

GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE'S PARTICIPATION TO A HUMANITARIAN VISIT

On Saturday the 5th of September, a delegation representing the head of churches made a humanitarian visit to the two families of Hanoun and Al-Gaoui in Shekh Jarah, the Arab neighborhood on the road to Mount Scopus, whose houses were confiscated by the settlers.

The delegation consisted of Rev. Fr. Filoumenos representing His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III and the Orthodox Patriarchate, His Eminence Bishop Mounieb Younan, representing the Lutheran Church, Rev. Fr. William Shomali representing the Latin patriarchate and Rrev. Fr. Michael Selerz coordinator of Head of Churches.

They offered to Hanoun and Al-Gaoui's families financial help.

Chief Secretary's Office

THE PRIMATE OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

On Monday 11th/24th of August 2009, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, received the Archbishop and Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada Most Rev. Fredrick James

Hiltz, who was escorted by the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem Right Rev. Suheil Dawani.

During the visit a discussion was held about the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate in the Holy Land up to Qatar, where the Patriarchate recently founded a new church. A discussion was also held on the existing religious coexistence in Jerusalem and that real ecumenism is a dialogue and community in love and truth, based on the life of the Church through its history. Further discussion took place on the Holy City of Jerusalem regarding it as the centre of the world, where pilgrims arrive, give praise to God and are transformed.

This work of spiritual completeness and salvation occurs through the Church, existent throughout the centuries in a state of spirituality, yet nevertheless with its physical heritage, its fortune in the sense of the Holy Places, convents, residences, charitable and educational institutions. An important amount of the Patriarchate's budget is disposed for its philanthropic and educational stewardship.

The Anglican Archbishop thanked His Beatitude for the welcome and audience, and referred to their meeting a year ago in the framework of the Lambeth Conference where His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III was invited as a guest of the Archbishop of Canterbury Most Reverend Dr. Rowan Williams.

Chief Secretary's Office

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THE 'COUNCIL OF THE RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS OF THE HOLY LAND' CONVENES IN JERUSALEM

His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III participated in the assembly of the 'Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land' that took place on August 5th, 2009, at the American Colony Hotel in East Jerusalem.

The 'Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land' was first formed in the year 2005. It was formed with the initiative of the U.S. State Department and with the agreement of representatives of the three religions of the Holy Land, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, to continue and complete the task of the Alexandria Interfaith Summit, convened in 2002 at Alexandria, namely the peace initiative of religions to contribute towards the solution of the Israeli – Palestinian issue.

The primary objectives of this council are:

1. To foster an environment of mutual respect between the followers of the three religions in the Holy Land, and the respect of the Holy Places sacred therein.
2. The avoidance of defamation, offence or derogatory representations to the other, and to respect the individual dignity and freedom of people.
3. The respect of the religious character of Jerusalem, and the possibility to secure open access to the city for the followers of the three religions and all people that visit it.

The members of this Council believe that the three religions are able to contribute to the peace and reconciliation and the fostering of a political climate of detente. Without a

solution to the religious problem of Jerusalem, it is not possible for a political solution to exist.

The primary theme of the present meeting concerned was of school text books for schools in Israel and the Palestinian Authority, entitled 'The Israeli Palestinian School Book Project'. The conference started with a brief welcoming address by the convener of the Council, Rev. Dr. Trond Bakkevitz, who underlined the importance of the school text books in the schools of Israel and Palestinian Authority for the rapprochement of the two peoples, the fostering of a climate of political trust, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

At this meeting the following leaders of the Christian Churches of the Holy Land took part: His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, His Beatitude Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem Fuad Twal, and former Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem His Beatitude Michelle Sabah, Canon Dr. Shehadeh Shehadeh on behalf of the Anglican Bishop Rev. Suheil Dawani, Lutheran Bishop Munib Younan and others. The representatives of Judaism were the Director General of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel Mr. Oded Wiener, Rabbi of Savion David Brodman, the Chief Rabbi of the city of Haifa Shear Yeshuv Cohen and the interfaith advisor to the Chief Rabbinate Rabbi David Rosen.

It was not possible for representatives of the Islamic community and the Palestinian Authority to attend due to the recently created political tension. Present, however, was Mr. Basri Saleh, Deputy Minister of Planning of the Palestinian Authority, representatives of the field of education from Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and also representatives of foreign diplomatic delegations.

After the opening address of the Secretary, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III addressed the participants at the meeting in the name of the Christian religious leaders as follows:

Remarks at the Planning Meeting

Of the Israeli-Palestinian School Book Project

Under the auspices of the Council of the Religious
Institutions

Of the Holy Land

At the American Colony Hotel

Jerusalem

5 August 2009

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

Your Excellencies,

Honourable Ministers,

Members of the Council,

Brothers and Sisters,

Dear Friends,

We greet you warmly, and we welcome you all to the Holy City of Jerusalem for this important planning meeting for the Israeli-Palestinian School Book Project. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate remains a dedicated member and firm supporter of the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land and we recognize the importance of this particular project.

The commitment of the Patriarchate to education is well known. We have a great deal of experience in the field of education

in our region and our schools are well known both for the quality of the education that they provide, as well as for the welcome that we give to study, regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation.

Education is, of course, one of the chief methods, by which we are able to fight prejudice and ignorance. No society can thrive without a strong educational system and education brings with it a deeper understanding of our world and equips our young people with the tools and skills that enable them to become citizens who are able to make a contribution to our common life.

Education is not simply utilitarian: learning is good for its own sake, and we all know the benefits that come from an education, that strives to broaden the mind and challenge the intellect. In the Christian tradition we have long understood the value of a broad education.

Ignorance is the main cause of distance and difficulty between our communities, and ignorance is one of the factors of life in our region that is the most important to address and correct. Whatever our personal beliefs and convictions, we must know about each other. Jewish students must know about the Christianity and Islam; Christians must know about Judaism and Islam, and Muslims must have a basic grasp of Judaism and Christianity. And they must know and begin to appreciate each other's histories in this region.

Jerusalem, in this case, and We mean the Old City, should be declared and turned into an inter-faith and multi-culture study centre.

In particular, we should ensure that the Old City of Jerusalem -which is a living community- remains for us a unique

opportunity for interfaith and multi-cultural study. Here in Jerusalem we can experience at first hand an interfaith and multi-cultural society living in co-existence.

The future of the Holy Land depends on the building of a society of genuine diversity, mutual respect and reconciliation. In this task education is key, and the Council can and must do all in its power to ensure that our schools and young people have the best trained teachers and the best resources possible, and to this end We are pleased to support the School Book Project and We look forward to seeing the fruits of its work.

Rabbi David Rosen hereby representing the Chief Rabbinate of Israel followed His Beatitude with another address, referring to the Alexandria Interfaith Summit, the forerunner of this Council, consisting of political and religious personalities of Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths, with their own initiative and purpose of contributing to the efforts of peace in the Middle East. He also mentioned the meeting of the religious leaders in Washington, prior to the Annapolis Summit. He thanked Rev. Dr. Trond Bakkevitz for his strength in mobilizing the initiative of peace and overcoming the disappointments of our local failures.

He also thanked the representatives of the Norwegian Government and the U.S.A for their efforts towards peace. He underlined the importance of the Council's mission to promote mutual respect between the three religions, individual human dignity and freedom, and the stance against insult and defamation of others. "These beginnings indeed constitute," he said 'the basis of a peaceful political solution and reconciliation'.

Mr. Louis Moreno, the representative of the American Embassy, continued. Mr. Moreno noted that beyond the importance of upholding the Road Map and beyond the importance of the

existence of two states, there is great importance in the avoidance of creating a climate of heated atmosphere and combating the undermining of one national entity by the other.

Successively Mr. Greg Markese emphasized the value of this Project for the preparation of the peaceful coexistence of the two peoples.

Rev. Dr. Trond Bakkevitz, in between speakers, also highlighted how important the churches, schools and the various educational organisations are in spreading the teaching about the human person as an image of God.

Following this dialogue, Chair Professor Race Wexler, a member of the Council and a representative of the U.S. State Department, underlined the importance of education for peaceful coexistence, and noted that this had been the inspiration of the 'Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land'. He analysed the methods of actualising this project through the gathering of information and acquiring knowledge through special teams, assisted by the education ministries of the countries involved in the initiative towards peace. At the end of the meeting, Rev. Dr. Trond Bakkevitz expressed his satisfaction of the level of the presentations and pointed out the absence of the Palestinian and Muslim presence. The responsibility for the appointment of these representatives lay with the Palestinian Authority.

During the lunch of the Representatives at the Council, a discussion took place regarding the drafting of a statement about the future of Jerusalem. The outline of the exchange of views was as follows:

'This matter, namely the future of Jerusalem, was discussed by some members of the Council in Oslo and Washington. All religions have a place in Jerusalem; all religions have a historic bond with Jerusalem. When referring to Jerusalem, we mean the Old City. The heart of the problem is essentially two

places of pilgrimage: the Temple of Solomon and the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron. At these places there is mutual distrust between followers of Judaism and Islam. The respect for the history and the confines of each religion, as in the case of Patriarch Sofronios and the Khalif Omar Hatamb, is possible to constitute the outset for the solution of the political problem. There is the view that the political problem creates the religious one, while there is the prevailing notion that the religious problem at these sacred places is also creating the political polarization. Through education is fostered a climate of religious tolerance and coexistence'.

An examination then took place of the scheduled planning of the activities for the 'Council of Religious Leaders of the Holy Land' in the year 2009 to 2010. Specifically this included prioritising Jerusalem; open access to the Holy Places, education, the political interaction of the Council towards the Israeli government, the Palestinian Authority and Non Governmental Organisations. Final concerns included the creation of a website for the Council, the appointment of new Islamic representation on the Council, and the determination of dates for the next two convocations of the Council; November 3rd, 2009 and April 22nd, 2010.

Chief Secretary's Office

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A PROTESTANT STUDENT TAKES

HIS RETREAT AT MAR SABBA CONVENT

'As 21st century war jets fly over the monastery of Mar Sabbas nestled in the cliff face of the Kidron Valley in the Judean wilderness little has been altered in the daily life of the monks here over the past 1500 years. I was given the distinct privilege to abide with them in almost every way for three days and three nights, for no Protestants are normally permitted to lodge or worship with them. The foundations of the original ascetic lifestyle remain in tact in this cradle of monasticism; no women, no electricity, no running water, no communication with the outside world; the same liturgy, icons and apophatic theology. Since Constantine made Christianity the official Roman religion in the 4th century the anchorities have been regarded by the church as "taking the place" of the martyrs, as they daily die to self, guarding their free will against falling prey to the passions and vices of the soul. Their aim is to be found in John 17:21, to be like Christ who is one in the Father, in the wilderness overcoming temptations with the wild beasts and the Spirit ministering to them. Their central idea is the pillar of Orthodoxy, a theosis, a deification of self, the transformation of man into the image of God. The monks preserve and spread the apostolic faith through worship, liturgy, monasticism, and missions.

As I arrived from Jerusalem on January 1, 2009 I was greeted at the heavily fortified entrance and given a brief tour of the complex by a Russian monk in broken English, viewing the tomb of the desert fathers Sabba and John of Damascus. St. Sabba founded the site in the late 5th century while living in a cave opposite the existing monastery when in a vision seeing a pillar of fire found a cave behind it oriented to the east which would become the main sanctuary, today it is called the

chapel of Saint Nicholas. The entire site is extraordinarily clean and well maintained with remains visible from the Byzantine period to today. The monks do not use standard Greenwich time but ancient Roman/Byzantine time as in Scripture (...in the 6th hour he was crucified...Luke 23:44...aka noon). The food served to me was to be eaten apart from the 30 monks because I am a Protestant. The food served was a hearty portion of cold stew consisting of no meat but potatoes and vegetables, with bread, salad, fruit and wine. Their daily life consists as follows. The day begins at 2:00 a.m. with a three hour service in the chapel of St. Nicholas. I was permitted to partake in the entire service save the sacraments. The large cave is shrouded in darkness being only lit by candles with 800 year old icons and the bones of desert martyrs decorating its walls. While at Mar Sabba I finished memorizing the book of Revelation and it was in this service that I was first able to tell the entire book to myself from heart. The monks are awoken one hour prior to the service by a loud bell ringing 33 times, then again moments before the service starts they are summoned by the sound of a hammer knocking on wood, reminding them of Noah calling the beasts into the ark to save them from doom. As the monks enter the ark of the church their procedure is to individually venerate various icons by bowing to them and kissing them as well as the 136 skulls of the martyrs. They believe the bones not only retain their story but the Holy Spirit. The service is conducted entirely in Greek with reading from the Septuagint and their liturgy, culminating with the sacraments. From 5:00 to 8:00 a.m. is a time of prayer and rest save for those who prepare the main and only meal of the day served at 9:00 a.m., save for the weekend when there are two meals served daily. From 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 pm is a time of work and study. From 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. is the evening vespers service which is a time of prayer, singing and reading that begins in the narthex of the other main chapel the Church of the Annunciation. The monks would not permit me to venerate the icons and during the service I first had to stand out of the chapel in the entrance

way, out of paradise, but on the second day I was kindly invited into the chapel with them. Following vespers there is a one hour break till the 30 minute evening prayer service starting at 5:00 p.m. which is followed by a time of devotions by the Abbot to his flock of which I was excluded. From 6:00 p.m. until 2:00 a.m. is a time of prayer, meditation and rest.

The three days and three nights I stayed with the monks was everything I imagined but nothing I expected, for seeing something is different than being told about it. The living conditions would be considered good for desert anchorites. The 110 rooms in the lavra are small 11 feet by 11 feet but warm and decorated. Each room has one bed, desk, and lamp with three blankets and a tub of well water to wash their hands and their feet. After the first day I felt very welcome by most the monks, especially the five who spoke some English and developed a real affinity with them. The monks were very curious about America and its new president and considered these days the birth pangs. I was scheduled to stay seven days but only stayed three, for I based my decision on the unwritten rules of hospitality, not wanting to wear out my welcome and the fact that I did not want to invade their high holy Christmas services. This was advantageous as they asked me to return to them and next time to bring some maps of the Holy Land'.

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Statement issued from the Chief Secretary's Office

VISIT OF THE POPE OF ROME BENEDICT XVI TO THE HOLY LAND

On the 2nd of December 2008 the Apostolic Delegate Msgr. Antonio Franco, the representative of the Pope to the Holy Land, visited His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophillos III and informed him of the intention of the Pope of Rome Benedict XVI to visit the Holy Land.

His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem replied that the Pope would be welcome to visit in accordance with the church order and the Status Quo.

Since then, the Committee for the Status Quo issues of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which consists of His Eminence Christodoulos Metropolitan of Eleftheroupoleos and Elder Dragoman, the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Aristarchos Archbishop of Constantina and the Superior of the Holy Sepulchre and Sacristan Reverend Archimandrite Isidoros, initiated cooperation with the Franciscan Brotherhood, Custodians of the Roman Catholic Church in the Holy Land and the Apostolic Delegate concerning the details of the Pope's visit to the Patriarchate and the Holy Places, based on the Status Quo developed through the centuries and further crystallized in the 19th century.

The Pilgrimage Committee constantly cooperated with the Israeli Police for the forthcoming visit of the Pope to the Patriarchate. As a guest of the State of Israel, tight safety measures were set for the protection of the Pope. The police repeatedly inspected and secured the grounds of the Patriarchate and especially the proposed areas of the Pope's visit, in order to prevent and avert any possible offensiveness.

Pope Benedict XVI was also an official guest of the Jordanian State. He arrived in Jordan, an integral part of the Holy Land, at Amman airport on Friday 8th of May 2009. He was received by the Jordanian Royal family, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, His Eminence Venedictos Metropolitan of Philadelphia, the Latin Patriarch Finad Twal and other officials. Pope Benedict XVI visited the "King Hussein" Mosque and laid the foundation rock of the University in the city of Madaba. The Pope also visited Byzantine Churches at Mount Nevo in Jordan. During the various visits in Jordan the Patriarchate was represented by His Eminence Dorotheos Archbishop of Avila, the Patriarchal representative in Amman His Eminence Venedictos Metropolitan of Philadelphia and Reverend Archimandrite Innokentios, the Patriarchal representative in Madaba and responsible for the Patriarchal Arab speaking schools.

In Israel, the Pope arrived at Ben Gurion Airport on Monday morning 11th of May 2009. Upon his arrival he was welcomed on behalf of the Israeli Government by the President of the State, Mr. Shimon Peres and the Prime Minister, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu. Present at the welcoming reception were Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church and leaders of the Christian Communities in the Holy Land. His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III was represented by His Eminence Christodoulos Metropolitan of Eleftheroupoleos. In his statements to the Israeli media the Pope spoke about peace between Islam and Judaism and referred to the Jewish Holocaust during the Second World War.

On the same day 11th of May 2009 at 16:00 an official reception for the Pope was held at the Presidential Palace by President Shimon Peres. His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III attended on the invitation of the President.

At 17:45 on Monday evening 11th of May 2009, the Pope visited

Yad Vashem in West Jerusalem, which is in memory of the six million Jews, victims of Hitler's murderous ideology. The Pope condemned this crime and all acts of anti-Semitism, and stated that it is his wish that this crime will never be repeated, not against the Jewish Nation or to humanity as a whole.

Later that day 11th of May 2009 at 18:30, in the Hall of Notre Dame Hotel, the pilgrim centre of the Roman Catholic Church by New Gate, a meeting was held between the Pope and the representatives of the Christian, Jewish and Islamic Communities in the Holy Land.

Present at the meeting were members of the Council of Religious Leaders in the Holy Land, Jewish, Christian and Muslim. This newly formed Council has as its objective the promotion of and contribution to a solution of the political crisis between Israel and the Palestinians. The members of this council, with His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III as its president, had held a meeting in October 2007 in the U.S.A prior to the meeting of political leaders in Annapolis. Coordinator of the Council is Mr. Trond Bakkevig from Sweden. At the latest meeting at the Hall of Notre Dame Hotel, the Patriarchate was represented by the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Aristarchos Archbishop of Constantina.

During the address, the Latin Patriarch Mr. Fouad Twal, Mr. Trond Bakkevig Coordinator of the Council of Religious Leaders in the Holy Land, the Pope and Sheikh Taisir Tamimi emphasized the role that the representatives of these respective religions can play in finding a peaceful solution to the problem between Israel and the Palestinians, a solution that will guarantee freedom, independence, security and prosperity to the two peoples, followers of the three religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

On Tuesday 12th of May 2009, the Pope visited the holy site of Muslims, the Dome of the Rock, where he was received by the

Mufti of Jerusalem, Sheikh Mohammed Hussein. He then proceeded in the same area, the Western Wall of Solomon's Temple, the most sacred site in Judaism.

At noon on the same day, the Latin Patriarch Mr. Fouad Twal gave a lunch in honour of the Pope, at the Latin Patriarchate. His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III and the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Aristarchos Archbishop of Constantina were invited and attended the lunch.

Later that day in the evening, Pope Benedict XVI performed a Liturgy in the Garden of Gethsemane, in the "Kidron Valley" between the temple of Solomon and the Mount of Olives.

On Wednesday morning, 13th of May 2009, the President of the Palestinian Authority Mr. Mahmoud Abas-Abou Mazen, held a reception ceremony for the Pope at the presidential offices of the Palestinian Authority in Bethlehem. His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III was invited to this reception and attended it accompanied by the Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem His Eminence Theophilaktos Archbishop of Jordan. After this, the Pope performed a Liturgy in the city square of Bethlehem in front of the Municipality and the courtyard of the Church of the Nativity. Present at the Liturgy was the Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem His Eminence Theophilaktos Archbishop of Jordan.

In the afternoon at about 15:30 that same day 13th of May 2009, the Pope visited the Church of the Nativity. The Pope entered the Holy Grotto, according to the Status Quo from the Latin Church of St. Catherine, and venerated, in the presence of our Patriarchal Representative and the Representative of the Armenians.

Later that day in the evening of May 14th the Pope visited the Palestinian refugee camp of Aida near Rachel's Tomb where, in

the presence of the President Abas-Abu Mazen, the Pope declared his support of the Palestinian people, acknowledging the recent suffering of the people in Gaza, and promising to help by all possible means to attain a just solution to the Palestinian problem.

On Thursday May 14th, the Pope visited and spent the day in the city of Nazareth.

On Friday May 15th the Pope Benedict XVI visited the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem accompanied by thirty six members of the Roman Catholic Church, according to the pre-arranged and regulated order. Amongst the members of his escort was Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Foreign Minister of the Vatican, the Cardinal Walter Casper, President of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, the Apostolic Delegate Msgr. Antonio Franco and the Custos of the Holy Land father Pirbattista Pizzaballa.

The visit took place at 9:15a.m, after preparations and security measures were carried out by the Israeli Police the previous night and in the morning prior to his arrival. At the entrance of the Patriarchate, the Pope was greeted by His Eminence Kyriakos Metropolitan of Nazareth, His Eminence Isichios Metropolitan of Kapitolias and the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Aristarchos Archbishop of Constantina. They escorted the Pope to the entrance of the Hall of the Throne, where he was welcomed by His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III who led him to sit on his right.

His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III addressed Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Benedict XVI replied with his own address.

(The transcripts of each address are reproduced at the end of

this chronicle).

After the addresses, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III presented a gift to the Pope, a beautiful icon of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was illuminated for the 2000 years celebration of Christianity and two 'dikirotrikira' candles for blessing of Patriarchs and Bishops.

The Pope responded by presenting a gift to His Beatitude, a precious Facsimile manuscript, an illustrated handcrafted Synaxarion of the months September to February which had been written for the Byzantine Emperor Vasilios II (976-1025). The 11th century original is kept in the Vatican Library known as Codex Vat. Graec., 1613.

Invited to this meeting were the representatives of the other Christian Communities in the Holy Land, the heads of the Israeli Police, the Directors of the Department of Christian Affairs of the Ministry of Religions of Israel, the President of the Local Administration of the Palestinian Authority Mr. Ziad Bandak, members of the Committee for Christian Affairs of the Palestinian Authority, the representatives of Diplomatic Delegations of Jerusalem, amongst them the Greek Consul General Mr. Sotirios Athanasiou, members of our Arab-speaking congregation and prominent members of the Jewish, Muslim and Christian Communities.

Soon after the addresses and greetings by the Christian Communities, the Pope continued his visit to the Church of Resurrection.

In the courtyard of the Church of Resurrection Pope Benedict XVI was received by His Eminence Isichios Metropolitan of Kapitolias, the members of the Status Quo Committee of our

Patriarchate, the Elder Dragoman His Eminence Christodoulos Metropolitan Eleftheroupoleos, the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Aristarchos Archbishop of Constantina, Reverend Archimandrite Isidoros the Sacristan and Superior of the Holy Church of Resurrection and the representatives of the Armenians and Franciscans.

As he entered, the Pope was received by the Custos of the Holy Land Rev. Fr Pierebattista Pizzaballa at the Stone of Anointing where he venerated and then performed Doxology at the Holy Sepulchre in the presence of the Patriarchate's representatives who previously received him in the courtyard of the Holy Sepulchre.

The Pope then worshipped at the Shrine of the Franciscans "Noli me tangere" otherwise known as the Chapel of Saint Maria Magdalena and then ascended the North stairs to the Holy Calvary (Golgotha), where he was received by the Greek Orthodox monk of the Shrine, before praying and lighting a candle.

After the worship at the Holy Sepulchre, Pope Benedict XVI visited the Armenian Patriarchate and the Holy Cenacle on Mount Zion. Finally he travelled to the city of Tel-Aviv, to Ben Gurion airport, where the official farewell ceremony took place prior to his departure for Rome.

Chief Secretary's Office

Text of Pope Benedict's Speech During Meeting with

Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with profound gratitude and joy that I make this visit to the Greek Orthodox

Patriarchate of Jerusalem; a moment to which I have much looked forward.

I thank His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilus III for his kind words of fraternal greeting, which I warmly reciprocate. I also express to all of you my heartfelt gratitude for providing me with this opportunity to meet once again the many leaders of Churches and ecclesial communities present.

This morning I am mindful of the historic meetings that have taken place here in Jerusalem between my predecessor Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I, and also between Pope John Paul II and His Beatitude Patriarch Diodoros.

These encounters, including my visit today, are of great symbolic significance.

They recall that the light of East (cf. Is 60:1; Rev 21:10) has illumined the entire world from the very moment when a "rising sun" came to visit us (Lk 1:78) and they remind us too that from here the Gospel was preached to all nations.

Standing in this hallowed place, alongside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which marks the site where our crucified Lord rose from the dead for all humanity, and near the cenacle, where on the day of Pentecost "they were all together in one place" (Acts 2:1), who could not feel impelled to bring the fullness of goodwill, sound scholarship and spiritual desire to our ecumenical endeavors? I pray that our gathering today will give new impetus to the work of the theological dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches, adding to the recent fruits of study documents and others joint initiatives.

Of particular joy for our Churches has been the participation

of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, His Holiness Bartholomew I, at the recent Synod of Bishops in Rome dedicated to the theme: *The World of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*. The warm welcome he received and his moving intervention were sincere expressions of the deep spiritual joy that arises from the extent to which communion is already present between our Churches. Such ecumenical experience bears clear witness to the link between the unity of the Church and her mission. Extending his arms on the Cross, Jesus revealed the fullness of his desire to draw all people to himself, uniting them together as one (cf. Jn 12:32). Breathing his Spirit upon us he revealed his power to enable us to participate in his mission of reconciliation (cf. Jn 19:30; 20:22-23). In that breath, through the redemption that unites, stands our mission! Little wonder, then, that it is precisely in our burning desire to bring Christ to others, to make known his message of reconciliation (cf. 2 Cor 5:19), that we experience the shame of our division. Yet, sent out into the world (cf. Jn 20:21), empowered by the unifying force of the Holy Spirit (ibid. v. 22), proclaiming the reconciliation that draws all to believe that Jesus is the Son of God (ibid. v.31), we shall find the strength to redouble our efforts to perfect our communion, to make it complete, to bear united witness to the love of the Father who sends the Son so that the world may know his love for us (cf. Jn 17:23). Some two thousand years ago, along these same streets, a group of Greeks put this request to Phillip: "Sir, we should like to see Jesus" (Jn 12:21). It is a request made again of us today, here in Jerusalem, in the Holy Land, in the region and throughout the world. How do we respond? Is our response heard? Saint Paul alerts us to the gravity of our response: our mission to teach and preach. He says: "faith comes from hearing, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (Rm 10:17). It is imperative therefore that Christian leaders and their communities bear vibrant testimony to what our faith proclaims: the eternal Word, who entered space and time in this land, Jesus of Nazareth, who walked these streets through

his words and actions calls people of every age to his life of truth and love.

Dear friends, while encouraging you to proclaim joyfully the Risen Lord, I wish also to recognize the work to this end of the Heads of Christian communities, who meet together regularly in this city. It seems to me that the greatest service the Christians of Jerusalem can offer their fellow citizens is the upbringing and education of a further generation of well-formed and committed Christians, earnest in their desire to contribute generously to the religious and civic life of this unique and holy city. The fundamental priority of every Christian leader is the nurturing of the faith of the individuals and families entrusted to his pastoral care.

This common pastoral concern will ensure that your regular meetings are marked by the wisdom and fraternal charity necessary to support one another and to engage with both the joys and the particular difficulties which mark the lives of your People. I pray that the aspirations of the Christians of Jerusalem will be understood as being concordant with the aspirations of all its inhabitants, whatever

their religion: a life of religious freedom and peaceful coexistence and – for young people in particular -unimpeded access to education and employment, the prospect of suitable housing and family residency, and the chance to benefit from and contribute to economic stability.

Your Beatitude, I thank you again for your kindness in inviting me here, together with the other guests. Upon each of you and the communities you represent, I invoke an abundance of God's blessings of fortitude and wisdom! May you all be strengthened by the hope of Christ which does not disappoint!

Speech of Welcome

To His Holiness Benedict XVI

Pope of Rome.

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Friday, 15th, May, 2009

Your Holiness Pope Benedict XVI,

Christ is risen!

We greet you warmly in the name of the risen Lord in this Holy City which witnessed the passion, death and resurrection of Our Lord, and we welcome you on this, the first visit to the Holy Land of your pontificate. We remember well the visit of your late and beloved predecessor, Pope John Paul II, in the year 2000, and the deep and positive effect that his visit had for reconciliation and peace in our region.

