

THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM ATTENDS THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS RECEPTION BY HM KING OF JORDAN

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, Patriarch of Jerusalem and all of Palestine, joined the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem today, December 14, to attend the annual Christmas reception hosted by His Majesty King Abdullah II, King of Jordan.

During the reception His Beatitude gave the following speech:

Your Majesty,

Your Royal Highnesses,

Esteemed Members of the Government,

Beloved Leaders of our Religious Communities

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Reverend Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We greet you, Your Majesty, in this festive season, in which our region has the privilege of holding the festival of the light of justice, even in a world, and in a time, when there is deep confusion and despair. The words of the Holy Book

remind us:

*Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.*

*For darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the
peoples,*

*but the Lord will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.*

(Is 60:1-2)

As we emerge into a post-pandemic world, we face tremendous challenges. Most especially we are painfully aware of the deepening danger of new assaults from some quarters on the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious integrity of our region. There can be no doubt that this is an extremely sensitive time in our history, and the situation in which we are living, both in this region and around the world, is extremely delicate. We must admit that it can feel like a volcano that is on the verge of eruption. Those who are motivated by ideology rather than by our common sacred values put not just individual lives at risk, but the entire human community.

In the face of these harsh realities, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan remains a beacon of stability, mutual respect, tolerance, and the flourishing of different religious groups side by side. Your Majesty is well known throughout the world for your commitment to peace-building and the promotion of ordered co-existence so that all may prosper. We are fully aware of Your Majesty's firm and clear voice in defending the Status Quo of our Islamic and Christian religious

institutions and also for your care for the Christian presence in the Holy Land and for the Christian character of Jerusalem. As the Heads of the Churches and Christian Communities of the Holy Land, we want to assure you once again of our full support of you in your essential role as the Custodian of the Christian and Islamic Holy Places in the Holy Land. The Status Quo has always been the key for the welfare and peaceful co-existence between all who call the Holy Land our home.

We wish to express our appreciation to you for gathering us in this festive event, so that we may give expression, by our presence, to Your Majesty's commitment to the religious diversity of our region in general, and of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and of the Holy Land in particular, which is at the heart of our collective identity. We are gathered from the many religious communities that make up our diverse society here in Jordan and in Jerusalem, and which have lived together for generations. The future of our region depends on sustaining this diversity, so that all our peoples may have a future of opportunity, hope, and safety.

In times of darkness, the light shines ever more brightly. This is exactly what we are about to celebrate in Bethlehem. We are grateful for the light that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan shines in our region, and we assure you, Your Majesty, of our ongoing willingness to work with you to ensure the prosperity of all our peoples.

May God bless you, Your Majesty, all the Royal Family, and all those set in authority under your wise leadership, and may God bless all the peoples of our beloved Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and our beloved Holy Land.

Thank you.



