

HIS BEATITUDE RECEIVES ITALIAN JOURNALIST GIANCARLO GIOJELLI

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem, received today Thursday, May 16, renowned Italian journalist Giancarlo Giojelli at the Patriarchate's headquarters in Jerusalem.

Giojelli, who's been known to have interviewed great world leaders such as Pope Francis, Nelson Mandela and many others, paid a special visit to the Patriarch of Jerusalem in order to further extend his list of interviews with prominent leaders.

His Beatitude highlighted the importance of cooperation between the Churches in the world, and especially the Churches in the Holy Land, where Jesus was born and crucified. They spoke about the ongoing construction work and the excavations for the restoration of the floor of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and the monumental cooperation between the three Churches in charge of the Holy Sepulcher; the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, the Franciscan Custody, and the Armenian Patriarchate.

The conversation also led to the meeting of His Beatitude Theophilos with the Pope back in September 2023, and the constant efforts to build bridges and better communication with the international community and world leaders in effort to safe guard the Christian character of the Holy Land and the Holy City.

Towards the end of the meeting, His Beatitude blessed Mr. Giojelli and his wife with crosses and wished him success in his future missions.

PASCHAL GREETING VISITS TO THE WESTERN CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM

On Tuesday morning, April 2, the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher led by His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, extended their Paschal greetings to the Western Churches in Jerusalem who have celebrated Christ's resurrection on Sunday.

The Jerusalem Patriarchate delegation headed first to the Franciscan brotherhood near the New Gate, where His Paternity Father Francesco Patton, Custodian of the Holy Land, received the Patriarchal delegation and exchanged celebratory speeches.

His Beatitude speech was as follows:

*“Your Paternity, dear Father Francesco,
Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,
Dear Fathers,*

Christ is risen!

*We greet you, dear Father Francesco, and your Brotherhood, as
you celebrate the Feast of Feasts, and we are mindful of the
words of the Paschal Liturgy:*

*Come, receive the Light that is never overtaken by night,
and glorify Christ, who is risen from the dead.*

We keep this holy season of light and life at a time of deep

darkness for our region and our world, and yet we do not shy from proclaiming that Christ has “trampled down death by death,” and given new life to the world.

It is our spiritual mission to keep the Light of the Gospel shining even in the most difficult of circumstances and the most hopeless of situations. To this end we are steadfast in proclaiming the message of salvation that is given to us and to all humanity in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. As our Lord has said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live” (John 11:25).

We are also grateful that we remain united in our common conviction as the Churches and Christian Communities of the Holy Land in standing against all forms of violence, in calling for an immediate and sustained ceasefire, the release of the hostages, the guarantee of humanitarian aid, access for doctors and medical personnel, and a fresh commitment to a new path forward for our region that leads us away from prejudice, violence, and war to mutual respect, reconciliation, and peace.

We wish to express our appreciation to you, dear Father Francesco, for your clear commitment to these goals, and we are encouraged by our fraternal co-operation. In the face of such terrible conflict, the readiness of the Churches to join together in a common witness and a common cause is not only a sign of our strength; it is also a visible sign of hope for our peoples in the Holy Land and for all people of good will around the world.

We cannot but mention other challenges that affect our mission. Once again the Israeli municipal authorities are raising the issue of illegal and unfair municipal taxes on church property and even moved to freeze our bank accounts. This would deprive us of essential resources that enable us to run our church, charitable, educational, and other

essential services.

We call on the local authorities to respect our historic and universally-recognised rights, so that we can carry out our spiritual mission without impediment or interference.

We are beset by dangers all around. And yet we are not afraid and we do not give up hope. For we are community that believes in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. As Saint Paul reminds us, affliction produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us (Rom. 5:3-5).

May this joyous feast of Easter be a hopeful time for you and your Brotherhood, and for all our peoples, as we rejoice in the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ over sin and death, and may this season bring us a new and tangible path to a lasting peace in our region.

Christ is risen!

Thank you."

Later the delegation headed to the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem, where the Brotherhood was received by His Beatitude Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, and the accompanying Bishops and priests.

Their Beatitudes exchanged Paschal greetings and speeches, highlighting the importance of faith and patience. His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos speech reads as follow:

"Your Beatitude, dear Cardinal Pizzaballa,

*Your Eminences,
Your Graces,
Dear Fathers,*

Christ is risen!

We are pleased to rejoice with you, dear Cardinal Pizzaballa, as you and your communities celebrate the great feast of Easter. As Saint John of Damascus has written:

*Meet it is that the heavens should rejoice,
and that the earth should be glad,
and that the whole world, both visible and invisible,
should keep the feast;
for Christ our everlasting joy has arisen.*

(From the Canon of Pascha)

Even in the face of the terrible difficulties that we are facing in our region, we must not let violence and war rob us of the everlasting joy of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, for it is precisely this hope that sustains us, our communities, and the world.

The resurrection, by which our Lord Jesus Christ destroyed sin and death, strengthens us in our resolve to be witnesses for peace and reconciliation. We shall not waver in our calls for an immediate sustained ceasefire, the release of hostages, the effective delivery of humanitarian aid, safe access for medical personnel and supplies, and a new resolution to chart a pathway to peace that promises a future for all those who call the Holy Land our home.

These are not vain desires: they are the necessary actions that will restore life and well-being, and they accord with the Scriptures. As we read in the Book of Proverbs, It is honorable to resolve a dispute (Prov. 20:3), and in the First

Letter of Saint Peter, we understand that since, therefore, Christ suffered in the flesh, [we must] arm ourselves also with the same intention (for whoever has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin), so as to live for the rest of our time in the flesh no longer by human desires but by the will of God (1 Pet. 4:1-2).

In addition to our united commitment to peace, justice, and reconciliation in the current war, we remain determined to resist the broadening of areas of conflict in our life. As was the case in 2018, so today in the strongest possible terms we are encouraging the authorities not to over-reach their jurisdiction in attempts to impose illegal and unjust municipal taxation on the Churches that contravene our historical and internationally recognized position and rights. To press this matter in the present circumstances would add an unacceptable level of pressure on the Churches at a time when all people of good will in our region must be focused on the rebuilding of our society, its structures, and communities. We also call on the authorities to refrain from the freezing of all Church assets immediately, so that the Churches can fulfil their mission to serve, to educate, to heal, and to care for those who come to us.

We continue to be grateful to you, Your Beatitude, for your steadfastness in the pastoral care of our communities and for your dedication to our shared efforts within our council of the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches. At no time has our mutual support and alliance been more crucial for the well-being and future of the Christian presence in the Holy Land. Our co-operation is one of the few signs of hope in our increasingly fractured and disrupted society.

May God strengthen you in your pastoral ministry, and may God sustain us all as we seek to be faithful to our spiritual mission of proclaiming the joy and the hope of the resurrection.

Christ is risen!

Thank you."

Lastly, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem, together with His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina headed to the Mount of Olives to greet Archbishop Adolfo Tito Yllana, the Apostolic Nuncio to the Holy See.







BEGINNING OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY LAW AT THE JERUSALEM PATRIARCHATE FOR THE YEAR 2023

Jerusalem, February 28, 2024

The Christian family law of the Jerusalem Patriarchate for the year 2023 amendment will come into effect, in all ecclesiastical courts, starting March 1, 2024.

It was approved by the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem in its session held on October 5, 2023 in Jerusalem. This law comes in implementation of the vision of His Beatitude Patriarch K.K. Theophilos III in modernizing church laws to keep pace with the times, as this law included fundamental amendments while preserving the basic spiritual aspects of the law for the peace and benefit of the community spiritually and to further assist them pastorally.

Among the most prominent amendments included in this law are wills, adoption, inheritance, custody, establishing a Christian family home, and accelerating judicial procedures, especially for issues of alimony, guardianship, and custody.





HIS BEATITUDE OPENS THE CHURCH OF 'THE THREE HIERARCHS' IN DIBEEN IN JORDAN

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, Patriarch of the Holy City, together with His Highness Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, Chief Advisor to His Majesty the King of Jordan for Religious and Cultural Affairs, opened on Sunday, February 18, the Three Hierarchs Greek Orthodox Church, within the Orthodox Center project in Dibeen in Jerash Governorate, Jordan.

The opening of the new church was attended by Her Highness Princess Maryam Ghazi and the Patriarchal Representative of Amman His Eminence Archbishop Christophoros of Kyriakopolis, who said that the opening of the church coincides with the Kingdom's celebrations of the silver jubilee of His Majesty the King of Jordan, King Abdullah II, stressing that Jordan is a living example of religious coexistence, and a haven for safety, security and stability.

Archbishop Christophoros continued that "the church will meet the needs of young people, and will be a place for holding conferences, meeting intellectually and culturally, and

“serving the local community.” He also expressed his thanks for the generous donation made by Mr. Issa Nassif Odeh to complete the construction of the church.

The Church of the Three Hierarchs is the first in Jordan to bear this name, and it is in the middle of the Orthodox Center project adjacent to the Monastery of the Virgin Mary, Fountain of Life in Dibeen, and it was named after Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory, and Saint John Chrysostom ‘the Golden Mouth’.

The new church also features geometric designs that reflect the traditional Jordanian building art in the region, with a Byzantine architectural spirit.

The church of the Three Hierarchs to hold its first divine liturgy next Friday, February 23, with attendance from officials and local believers from various governorates of the Kingdom.





VISIT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES TO THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday, February 17, His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, Patriarch of the Holy City, welcomed Dr Jerry Pillay, the general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), at the Jerusalem Patriarchate's headquarters. The meeting was attended by the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, including; Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem; Fr. Francesco Patton, Custodian of the Holy Land; Archbishop Hosam Naoum, Head of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem, and representatives from the Armenian Patriarchate and the Coptic Church in Jerusalem.

The visit of the General Secretary comes during difficult times the Holy Land is going through, therefore Dr Pillay

expressed his commitment to ask the millions of Christians, who are members of the Council worldwide, to increase their prayers and support to the churches and the people in the Holy Land, and for peace and reconciliation amid the tension between the different sides.

In recognition of his support, His Beatitude honoured the General Secretary with the medal of the Commander of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre.

In addition, the Church leaders each took the opportunity to present the General Secretary with the difficulties and challenges facing Christians, churches and their properties, i.e. the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane, that are often affected by the improper actions of radical elements.

During the meeting, His Beatitude took the opportunity to address Dr Pillay on behalf of the church leaders as follows:

*“Dr Pillay,
Beloved Members of your Delegation,
Sisters and Brothers in Christ,*

We welcome you warmly to the Holy City of Jerusalem and to our Patriarchate, and we wish to express our gratitude to you for your visit at this difficult and complicated time for all the peoples of this region, and especially for the Christian community of the Holy Land.

Your visit is of such importance, for you bring with you the attention of the World Council of Churches and its members to the situation here.

In these critical times, we Christians, both in the Holy Land and around the world, have a mission to uphold the message of the Gospel, which is stronger and more enduring than our human weakness. It is the Gospel that speaks of

reconciliation and peace, and this must be our constant commitment. War and violence are always the consequence of human failure. But Christ and his Church proclaim a different truth. In theological terms we affirm that hatred and darkness have no hypostasis; it is only light and life that have a true and enduring existence.

Death is not our mission. God-given life is at the heart of the kerygma of the Gospel. As our Lord Jesus Christ tells us, I came that they may have life and have it in all its fulness (John 10:10). We are called to be united in our moral obligation and mission to uphold the sacred values of peace and reconciliation. As we learn from the Prophet Isaiah,

*They shall beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation;
neither shall they learn war any more.*

(Is. 2:4)

This is our common human vocation and our common human destiny. The call of the Gospel is to turn the instruments of war into the instruments of peace and reconciliation.

Our historical experience in the Holy Land is a powerful and tangible example that synagogue, church, and mosque may exist side by side in mutual respect. Ours is a long-standing multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious landscape which has given rise to a unique civilization, in which Jerusalem remains the beacon of hope for the whole world. There has always been room in the Holy Land for all those who call this region our home.

There is no military solution to establish the future of the Holy Land and the wider Middle East. The pattern of disputes, retribution, and retaliation has brought us no nearer to peace and security, and all these frames of reference are bankrupt. For it is written, Do not be overcome by evil, but

overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:21).

With this in mind, we as the Heads of Churches in the Holy Land continue to pray and call for an end to the war so that the humanitarian crisis may be brought to an end, displaced populations may return to their homes, and essential help be brought to all innocent victims caught up in this conflict who are without the basic necessities of life.

The present conflict is clear evidence from which we have learnt that that we must face the future with a new resolve. We believe that this is the only way to forge a new pathway to true and lasting peace and reconciliation.

The Heads of the Churches remain firm in our opposition to the escalation of violence. We are convinced, as is the World Council of Churches, that it is in upholding and promoting the fundamental values of the Gospel that a way forward will be found, and we invite our fellow Christians, as well as all people of good will around, to join us in this sacred mission. For it is written, Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God (Mt 5:9).

As you come to the Holy Land as pilgrims of peace in a time of war, we pray that our risen Lord, the conqueror of death, may bless your work and your endeavours in the cause of the Gospel of peace and reconciliation.

Thank You."



THE DEPARTURE TO THE LORD OF

THE BLESSED ARCHIMANDRITE THEODORITOS HEGOUMEN OF KATAMON

At 10.30 p.m. on the night of Wednesday, January 25th/February 7th, 2024, the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Saint Simeon in Katamon, Archimandrite Theodoritos, slept in the Lord.

His Funeral Service was held at 10.30 am. on Thursday, January 26th/ February 8th 2024 in the chapel of Saint Thecla inside the Central Monastery, presided over by our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the participation of the Holy Sepulchre High Priests and other Holy Sepulchre Fathers, at the honorary presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos, and at the joint prayer of monastics and laity of the Greek parish of Jerusalem.

The Obituary was delivered by the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, in which the details of his life and activity as a Holy Sepulchre Father and Hegoumen of the Monastery of Saint Simeon Katamon are mentioned as follows:

“Your Beatitude Father and Master,

Reverend Archbishops,

Consul General of Greece,

Dear Fathers,

Beloved brethren in Christ,

We stand in tears before the tomb of our beloved brother

Hieromonk Theodoritos, as our Lord stands before the tomb of his four-day friend Lazarus. We mourn the separation, like Christ's disciples after His glorious Ascension. We humanly reflect that death is a great and terrible mystery. We wonder how the most harmonious symbiosis of soul and body is broken, how the soul is forcibly separated from the body, how man, through disobedience and the fall, brought death upon himself and heard from his Creator and Maker: "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return"(Gen. 3, 19).

To these questions of human concern, the person, the teaching and the work of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ comes as an answer. The fact that God condescended to our race, had mercy on us and in Christ, His Only Begotten Son became like us humans. He assumed in the Incarnation our human nature and flesh and through the Cross and the Resurrection He raised us from Hell and granted us eternal life and rest in the heavens with Him.

This truth was revealed to the holy disciples and apostles of Christ. These became eye-and-ear witnesses not only of Christ's teaching but also of His God-human person. They saw and recognized Him in His earthly life and witnessed His healing and redemptive action, but also is Resurrection "in another form" (Mark 16:12). The faith in this redeeming truth is comfort and power against the fear of death, especially of death by martyrdom. The Incarnation, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Christ compose, hold and sustain the whole body of the Church.

Our beloved, elderly and respected late brother Archimandrite Theodoritos also embraced this faith, as he was ordained as a monk at a young age in the holy Trooditissa Monastery of the Church of Cyprus. From there he came to the Israeli hospital in Hadassah for treatment of the precarious health of his eyes. Following the exhortation of his Spiritual Father, Hieromonk Pagratios, whom he greatly respected, he sought and joined our Holy Sepulchre Brotherhood shortly after 1967. He

served in various ministries with zeal and devotion, overcoming the difficulty of his health. He was responsible for the students in the Patriarchal School, a ministering Priest in the Holy Monastery of the Megali Panagia for years, and a member of the Holy and Sacred Synod, as appointed by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

Mainly, he was the Hegoumen of the Holy Monastery of Saint Simeon the God-receiver in Katamon continuously and uninterruptedly since 1979. He preserved this Monastery and its Church as the functional centre of the Greek Community of Jerusalem in Katamon, as it had always been as a Pilgrimage centre for the adults from the Orthodox countries of pilgrimage. He also protected it from outsiders, because of its historical position.

Conscientiously appreciating the donations of the pilgrims, and not failing to be charitable to the poor, he renovated its temple and enriched its iconography. Many external repairs were carried out for its maintenance and beautification. Thanks to his perseverance and energy, the Patriarchate achieved the impossible, the acquisition of what was said to be a piece of the relic of Saint Simeon the God-receiver from the Roman Catholic Church of Croatia in 2010, kept as a treasure of the Monastery; the return of the Saint's relic is celebrated annually on the 25th September.

For these good works of his life, for his honest and virtuous monastic and priestly ethos and for his tireless patience and determination during the many years of testing due to poor health and for his care for the weekly Divine Liturgy in the Monastery and Holy Communion while bedridden, we beseech our philanthropic God, to forgive him because as a man he has sinned voluntarily or involuntarily; to rank his soul in the land of the living with the holy and the righteous in the enjoyment and rejoicing of the unwaning light of His glory; to give him the crown of righteousness, "which He shall give to

all those who love Him”.

May his memory be everlasting!”

The funeral procession to Holy Zion was led by their Eminences the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina and Aristovoulos of Madaba, where he was buried in the Cemetery of the Fathers.

May his memory be everlasting!

From Secretariat-General

**PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS: FROM
THE BAPTISM SITE THE LAND OF
PEACE AND EVANGELISM HE
RAISES PRAYERS AND
SUPPLICATIONS FOR OUR PEOPLE
IN GAZA AND DEMANDS AN
IMMEDIATE END TO THE BLOODY
CONFLICT AND THE RESOLUTION
OF THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE**

Baptism Site, Friday, January 26, 2024

On the morning of Friday, January 26, 2024, the Greek Orthodox Church of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem performed the annual pilgrimage ceremony to the place of baptism of Jesus Christ –

Al-Maghtas in the presence of all the parishes of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the East Bank.

The prayer was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and all of Palestine and Jordan, with the participation of the Patriarchal Representative of Amman His Eminence Archbishop Christophoros of Kyriakopolis, the Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem and Hegoumen of the Theophany Monastery His Eminence Metropolitan Benedictos, and many distinguished Bishops coming from Greece with a group of Priests and Deacons, in the presence of ministers, diplomats, officials and public figures, amid the active participation of Orthodox Scout Groups and members of the Orthodox youth and believers from various regions of Jordan and abroad.

At the end of the prayer, His Beatitude delivered a spiritual and patriotic speech to the faithful, in which He said: *From this holy place the Christian faith began and was transferred to all parts of the world, from the holy land we are called children of God, to walk in His name, we are called to remove from us the eternal darkness and pass into the light and become children of the Kingdom of heaven. From the waters of the Jordan, all nature is sanctified, because our holy land accepted God and became a paradise in Him, was blessed by Him and blessed the whole world.* His Beatitude invited our children from all over the world to come to the Holy Land for pilgrimages to receive the blessings of the Holy Land.

His Beatitude called for peace in Palestine, especially for our people in the Gaza Strip, appealing from the Holy Land to stop the war and for a just solution to the Palestinian issue with the establishment of its state with East Jerusalem as its capital. His Holiness together with the faithful also prayed for the country's leader, His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al-Hussein, for whom Jordan is celebrating this year the twenty-fifth anniversary of his accession to the throne of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the assumption of his

constitutional powers.

His Beatitude first thanked Prince Ghazi bin Mohammed, the King's personal envoy and adviser on religious and cultural affairs, for his great efforts with the Baptistery Authority, which he chairs, as this year they celebrate the silver jubilee of restoration and establishment of this Place, and the Tourism Promotion Authority, the Jordanian Arab Army, the security services, and all local and international news stations and websites and the clergy, youth and scouting bodies participating in the organization of this blessed day.

In the end, white doves were released into the sky as a symbol of the Holy Spirit Who appeared above Christ's head in the form of a dove during His baptism in the waters of the Jordan River, and then His Beatitude came with the Bishops and Priests to the river bank, blessing, as usual, the waters of the Jordan River with the Holy Cross.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday morning, January 20, His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III led a delegation from the Jerusalem Orthodox Patriarchate to the Armenian Patriarchate, to exchange Christmas greetings. His Beatitude's speech was as follow:

*Your Beatitude, dear Archbishop Nourhan,
Your Eminences,
Your Graces,
Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,
Dear Fathers,*

*Christ is born!
Glorify him!*

We greet you warmly, Your Beatitude, and the members of your Brotherhood, as you celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of the Divine Logos in the Church of the Nativity. This is a time of deep joy, and we recall the words of the hymnographer:

*O Bethlehem, receive the Mother of God:
for she has come to you to give birth to the Light that never
sets.*

*Let everything that has breath praise the Maker of all.
(From Mattins of the Forefeast of the Nativity)*

As we keep the Christmas feast of joy, hope, and light in this time of darkness in our region and in our world, we must not refrain from appropriate rejoicing. For the Light that the darkness can never overcome has come into the world (cf. Jn 1:5), and this great feast renews our faith and trust in the God who comes to share our humanity in all its fullness.

Our spiritual mission that has been entrusted to us by Divine providence is to remain focussed always on this message of hope, especially when hope seems elusive. There is no doubt that at this present time in human history the human family is facing some of its greatest challenges, and our region is no exception. For we are under particular pressure here in the Holy Land, where so many innocent victims suffer and where so many are displaced from their homes and their lands. As we are fully aware, the Christian community is also confronted by the impact of the conflict, and there has never

been a time when our shared commitment to our spiritual mission here has been more urgent.

Just as we are keeping the Christmas feast, which is the feast of God's solidarity with us, we wish to take this opportunity to express our solidarity as well with you and your community in the face of the pressures you are bearing. The situation that you face is not simply an issue for the Armenian community alone; indeed it is an issue for the whole Christian community. We recall the words of Saint Paul, If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it (1 Cor. 12:26). We are committed to remain united in our resolve to defend the integrity of the Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

We assure you, Your Beatitude, of our firm support in your endeavours to protect the patrimony of the Armenian patriarchate. As Saint Paul encourages us, we are to bear one another's burdens, and in this way...fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). We are deeply concerned at the ongoing harassment that the Armenian community is experiencing in the matter of the Cow's Garden, and we pray for a swift resolution to these problems and the restoration of normal life for the Armenian community.

On this occasion we would like to offer our congratulations for your newly ordained bishops, and we also wish to express once again our condolences at the recent passing away of the late Archbishop Aris, who was a faithful servant of the Armenian Church and of the Christian community of the Holy Land. May his memory be eternal.

In this difficult season for the world and for our region, we must renew our resolve not to let anything distract us from our pastoral and spiritual mission to guard and protect the Holy Places and to serve and support the Christian presence here. Nothing is more important than this. We are to be

vigilant for those who cause divisions among us and put obstacles in our way that are contrary to the Gospel (cf. Rom. 16:17). Let this be our special care so that we may always join our efforts and maintain our united front against those who wish to rend the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious fabric of our society.

In this blessed season of the Prince of Peace, we renew our appeal for peace and for a humanitarian ceasefire so that the innocent victims of the present conflict may receive the essential help and care that they so desperately need. And we encourage the authorities of our region and of the world to do all in their power to bring a swift end to this conflict, prevent any escalation, and engage in a process of dialogue that will lead to lasting and robust peace and security for all our peoples.

As we keep this holy season, Your Beatitude, we pray that the Light that shines from the Holy Grotto of Bethlehem will illumine the darkness of this present time, and enlighten the hearts and minds of all to seek peace and pursue it (Ps. 34:14).

*Christ is born!
Glorify him!*







SPEECHES OF HIS BEATITUDE TO THE FRANCISCAN CUSTODIA AND ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE FOR THE OCCASION OF CHRISTMAS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

January 9th marked the day of various brotherly Christmas greetings exchanges by the different church leaders in Jerusalem to our Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. During a separate visit, the brotherhood of the Franciscan Custodia, led by Custos of the Holy Land, Father Francesco Pattonton, conveyed Christmas greeting to our father and Patriarch of Jerusalem and our Orthodox Patriarchate, to whom His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III delivered the following speech:

Your Paternity, dear Father Francesco,

Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

Christ is born!

Glorify him!

We are pleased to welcome you to our Patriarchate in this season of light and hope, and we thank you for your kind and gracious greetings for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. Once again we are brought face to face with the great mystery of our salvation, and we sing at this time:

*In Bethlehem, in a manger of animals,
from a Virgin now is born a young Child
who is the pre-eternal God.*

O what a wonder is this!

(From Mattins of the Forefeast of the Nativity)

In this grave time, when our region is wracked by war, and where so many innocent victims are displaced and in daily danger, we cannot forget the great wonder of this feast and bear witness to the true spiritual meaning of Christmas. Even when the land of the Prince of Peace is torn by war and violence, the world looks to the Holy Land for reassurance that there is still the hope of a better future, that the human family may find the way to reconciliation, mutual respect and understanding, justice, and peace for all, both

here in our region, and around the world.

Once again we wish to take this opportunity of your visit to us to emphasise the importance of our ongoing co-operation in our common work and witness. Your commitment to your pastoral mission in your communities is a testimony to your care for the integrity and well-being of a strong and vital Christian presence here – which has been for some time now under terrible pressure, and which the present conflict threatens even further.

We are also grateful for your participation in the essential renovation work in which we are engaged in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and that is planned for the grotto of the Basilica of

the Nativity. While we are currently focussed on the efforts to bring aid and support to those in the greatest need in our communities, particularly in Gaza at the Church to the Holy Family and at the Monastery of Saint Porphyrios, still this shared attention to maintaining the Holy Sites as places of worship and as living witnesses to our sacred history is a vital part of our ongoing spiritual mission, especially in times of conflict. As Saint Paul encourages us, Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2).

This great feast, which Saint John Chrysostom calls the "metropolis," or "mother city," of feasts, in which we celebrate the mystery of the Incarnation of the Divine Logos, who comes from the heavenly city to share in the human city, is a reminder to us all of the urgency of true dialogue as the only reliable course to robust and enduring reconciliation and peace. Admittedly this is the difficult path, and yet it is the necessary one, and as the servants and guardians of the Holy Places we remain steadfast in this commitment, and determined to work with those who are pledged to this same effort. We cannot abandon our commitment to

dialogue, especially when the possibility of effective dialogue seems to be so elusive.

So we take this opportunity to repeat our call for peace and for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. The future for which we all long will not be born from violence and war, but from the steady, attentive work of mutual respect, reconciliation, and peace-building. This will mean a new spirit on all sides of the conflict, and a deeper understanding that the future of our region and our world depends on our acceptance of our mutual flourishing. For God is agathos and philanthropos. As we celebrate once again the feast when God makes his home among us, we are reminded that there is room in the Holy Land for all who call the Holy Land their home.

May the Prince of Peace encourage you and the members of your fraternity, and may all our peoples know the peace that he came to bring to us.

Christ is born!

Glorify him!



Soon afterwards, the Armenian Patriarchate representatives also joined the rest of the Churches in Jerusalem to convey Christmas greetings to His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, to whom His Beatitude delivered the following speech:

Your Beatitude, dear Archbishop Nourhan,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

Christ is born!

Glorify him!

We greet you warmly, Your Beatitude, and the members of your Brotherhood, as you celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of the Divine Logos in the Church of the Nativity. This is a time of deep joy, and we recall the words of the hymnographer:

O Bethlehem, receive the Mother of God:

for she has come to you to give birth to the Light that never sets.

Let everything that has breath praise the Maker of all.

(From Mattins of the Forefeast of the Nativity)

As we keep the Christmas feast of joy, hope, and light in this time of darkness in our region and in our world, we must not refrain from appropriate rejoicing. For the Light that the darkness can never overcome has come into the world (cf. Jn 1:5), and this great feast renews our faith and trust in the God who comes to share our humanity in all its fullness.

Our spiritual mission that has been entrusted to us by Divine providence is to remain focussed always on this message of hope, especially when hope seems elusive. There is no doubt that at this present time in human history the human family is facing some of its greatest challenges, and our region is no exception. For we are under particular pressure here in the Holy Land, where so many innocent victims suffer and where so many are displaced from their homes and their lands.

As we are fully aware, the Christian community is also confronted by the impact of the conflict, and there has never been a time when our shared commitment to our spiritual mission here has been more urgent.

Just as we are keeping the Christmas feast, which is the feast of God's solidarity with us, we wish to take this opportunity to express our solidarity as well with you and your community in the face of the pressures you are bearing. The situation that you face is not simply an issue for the Armenian community alone; indeed it is an issue for the whole Christian community. We recall the words of Saint Paul, If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it (1 Cor. 12:26). We are committed to remain united in our resolve to defend the integrity of the Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

We assure you, Your Beatitude, of our firm support in your endeavours to protect the patrimony of the Armenian patriarchate. As Saint Paul encourages us, we are to bear one another's burdens, and in this way...fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). We are deeply concerned at the ongoing harassment that the Armenian community is experiencing in the matter of the Cow's Garden, and we pray for a swift resolution to these problems and the restoration of normal life for the Armenian community.

On this occasion we would like to offer our congratulations for your newly ordained bishops, and we also wish to express once again our condolences at the recent passing away of the late Archbishop Aris, who was a faithful servant of the Armenian Church and of the Christian community of the Holy Land. May his memory be eternal.

In this difficult season for the world and for our region, we must renew our resolve not to let anything distract us from our pastoral and spiritual mission to guard and protect the

Holy Places and to serve and support the Christian presence here. Nothing is more important than this. We are to be vigilant for those who cause divisions among us and put obstacles in our way that are contrary to the Gospel (cf. Rom. 16:17). Let this be our special care so that we may always join our efforts and maintain our united front against those who wish to rend the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious fabric of our society.

In this blessed season of the Prince of Peace, we renew our appeal for peace and for a humanitarian ceasefire so that the innocent victims of the present conflict may receive the essential help and care that they so desperately need. And we encourage the authorities of our region and of the world to do all in their power to bring a swift end to this conflict, prevent any escalation, and engage in a process of dialogue that will lead to lasting and robust peace and security for all our peoples.

As we keep this holy season, Your Beatitude, we pray that the Light that shines from the Holy Grotto of Bethlehem will illumine the darkness of this present time, and enlighten the hearts and minds of all to seek peace and pursue it (Ps. 34:14).

Christ is born!

Glorify him!



SPEECH OF HIS BEATITUDE TO FELLOW CHURCH LEADERS FOR THE OCCASION OF CHRISTMAS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On January 9, 2024, following the Christmas Feast (according to the Julian Calendar) in Bethlehem, the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem exchanged greetings to our Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, where His Beatitude delivered the following speech;

Beloved Fellow Heads of the Churches,

Your Excellencies,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers,

Brothers and Sisters,

Christ is born!

Let us glorify him!

We welcome you warmly to our Patriarchate, and we thank you for your expressions of greeting as we keep the feast of the Incarnation of the Divine Logos. If our celebrations are restrained this year, our joy at the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ remains undiminished, and this is why the Church sings:

Heaven and earth are united today,

for Christ is born...

Therefore let us also give glory

and cry aloud to him:

Glory to God in the highest,

and on earth peace,

which your coming has bestowed on us, O Saviour.

(From Great Compline at Christmas)

Our gathering today is of special significance, for we are a witness together of the peace that our Lord Jesus Christ has brought to all humankind. Whatever the circumstances of our life, and especially at this time when our region is engulfed in conflict and so many innocent victims are in danger and displaced, we cannot waver from our resolve. For our mission has been throughout the ages to be a living martyrdom here in the Holy Land to the unique and great gift of the entrance of the Divine Logos into our human history. As the Lord says, for this I came into the world, to be a witness to the truth (Jn 18:37).

We give thanks to Almighty God that the Heads of the Churches and our respective communities are united in this resolve and in this diakonia. Our communities in the Holy Land look to us to provide help to those in the greatest need, and Christians and people of good will the world over

look to us for encouragement and hope. Our shared commitment and our shared witness are important ways in which we seek to embody encouragement and hope, for we are instructed by Saint Paul to remember before our God and Father our work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess 1:3).

This hope is not abstract or moral, but something concrete. Time and again we proclaim the hope that is brought to us by mystery of the Incarnation by our participation in the divine Eucharistic Body, which is continually renewed in the life of the Church for the salvation of the world, because the Church is the incarnate Body of our Lord Jesus Christ. As Saint Paul says, you are the body of Christ and individually members of it (1 Cor 12:27).

For this reason we remain steadfast in our calls for peace

and justice, for this is the message of Christmas. We appeal for a humanitarian ceasefire so that urgent aid may be brought to innocent victims of the conflict, and we repeat our concern at the ongoing unnecessary suffering of so many. We urge the authorities of the region and to the international community to do everything in their power to prevent this conflict from escalating, and we repeat our firm conviction that the solution to the challenges that we face in the Middle East is not in armed conflict, but in a renewed and robust process of disciplined dialogue that is directed to mutual understanding and respect, and focussed on the establishment of true reconciliation, justice, and peace. Only in this way will we be able to ensure the future of our multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious society that has such historic roots here.

May this season of light and hope be a season in which we renew our support of our common spiritual mission to proclaim the Gospel message of hope and salvation for all peoples. May nothing undermine this, and may no difficulty or challenge that we face undo the good work of our own mutual understanding. As our Lord assures us, where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them (Mt 18;20). It is in this spirit that we can afford no family disagreements or divisions in the face of the unprecedented challenges with which we are, and have been, confronted, for some time. For the presence of the Church in Jerusalem is the beacon of light that shines before everyone (cf. Mt 5:14). Our very future, and the future of the Christian presence in the Holy Land, is at stake, and nothing can stand in the way of the deepening of our common resolve to face this future together as those to whom Divine Providence has entrusted the pastoral oversight of our respective communities.

We wish to take the opportunity of this Christmas gathering to thank all those understand our mission and continue to support a vibrant and flourishing Christian presence in the

Holy Land. We are especially grateful to His Majesty King Abdullah of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for his steady leadership and his deep devotion as the Custodian of the Christian and Muslim Holy Places, as well as to His Excellency the President of the Palestinian State, Mr Mahmoud Abas.

And not least we wish to acknowledge the ongoing support of His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury and other religious leaders around the world who help to keep the plight of our people before the world's attention.

We pray that the peace and justice that is brought to us by the newly-born Son of God may prevail over against the forces of darkness, which attempt to deprive the world of the incarnate light of Christ.

Christ is born!

Let us glorify him!