

# ADDRESS OF H.H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM TO THE FRANCISCAN CUSTODY ON THE OCCASION OF EASTER

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

18 April 2017

Your Paternity, dear Father Francesco,

Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

*Christ is risen!*

It is with great joy that we greet you in these bright days of the Paschal feast, in which we enjoy the happy event of being able to celebrate Easter on the same day. Our visit to you now, after your visit to us earlier today, is no casual formality. Rather these visits are a part of our moral, spiritual, and familiar obligation to each other in our homes. We say this because our life here in Jerusalem is the life of a family. So like families, we can visit each other on special occasions, even on the same day!

So as a family we can proclaim the Resurrection together with one voice, and say with a full heart together the words of one of the ancient hymns of the Western Church:

*Christ, the Victim undefiled,*

*Man to God hath reconciled;  
whilst in strange and awful strife  
met together death and life;  
Christians on this happy day  
haste with joy your vows to pay;  
"Christ is risen" today we cry;  
now he lives no more to die.*

(Victimae paschali 11<sup>th</sup> century)

We celebrate Easter this year in the warm remembrance of the re-dedication of the Sacred Edicule, where the mystery of our Easter faith finds its focus, and we wish to take this festive occasion to express once again our gratitude to you, Your Paternity, and to your community, for the full and enthusiastic co-operation that you have given to this work. You have borne even the inconvenience of the displacement of your space in the Holy Sepulchre with patience and generosity.

The entire process of the exploration and renovation of the Sacred Edicule has received world-wide attention. Not only has there been interest in the structure itself, but also in the remains of the cave that it encloses. The eyes of the world have also been attentive to the fresh experience of co-operation between our three Communities in the carrying out of this work. This is the great hope that has arisen from this joint project.

Needless to say, just as we are, the world is looking forward to the completion of the renovation of the remaining parts of the compound of the Holy Sepulchre, including the underground sewage system and the floor of the rotunda.

We celebrate the Easter Feast once again at a time when there

is much difficulty and danger in our world, and especially in our region. Syria is of special concern to us in these day, as is Egypt. Faithful people are suffering persecution, millions remain displaced from their ancestral homes, and there is an instability on the world stage that creates great uncertainty.

In these times it is all the more incumbent upon us, to whom Divine Providence has entrusted the Diakonia of the Holy Land and our sacred shrines, to show to the world the truth and power of the Resurrection to bring new and more abundant life. This mission begins, as we as leaders, as well as the communities we lead, take responsibility for our common life. We give thanks to Almighty God that we have been given this opportunity to deepen our co-operation in the spiritual mission of the Holy Places.

May the Light of the Resurrection sustain you, Your Paternity, your Brotherhood, and the communities that you serve throughout our beloved Holy Land, and may the risen Lord crown our joint efforts as an encouragement to all those who look to Jerusalem for the strengthening of their faith in the living God who raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

*Christ is risen!*

Thank you.