

H.B. THEOPHILOS' III ADDRESS TO THE ARMENIAN DELEGATION ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR PASCHAL VISIT TO THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM.

14 April 2015

Your Beatitude, Patriarch Nourhan,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces.

Reverend Fathers,

Beloved members of our Respective Brotherhoods,

We greet you in this joyous season of Easter, and we thank you for your festal greetings. As we celebrate this Feast of Feasts, we give thanks to Almighty God for deepening relationship of co-operation that is emerging between our two Brotherhoods, as we seek to be faithful in our mission as guardians and servants of the Holy Places.

Our region is facing a crisis of unprecedented proportions and the Christian presence in the Holy Land and in the Middle East, where we have lived and flourished since the earliest days of the Church, is under new and terrible threat. Persecution is on the rise, and ancient, established communities are disappearing or being systematically

eradicated.

This new situation puts an even higher premium on our mission. The Holy Places that have been committed to our care by Divine Providence are the living testimony of our sacred history in this land, an undeniable witness to the presence of God among his people and the guarantee in the eyes of the world that this region is our home. A vital, vibrant Christian presence is essential to the integrity of the Holy City of Jerusalem and our entire region, and ours is the responsibility to ensure that this presence remains strong and safe.

We therefore continue to be committed to all that is necessary to safe-guard the well-being of the Holy Places and the security of our Christian communities, and we welcome the genuine ecumenical spirit that must always characterize the best relations between Churches.

May the Light that shines from the Holy Tomb this Easter enlighten our minds and our hearts, that we may be effective witnesses to the truth of the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ is risen!

Thank you

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem