

HIERARCHS OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE VISIT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday afternoon, January 22/ February 3, 2019, two Hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate with a group of pilgrims visited the Patriarchate, and were received by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. His Beatitude spoke to them on the spiritual help they may draw from their pilgrimage in the Holy Land and the Patriarchate.

From Secretariat-General

THE MOST REVEREND METROPOLITAN OF AUSTRO- HUNGARY VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

On Monday afternoon, January 22/ February 3, 2019, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Arsenios of Austro-Hungary of the Ecumenical Patriarchate visited the Patriarchate, escorted by his Associate Reverend Bishop Paisios of Apameia and a group of 50 pilgrims. His visit was a continuation of his long-term tradition of an annual pilgrimage in the Holy Land. His Eminence was warmly received by His Beatitude our Father and

Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, Who blessed the pilgrims and spoke to them in Fatherly spiritual words.

From Secretariat-General

THE CUTTING OF THE NEW YEAR CAKE AT THE GREEK CLUB OF JERUSALEM

On Saturday evening, January 20/ February 2, 2019, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos cut the New Year Cake of the Greek Community of Jerusalem at the modest ceremony which was organized at the Greek Club in West Jerusalem near the Greek Consulate.

The ceremony was honoured by the presence of the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos, the Consul Mrs. Katherine Tzima, the representative of the Cypriot Embassy in Tel-Aviv Mrs. Luiza Varakla, Doctor Demetrios Karousis and Greek expatriates.

After the troparion of St. Basil, His Beatitude wished a Happy New Year, then He cut and distributed the pieces of the Cake to all.

The President of the Community Mr. Anastasios Damianos thanked His Beatitude, saying that the ceremony of the cutting of the cake takes place on this day of the commemoration of St. Euthymios, during which the Greek Community honours in gratitude its benefactor the Hagiotaphite Euthymios, former Sacristan of the Holy Sepulchre, to whom they owe not only the

Club but also its existence.

From Secretariat-General

THE CUTTING OF THE NEW YEAR CAKE AT THE PATRIARCHAL SCHOOL

On Wednesday afternoon, January 3/16, 2019, there was the cutting of the New Year Cake at the Patriarchal School of Priests in Zion.

The ceremony was honoured by the presence of H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, who was escorted by Geronda Secretary-General Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina and other Hagiotaphite Fathers, along with the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Christos Sophianopoulos.

The ceremony included the apolytikion of the feast of St. Basil the Great and Christmas songs by the students under the lead of the choir leader of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre Mr. Constantinos Spyropoulos.

Before the end of the ceremony, His Beatitude cut the cake, wishing "A good and happy New Year 2019" and distributed the presents to the novices of the School.

From Secretariat-General

THE VISITS AT THE PATRIARCHATE ON THE OCCASION OF CHRISTMAS

On Wednesday morning, December 27, 2018/ January 9, 2019, the leaders of the Christian Churches of Jerusalem visited the Patriarchate on the occasion of Christmas.

At 9.15 a.m. the Franciscan Custody visited the Patriarchate under its Abbot, Fr. Francesco Patton.

H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Teophilos addressed the Custody as follows;

“Your Paternity, dear Father Francesco,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

We rejoice with you, dear Father Francesco, and we thank you warmly for your greetings for the feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Logos. As we sing in our Liturgy

Today the Virgin gives birth to Him who is above all being, and earth offers a cave to him whom no one can approach. Angels with shepherds give glory, and Magi journey with a star. For unto us is born a young child, the pre-eternal God.

(Kontakion of the Feast)

It is right that we pause for a moment together to recognise the extraordinary mystery of the Incarnation, when the Creator of all became a part of his own creation. And God did not become man for his own sake or benefit, but out of love for us, to restore humanity to our original vocation.

This great mystery of the meeting of heaven and earth is not simply a theological ideal; it is an event in our sacred history that happened here in this land, the land of the divine-human encounter. As Saint Athanasius the Great has said, "God became man, so that man might become divine".

And so we hold in special reverence the Church of the Nativity, where over the last few days both our communities have celebrated this great feast. Like all the Holy Places, the Church of the Nativity has been entrusted to us by Divine Providence to guard and sustain, and we give thanks for our fraternal partnership that enables us to pay attention to the restoration of the Grotto.

It is of course, fundamental that the Church of the Nativity remains a place of worship, prayer, and pilgrimage that is open to all freely and without distinction. The Holy Places are not museums or national monuments, but "springs of [spiritual] water gushing up to eternal life (cf. John 4:14).

Our brotherly co-operation has enabled us also during this last year to provide a united front against proposed legislation that would impinge severely on our rights and freedom with respect to our properties. We cannot rest in our vigilance against those radical elements in the society that seek to change the fundamental multi-cultural, multi-ethnic,

multi-religious identity of the Holy Land, and who are undermining the Christian character of this Holy City as well. Our continuing steadfastness together is our proper defence, and it is a sign of hope and encouragement to all those who look to the Holy Land in hope during this holy season.

We take this opportunity to thank you, dear Father Francesco, and your community, for your ongoing solidarity, along with the other Heads of Churches, and we re-commit ourselves to doing all that may be necessary to ensure that the Integrity of the Holy Places and our beloved Holy Land is maintained and respected by all.

MAY Christ our God, who by His Incarnation has gathered into unity all things in heaven and on earth, through the intercession of the Mother of God, the Theotokos, bless you, your brotherhood, and all the members of your communities, and MAY we wish you a happy and peaceful New Year.

Thank you”.

At 10.00 a.m. there was the visit of all the other Communities, of the Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem His Beatitude Pierre Battista Pizzaballa, the Church of the Copts, the Syrians, the Anglicans, the Lutherans and others.

His Beatitude addressed them as follows;

“Beloved Fellow Heads of the Churches,

Your Excellences,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers,

We welcome you all to our Patriarchate as we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we thank

you warmly for the greetings that you have expressed to us. This is a joyous time, in which our welcoming of each other is a sign of our welcoming of the Good News of the Incarnate Logos. As we sing during the Royal Hours in preparation for the Christmas Feast, let us listen to Saint Sophronios, Patriarch of Jerusalem;

Make ready, O Bethlehem,

let the manger be prepared,

let the cave show its welcome.

The truth has come,

the shadow has passed away.

(The Royal Hours, Tone 8, by Patriarch Sophronios)

The divine-human encounter in the flesh lies at the heart of our sacred history in this land. Here we Christians have lived and built communities from the very beginning, cherishing and guarding with our very lives the Holy Places, that is a living *martyria* by God's salvific acts.

The integrity of the Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, along with the stability and vitality of the Christian presence here, are at the heart of our physical presence and spiritual mission. We believe firmly that we have the capacity to enable Christians to remain in this region, and our Churches have long experience in building initiatives that serve this purpose and goal.

During this past year, we have emphasized all this on many occasions, and we wish to express our gratitude to all of you for your solidarity in the face of unjust incursions and threats against our legitimate rights and freedoms as Christian communities here. For the moment we have fended off proposed legislation that would intrude unjustly on our legitimate rights and freedom with respect to our properties,

and we continue to ensure that the Old City, and more specifically the Christian Quarter, maintains its historical Christian character. Our united efforts have up to the present enabled us to protect ourselves against those radical elements in our society that seek to weaken and break down the true multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious nature of this Holy City and our region. We realise that this is a constant threat against which there must be constant vigilance.

Please allow us to take this opportunity to express our gratitude once again to His Grace Archbishop Suheil for all that he has done to enable us to work with His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, who has given our cause invaluable help and support. We cannot but mention the support the we have received from His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales in his recent gathering in London of Church Leaders from stricken areas of our beloved Middle East. We also thank His Excellency Archbishop Pizzaballa for facilitating and supporting our ongoing and fruitful relationship with the Holy See. It is just such international support as this, from Church leaders as well as governmental authorities, that has contributed so much to our success so far. We must not allow our alliances to be undermined in any way.

In support of this united front, please allow us to announce to you that we have encouraged the establishment of the International Community of the Holy Sepulchre, with a base in London. This Trust exists to benefit the Christian presence in the Middle East in general and in the Holy Land in particular, and it is an intentionally ecumenical and international organization. The concept of ICoHS, as it is popularly called, has flowed directly out of the work that we have been doing around the world to keep the situation of the Christian community here before the world community. We invite your participation and support in this venture. We have come to see that we have many supporters around the world who care deeply

about the Holy Land, and who are prepared to act on our behalf. ICoHS is one way to be effective in this work.

Finally, let us acknowledge with gratitude His Majesty, King Abdullah II, who hosted the gathering of the Heads of Churches and Christian Communities in Amman last month in celebration of Christmas, and which took place in the presence of His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas.

At this season, when we welcome so many pilgrims who come longing for the spiritual refreshment of the Holy Places, and who long for the coming of our Lord into the cave of their hearts, MAY we who live and minister here also make ready our minds and souls, so that the incarnate Logos by the intercession of the Mother of God, the Theotokos, MAY shine in us and strengthen us to carry on the mission that the Divine Providence has entrusted to us.

MAY God bless you and your communities during this blessed Christmas season, and MAY God bless all the peoples of our beloved Holy Land. We wish you all a happy and peaceful New Year.

Thank you”.

Near noon the Apostolic Delegate visited the Patriarchate, as the representative of the Vatican in Jerusalem.

Likewise, the Most Reverend Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella with an entourage returned the visit to the Copts, the Syrians and the Ethiopians.

From Secretariat-General

THE VISITS OF THE PATRIARCHATE ON THE FEAST OF CHRISTMAS OF THE WESTERN CHURCHES

On Friday December /, the customary visits of the Patriarchate on the occasion of Christmas Feast took place at the Fraternity of the Franciscan Custody in the Holy Land at first, and then at the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem.

Our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos who was escorted by Hagiotaphite Fathers, addressed the Franciscans as follows;

“Your Paternity, dear Father Francesco,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Respective Fraternities,

Beloved in Christ,

We greet you, dear Father Francesco, and your community, with the joy of this holy season as you celebrated the feast of the Nativity. At this time, when the eyes of the world are directed to the Holy Land, we remember these words from the Orthodox services;

O Joseph, proclaim the wonders to David,

the ancestor of God. You have seen a Virgin

great with child; you have given glory with

the shepherds; you have worshipped with

the Magi; and you have been instructed through an angel.

Entreat Christ our God to save our souls.

(Dismissal Hymn, Vespers after the Nativity of Christ, Second
Tone)

By Divine Providence, Saint Joseph was given the responsibility of guarding and protecting the Mother of God and the new-born Saviour Jesus Christ, and so he is an example to us in our own day, to whom the same Divine Providence has entrusted the guarding and protecting of the Holy Places, as well as the shepherding of the Christian communities of the Holy Land. May Saint Joseph strengthen us for this mission by his intercession.

The responsibility of guarding and protecting the Holy Places as well as of serving the Christian communities rests heavily upon us especially when the Christian communities of the Middle East in general and our beloved Holy Land is particular continue to pass through difficult times. This has been a turbulent year, with many problems and challenges. But by the grace of God we have shown a united front, which has enabled us to defend our rights, privileges, and autonomy.

As you yourself have written, "Christmas symbolises unity, coexistence, new beginnings and hope." Our unity of purpose is essential to ensuring the special character of the Holy City of Jerusalem and the Holy Land as the home of the Jews, Christians and Muslims, and as you have so rightly said, "in the Holy Land it is fitting that there should continue to be coexistence between Christians, Muslims, and Jews.' This is the "message of peace and brotherhood between all religions and all peoples.'

The Churches play an essential role in maintaining this spirit of coexistence. Our duty as Christians and as monastics is to ensure the ongoing nature of the Holy Sites as places of worship and spiritual refreshment not just for Christians, but

also for peoples of all faiths who come on pilgrimage. We know the importance of this mission in the ever-increasing number of pilgrims who visit the Holy Places.

Nor can we underestimate our role in the establishment of true peace and reconciliation. The feast of the Nativity is the feast of peace and reconciliation par excellence, when the Prince of Peace came in the flesh to reconcile humanity with God, and human beings with each other. As Saint Paul has written, he was born in human form (Phil. 2:7).

This is the hope of this Christmas season, and this is our commitment.

As we celebrate this feast with you, dear Father Francesco, we take this opportunity to give thanks again for the productive co-operation between our two Brotherhoods in the ongoing restoration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Grotto of the Church of the Nativity. This co-operation is unprecedented in our shared history, and it is a real sign of the reconciliation that we are called to preach and to live.

May God bless you, Your Paternity, your Brotherhood, and all the Communities entrusted to your pastoral care. We wish you a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Thank you”.

And at the Latin Patriarchate as follows;

“Your Excellency, dear Archbishop Pizzaballa,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers,

Beloved in Christ,

As you keep this Christmas feast, we greet you with the joy of

the angels who proclaimed, "Glory be to God on high, and peace, goodwill among all people". We pray that you may know the pace of this holy season and draw strength and illumination from the Incarnate Logos, who is "the Dayspring from the east, who has visited us from on high", in whom "we who were in darkness and shadow have found the truth" (Exapostilarion from Matins of the Nativity).

As you know well, Your Excellency, this has been a year of many challenges, both locally and internationally.

At home we have had to face the ongoing pressure on our rights, privileges, and autonomy as Churches – a pressure that continues to demand our united opposition for the sake of preserving not only the Status Quo, but also the true character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land as a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious society in which a vital, vibrant, living Christian presence is essential.

On an international level, there has been more migration of refugees within the Middle East and abroad, and our region continues to wrestle with the humanitarian crisis of so many displaced and homeless persons. In this regard we cannot forget the plight of our Lord Himself, who as an infant was displaced from his own home by the political unrest of His time.

We are deeply encouraged by the support we have received from Church and governmental leaders around the world, and we have shown to the world our own unity of purpose in many ways. In particular we have recently shown our common witness at the Christmas Festival in Jordan, hosted by His Majesty King Abdullah and His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas.

It is essential to our common mission here to protect the Christian community of the Middle East and to do all in our power to encourage and help them to remain in their ancestral homes. Our ancient, native Christian communities must not just

survive the present pressures and difficulties; they must thrive and prosper if this region is to maintain its historic and unique identity as the home of the three Abrahamic traditions.

We recognize, dear Archbishop Pizzaballa, your pastoral zeal and your commitment to the well-being of this Holy City and our beloved Holy Land. Your years of selfless service are ample evidence of your love of the Holy Land and all our peoples. Our deepening relationship of co-operation over the years is yet another sign of hope both for those who call the Holy Land their home, as well as for those who call Jerusalem as their spiritual home and who come here in thousands every month as pilgrims.

Here is our common witness to the world. May we share together the rejoicing of the whole of creation at the birth of Christ, as we sing;

Make glad, O ye righteous;

greatly rejoice, O ye heavens;

ye mountains dance for joy. Christ is born...

Angels sing praises, saying,

“O Lord past our understanding,

Glory to you.”

(Katavasie from Matins of the Feast of the Nativity)

May God bless you, Your Excellency, along with your bishops, clergy, and people, and may the Incarnate Logos illumine all our hearts and fill us with a peaceful, reconciling Spirit.

We wish you a happy Christmas and a New Year of peace and joy.

Thank you.

Afterward, His Beatitude, escorted by Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina visited the Apostolic Delegate representative of the Vatican in the Holy Land and the Anglican Church in Jerusalem under the Bishop Most Reverend Suheil Dawani.

From Secretariat-General

THE ADDRESS OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM TO THE PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL ON THE OCCASION OF THE NEW YEAR 2019

On Thursday, December 14/27, 2018, the official Meeting of the Heads of the Churches of Jerusalem took place at the Presidential Residence of Israel, with the President of the State of Israel, on the occasion of the New Year.

In this meeting, the President of the State of Israel, Mr. Reuven Rivlin, escorted by the Minister of Internal Affairs of Israel, Mr. Arié Machlouf Deri, addressed the Heads of Churches and their escorts, wishing them health, peaceful the New Year 2019 and prosperity, and underlined the importance of this meeting, especially in the Holy City of Jerusalem, Holy for the three monotheistic religions, in which nevertheless there were incidents of violence in the past year. Israel strives to protect the increasingly numerous pilgrims in Jerusalem and in the other shrines, such as in the Jordan

River, where the Monastery of St. John the Baptist has been renovated and the surrounding area is being de-mined. Israel has no intention of interfering with the properties of the Churches. The President wished that the New Year may be blessed by God.

His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos returned the address of the President of behalf of all the Churches as follows;

27 December 2018

Your Excellency Mr. President,

Your Excellency, the Minister of the Negev,

Your Beatitudes,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are delighted to extend to you, Mr. President, on behalf of the Churches and Christian Communities of the Holy Land, the greetings of this holy season, during which our Abrahamic traditions are celebrating important festivals, and during which time so many pilgrims come to this City and Holy Land for spiritual renewal.

Very soon the eyes of the Christian world will be turned to the Jordan River, as Christians remember shortly after the Christmas Feast the occasion of Our Lord's baptism. We shall gather at the Jordan River with both the local Christian Community as well as with pilgrims from around the world at Qasr El Yahud.

We wish to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for your personal interest in, and your commitment to, the

project of clearing the minefields at this site, and for making this site accessible after so many years. We also express our appreciation to the army for their important role in coordinating all the parties in completing this tremendous undertaking.

Mr. President, even as we celebrate this wonderful accomplishment, hindrances remain.

One particular challenge that we have managed to resist several times now, the last occasion having been achieved with Your Excellency's courteous intervention, must be faced head on.

Certain Members of the Knesset, who we believe are misled, moved once again to propose to the Ministerial Committee for Legislation the discriminatory bill which restricts the rights of Christian Institutions to deal with their property and threatens the income that sustains the humanitarian mission of the Church, along with its care for the Holy Sites.

We are thankful to the firm support of our friends both in Israel and around the world, who, in spite of the inconvenient timing, came immediately to our assistance. We are sure that their support will not fall, should this legislation be pushed forward again.

Your Excellency, we are grateful for your gracious intervention and for the wise approach of Prime Minister Netanyahu in causing this bill to be withdrawn. This action is consistent with your commitments to preserve the long-standing Status Quo and to sustaining the unique multi-religious tapestry of our beloved Jerusalem.

While thankful for this reprieve, we are deeply concerned that attempts to bring this legislation forward will continue. We shall therefore remain actively attentive to this matter, and convinced that this Bill has no place in the corpus of legislation of the State of Israel. We reiterate our readiness

for dialogue to find lasting solutions that benefit the whole society. Yet, at the same time we stand united in our position both to defend our legitimate and sacred rights, as well as to continue that constructive engagement with governmental authorities that has been formed and shaped over the many years.

We do not seek our own benefit, but that of the mission that has been entrusted to us by Divine Providence; to serve the Holy Places and witness to this land of the divine-human encounter – that is our common sacred history. Jerusalem is the universal symbol of peace to which the whole world looks for reconciliation and mutual flourishing. It is unique in its existence as a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious community that is home to the three Abrahamic faiths. Jerusalem is the spiritual heart of the world that is longing for truth, light and righteousness.

As we read in the Psalms

*Our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem.
Jerusalem-built as a city
that is bound firmly together.*

(Ps. 121[122]:2-3)

We join with you in your official commitment to preserve this multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious character of Jerusalem, and we applaud your steadfastness to our harmonious mutual flourishing. As a Jerusalemite yourself, you understand well that Jerusalem is a unique paradigm of the human community, in maintaining cultural and religious traditions that live peacefully side by side. We welcome the support that you give to ensure that Jerusalem maintains this essential character.

We take this opportunity, Mr. President, to wish you and your family a Happy New Year. May God bless you in your work on behalf of all the peoples of our beloved Holy Land.

Thank you.

From Secretariat-General

CHRISTMAS CEREMONY IN AMMAN OF JORDAN AT HIS BEATITUDE'S INVITATION

On Wednesday evening, December 6/19, 2018, day of the commemoration of St. Nikolaos, Bishop of Myra of Lycia the Wonder worker, there was a Christmas ceremony at the Cultural Centre of the Prefecture in Amman, at the invitation of our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, on the occasion of the forthcoming Christmas Festivities. The ceremony was attended by the invited clergy and laity, members of the Churches of Jordan.

His Beatitude was escorted at the ceremony by Geronda Secretary-General Most Reverend Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, the Patriarchal Commissioner in Amman Most Reverend Archbishop Christophoros of Kyriakoupolis and Priests from the city of Amman and other towns of Jordan.

The Orthodox Choir of town Sarih from Irbet district chanted the apolytikion of the Saints of Jordan in Arabic and the "Axion esti" in Greek.

The choir of the Roman Catholic Church which was represented in the ceremony by the Most Reverend Archbishop Somaly in

Amman, chanted various Christian hymns, such as "Ave Maria" and Christmas carols, by a ten-year-old tenor and the young lady Mennel Maskoun, and other invited women, all with charismatic voices.

The Christian Festal atmosphere was sealed by the address of His Beatitude which was read by Fr. Issa Mousleh, in which He thanked the King of Jordan for the continuing politics of peaceful co-existence and cooperation between Muslims and Christians, which has been founded since 639 A.D. by the memorable Patriarch of Jerusalem Saint Sophronious and Caliph Omar Khatab. His Beatitude's address follows below in Arabic;

**حضرة صاحب الجلالة الهاشمية الملك عبد الله الثاني بن الحسين
المعظم حفظه الله ورعاه**

صاحب السمو الملكي الأمير غازي ابن محمد المعظم

أصحاب الدولة والمعالي والسعادة والنيافة والسماحة

السيدات و السادة

الحضور الكريم

يُشرفني أن ألقى في حضرة جلالتم كلمة غبطة البطريرك ثيوفيلوس الثالث، بطريرك المدينة المقدسة و سائر أعمال فلسطين والأردن، وأنقل لكم سلام وتحيات أعضاء المجمع المُقدّس، وأعضاء أخوية القبر المُقدّس، وسائر الآباء الأجلاء كهنة بطريركية الروم الأرثوذكس المقدسية، وأبنائنا الروحيين أبناء الكنيسة الرومية الأرثوذكسية، بمناسبة هذا الاحتفال بعيد الميلاد المجيد تحت رعاية جلالتم.

فأنتم يا صاحب الجلالة، ملك الأردن العزيز، صاحب الوصاية على المقدسات الاسلامية والمسيحية في القدس الشريف بما فيها القبر المقدس و بطريركية الروم الأرثوذكس المقدسية، هذه الوصاية التي تُشكل درع حماية وامتداد للعهد العمري التي تمت بين البطريرك صفرونيوس والخليفة عمر بن الخطاب.

صاحب الجلالة المعظم

إن عيد الميلاد المجيد هو عيد تجسد السلام والمحبة، المحبة التي هي ثمرة التنازل الإلهي الممزوج ببذل الذات والتواضع التام وإخلاء الذات من أجل مصالحة الإنسان مع الله والقريب، لكي يعم السلام الآتي من فوق، من السماء، والساكن في قلب الانسان. فلا سلام على الأرض بدون سلام القلب ونقائه، ولا يمكن حب الله بدون تجسد هذا الحب بمحبة القريب، محبة الانسان لأخيه الانسان مهما كان ومن أين ما كان.

فالميلاد المجيد يعلمنا أن نرى الله في وجه كل إنسان على الأرض وأن نحبه .

ولهذا ولد المسيح بالجسد، من امرأة عذراء (سيدتنا مريم العذراء)، واختار أن يولد في مذود للبهائم، في مغارة متواضعة، في مدينة بيت لحم الصغيرة. وأول من سمع تسابيح الملائكة من السماء، مبشرين بمولده هم رعاة بيت ساحور البسطاء، ومن قدموا له الهدايا هم المجوس الغرباء، وأول من دافع عنه هم أطفال بيت لحم الشهداء.

فبولادة السيد المسيح في بلادنا المقدسة ومعموديته التي تمت في نهر الأردن، عندنا هنا في الأردن، انبعثت ولادة جديدة للبشرية جمعاء، وأسسست مفاهيم روحية كونية غيرت مجرى التاريخ إلى الأبد.

ونحن اليوم نحتفل معاً بعيد الميلاد المجيد الذي يذكرنا بأهمية السلام وحاجة المجتمعات البشرية الماسة إليه نرفع نداءنا إلى جميع ذوي النوايا الحسنة في كل أرجاء العالم للعمل من أجل السلام العادل لكل البشر وترسيخ أوصل الأخوة والعيش معاً. فنقبل الآخر وخصوصاً المحتاج وننفتح عليه بروح المحبة فنصغي له ونقبله ونمد له يد المساعدة لنساهم في تعزيز روح الأخوة والمحبة لا روح الإنغلاق والإنعزال. واحتفالنا بالميلاد المجيد يقاس بمقدرتنا على الحب واستقبال الآخر والتضامن والوحدة.

جلالة الملك المعظم

السيدات و السادة أبناء الأسرة الأردنية الواحدة

إن كنيسةنا الأرثوذكسية المقدسية أم الكنائس هي الكنيسة المحلية في بلادنا المقدسة وهي ممثلة بطريكية الروم الأرثوذكس المقدسية بموجب القوانين والأنظمة الكنسية وحتى الدولية. ومن هنا وانطلاقاً من موقعنا الروحي والرعايي في جسم الكنيسة الجامعة ننبه من خطورة تعاليم ومواقف البدع والهرطقات التي تأتي باسم المسيحية. فالمسيحية منها براء، وخصوصاً تلك الفئة التي تسمى بالمسيحية الصهيونية التي تبني معتقدات وتعاليم بعيدة كل البعد عن المسيح وتعاليمه. حيث تنشط هذه المجموعات الزائفة على منصات حوار الأديان وتعطي صورة مشوهة عن إيماننا المسيحي. وهي تعكف على استغلال منتهيات التلاقي بين الأديان من أجل تزييف وتشويه التاريخ وإعطاء من لا يملك لمن لا يستحق. ونحن في كنيسةنا الرومية الأرثوذكسية نحذر من خلط الأوراق وتشويه العقائد بما يحقق مآرب الباغضين والمتآمرين، فما تعانیه كنيسةنا من اعتداءات على أملاكها وأوقافها في القدس وفلسطين هو جزء من هجمة ممنهجة على جميع كنائس القدس. إذ تتخذ هذه الهجمة عدة أشكال: من فرض للضرائب، إلى محاولة مصادرة للممتلكات، وإرغام أبناءنا على دراسة المناهج الإسرائيلية. كما تعرضت أكثر من خمسين كنيسة لحرق وتكسير بشع على يد ما يدعى جماعات تدفيع الثمن اليهودية منذ عام ألف وتسعمائة و سبع وستين. وللأسف، تبقى حملة الاستهداف مستمرة، الأمر الذي يستدعي جهداً مضاعفاً من جميع كنائس العالم لكي تلتف حول وصاية جلالتكم لحماية القبر المقدس وحماية كنائسنا التاريخية في الأراضي المقدسة. وقد عبرنا نحن وجميع كنائس الشرق الأوسط عن موقفنا الثابت بأن أساس السلام في القدس هو أن تبقى كنيسة القيامة للمسيحيين وحدهم كما هو المسجد الأقصى للمسلمين وحدهم.

كما نود أن نؤكد، وباسم جميع كنائس الأراضي المقدسة بأنه لا بديل عن حل الدولتين وأن تكون القدس عاصمة دولة فلسطين. وهذا هو أبسط حقوق الشعب الفلسطيني المظلوم، والتي إن استمر العالم بتجاهلها سنشهد المزيد من الصراع الديني والتطرف والاعتداء على حقوق الآخرين.

مليكننا المحبوب

في هذا الزمن الصعب والحروب والمآسي التي تحدث في الدول المجاورة وفي خضم معاناة الإنسان اليومية والخوف المتزايد في قلوب الناس من المجهول الآتي. كم كان الإحساس جميلاً والمشاعر جياشة مليئة بالثقة والحب والأمل عندما حصلت على جائزة تمبلتن للوئام والسلام، فهذا زادنا فخراً واعتزازاً وحباً لجلالتكم، فقابلتم العطاء بكرم هاشمي أصيل ينم على حرصكم المعهود على المقدسات حين تبرعتم بجزء كبير من هذه الجائزة لإعمار كنيسة القيامة وأنتم تبرزون للعالم أجمع الصورة الحقيقية للإسلام ونموذج فريد للعيش المشترك وإصرار زعيم عظيم على حفاظه على النسيج الوطني السليم والحقيقي في مملكته.

فعملكم هذا يا صاحب الجلالة، وأداؤكم لمهامكم في وصايتكم ورعايتكم لمقدساتنا الإسلامية والمسيحية هو خير مثال للعالم على الجهاد الحقيقي، و درس للجميع بأن يؤدي كل عمله على أحسن وجه

جلالة الملك المعظم

و نحن إذ نعايد جلالتم و أبناء الاسرة الهاشمية و الأردنية بمناسبة عيد الميلاد المجيد و رأس السنة الميلادية نرفع أديعتنا و صلواتنا الى الرب الإله من اجل الصحة و التوفيق لجلالتكم لتواصلوا مسيرتكم المباركة و أن يديم علينا نعمة الأمن و الاستقرار و يحفظ اردننا الغالي و جيشنا العربي الباسل و كل الساهرين على امن و استقرار الوطن متمنين لكل أبناء و بنات الوطن العزيز كل نعمة و بركة .

دمتم و دام الأردن مباركا الى الأبد

From Secretariat-General

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM AWARDS THE GREEK AMBASSADOR IN ISRAEL

On Wednesday morning, November 29/ December 12, 2018, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos awarded the retired Greek Ambassador in Tel Aviv Mr. Constantinos Bikas with the medal of the Grand Commander of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre.

This honorary distinction to his Excellency the Ambassador was in recognition and respect of his dedicated ministry to our nation and the Patriarchate.

Emotional, the Ambassador thanked His Beatitude and committed himself to always support the Patriarchate, which supports the rights of Romiosyne in the Holy Land.

From Secretariat-General

THE THIRD DAY OF THE VISIT OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM IN ROMANIA

On Saturday morning, November 18/ December 1, 2018, there was a Service of thanksgiving Doxology to God for His help in the liberation and unity of the Romanian people as one Orthodox nation. The service was held on an outdoor platform in front of the Holy Trinity Cathedral, and despite the sunny weather, the temperature was six degrees below zero, making the fingers

stiff. The service was attended by the Princess and many people.

At the end of the Doxology the Patriarch of Romania spoke in English:

“Let us defend and cultivate national freedom and unity as expressions of the dignity of the Romanian people”

The Great Union in Alba Iulia, since which we celebrate 100 years today, on December 1, 2018, is the celebration of freedom, unity and dignity of the Romanian people, gained through many sacrifices and sufferings.

The War of Romanian Unification (1916-1919), as Romanians have called their participation in the First World War (1914-1918), aimed to unify all Romanians into one national state, “following centuries of sufferings endured in a Christian manner” with faith, patience, and hope.

The achievement of national unity on December 1, 1918, was also possible with the contribution of the Romanian Orthodox Church, which supported the Great Union of all Romanians. The Church was together with the people in every effort *to cultivate national consciousness and to affirm the wish of national unity*, in all Romanian provinces, but particularly in Transylvania, Bessarabia, and Bukovina.

Through prayer, through speech, by printed books, with the personal presence and the concrete action of its servants, the Church was active in the unification process, involved in the achievement of this ideal through learned hierarchs, patriotic priests and deacons, theology professors and students with oratory, persuasion and mobilization skills, but also through monastics who have taken care of the wounded soldiers, in monasteries and parishes that organized money and food collections, all of them together morally encouraging and materially helping the Romanian fighters for national freedom and unity.

