

PASCHAL GREETINGS TO THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR PASCHAL VISIT TO THE PATRIARCHATE

10 April 2018

**This speech was not delivered in person,
but is sent to the Armenian community
via this website.**

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

Your Beatitude Patriarch Nourhan,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

Christ is risen!

We welcome you to our Patriarchate in this Bright Week, and we thank you for your Easter greetings. As we celebrate together this Feast of Feasts, we do so in the words of this Paschal hymn;

Let us arise in the deep dawn and,

*instead of myrrh, offer praise to the Master;
we shall see Christ, the Sun of Righteousness,
who causes life to dawn for all.*

(Ode Five of Pascha, Hermos)

Our witness as those to whom Divine Providence has entrusted the diakonia of the Holy Places is to this new life of the Resurrection that Christ has given to all. Even in the most challenging of times and the most difficult of circumstances, this is the true Light that shines in the darkness and which the darkness cannot overcome (John 1:5).

Our witness to this Divine Light, which is the hope of all the world, is never more evident than in our united purpose and action. We have seen the fruits of this unity of purpose and action again and again in recent months, from the co-operation of our communities in the restoration of the Sacred Edicule to our commitment in the face of attempts by radical elements in our society to undermine the Status Quo that guarantees the freedom of the Churches.

Our Joint action has shown to people near and far and to our communities our firm determination to continue in our witness to the values of the Gospel.

We give thanks to God, especially this year that during these most Holy Days we have lived into the true provisions of the Status Quo, and the Paschal celebrations of our communities have occurred in peace and harmony.

Even as we celebrate this Paschal Feast, we cannot rest on our laurels. The new life that shines from the Holy Tomb calls us into an ever-deepening understanding and mutual respect that require constant attentiveness and support. The world continues to be broken by violence, unrest, and bloodshed, and many do not know the Uncreated Light that shines forth from

our Lord and His Tomb. Our unity of purpose in protecting the mission of the Church in the Holy City of Jerusalem in particular and in this region in general is a great sign of hope for the world.

Our spiritual mission as guardians and servants of the Holy Places is to ensure, as best as we can, that the new life that the risen Christ causes to dawn for all, is made manifest in our witness, in our own service to ensure that the Holy Places remain accessible to all without distinction. The countless pilgrims who have joined us for this Feast of Feasts this year, as well as our own local communities here, are our great joy, for they are the living testimony to the spiritual energy of the Holy Places, and their devotion is a great encouragement to us in our vocation.

May God bless you, Your Beatitude, in this joyful Eastertide, as well as you Brotherhood and the Armenian community. May the Light of Righteousness warm our hearts and enlighten our minds.

Christ is risen!

Thank you.