

PASCHAL GREETINGS TO THE APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATOR OF THE LATIN PATRIARCHATE IN JERUSALEM

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

Your Excellency, dear Archbishop Pizzaballa

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers,

We greet you, dear Archbishop Pizzaballa, along with the Bishops, clergy and faithful of the Latin Patriarchate, as you celebrate Easter. This is a time for rejoicing in the great mercy of God, as we sing in a Paschal hymn:

Come on this auspicious day of the Resurrection,

*let us partake of the new fruit of the vine of the divine
gladness*

and of the Kingdom of Christ,

praising him as God unto the ages.

(Ode 8, Troparion)

Even in the face of unprecedented difficulties and challenges for the Christian communities of our region, we are called always to hold fast to this divine gladness, and to the praise

of God, who is our hope and our salvation.

As Saint Paul says in the Second Letter to the Corinthians;

“Therefore, since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart...afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies” (2 Cor. 4:1, 8-10).

We share a moral obligation to the faithful to our martyria to the Empty Tomb, which is full of the divine life. Our responsibility in this matter is great, and has been laid on us by Divine Providence, and we rejoice in the deepening unity of trust and purpose that exists between our communities. We commend you in your pastoral ministry, and we wish to express once again our appreciation for your leadership in clear vision.

If proof were needed of the supreme importance of our united efforts in the safeguarding of the Holy Sites and of the historic rights and privileges to the Churches, we need only think of our indigenous Christian communities of this region and their witnesses to the life of the Church from the very beginning. And we are constantly aware of the ever-growing influx of pilgrims, week by week, month by month, who are an evident and measurable proof that the Holy Sites, and this Holy Land, must remain open to all without distinction or discrimination, as well as of spiritual refreshment in a world that is so terribly wounded by violence, oppression, poverty, the displacement of populations, and injustice.

May we always be faithful to our spiritual vocation. Even when the situation may seem hopeless to others, may we always shine with the hope of the resurrection, radiating divine gladness, and praising the One who brings eternal life to all. In

certain circumstances, when decisions are necessary, may we always have the courage to act in the strength that the Almighty God gives in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May God bless you, dear Archbishop Pizzaballa, and all those committed to your charge, and may you have a blessed and joyous Easter Feast.

Christ is risen!