During the 1916-1918 Unification War, more than 250 Romanian Orthodox priests accompanied the troops of the Romanian army on the battlefields as *military confessors*. Some of them died on the front, others were taken prisoners and deported. Over 200 monks and nuns worked as nurses in various campaign hospitals or on the front, some dying on duty because of typhus exanthema. Hundreds of priests were investigated, robbed or expelled from their parishes by the enemy, others died after being shot in the territories occupied by German troops. In Transylvania, over 150 priests were thrown into the Hungarian prisons, some of them being sentenced to death or years of imprisonment. More than 200 priests were deported to Western Hungary, in Sopron County, where they lived in inhumane conditions until their release in 1919 by Romanian troops (Ref. Rev. Prof. Mircea Pacurariu, *History of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 3rd ed.* In Romanian: Basilica Publishing House, Bucharest 2013, pp. 471-473).

Regarding the Great Union in Alba Iulia, on December 1, 1918, the 1228 official delegates in the Constituent National Assembly included *many Church servants*. The two Romanian Churches in Transylvania (the Orthodox and the Greek-Catholic Churches) were represented in Alba Iulia by *five bishops, four vicars, ten delegates of the Orthodox consistories (diocesan councils) and Greek-Catholic collegiate chapter, 129 deans, one representative of theological-pedagogical institutes, and two representatives of the students of theology*, adding many other priests who came leading their believers to seal the century-long desire of the Romanian ancestors to live in one country without oppression.

Church servants were elected in the Great Council of the Romanian nation, as well as in the Conducting Council, while the Romanian Orthodox bishop Carasnebes, Miron Cristea, who later became a Primate Metropolitan (1919), and then the Patriarch of Greater Romania (1925), as well as the Greek-Catholic Bishop of Gherla, Iuliu Hossu, were elected as

members of the four-person delegation who presented the Union Act to King Ferdinand in Bucharest.

Now, celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Great Union of December 1, 1918, we want *to pay homage of gratitude to all those who contributed to the achievement of the greatest ideal of our history.*

As an act of commemoration of the 1918 Great Union founders, on this Centennial anniversary, on November 25, together with His Holiness Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople and Ecumenical Patriarch, and the hierarchs of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, we consecrated the *Romanian People's Salvation Cathedral* or the National Cathedral in Bucharest, a symbol of Romanian spirituality and unity, which draws together the love for God of a Christian, sacrificial, and generous nation and the gratitude we permanently owe to the National Heroes.

We are all called to keep and cultivate the gift of national freedom and unity as a symbol of the dignity of the Romanian people, acquired with many human sacrifices and many spiritual and material efforts!

For all the benefactors of the Great Union, we thank today the Most Holy Trinity, the Protector of the Coronation Cathedral in Alba Iulia, and we gratefully remember all Romanian heroes who sacrificed themselves for the freedom, unity and dignity of the Romanian people.

Today, all Romanian citizens have the duty *to keep and cultivate not only the gift of freedom, but also the gift of national unity*, as a symbol of the dignity of the Romanian people, in dialogue and cooperation with all peoples of the world.

Many and blessed years, Romania!

+ DANIEL

Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church

After the Doxology, at a nearby building of the Museum there was a representation of the event of the 1220 delegation of representatives who came from Transylvania, Bessarabia, and Bukovina, and signed the papers for the unity. The representation was done by people dressed in traditional clothes of the time of the agreement, and people dressed in contemporary clothes who held two-metre-long bulges, similar to those by which they bulged in 1918 and summoned the soldiers to war and to the unity of the Romanian people. There was also the unveiling of three plaques bearing inscriptions with the names of those who contributed to the unity. These were followed by the attendance of a parade of groups of laity dressed in 1918 clothes, who sang national songs, and finally there was the blessing of the water by the Patriarch of Romania at the very high cross-shaped monument of those who fell in the battlefields in 1918 and a memorial service for the repose of their souls.

At noon there was a meal offered by Archbishop Eirinaios of Alba Julia.

In the afternoon of the same day there was the welcoming reception of the President of Romania Mr. Werner Johannes at the square of Alba Julia Cathedral.

From this position the President and his associates, along with Their Beatitudes the Patriarchs returned to the cross-shaped monument, the symbol of the freedom and unity of the Romanian people and the President with the Mayor cut the ribbon to allow their entrance inside.

Consequently at the central square of the city, before the President of the country, other officials and Their Beatitudes, as well as a huge crowd of people, who had filled the streets and the balconies of the blocks of flats around,

there was a parade of groups of soldiers, tanks, Fire brigade, artillery, helicopters, military aviation and many other contemporary weapons for the defense of the Romanian people, under the music of a philharmonic orchestra.

Thereafter, supper was offered by Archbishop Eirinaios of Alba Julia, and finally the Patriarchal entourage travelled by car via Sibiu, and by plane back to Bucharest. His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem and His entourage flew from Bucharest back to Tel Aviv by El-Al airways early on Sunday morning, December 2, 2018. Glory be to God for all things.

From Secretariat-General