

ADDRESS OF H.H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM TO THE APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATOR OF THE LATIN PATRIARCHATE ON THE OCCASION OF EASTER

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

19 April 2017

Your Excellency, dear Archbishop Pizzaballa,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Monastics,

Dear Fathers,

Christ is risen!

It is our joy to be here, Your Excellency, to express our Easter Greetings to you on the occasion of your first Easter as the Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate. We rejoice today with the Mother of God in these words of one of our Paschal hymns:

Shine! Shine! O New Jerusalem!

The glory of the Lord has shone on you!

Exalt now and be glad, o Zion!

Be radiant, O Pure Theotokos,

In the Resurrection of your Son!

Our joy is made all the more complete this year by the fact that we have celebrated Easter on the same day, and this common celebration emphasizes the importance of our Christian witness, especially at this time when our Christian brothers and sisters in our region and elsewhere are enduring hardship and persecution, particularly in Syria, and Egypt.

The current intolerable climate of violence makes it clear that our pastoral ministry is not limited to the guarding and serving of the Holy Places, but demands a careful attentiveness to all the communities under our *diakonia*. And by extension our pastoral concern reaches the world-wide Christian family, especially to those beyond our region who are suffering.

Your broad experience for many years as the Custos has given you to understand, defend, and proclaim the significance of the Holy Places – a significance that is inseparable from the indigenous Christian community. We cannot separate the “living stones” from the sacred stones from which the holy sites are built, for holy sites cannot be separated from their communities, or communities from their holy sites. Each gives life and purpose, and reveals meaning to the other.

Your steadfastness in promoting harmonious co-operation is deeply appreciated by all, and we must not forget the pivotal role you played in the restoration of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Sepulchre – a role that reflects also your authentic instinct for the unity of our Churches.

We are grateful for everything that you have done, and continue to do, both in your role as Custos, and now as Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate. We pledge to you our support and complete understanding, so that we may continue in that co-operation and common pastoral mission that

Divine Providence has placed upon us, and so that we may be an effective witness of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ in a world that is torn apart by violence, hatred, war, and persecution.

However, we recognize that people expect us to whom leadership has been entrusted not just to raise awareness, but also to support genuine efforts and work for peace and reconciliation. It is our duty to translate the message that we celebrate into effective action. This is how we demonstrate that we are not here simply as moral and spiritual leaders, but as those who put our beliefs into practice. The living witness of the message of the Gospel is to work for peace and reconciliation between all people, and in our region in particular between our fellow citizens, Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike. This is the true meaning of the resurrection for the life in the world.

May the Light of Christ that shines from the Holy Tomb strengthen and encourage you in the challenging mission that lies before you and all of us, and may God bless your clergy and the communities entrusted to your care.

Christ is risen!

Thank you.