who call the Holy Land our home, Jew, Christian, and Muslim, the Holy Places, many of which we share, are not simply places of private devotion. They are also a sign to us

of genuine interfaith dialogue and relationship. For here divinity and humanity have enjoyed true physical and spiritual relationship and dialogue. They realize for us our common human nature and our common human destiny.

At Christmas and Hannukah we celebrate the feast of the divine, uncreated light. That light does not discriminate, but shines on all. This is the light that has been revealed in human history to our forebears, and just as they were enlightened and showed us the way, so we must follow in their footsteps and show the way to others.

Recent sad and devastating events in our region cannot extinguish this divine light, and we to whom the spiritual leadership of our communities has been entrusted cannot be distracted or put off our course. Our mission has always been, and continues to be, to point to this light, so that it may be a clear beacon to a world in terrible need of the reconciliation and the love of God.

This light has been revealed to us in particular times and places in history. Therefore we who follow the three great Abrahamic traditions of faith believe firmly that the light is truth, and that truth is light. We should not be, we cannot be, afraid of the darkness. As we read in the Psalms:

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Psalms 26 (27): 1-2

Our God-given mission is precisely this: to guard and proclaim this light as the hope of the world, the sustenance of our local Communities and the encouragement of pilgrims. The Holy City of Jerusalem, the home of us all is essential to this spiritual mission, and no one has the right to attempt to extinguish this light.

We wish to thank you, Dr Landau and MrHalevi, for your efforts

in helping to maintain Holy Land as a safe place for pilgrims,
and for all that you do to support the leadership of the
Christian communities. In this holiday season, may God bless
you your work, and may God bless all the peoples of the Holy
Land.

We wish all a Happy Christmas and ChagSammeach.

Thank you.

His Beatitude
THEOPHILOS III
Patriarch of Jerusalem