

# ADDRESS OF H.H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY AT THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

3 May 2017

Your Grace, Archbishop Justin,

Dear Mrs. Welby,

Your Grace Archbishop Suheil,

Dear Father Hosam,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers,

*Christ is risen!*

We welcome you, dear Archbishop Justin and Mrs. Welby, back to the Holy City of Jerusalem and to the Holy Land in this joyful Eastertide with the triumphal words of the Paschal troparion that we sing throughout this season:

*Christ is risen from the dead,  
trampling down death by death,*

*and to those in the tomb*

*He has given life!*

This year, our Easter celebration has special significance for us all, for as we keep the Feast of Feasts at the same time, we demonstrate to the world our common faith in our crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed our physical presence here at the places of the crucifixion and the burial, proclaiming together the resurrection, is a powerful *martyria*, of the Light of salvation that shines from the Holy Tomb that has been given to the whole world through the Church.

Your pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and of course, to the Church of Jerusalem, at this time, is a visible expression of your desire to be one with the local Church. As you yourself said in your own Paschal letter, we “join in an ecumenism of action to bring the transforming, serving love of Christ to the world.” Our task is not simply one of proclamation, but also of putting that proclamation into practical work on behalf of the poor, those who are the victims of war, violence, and persecution, and all who are in any kind of need.

Your pilgrimage makes two important matters clear:

First, your presence among us confirms and supports our witness here in Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

And secondly, your pilgrimage demonstrates true affirmation and encouragement for the native Christian communities in the Middle East, as well as other innocent peoples in our region, who are, even as we are gathered in this holy place, suffering persecution and the results of violence and displacement on a scale that is unprecedented in recent history. Your presence is a confirmation of the integrity of the Christian community in our multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious landscape.

As we gather today in this meeting between the Anglican

Community with the Mother Church of Jerusalem, the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate, we affirm our long mutual commitment to our historical ties and to our substantial theological dialogue. However, in the Holy Land, this dialogue is not simply about theological principles: in our Christian life, worship, and work together, we demonstrate our unity and oneness in our proclamation of our Lord Jesus Christ as the redeemer of humanity, and his resurrection as the victory of life over death, of light over darkness, of wholeness over brokenness.

As Saint Gregory Palamas says, in a typical but rich play on words, the *anastasis* – that is the *resurrection* – , means *anaplasia* – which is remaking as well as *anakenisis* – which means *renewal*. And it also means *anazoosis* – which is bestowal of new life. All these concepts are deeply related to the resurrection.

In this proclamation we are already united. Our mission as Christians and Churches is precisely to declare to the world that darkness, even the darkness of this present time, has no power over the Light of the resurrection and the hope that this Light brings to creation. This hope we hear in the words of the Letter to the Colossians, when Saint Paul says that we “have clothed ourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator” (Col. 3:10).

From this place where we are gathered this morning, we send our common message to our Christian sisters and brothers who live throughout the Middle East, as well as the Christians in other parts of the world, and to all people of good will regardless of their faith, who suffer despair, fear, confusion, grief, exile from their homelands, and the consequences of violence at the hands of other human beings. For in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, God has acted decisively to restore all humanity and the creation that “has been groaning in labor pains until now”

(Rom. 8:22) to our original eternal destiny.

It gives us deep pleasure to welcome you, dear Archbishop Justin and Mrs Welby, to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the wake of the recent renovation and re-dedication of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Tomb, the focus of our Paschal devotion. In honour of your pilgrimage, we wish to present you with this icon of the Theotokos, praying to the risen Lord that He may strengthen you in your archpastoral ministry. And we pray that the risen Lord will bless your mission in our beloved Holy Land.

*Christ is risen!*

Thank you.