

REMARKS AT THE MEETING OF THE HEADS OF CHURCHES & OTHER RELIGIOUS LEADERS WITH THE CHIEF RABBINATE OF ISRAEL.

21 December 2015

Rabbi David Lau,

Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef,

Your Beatitudes,

Your Graces,

Beloved Fellow Leaders of our Communities of Faith,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my remarks at this meeting, I wish only to make two central points.

The first is to say as clearly as possible that we totally condemn all violence against the human person, from whatever side of the conflict it comes, and under whatever circumstances it occurs. While we recognize the legitimate aspirations of both the State of Israel and the Palestinian people, we cannot condone acts of terror and the taking of life.

From this condemnation of terror and violence comes our second point. We make the bold claim that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and this truth is the foundation

for our understanding of the human person. But more than this, by extension we must also say that not only do we share the same human nature that is a mirror to us of the divine life; we are also created of the same earth.

The earth belongs to all, and this particular earth of the Holy Land is not only our common home, it is our common origin. We were “formed from the dust of the earth” (Gen. 2:7), and this common origin must unite us in a new common purpose to work together for the well-being and the flourishing of all who call the Holy Land their home.

Because we are all created from the same earth, we are also all subject not just to the same corruption, but also to the same transformation. As we read in Saint Paul’s Letter to the Romans:

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves... groan inwardly while we wait for adoption,

for the redemption of our bodies.

(Rom. 8:22-23)

On this earth that we share, from which we take our common origin, we must also take a stand together, united for the sake of peace and reconciliation, and refusing to let any other concern deflect us from the task of building a society here, where all can live in peace, security and mutual flourishing.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem