

HIS BEATITUDE THEOPHILOS III PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM ADDRESS ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT OF THE PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL.

Tuesday, 14 April 2015

An Address on the Occasion of the Visit of the President of
Israel

to a Gathering of the Heads of the Churches and Christian
Communities

of the Holy Land at the Patriarchate

Your Excellency, Mr. President,

Your Beatitudes,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Respected Members of the Government and Civil Service,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We welcome you, Mr. President, to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem on behalf of the Churches and Christian communities of the Holy Land, and we thank you for your visit during this

season in which Christians throughout the region celebrate the most sacred feast of the year. At Pascha, the eyes of the world turn toward Jerusalem in hope and expectation.

We greet you also with blessings for the recent feast of Pesach. The close relationship between Pesach and Pascha are an important reminder to us all of the deep bonds that unite the children of Abraham in our respective Abrahamic traditions, of which our Muslim sisters and brothers are also an integral part.

Jerusalem and the Holy Land have always known religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity, and this diversity is an essential part of the integrity of our region. Jews, Christian and Muslim have lived here side by side for centuries, always seeking mutual understanding, and this experience is both crucial for our mutual well-being and for peace in our region and our world. Ours is a unique witness, especially in the particularly turbulent current situation of the Middle East region, of the possibility of a future in which all peoples may realize there is no better alternative than to live together in genuine harmony. Therefore, we will keep this vision before us in this city, which is holy to all three Abrahamic faiths, and in fact, to the whole world.

We wish to acknowledge and commend you, Mr. President, for the strong stance you have taken against religious bigotry of any kind, and for the actions you have taken against crimes targeting religious shrines, monuments, and the Holy Places. We share with you, Mr. President, an abhorrence of prejudice of any kind, and we support the protection of communities and sacred places against attacks and vandalism. Such acts have no place in this city or in this Holy Land.

We re-affirm to you our commitment as the Heads of the Churches and Christian communities of the Holy Land to be an effective partner in your mission, together with all who strive for peace in our beloved Holy Land. This is our moral

duty and responsibility as religious leaders, and we cannot rest until all those who call Jerusalem their home come to know the peace of Jerusalem, for which we all pray.

Again and again, we return to the words of the Psalmist who says, "How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! For there the Lord ordained His blessing, life for evermore" (Psalm 132 [133]: 1,3).

It is the responsibility of all the children of Abraham, Jew, Christian, and Muslim, to live the full meaning of this promise, so that the Light that shines from this Holy City may always be a beacon of hope to all humankind.

May God bless you, Mr. President, your family, and all the peoples of our beloved Holy Land, and may God grant you strength for the work that is yours.

Thank you.

HIS BEATITUDE

THEOPHILOS III

PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM