

# **SPEECH TO THE MEETING OF THE PRIMATES OF THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION IN AMMAN**

The following speech was read on behalf of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos at the meeting of the Primates of the Anglican Communion in Amman, on Wednesday January 2/15, 2020.

**“His Beatitude Theophilos III Patriarch of Jerusalem**

Your Grace, Archbishop Justin,

Your Grace, Archbishop Suheil,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Sisters and Brothers,

In this holy season during which Christians in both West and East have been celebrating the great feasts of our Lord's Nativity and Theophany, we greet you and we welcome you warmly to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which is part of our ancient Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

We are especially happy to welcome you back once again, dear Archbishop Justin, to this region, and we wish to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to you for the help and support that you have given, and continue to give, to us and to the Heads of the Churches and Christian Communities of the Holy Land, in our united struggle to preserve our historic and sacred rights and privileges and to support a vibrant and secure Christian presence in the Holy Land.

We face unprecedented threats to our life here, especially

from radical groups who are seeking actively to undermine our multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious landscape. Even in the Old City of Jerusalem we see this activity, which, if unchecked, could well lead to fundamental disruptions in the ability of pilgrims and local Christians to have access to our administrative centre as well as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

These are very serious matters and in facing them we take great encouragement both from the unity of purpose that exists among the Heads of the Churches and Christian Communities of the Holy Land, as well as from the remarkable support that we are receiving from leaders in government and religion around the world. We cannot rest, for the pressures are great and relentless, and we know that an assault against one of our communities is an assault to us all.

In this regard, we would like to make special mention of the commitment of our dear friend Archbishop Suheil, to this work. Our Patriarchate and the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem have always enjoyed a good and close relationship over many years, and this long friendship is bearing considerable fruit at the present time as together we stand shoulder to shoulder in the face of our common difficulties. We wish also to mention Archbishop Suheil's tireless pastoral zeal for his communities and his work in renovation and restoration of congregations in his care. All of this work contributes to the strengthening of the Christian presence in our region.

We would also like to mention the recently established International Community of the Holy Sepulchre, which is an intentionally ecumenical society that is committed to enabling communities in the Holy Land to flourish. This society has the support of the Heads of the Churches, and seeks to gather Christians from all the Churches in effective support of the Christian presence in the Holy Land. It is our hope that ICoHS will grow to include members in every Province of the Anglican Communion, and indeed in just a couple of weeks there will be

important events in the Diocese of Southeast Florida in the Episcopal Church to promote the mission of ICoHS. This is a significant venture for us, and we so appreciate your support.

As you gather here in preparation for the Lambeth Conference next summer, we recall with deep joy our participation in the last Lambeth Conference twelve years ago. The Anglican Communion and the Orthodox Church have enjoyed a centuries-long relationship that is important to us both. We share so much in our common patristic heritage and over the generations we have been able to be of unique support to each other.

While it is true that both our Churches are facing complicated internal issues at the present time, we cannot let these matters distract us from our fundamental commitment to an ever-deepening dialogue and to travelling together on the road to unity. We must always resist the temptation to a narrow parochial focus that blinds us to the greater and primary mission of the Church, of being a beacon of the light of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in a world that is increasing bereft of hope, and where confusion and despair struggle with truth and joy for the souls of men and women.

This greater and primary mission must always be paramount in our ministry as those to whom the Divine Providence has entrusted the pastoral care of our respective Churches.

As you gather here in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, we pay tribute to the strong commitment of His Majesty King Abdullah II, who is the Custodian of Christian and Muslim Holy Sites in the Holy Land, to the well-being of the Christian communities here. Jordan remains a country in which faithful communities are protected, and where Christian leaders from all over this region are able to gather freely. We are delighted that you and your fellow Primates are able to enjoy this opportunity to gather and take counsel in this city where all are welcome.

MAY God bless you, dear Archbishop Justin, as you meet

together over these days, and MAY God guide you as you gather the bishops of the Anglican Communion at the Lambeth Conference in the summer.

Thank you.”

**From Secretariat-General**