

PARTICIPATION OF HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III AT THE “EAST- WEST DIALOGUE PEACE-BUILDING SEMINAR”

His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III addressed the “East-West Dialogue Peace-Building Seminar,” which took place in Jordan, at the King Hussein Bin Talal Convention Center on August 12th, 2009.

During His address, His Beatitude expanded on the following matters:

- 1) The great importance of the seminar for the potential contribution of peaceful relations in the area.
- 2) The unique and symbiotic relationship that the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, now over two thousand years old, has developed with the Arab Muslim world, and in particular with the Muslim faithful of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.
- 3) The efforts for peace that have been actualized in the area, such as the “Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land”, and the peaceful role that the Patriarchate can play to the forthcoming generations in the context of the basic principles of Christianity.
- 4) The role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the region and the peaceful coexistence of the Islamic world with the adherents of the other monotheistic religions.

The following is the full text of the speech given by His

Beatitude at the seminar:

Remarks at the East-West Dialogue

Peace-Building Seminar

at the king Hussein Bin Talal Convention Center

Jordan

12 August 2009

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

“Your Royal Highness Prince Ghazi,

Distinguished Participants in this Seminar,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We greet you warmly on the occasion of this important seminar and we applaud the choice of subject for our work. In the difficult endeavor of the resolution of conflict and of building and sustaining peace, the art of dialogue and listening is of supreme consequence.

It is right, also, that we mark at this seminar the leading role that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has played as a “home of peace initiatives”. We salute especially the role of His Majesty, King Abdullah II bin al-Hussein, and His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi, whose tireless efforts on behalf of all the peoples of our region and for the promotion of mutual understanding and respect among people of different cultural, ethnic and religious identity are well-known both here and around the world.

In this context we are reminded of the proclamation of *The Amman Message* by His Majesty in 2004, which is itself both an important exposition of the tenets of Islam as well as a milestone in the quest of peaceful co-existence between Islam and those of the other monotheistic faiths.

In these few brief remarks we would like first to highlight the role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in our region. Jordan is indeed the only (Arab) Islamic country in the Middle East in which there is true freedom of religion. Here, where the majority of the population is Muslim, there are flourishing communities of those who adhere to other faiths, especially Christianity. All citizens are given equal protection under the law regardless of religious affiliation and we know from our own experience that Christian and Muslim live side by side in peaceful co-existence.

But more than this, all Jordanian citizens, regardless of religious affiliation, have equal opportunities and rights, and we note the presence of Christians at every level of the society, including business and government.

This integration is a significant achievement and may serve as a model for other countries of our region. We have a long history of living together and we know and understand each other's culture and customs.

As we think particularly of the subject of this seminar – the art of dialogue and of listening for conflict resolution and peace-building – we recall the familiar words of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of Luke (6:31), Jesus enunciates a central principle of Christian ethics, a principle that is shared by almost every religious tradition in one form or another:

“Do to others as you would have them to do to you”.

Known often as the **“Golden Rule”** this teaching is the basis of what we call the **“ethnic of reciprocity”**, that fundamental

understanding of human society that one has a right to just treatment and one has a responsibility to ensure the same just treatment of others.

This is the basis of all proper dialogue and all effective listening.

The Christian faith is not solely a private, personal matter. Christians are commanded by Our Lord to show forth their daily lives. In the Gospel of Matthew (5:16), Jesus reminds us of this with these words: ***“Let your light so shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven”.***

This is a further summons to the Church to be actively involved in the kind of dialogue and listening that leads to the resolution of conflict and the building of lasting and durable peace.

If we may speak for a moment in more theological terms, to listen effectively is not dissimilar from the practice of prayer. Whatever we are engaged in the public liturgical prayer of the Community, or the discipline of private personal prayer and devotion, prayer is first and foremost the act of placing oneself in the presence of God in order to listen. Without the openness of the Community of faith and the individual believer to God in this profound act of listening, there can be no progress in the spiritual life. This is, we believe, a crucial basis for understanding the task of listening to our fellow human beings.

We have good models upon which to build.

The Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, having existed in this region for 2000 years, has developed deep symbiotic ties with the Arab Muslim world in general and with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in particular. We know the peoples of different religious traditions can live together in peaceful co-existence, for we see its fruits here. And in this way we

believe that we have the full trust of others in the Islamic world.

We also believe that the Patriarchate can be a true bridge of trust in the task of the healing of memories. As we all know, memories in this region are deep and have a lasting effect on our common life. As we think of East-West dialogue, we cannot forget, for example, the searing memory of the crusades, which still colors the understanding of many in our region towards the West. This is not the only memory that must be healed, and we can all think of others.

This is not to say that others do not have an urgent part to play in the peace process. But we do believe that the Patriarchate has a unique role in reducing the effect of such bad memories between East and West. Islam first met Christianity in the Orthodox Church, and the best way forward in the healing of memories is in the mutual understanding – the dialogue and listening – between the original local Church of this region and Islam.

In this connection we note also the work of two other bodies that are engaged in similar work to this seminar. Last March we were in London for the C-1 World Dialogue which is co-chaired by the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Sheikh Dr. Ali Gomaa, and the Bishop of London, Dr. Richard Chartres. His Excellency Dr. Mustafa Ceric, the Grand Mufti of Bosnia, and we are founding Vice Chairs of this Dialogue. His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi also had had a significant role in the establishment of this Dialogue.

In addition to this Dialogue, there is the work of the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, which continues to be a force for conflict resolution and peace-making in our region. Only last week, members of the Council met in Jerusalem to examine the question of education and the provision of textbooks for schools in both Israel and the Palestinian Authority that seek to tell truthfully the complex

and often difficult story of our Holy Land.

We cannot emphasize too strongly how significant the subject of this seminar is, and the potential contribution that this seminar can make to the peace process. And we would also like to emphasize the urgent need for actions to follow words. In the theological traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the concepts for “word” and “action” are closely related, and we must live out that relationship in all that we do to ensure that this region may become an even greater beacon of hope to those who seek to build a new future for humanity throughout the world.

We thank you for your invitation to give these remarks, and we pray for God’s blessing upon His Majesty and all the Royal Family, and upon all the people of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as well as upon all of you and upon the work of this seminar.

God bless you – Thank you”

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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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PREPARING THE WAY FOR THE BAPTISM OF PILGRIMS AT THE JORDAN RIVER

His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III visited the Holy Monastery of St. John the Baptist by the Jordan River and the traditional Biblical place where the Lord was baptised. The visit took place on Wednesday July 8th 2009 in cooperation with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Ministry of Tourism of Israel. During the visit, the Ministry was represented by its Senior Deputy Director-General Mr. Raphael Ben-Hur and his colleagues, while His Beatitude was escorted by the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Aristarchos Archbishop of Constantina, the Superior of St. Gerasimos Rev.

Archimandrite Chrysostomos and deacon Rev. Fr. Athanasios.

This area has been a military zone since 1967 and the Israeli Defence Forces permit pilgrims to visit the site twice a year, on the 5th /18th of January, the eve of Epiphany, for the ceremony of the Blessing of the waters performed by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem and, on Holy Tuesday, for the traditional pilgrimage baptism of believers. This allowance resulted from a suggestion made by the late Patriarch of Jerusalem Diodoros I to the I.D.F authorities.

The I.D.F, in cooperation with the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, provided access to the site on the occasion of the Patriarch's visit to view the premises of the Holy Monastery of St. John the Baptist, partially demolished since 1967 and to assess the possibility for its renovation. Approval for renovation work already exists and in order for the project to be initiated, it requires the submission of an architectural site analysis and the goodwill of a benefactor to finance the expenses.

After the visit to the Holy Monastery, His Beatitude together with Mr. Raphael Ben-Hur, the General military Commanding officer of Jericho Mr. Itzik Deri, the General military Commanding officer of Bethlehem Mr. Iyad Sirhan, the civil engineer Mr. Ofer Meital and the architect Mr. Ron Margolin, visited the place of the Baptism at the Jordan River and inspected the works carried out by the I.D.F, namely the support of the river bed for the safe access of pilgrims to the river waters and the construction of a stone platform and stone roofing for the performing of the Blessing of the waters ceremony by the Patriarch. This platform and its surroundings is the Patriarchates' property.

The Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III conveyed appreciation for the cooperation between the Ministry of Tourism and the Israeli Defence Forces which led to this facilitation, an event that preludes the gradual and permanent

prevalence of peace, enabling the more frequent and easy visitation of pilgrims for their customary baptism and sanctification at the traditional Biblical place of the Lord's Baptism.

Chief Secretary's Office

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THE FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE U.S.A. Mr. JIM CARTER, VISITED THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

The former President of the U.S.A, his Excellency Mr. Jim Carter, recently visited the State of Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Gaza.

On Saturday May 13th at 7:00 p.m. the former President of the U.S.A Mr. Jim Carter visited the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the first and oldest religious institution in the Holy Land. The visit was organised with the cooperation of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, members of the World Council of Churches and members of the Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land.

The former President Mr. Carter was escorted by Mr. Hrair Balain, Director of Conflict Resolution at the Carter Centre, Mr. Karin Ryan, Director of the Human Rights Program at the Carter Centre and Mr. Rick Jascula, Trip Director for the

Carter Centre and Mr. Samuel Jones.

Present with His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III were members of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre including the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Aristarchos Archbishop of Constantina and His Eminence Methodios Archbishop of Mt. Tabor. Representing the other Christian denominations in the Holy Land were: the Lutheran Bishop in Jerusalem Mr. Munib Younan, the Anglican Bishop Mr. Suheil Dawani, Rev. Fr. Naim Ateek and Rev. Fr. Olav Fykse Tveit of the World Council of Churches.

The meeting took place in an atmosphere of cordiality, mutual trust and understanding. At the meeting, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem addressed former President Mr. Jim Carter and his escorts as follows:

Your Excellency, President Jimmy Carter

Fellow Members of

the Council of Religious Institutions of The Holy Land

Distinguished Guests,

We thank Your Excellency for this important and cordial visit to our Patriarchate and for your attention to the work of the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land. We are proud to be within, amongst and most importantly, part of this distinguished community of the Holy Land in general and of Jerusalem in particular. We honour and pride ourselves to be patrons, guardians and participants in the continuing history and heritage of these people and this unique culture.

Jerusalem is the embodiment of the sacredness and purity that emanates from the three faiths of the Heavens; Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

We reaffirm the great importance attached to the involvement of the Churches of Christ and reaffirm that The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, also known as the Mother Church, embraces all initiatives that call for peace and justice in the world generally and in our beloved middle east specifically.

Promoting values of peace and justice is of paramount importance. Violence, aggression, hatred and bigotry produce unrest and insecurity; unfortunately have replaced peace and justice that produce security and prosperity. We firmly believe, now exists the possibility for the conflict and hatred to be turned into durable and just peace. One of the main roads that must be travelled to achieving this, is the road of Reconciliation between God and Man made in Christ.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem is witness to the uniqueness of Jerusalem, which is a model for overcoming existing religious, cultural and ethnic particularities, without attempting to destroy them. The opportunity to experience how ethnical-religious entities and Christian denominations live together in harmony, despite the fact that the political environment is in conflict. The focus must always be on fortifying mutual respect and coexistence.

The importance of Christianity and its presence, especially in our beloved Holy Land must be emphasised protected and empowered for not only does it lend itself to keeping liberalism alive but is a great help in facing a difficult present day challenge, namely: the need to maintain the fabric of the societies within this region. This is an ingredient that is so crucial for the future generations across the spectrum of faiths.

Through providing welfare; be it social programs or education, the work of the Churches is clear and must be both supported and expanded.

We all, take this opportunity to declare our commitment to our

mission which throughout the ages has been to first uphold Holy Places and Shrines as places of worship accessible to all the faithful, regardless of denomination and diversity; keeping the pilgrims and visitors flocking to this Land.

Your Excellency, distinguished guests, thank you again for being with us and for this opportunity to talk about what is so important to all present here today...peace and continuity for Jerusalem and our beloved Holy Land.

Wishing you every success in your mission and may the Lord almighty light your path and guide you to fulfilment.

Thank you.

His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III emphasized the fact of the diminishing Christian presence in the Holy Land, a community that is not even recognised as a minority, and He touched upon the Patriarchates' contention with the immigration wave and its effort to contain this by fostering, in a spirit of moderation and reconciliation, the relationship between the followers of the religions of the Holy Land and by supporting the common education of Christians and Muslims through the Patriarchate's Community Schools.

The former President of the U.S.A Mr. Jim Carter replied by thanking His Beatitude and the representatives of the other Christian Churches for their warm welcome and said that he considers as a blessing his return visit to the Holy Land, the place where Jesus Christ lived and was crucified.

Mr Carter added that he, as a Christian, regularly attends churches since a young age and preaches at Churches of the Lutheran denomination of which he belongs.

The representatives of the other two denominations spoke to the President and emphasised, as did His Beatitude, the difficulties that Christians face due to the tense political

situation in the Holy Land. They referred to the separation of the rest of the Holy Land cities from Jerusalem. The leaders of the Christian Churches in the Holy Land have declared in a common statement in 1994 and more recently on 29th September 2006, Jerusalem to remain an open city for the two peoples giving freedom of access and worship to the followers of the three main religions.

In the conversation that followed, the former President of the U.S.A Mr. Jim Carter stated that his personal intention and that of the U.S.A is to support a resolution to the problem of the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the formation of two viable states; a viability based on designated and acknowledged borders, locally and internationally, according to the road map, based on respect of independence, freedom and security of the citizens of each state.

Mr. Jim Carter mentioned that during his recent travels through Damascus, he visited the site of Apostle Paul's house where he sojourned. For the success of his peace mission Mr. Carter implored the prayers of all.

His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III offered former President Mr. Jim Carter a handcrafted silver plated manger, depicting the birth of Christ, as well as a precious volume of the history of the Patriarchate, printed in Greek and English, in celebration of 2000 years of Christianity. In addition Dr. John Tleel offered the President an autobiographical book entitled "I am Jerusalem" which comprises selected material from his personal archive about Jerusalem, the Patriarchate and the Greek Community.

The Chief Secretary's Office

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RECENT MEETINGS OF THE BEATITUDE

On Tuesday, 21st January/3rd February 2009, His Beatitude received some students of the German Seminary of Benedictine monks of the Church of Dormition of the Theotokos on Mount Zion and answered questions on the pastoral role of the Patriarchate at the Holy Land and the Orthodox prerequisites for participation in the Ecumenical dialogue.

On Thursday, 23rd January/3rd February 2009, His Beatitude received a ten-member inter-religious Norwegian ecclesiastic delegation, headed by the Lutheran bishop of Oslo, Mr. Ole Christian M. Kvarme to updated them on the ecclesiastic and political situation in the Holy Land and on the aid of its residents.

On Friday 24th January/6th February 2009, His Beatitude received a five- member team who were released from concentration camps of the Republic of Serbska and talked to them about the unifying and the conciliatory power of the Orthodox Church in Orthodox Christian States. Then, His Beatitude received Mr. John Nduna, Director of ACT (International Action by Churches Together), a Department of the World Council of Churches, in charge of the moral and humanitarian aid and relief to Gaza, along with Mr. Dirk Lackovic-Van Gorp, Director of the IOCC (INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES).(Photo 1)

On Saturday, 25th of January/7th of February 2009, His Beatitude received a delegation from the World Council of Churches within the framework of the program "Palestine and

Israel Ecumenical Forum” with Rev. Dr. Olav Fuske Tveit in charge (Photo 2)

Afterwards, His Beatitude received a group of representatives of Christianity, Judaism and Islam of the “Department for Peace, Reconciliation and Interfaith Dialogue-Clergy for Peace” along with Doctor Chalil Andraous from Koufr-Giasif. Finally, His Beatitude received representatives of the Greek Orthodox community of Remli regarding the assistance for the development of the Community School. In the evening of the same day, His Beatitude officiated in the ceremony of the cutting of the New Year’s cake in the Greek Club of the New City of Jerusalem, near the monastery of Saint Symeon the Receiver of the Lord at Katamonas.

This club was founded in 1902 by expatriate Greeks who lived in Jerusalem, for the strengthening of the ties with the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and the boosting of the Christian and national conscience. Today, the club numbers about 40 members who voluntarily offer their services for the organisation of cultural activities with Greek Christian character, in cooperation with the Patriarchate.

The ceremony was attended by Agiotafites and members of the Greek Community of the Old and New City of Jerusalem. The ceremony was honoured with his presence, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr. Sotirios Athanasiou.

His Beatitude was addressed by the President of the Greek Community, Mr. Vasilios Tzaferis. In response, His Beatitude wished the President and the members of the community, a happy, blessed and prosperous in the Lord New Year, and thanked Mr. Vasilios Tzaferis for his support to the Greek community and the Patriarchate.

