

THE VISIT OF HIS BEATITUDE THEOPHILOS III PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM TO WESTMINSTER- ENGLAND

29 January 2020: H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos met with The Most Reverend Justin Welby, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of All England and Metropolitan. The two met as friends for conversation and prayer, and to discuss the challenges faced by Christians across the globe and especially in the Holy Land. Archbishop Welby exhorted all Christians to continue to hold their brothers and sisters in the Holy Land and across the Middle East in their prayers.

His Beatitude was then received by Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Special Advisor on Faith, Jonathan Hellewell, at Number 10 Downing Street, and also later met with the UK's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, Rehman Chishti MP, at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

His Beatitude addressed a meeting of Members of Parliament, Lords, and Lord Bishops hosted by Sir Desmond Swayne MP, at the Palace of Westminster, where he spoke of His gratitude for the steadfast support from those in the UK for Christians in the Holy Land. His Beatitude updated the friends and supporters in attendance on the situation of the Churches in the Holy Land, and answered many questions from those present. His Beatitude paid warm tribute to President Rivlin, His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan and to President Abbas for their unswerving support for the Christian community across the Holy Land.

Reflecting on his impressions of the visit, His Beatitude

remarked:

“We have been greatly blessed by the friendship and interest shown to us in our short time in the UK. Christians in the Holy Land will take comfort from knowing that Christians in the UK are so faithful in holding us in their prayers and so determined to understand and support us in our circumstances. The UK Government understands the unique role of the Holy Land churches, not simply as historic buildings but as the living Church that plays such a vital role today. Our visit has enabled us to renew friendships, to greet new friends, and discuss how the UK can continue to support the ministry of the Church in the Holy Land.”

His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain hosted an official dinner in honour of His Beatitude on his visit to the UK. His Beatitude thanked the Archbishop for his kindness and generosity.

The unprecedented levels of support and interest in the Church in the Holy Land among UK political and church leaders is a result of growing understanding of the unique role and importance of the Christians in the region. This has translated into a strong determination to support the peaceful ministries of the Church in the Holy Land, and is reflected in the interest at the highest levels of the UK government. This follows on from the visit of His Royal Highness Prince Charles the previous week. His Beatitude offered a prayer for those he had met and for the United Kingdom.

“May God bless all those who have welcomed us with such warmth and joy these past few days. We pray for blessing on all those in the UK and wisdom for their leaders. We thank God for their steadfast friendship, and for this precious time together. Amen”