

ADDRESS OF WELCOME TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UKRAINE HIS EXCELLENCY PETRO POROSHENKO TO THE PATRIARCHATE.

23 December 2015

Your Excellency, Mr. President,

Your Eminences,

Distinguished Members of the Presidential Entourage,

Your Graces,

Reverend Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this season of preparation for the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, we welcome you warmly to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. You have come to the Mother of all the Churches, and the Patriarchate has a long history of playing an important role. For we represent not ourselves; we represent the entire Christian world.

The Patriarchate has a special concern for our Orthodox sisters and brothers around the world, and they feel at home here in Jerusalem with us. Through the ages, and with the moral and financial support of the Orthodox world, the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher has served and protected the Holy Places, ensuring that they remain open and accessible to all without distinction.

Every year the Patriarchate receives many thousands of pilgrims, many of whom come from the Ukraine. We are in contact with your country through these pilgrims, who come from your country to the Holy Land every day. In recent years we have welcomed many Bishops and clergy, and we remember today with particular affection and respect the late Metropolitan Vladimir, who made many pilgrimages here over the years.

It is right that we should honor this special relationship between the Patriarchate and the Ukraine, for this relationship is deep and goes back for centuries. Our predecessors the Patriarchs Theophanes III and Paisios played a crucial role in the life of the peoples and the Church in the region of the Ukraine in the 17th century in defending Orthodoxy in times of great difficulty.

In this same spirit, we are following closely the events in your country, and we are aware of the challenges and difficulties that are before you. We pray especially for the end of the schism of the Orthodox Church in the Ukraine and the restoration of unity, for this unity is essential for the well-being of the country as a whole. We recall the words of Saint Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians, in which he said:

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose.

(I Cor. 1:10)

Unity is the foundation upon which normalization is built. There are solutions to every problem, but the successful resolution depends on unity and all enduring solutions flow from unity.

Here we must remark that in the restoration of unity, the Orthodox principle of oikonomia is fundamental. Oikonomia lies at the basis of the mind and heart of Orthodoxy, and it is in this framework of the divine oikonomia that a way forward can always be found.

The Church of Jerusalem is the Church of the Cross of Christ. We share in both the joys and the sufferings of the Church and our peoples wherever they may be, and we stand ready to make our contribution to the restoration of peace and the building of reconciliation.

We are pleased to welcome you here, Mr. President, as the leader of a great country, and we wish you success in your mission in our region. But we welcome you not simply as the head of state, but as a pilgrim, following in the footsteps of so many of your fellow countrymen down the ages who have come to the Holy Land for spiritual refreshment and renewal.

We therefore pray that Christ, who is the Incarnate Light of the Sun of Justice, may shine upon you, your family, and on all the peoples of your beloved Ukraine.

In token of the long and formative relationship between the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Ukraine, we wish to bestow upon you, Your Excellency, the decoration of the Order of the High Cross of the Knights of the Holy Sepulcher.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem