

HIS BEATITUDE'S SPEECH IN RECOGNITION OF NEW LATIN PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

Your Beatitude,

On this occasion of your official visit as the newly appointed Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, we welcome you not as a stranger, but as an old trusted friend. The news that His Holiness Pope Francis had appointed you as Latin Patriarch was widely welcomed both by your community and by all who are committed to the well-being of the Christian presence in the Holy Land.

Saint Paul writes in the First Letter to Timothy

“I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable, convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching... always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.” (2 Tim 4:1 – 2,5)

For many years, first as Custos and then as a bishop, you have shown yourself to be a faithful pastor to all those entrusted to your care in the spirit of these words of Saint Paul. You are deeply familiar with your people and this place, and we are glad that in you as the new Latin Patriarch we have a colleague with experience who understands the problems and the challenges that the Christian communities are facing in our time.

During your time as Custos, and continuing after your appointment as Apostolic Administrator, the co-operation that has been built between our Brotherhoods and our communities has produced tangible fruits that have been crucial in helping us all deal with the common issues that we are facing in

defending the Christian presence in the Holy Land and safeguarding the integrity of the holy places for the whole world.

We cannot emphasize enough the importance of the mutual trust that has grown up among us. Never before has the co-operation between our communities proved so effective and productive in our common mission. We cannot forget the instrumental role that you played in the joint effort in the restoration of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.

The pandemic has only made our mission more complicated and urgent. We have greater responsibilities and our mutual respect and co-operation are more crucial than ever before. We have every confidence that in your role as Latin Patriarch, you will continue to give your best efforts to all that makes for stronger and even more effective relationships.

As we know, Jerusalem is the womb from which the Church was born, and in our own time Jerusalem can be the womb from which new efforts for the unity of the Church may be delivered. Here in Jerusalem, we are a witness of the authentic spirit of ecumenism, for nowhere else on earth do so many Christian traditions celebrate together in one place in mutual respect, understanding and harmony. We each have our traditions, customs and culture and we have a deeper understanding of the true nature of dialogue. Needless to say, we should also mention the special place that our Anglican and Lutheran sisters and brothers have in this ecumenical vocation.

The Divine Eucharist is at the heart of the mission of the Church, and we must never lose our attentiveness to the path to the union of the Churches for which we pray in every liturgy that will restore to us the common Chalice, when once again we shall be able to be con-celebrants together at the altar. We are aware that we can never be complacent. We must

deepen our communication with each other, and sustain this spirit in all that we do.

We congratulate you as you assume your new responsibly in this difficult time, and we assure you of our prayers and support, as together we place the safety and security of the Christian presence in our beloved Holy Land and the holy places before all other considerations.

May God bless you, and may God bless all the communities entrusted to your pastoral care.

Thank you.