

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS OF PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III TO THE APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATOR OF THE LATIN PATRIARCHATE IN JERUSALEM.

29 December 2016

Your Excellency, Archbishop Pizzaballa,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers

We greet you, Your Excellency on this joyful Feast

with the beautiful words of the ancient hymn

Creator of the stars of night.

*When this old world drew toward night, you came; but not in
splendor bright not as a monarch, but the child of Mary,
blameless mother mild*

(Conditor alme siderum)

In this mystery of God's kenosis, of the miracle of the Creator of the Universe who consented to be born in our human flesh, we share in the humility of God, and give thanks together for the incarnation of the Divine Logos, Who is Himself the source of our grace and the hope of our glory.

We are glad to be greeting you at this Feast in your capacity as Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate, and we

are pleased that His Holiness Pope Francis recognizes in you the experience and wisdom that you have gained in your many years of life and service in the Holy Land.

The continuity of your ministry and presence among us helps greatly in the ongoing strengthening of our close co-operation, in the building up of which you have played a crucial role as Custos of the Franciscan Fraternity. Together our common work on the restoration of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre is a sign of great hope to a world in which there is so much despair.

But more than this, our co-operation in the diakonia of the Holy Places is a sign of something much deeper, for our co-operation also strengthens the effect of our pastoral mission. At a time when our region and our communities are suffering terribly by a range of dangers and untold difficulties, this pastoral mission is always at the forefront of our common concern and efforts.

As primates we are charged primarily with the spiritual care and nurture of the children of God entrusted to us, and they rightly look to us for this ministry. May we together always be an encouragement to all our peoples and communities in Jerusalem and throughout our beloved Holy Land,

Creator of the stars of night, your

people's everlasting light,

O Christ, Redeemer of us all,

we pray you hear us when we call.

May Christ our true God, who's born in a cave in Bethlehem, hear our prayers and give you strength Your Excellency, in your pastoral ministry. And may God bless the members

of your community throughout the Holy Land. And may the peace of our Lord prevail.

Thank you.

Merry Christmas and blessed the New Year!

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem