

GREETINGS TO THE FRANCISCAN CUSTODY OF THE HOLY LAND ON THEIR VISIT TO THE PATRIARCHATE ON THE OCCASION OF PASHA

3rd May 2016

Your Excellency,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Respected Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

Christ is risen!

We welcome you warmly, dear Father Dobromir and your brothers, to our Patriarchate in these bright days of the Paschal Feast, and we are delighted that, although you celebrated Easter some weeks ago, we are still in your season of Easter so that we may rejoice together in the light of the Resurrection.

Saint Francis himself captured the exuberance of our Easter joy in his great poem based on Psalm 148, which was translated into English in a famous hymn that includes these words:

Let all things their Creator bless,

and worship him in humbleness, alleluia!

Praise the Father, praise the Son,

and praise the Spirit, Three in One:

O praise him, alleluia!

Our Easter joy is made so much deeper this year in the wake of the historic agreement between our Communities for the restoration of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Tomb. The cooperation and harmony that have been evident throughout this planning has an importance for us, it is true. But our cooperation and harmony have an even greater significance for our common mission here in the Holy Land and our common witness to the world.

The project for the restoration of the Sacred Edicule is an inspiration to many Churches and Christian leaders at home and abroad. We to whom the guardianship and the *diakonia* of the Holy Places has been entrusted, and to whom the pastoral care of the Christian presence in the Holy Land has been given| have a responsibility to act for the good of all. We say this because we are here not for ourselves alone, but to be a witness to the world of the living hope of the Resurrection. Our unity of purpose in this matter is therefore significant beyond this project itself, and we pray that it may be an encouragement to others in their work together for the sake of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We take this opportunity of your visit to us to express our gratitude to Father Pierbattista, with whom we have enjoyed a warm relationship, and whose personal leadership in this common work has been instrumental. We wish him well as he lays down the office of Custos and takes on new responsibilities, and we thank him, through you, for the significant contributions he has made during his many years of service as

your Minister Provincial. We look forward to an equally beneficial and mutual relationship with the new Custos.

We are grateful to you for your Easter greetings, dear Father Dobromir, and we pray that our risen Lord Jesus Christ will bless you, your Brotherhood, and all those to whom you minister in our beloved Holy Land.

Christ is risen!

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem