

ADDRESS TO THE HEADS OF THE CHURCHES & THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES OF THE HOLY LAND ON THE OCCASION OF THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY.

9 January 2016

Your Beatitudes,

Your Excellencies,

Your Eminences,

Beloved Members of our Respective Churches and Communities,

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We greet you with these words of joy:

Today heaven and earth are united, for Christ is born. Today God has come to earth, and man ascends to heaven. Today God, who by nature cannot be seen, is seen in the flesh for our sake. Let us glorify him, singing:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace!

Your coming has brought peace to us.

Glory to You, O our Savior!”

The words of our liturgies at Christmas speak eloquently of the coming of the Incarnate Logos to take on our human flesh

and our human life for the sake of our salvation. We thank all of you for coming to greet us today, and we wish you all the joy of this great Feast of the Nativity.

On behalf of all the Christian communities of the Holy Land, we wish to take this opportunity to remind ourselves of some crucial commitments that are ours.

First, we remain committed to dialogue as the only effective way to achieve unity, respect, and mutual co-existence, not only between Christians, but between all people of good will irrespective of culture, language, ethnic origin, or religion. This human dialogue is a reflection of the divine-human dialogue that was ushered in by this Feast of the Incarnation when heaven and earth were joined, and God restored us to our right relationship with Him.

At this season of peace and reconciliation, we also remain committed to peace and reconciliation between the Abrahamic faiths. The Holy Land is our common home, and we share a common destiny. The World looks to us in hope for the promise of a new human future in which all may enjoy freedom of worship, and mutual understanding.

And lastly we re-iterate our condemnation of all violence of any kind from whatever side it comes. We know that it is dialogue, that careful and patient listening and speaking, and not violence that shapes the common ground on which all people of good will desire to stand.

We must never waiver in these obligations. At Christmas especially we preach the message of peace, justice, reconciliation, and the respect for the human person, and this message we must also strive to embody ourselves.

This message we declare to the whole world also by keeping the Holy Places for all people as places of spiritual nourishment and enlightenment. As our world is more and more misled and confused, and as so many suffer from human violence and human

neglect, we cannot allow anything to distract us from our primary mission.

May this season of the Light of the Incarnate Logos, which is the living expression of the union of humanity and divinity, be our guide and inspiration as we pledge ourselves once again to our spiritual mission.

May God bless you, and may God bless all the peoples of our beloved Holy Land.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem