

ADDRESS OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM AT THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM OF ISRAEL

On Tuesday evening, December 4/17, 2019, the Ministry of Tourism of Israel held a reception for Christmas and The New Year, given by the Minister of Tourism Mr. Yariv Levi at David Citadel hotel. Invited at the reception were the Heads and members of the Religious Communities in Israel.

H.H. Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed those present as follows;

Mr. Levin,

Mr. Halevi,

Your Beatitudes,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Leaders of the Jewish and Muslim Communities of Jerusalem,

Distinguished Civic Leaders,

Ladies and Gentlemen

As we gather once again in this holiday season, which is bright with light for our three Abrahamic traditions, please allow us to express our greetings to you all on behalf of the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The three Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam recognise the importance of Holy Places to the life of faith. And the Holy Land embraces both Holy Places that are

significant to our respective traditions, as well as Holy Places that are venerated by us all. No other religion in the world is infused with such universal religious and spiritual significance as the Holy Land, and especially this Holy City of Jerusalem. We understand that the Holy Places are places of worship and prayer not just for those who come here from around the world as pilgrims, but also for our local communities of faith.

With respect to the Holy Places in general, we know that they are significant not just from a commercial point of view. While the pilgrimage industry is important both for the national and the local economy, this is not its chief value. The chief value of pilgrimage and the Holy Places lies in the fact that they are conducive to peaceful co-existence in our multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious landscape. This is especially true of the Holy Places that are common to the Abrahamic traditions, but it is also the case with those places that are uniquely sacred to each one of those traditions.

Holy Places have profound and often ineffable spiritual meaning and significance for all people. Frequently they return again and again over a lifetime to drink of the deep spiritual wells that they find in the Holy Land. The Holy Places make us understand that, whatever our particular religious affiliations, in our common humanity we share the same spiritual longings, the same spiritual needs, the same spiritual aspirations.

Churches around the world accept our role in promoting pilgrimages and devotion to the Holy Places. We encourage devotion both among our local communities and the Churches around the world from which pilgrims come. This role must be taken seriously as a crucial element in the well-being of building and maintaining our peaceful co-existence and mutual witness.

Yet the Churches and Christian communities for the Holy Land cannot do this work alone. We have been trying our best to guarantee that the Holy Places function properly, not only to receive worshipers, but also to provide essential services, such as sufficient drinking water and other amenities that are provided by Ministry of Tourism.

In this spirit please allow us to remind you of the challenges that the monasteries of both the Greek Orthodox and Franciscan Fraternities are facing on Mount Tabor with respect to the supply of water. As you know, this is one of the major pilgrimage destinations.

There has already been an agreement between the Fraternities and the Government to undertake a shared project of a complete renovation of the water system that supplies both monasteries. We urge all those who are responsible for this matter to take this into serious consideration, and we repeat our commitment as partners, in this project.

We are grateful for the support and understanding that the Ministry of Tourism provides in encouraging pilgrimages and assisting in their smooth running, and we look forward to a deepening partnership with you in ensuring that the Holy Places have what they need in essential services to be able to serve the many thousands of pilgrims and locals who visit them throughout the year.

As we look forward to another season in which the eyes of the world will be focused on this Holy City and on the Holy Places of our region, we wish to take this opportunity to express to you Minister, and to all who support you in your work, our very best wishes for this holiday season.

May God bless you and may God bless all the peoples of our beloved Holy Land.

Thank you."

From Secretariat-General