

PASCHAL GREETINGS TO THE CUSTOS AND THE FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY OF THE HOLY LAND ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR EASTER VISIT TO THE PATRIARCHATE

10 April 2018

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

Your Paternity, dear Father Francesco,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Respected Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

Christ is risen!

We welcome you, dear Father Francesco, and we thank you for the Easter greetings that you have brought to us together with your Brotherhood. This is a time of great rejoicing for all people, for this is the Feast that proclaims God's salvation. As we sing today,

Come all you nations,

learn the power of this awesome mystery:

*for Christ our Saviour,
the Word who was in the beginning,
was crucified for us, and was buried of his own will,
and arose from the dead,
that he might save all things.*

(From the Resurrection Stichera)

It is here in Jerusalem, in the Incarnate Light that shines from the Empty Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all the nations learn the power of the new life of the Resurrection. It is here in Jerusalem that we see the vision of the gathering of the nations of the world as countless pilgrims from every land, journey here to receive this Light and to enter into this awesome mystery. It is here in Jerusalem that the salvation of the world and the fulfillment of all things in Christ has begun.

Of all this we are the witnesses. We give thanks to Almighty God that in our unity of purpose we have accomplished together so much for the sake of the Christian communities in the Holy Land and in our region, and for the integrity of the Holy Places.

And we wish to express our gratitude to you, dear Father Francesco, for your dedication and hard work in this regard. In the deepening understanding of our common mission to bear witness to the love and values of the Gospel, the world takes great hope, for they see the overcoming of prejudice and division for the sake of a higher purpose. And so they are renewed in hope, even in a time of renewed violence and strife both near and far.

The work before us continues. There is no rest from our diakonia of the Holy Places or from our pastoral and spiritual mission to our own communities in the region, especially to

those who are suffering particularly at this time. The human heart longs for freedom, peace, justice, and safety from danger, and the Church embraces suffering humanity wherever the human family is in any need. It is precisely in times of doubt, uncertainty, and fear that the Holy Places are revealed most fully as the touchstones for us and for the world of prayer. As Saint Paul exhorts us;

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

(1 Thess. 5.16)

May God give us his grace at this Paschal Feast to continue to be faithful in our vocation, and may God bless you, dear Father Francesco, your Brotherhood, and all the communities entrusted to your care.

Christ is risen!

Thank you.