All who come to the Holy Land – from the greatest to the humblest ordinary people – come as pilgrims. In Latin the word for pilgrim is peregrinus. At its root, peregrinus is someone who comes from another country, a traveler; and from the earlier days of the life of the Church after Constantine, faithful people have traveled to Shrines and Holy Places both in the Holy Land and throughout Europe.

And in Greek the word for pilgrim is proskynitis. In this word we encounter the concept of the pilgrim as “one who worships.” Just as most pilgrims travel, so too in the object of every pilgrim’s journey to worship at the shrine at the destination.

You come here, Your Holiness, as one who, like so many millions of others down the ages, embodies both these understandings of pilgrimage: you have come a long way, and you have come to worship at the Holy Places. May your pilgrimage be an example to all those others who long to come

to the places where sacred history has been made flesh, and where human beings have experienced God in the words of the prophets and in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jerusalem is the spiritual "mother of all the Churches." Here on the Day of Pentecost, the Church was revealed, and from that day to this, for 2000 years, the Church of Jerusalem has been a witness of the life, death, and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

We who seek to be faithful to the vocation of Jerusalem as the spiritual mother of all the Churches cherish our ecumenical partnerships and relationships, and we pray daily for the "union of all." **"Υπέρ τῆς τῶν πάντων ἐνώσεως."** The ecumenical journey is a journey of the healing of memories of the past as much as it is the recovery of a common life of faith and witness for the present and the future. May God give us the grace always to take to heart the difficulty we are in because of our unhappy divisions, and the resolve to do all that we can to overcome all that still divides us.

We continue to witness by maintaining the Holy Places which are dear and sacred to Jew, Christian and Moslem alike. As for the Christian community in our broader region and in the Holy Land in particular, the Holy Places have been the bond between the Church and this Land. The ministry of those to whom the Holy Places have been entrusted by Divine providence is to ensure that all have free access to them, so that the power of our sacred history may transform the lives of the faithful into discovering our common humanity and our mission for the restoration of all – as St. Paul says, **"ἀποκατάλλαξαι τὰ πάντα εἰς Αὐτόν"**. (Col.1,20).

The Pascal spirit is a reminder to us of the triumph of love over hate, of life over death, of justice over iniquity, of peace

over conflict, of light over darkness. The Church continues to

bear witness to this Incarnate love, who during his earthly ministry, commanded us not simply to love our neighbour as ourselves, but also to love our enemies and those who hate us.

We believe that the peaceful co-existence of Jew, Christian, and Moslem in the Holy land is essential to the fundamental integrity of the region. We have lived here together for generations; and so it must be into the future. We continue to be for the Christian population of the Holy Land. Our numbers are decreasing in relation to the rest of the population, and we are committed to the improvement of opportunities for education, employment and family life that enable all those who call the Holy Land their home to be able to live full and happy lives.

Jerusalem is unique. Here Jew, Christian and Moslem constitute a model of unity and diversity that gives expression to the inter-religious and multi-cultural environment of our contemporary life and the challenges that the world faces.

Our task is to extend and deepen the moral task of mutual respect, reconciliation, and lasting peace in the Holy Land. In this great work, Christians from every confession are called to join forces. Let our life together model the words of the psalmist, who said "steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other." (Ps.84(85),10).

In this great task, we are all summoned to move dynamic dialogue- a dialogue between our Churches, as well dialogue between Christians and the believer of our faiths. Let us never forget that the unity of faith to which we Christians are summoned is not an end in itself, but a means by which we witness to the unity of humankind.

Your Holiness, we know that you have come to the Holy Land as a pilgrim, but you are welcome also by the people here as a messenger of peace and reconciliation. At the same time, as

Patriarch of Jerusalem, we greet you with the words of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, who exhorts us at every Divine Liturgy to "love one another, that with one mind we may confess Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the consubstantial and undivided trinity."

Your Holiness, on behalf of all the representatives of the Churches and the communities of faith gathered here today, we thank you for your visit.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

God bless your pilgrimage.

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THE PRISON AUTHORITY OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL GRANTED A CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION TO PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

Your Beatitude,

Bless us! This letter is to report and explain to You, for which reason Your Beatitude has been presented with a

certificate of appreciation from the Prison Authority of the State of Israel.

We, Prothiereus Romanos Raduan, Hieromonk Seraphim Goldberg and Alexander Frel, as a group, visit Orthodox Christian prisoners in places of confinement throughout Israel on a regular basis (about once a month). This work was started in 2003 by His Eminence Timothy, Metropolitan of Vostra, and since then we have been visiting a total amount of about 40 prisoners in a dozen different prisons located in the Center (Ramla and the Tel Aviv area), the North (Tiberias, Afula and Haifa areas), and the South (Beersheva).

Our visits are carried out separately from other private visits and consist of prayer, reading the Holy Scripture, discussion, confession and, since January 2005, the Divine Liturgy twice a year, once at Christmas time and the second at Easter in one of the prisons, Ayalon in Ramla, where we have about 20 Orthodox Christian prisoners. We also performed the Divine Liturgy once in Tselmon, a prison near Tiberias. With the authorization of the prison authorities we performed the holy sacrament of baptism upon a Russian-speaking Israeli prisoner, who was registered as a Christian, but who was not baptized, and the holy sacrament of marriage upon an Israeli Arab prisoner. Most of the Orthodox Christian prisoners, whom we visit, are Russian-speaking Israelis, but we do have some Israeli Arabs, a Moldovan and a Greek.

We began this work in 2003 upon the invitation of the prisoners themselves, who found us through some Latin nuns. Prisoners started calling, asking us to come and we applied for and received a special permission from the Prison Security through the Prison Rabbinate. We have to renew the permission every six months. We have maintained a close contact with the prisoners since that time both through our visits and by telephone. We bring the prisoners agiasma, antidoron, Orthodox Christian spiritual books, icons, crosses, candles and incense. We also maintain contact with the 5 of our prisoners,

who have finished their sentences and are now free, as well as with relatives of prisoners.

We thank our All-Merciful Lord Jesus Christ for this blessing, and we pray that He may allow us to continue this work for the salvation of His creation and for His glory.

Attached herewith please find a report on the meeting, which was held at the Prison Administration in Ramla by the Chief Rabbi of Prisons in Israel, Yakutiel Yehuda Wizner, on February 16, 2009, during which we were presented with the above-mentioned certificate.

Soliciting Your Beatitude's prayers and blessings,

Prothiereus Romanos Raduan

Hieromonk Seraphim Goldberg

Alexander Frel

Jerusalem

February 18, 2009

Cc: T.E. Aristarchos, Archbishop of Constantina, Chief Secretary of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem & Theofylaktos, Archbishop of Jordan.

Report on meeting at Prison Administration in Ramla on February 16, 2009

On February 16, 2009, we, Prothiereus Romanos Raduan, Hieromonk Seraphim Goldberg and Alexander Frel, as a group

visiting Orthodox Christian prisoners in places of confinement in the State of Israel, attended a meeting for Christian volunteers held by the Rabbinate of State Prisons at the headquarters of the Prison Administration in Ramla. The goal of the meeting was not announced ahead of time. Despite the fact that there was no formal invitation, the meeting itself was formal and we were asked from which organization we come. Our response was that we come from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The meeting was called: **“Evaluation and Recognition of the Work of Christian Volunteers”**

Presiding over the meeting: **Chief Rabbi Yakutiel Yehuda Wizner, Head of the Prison Rabbinate,**

Present at the meeting: **Deputy Chief Rabbis Shlomi Cohen & Ofer Elmehiah, Chief Rabbi of Central Prisons Salman, Lt. Col. Ian Domnitz, Chief of International Relations.**

Prothiereus Romanos Raduan, Hieromonk Seraphim Goldberg & Alexander Frel (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem).

Spanish & English-speaking clergy & nuns (6 representatives from the Latin Patriarchate), who visit Latin prisoners.

Agnes Shehadeh, director of the “House of Mercy”, a Uniate organization, which actively visits prisoners regardless of their faith and their families and provides services to ex-prisoners. With her were a Uniate priest, a Maronite priest & 4 more representatives.

Anis Barghoun & 5 more representatives of the “House of Light”, a Protestant organization, which actively visits prisoners and their families and offers them gifts.

Retired Brig. General Zvi Givati from "Christian friends of Israel" with a Romanian Protestant.

Chief Rabbi Wizner opened the meeting in Hebrew with a comment on the strength of repentance and the rehabilitation of prisoners through religion, a theme he felt all of us as religious people could associate with. He mentioned that his goal is to strengthen the activities of Christian organizations in Israeli prisons. He said that there are now 700 Christian prisoners in Israel. He informed us that he has just promoted 3 new chief rabbis for the northern, central and southern prisons, asking us to arrange our meeting through them. (In the past we arranged for our meetings through the rabbi of each prison). His words were translated into English by Lt. Col. Ian Domnitz, Chief of International Relations.

Chief Rabbi Wizner introduced his colleagues and gave a summary of what the meeting was going to be about: thanking us, presenting us with certificates and a debate on our activities. He then asked us to introduce ourselves. We did and all of us thanked him for the invitation and some spoke briefly about their activities and the problems that we encounter during our visits (delays, refusal to bring food to the prisoners, etc). Chief Rabbi Wizner said that the rabbis encounter similar difficulties.

Following the introductions, Chief Rabbi Wizner presented 4 organizations with a certificate of recognition, underlining its activities. Only the "Christian Friends of Israel" were not rewarded. The meeting and the presentation of certificates was extensively covered by a photographer.

Last of all, Chief Rabbi Wizner asked us to synchronize our efforts and announced the forming of a steering committee after Passover. When asked for more precise information, he

said that we would be informed after Passover.

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