

REMARKS AT THE EASTER RECEPTION FOR THE PRESIDENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL AT THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE.

9 May 2016

Your Excellency, Mr. President,

Your Beatitudes,

Your Eminences

Your Graces,

Esteemed Governmental Officials,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for us to greet you, Your Excellency, during this holy season, in which we share in our celebrations of Pesach and Pascha. Once again, we are united in the reality of our common humanity and our common cultural heritage. This is a clear witness of our common Abrahamic roots in our beloved Holy Land, and this season is a source of joy and inspiration for us all.

We celebrate Jerusalem as the mother earth of our common religious, cultural, and spiritual traditions. The Abrahamic traditions bear witness to the sacred history, a history that gives meaning and purpose to every life. This message is of paramount importance, especially at a time in our present history, when in the world as a whole and in our region in particular humanity is experiencing confusion, fear, and

violence. It is precisely in these circumstances that the witness of Jerusalem must deliver us from every prejudice.

We see evidence of our shared heritage in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, where Saint Peter quotes the words of the Prophet Joel.

In the last days it will be, God declares,

That I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,

And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

And your young men shall see vision,

And your old men shall dream dreams...

Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved, (Acts 2: 17,21)

During this season of Pesach and Pascha, in the triumph of light over darkness, of freedom over slavery, of righteousness over evil, of truth over falsehood, Jerusalem calls on the name of the Lord and Saviour. Jerusalem embraces all humans and is the spiritual home of everyone who loves the God of love. Our shared joy at this time of the year comes from our passing over from the drought of the desert to the sweet waters of a green and pleasant land, from bondage to liberty, from the ashes of death to the fullness of life- a promise that the Prophet Joel declares that God offers to all who hope and firmly believe in him.

Recently ,we have celebrated this hope of renewed life in the agreement between the three Communities for the restoration of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Tomb. This is a worthy project in itself, but it represents a deeper commitment to maintain

the Holy Sites as meeting places between God and man where, in the spiritual renewal that they give us, we pass over from despair to hope, an experience that touches countless pilgrims from every nation and every religious and cultural expression.

Time and again, Your Excellency, we are deeply appreciative of your Presidency and your steadfastness in your public condemnation of all forms of prejudice, violence, and terrorism, from whatever quarter it comes. We also applaud your commitment to freedom of worship and religious expression for all the peoples of the Holy Land.

As we celebrate together this season of our common hope in God for a new future for the human family, we take this opportunity to wish you well in your ongoing service. It is our fervent prayer that during your time in office peace and reconciliation may come to prevail in our region.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem