

ADDRESS OF GREETING TO THE HONORABLE BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE U.S.A.

Bethlehem, 22 March 2013.

Mr. President,

The city of Bethlehem, the City of Peace, welcomes you today in this holy Church of the Nativity – the place where heaven and earth met, and where peace and reconciliation between God and humanity, as well as among human beings, took on our human flesh in Jesus Christ.

Here therefore we remember the words that announced to the shepherds:

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace, goodwill among all people!” (Luke 2:14).

To this City of Peace, where for generations Christians and Muslims have lived together as one people, we welcome you as a leader and as a messenger of peace and reconciliation. The people of our region long for peace and have invested their hope and trust in those who have the power to lead the world into a new age of peace for all. For *“blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”* (Mt. 5:9)

And so we look to you, Mr. President, as the leader of a great and noble nation that promotes the ideals of peace, reconciliation, justice and democratic principles among all peoples. It was here that the ideal of peace and reconciliation became a human being; and so it is fitting that from here you may gain strength and wisdom for the task ahead.

As the Patriarch of Jerusalem, on behalf of the Palestinian

community, made up of Christians and Muslims, we extend to you the assurance of our best wishes and encouragement. And we pray that the King of Peace and Justice, who was born in this very holy place, may grant to you and to the Government of the United States, perseverance and vision in your work of governing.

We also wish to acknowledge the efforts and the commitment of His Excellency, President Mahmoud Abbas, in the cause of peace and co-existence in our region, and the resolution of an independent future for the Palestinian people.

In remembrance of your visit, Mr. President, would you please accept these symbolic gifts with the blessings of the Holy Land. And we look forward to seeing you when we come to Washington.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem