

JERUSALEM MUNICIPALITY HOLDS THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS RECEPTION FOR THE CHURCH LEADERS

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III joined on Tuesday evening, December 28, Church Leaders in Jerusalem to attend the annual Christmas reception held by the Jerusalem Mayor, Mr. Moshe Lion.

On behalf of the Church leaders, Patriarch Theophilos thanked Mr. Lion for holding the event and expressed his season's greetings.

His Beatitude pointed the growing burdens for the churches and the communities due to the ongoing pandemic, especially during these blessed holidays where "we have missed the many thousands of pilgrims who come to the Holy Land each year... and when our city will once again be filled with pilgrims from all over the world who arrive here longing for spiritual refreshment and renewal at all our holy places," where His Beatitude noted the mayor's efforts in re-establishing normal life in Jerusalem and trying to facilitate for the possible return of pilgrims.

During his speech, Patriarch of the Holy City addressed the rise of "radical groups" assaults in Jerusalem against the Church, the clergymen and the Christian community and voiced the concern of the Church leaders "over the integrity of Jerusalem and the well-being of the Christian Quarter."

His Beatitude noted that "each historic Quarter of the Old City has its particular uniqueness that must be respected, adding that unfortunately, these radical groups are making a concerted and sustained attempt to undermine the integrity of

the Christian Quarter, and it is no secret that their aim is to put pressure on ordinary Christian inhabitants and pilgrims, and to weaken the Christian presence in the Quarter.”

He later emphasized that “we are calling that these extremist groups do not represent the State of Israel or the Jewish people and we must work together to curb the attempts of all radical factions in Jerusalem and in our Holy Land. We, the Heads of Churches, re-affirm our commitment to engage in urgent dialogue, on this issue, as declared in our recent statement.” Patriarch Theophilos respectfully encouraged the mayor to do all in his power “to ensure that the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious character of Jerusalem is protected and enhanced.”

His Beatitude ended by commending the civic authorities in their engagement with the various property and development projects of the Church institutions, for their congregations around the City and encouraged them to continue doing so in order “to move forward with these means the flourishing of our city, its residents and its future for the mutual benefit of all.”

In return, the mayor’s speech referred to Jerusalem as the heart of the world and that the holy places and pilgrims are of significance to the country and to the world at large. He also stated that he is a mayor for all residents and noted Jerusalem to be a city of peace and justice.

News by: Heba Hrimat.

