

# FESTAL VISIT OF THE PATRIARCHATE TO THE ARMENIANS

The visit of our Patriarchate to the Armenian Patriarchate for their joint Feast of Christmas and Theophany, in return of their visit on our Christmas Feast, took place on Saturday morning, January 7/20, 2018.

On this visit His Beatitude and His entourage of Hagiotaphite Fathers were received by the Armenian Patriarch Manukian Nourhan and the Armenian Brotherhood in Jerusalem. His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed the Armenian Brotherhood as follows:

“Your Beatitude, Patriarch Nourhan,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our respective Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

As you celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, we wish to express to you our Christmas and Epiphany greetings, and we recall the beautiful words of one of our Christmas services:

Make glad O Jerusalem,

and all you who love Zion, keep the feast.

Today the ancient bond of condemnation of Adam is lossed.

Paradise is opened to us.

(Tone 4 by John the Monk)

The Divine Logos became flesh in a particular time and place, in our very midst here in the Holy Land. Here the opening of Paradise was announced to humanity in the Incarnation of the Divine Logos. Here the Divine-human encounter restored us to our rightful relationship with God and with each other.

We to whom the Divine Providence has entrusted the guardianship and the diakonia of the Holy Places understand this. So do our communities that have lived here down the ages. And so do the many thousands of pilgrims who flock to this Holy City and this Holy Land every month for spiritual refreshment.

We have long known the importance of this place, and we have also known the supreme importance of maintaining the patterns and supports that sustain our communities and the Christian presence in the Holy Land and the Middle East. We rejoice at this season in all that we have accomplished together, especially the restoration of the Sacred Edicule and we look forward to our further co-operation in phase II of the renovation of that part of Church of the Holy Sepulchre beneath the rotunda.

The world takes great encouragement from these joint ventures and from our unity of purpose, just as our unity of purpose in the face of recent threats to the Status Quo has been of supreme importance. As is well known, and as we have emphasized time and again, the Bill of Church Land and the Jaffa Gate case are real challenges to the well-being of our communities and to the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious landscape of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. As we have been bringing our case to the international community, we have seen how our common and united efforts have affected those whom we have visited, and we have been deeply encouraged by their statements of support for us all here in the Holy Land.

We do all this not for the sake of the Holy Places alone, but also for the well-being of Christians and their presence

in the land of the Nativity. We wish to take the occasion of these holy days to express our appreciation to you, Your Beatitude, and to all the Heads of Churches for your recent statement of support in addressing the challenges we are facing.

May the newborn Christ, whose incarnation makes the whole creation rejoice, deepen our bonds and give us grace to continue our joint efforts, both in the work we are doing in maintaining the Holy Places, as well as in defending our historic rights and privileges enshrined in the Status Quo. Mutual respect is fundamental to our harmonious co-existence and is of paramount significance to our mission here.

We wish you, Your Beatitude, a blessed Christmas, and we ask for God's blessing on your Brotherhood and o the Armenian Community in the Holy Land.

Thank you."

The Armenian Patriarch replied to His Beatitude's address, wishing a peaceful and cooperative New Year 2018.

#### **From Secretariat-General**

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