

ADDRESS OF H.H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM TO THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE ON THEIR CELEBRATION OF EASTER

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

20 April 2017

Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our respective Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

Christ is risen!

In this Bright Week, we greet you, Your Beatitude, and the members of your Brotherhood and the Armenian community in Jerusalem, in the joy and gladness of the Resurrection.

As the Easter *Hymn of Exodus 15* in your Armenian tradition declares:

Today the immortal and heavenly bridegroom

Has risen from the dead:

Good tidings of exultation to you,

O Church, bride from the earth.

Praise your God in a voice of delight, O Sion.

Our Easter celebrations are made all the more moving this year as we celebrate the Feast at the renovated and re-dedicated Sacred Edicule. This project is the most significant endeavor in the Holy Places in our lifetime. We have saved Holiest site in the Christian world from certain permanent damage, and we have enjoyed the experience of the intimacy of touching the Tomb.

The most important fruit of this work has been the active dialogue that brought to fruition the co-operation of our three Communities in carrying out this project. This new chapter in our life has drawn the attention of the world and is a true sign of hope in a world torn apart by division, fear, violence, and persecution. The human family is fractured, and longs for unity and communion. Our unity of purpose in the renovation of the Sacred Edicule is of enduring significance, and we must build on this important foundation.

For there is more to be done, in completing further work in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, especially on the underground sewage system of the rotunda and the completion of the rest of the works in the compound of the Holy Sepulchre. There is also more to do in building a deeper unity among the Churches and Christian communities of the Holy Land in our spiritual mission. The renovation of the Sacred Edicule is a good beginning: we have shown that we can accomplish great things. But the strength of our resolve will be proven as we move on to do more in the future.

Once again, we wish to express our gratitude to you, Your Beatitude, for all your efforts in the work restoring the Sacred Edicule, and we look forward to further partnership with you as we take on the next tasks that lie before us. This

work has been laid upon us by Divine Providence, and we must be faithful to our calling, especially in our days, when our region is going through such horrible experiences and the world lives in total confusion and a very great danger.

May the Light that shines from the Holy Tomb at Easter give us the strength of purpose to carry on the good work that has been started. May we, as the Apostle Paul has said in the Acts of the Apostles, "finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace" (Acts 20:24).

We wish you, Your Beatitude, your Brotherhood, and the Armenian community under your archpastoral care, the joy of this Paschal Feast.

Christ is risen!

Thank you.