From the Chief-Secretariat

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ATTENDANCE OF DR CHRISTOS NIKOLAOU AND MRS EKATERINI DIAMANTOPOULOU AT THE PATRIARCHATE

Today, the three-day visit to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem by the most honourable guests, Dr Christos Nikolaou, General Manager of the Patriarchate's website and Mrs Ekaterini Diamantopoulou, Deputy Administrator of the non- governmental organization (NGO) "Romiosini", came to a close. On the one hand, Dr Nikolaou presented His Beatitude the official website of the Patriarchate as well as the under construction website of the NGO "Romiosini", where among other things many panoramic depictions of the Holy Shrines will be accessible. On the other hand, Mrs Ekaterini Diamantopoulou presented His Beatitude, the activities of the first year of the NGO 'Romiosini'. His Beatitude congratulated them on the scope of their work and gave them guidelines not only on the development of the Patriarchate's websites but also for the ongoing undertaking of the NGO "Romiosini". Special reference was made to the impending 1st World Conference of the NGO "Romiosini" which is going to be held at the Athens War Museum on the 30th-31st of next May with the topic. "Romiosini throughout the ages".

From the Chief-Secretariat

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 Elmeliah, 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 Barghoum & 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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VISIT OF GREEK EXPATRIATE FROM THE USA, MR. KAPETANAKIS, TO THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

On Thursday, January 28th of 2009, Greek expatriate, Mr. Leonidas Kapetanakis, paid a visit to His Beatitude, with

whose blessing and help transferred financial assistance to the Greek Orthodox Community in Gaza.

From the Office of His Beatitude

SPEECH BY PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III, ON BEHALF OF ALL THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES OF THE HOLY LAND, BEFORE THE PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL

Mr President,

Honourable Ministers,

Members of Parliament,

Distinguished Guests,

At the turn of the year, we greet you warmly in this season of renewal and hope, and we thank you for this opportunity to address you.

Events and gatherings such as this are of great importance both for celebrating the common bonds of our humanity, and for reminding ourselves of those fundamental values that are essential to our common life. Humanity today is confronted on every side with harsh forces of disrespect and even humiliation. And sadly much of this is taking place in the guise of religious allegiance and in the name of Almighty God.

The special position of the Churches ensures the uniqueness of Jerusalem as a city of sacred significance and the religious character of the Holy Land as a whole. This region is home to the three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. And it is a living witness to multi-culturalism and, most importantly, to ethnic and religious diversity. We who make up the community of the Holy Land in general, and we who are Christians in particular, must always strive to speak with one voice, stressing a united vision for peace and harmonious co-existence.

We are always glad to affirm that the Churches, in good times and in bad, never cease to serve our people and accomplish our mission and pastoral ministry, locally, regionally, and, ecumenically.

In our capacity as the Mother Church of the Holy Land and because of our unique historical presence, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem takes seriously our vocation of service. We are an anchor of Christian existence here and we are committed to advancing interfaith dialogue and maintaining the fabric of our society.

As we said recently to a gathering of the Diplomatic Corps here in Jerusalem, hard times must not blind us to the ties that bind us. When relationships are strained, we do not always like to admit that we are as closely related as we are. But we shall walk blindly on the road to peace if we do not appreciate the heritage of inter-religious co-existence that is ours in this region. We see a real chance for peace and recognise many courageous people of conviction and action. We must build on every opportunity for peace and reconciliation not just for ourselves, but for the generations to come.

The world looks to us for leadership. In countries that have

emerged from decades of Communist government, for example, there is a desire to learn from us about the ordering of society in which there is genuine freedom of religion and inter-faith co-operation and mutual respect. We in the Holy Land can give a gift to the rest of the world that no other people can give, for we have a heritage of living together in this region that is generations old. It is not too strong to assert that the future of our world is deeply connected to the future that we build in the Holy Land for all our people.

Over the years, Our Patriarchate has laboured to promote understanding between the religious communities and advance dialogue. We have the utmost confidence in the responsibility that the State of Israel has taken for the Christian Churches and communities.

We are highly appreciative of all those who support the spiritual integrity of Our Patriarchate and of our sister Christian Churches and communities. This support contributes to enabling the Churches to exercise our legitimate rights, privileges, and ancient customs.

Here again we mention something about which we have spoken recently. For in respect to the rights, privileges and the ancient customs of the Churches, we must never detract from the fundamental nature and purpose of the Holy Places. Here we are speaking primarily of the Christian Holy Places, but the same principle applies to all. We are particularly concerned at present with the attitude that considers the Holy Places to be either primarily tourist attractions or places of national heritage. While we appreciate the sentiment that can underlie these attitudes, it is our responsibility to remind those who have the power to make such decisions, of the fact that the Holy Places are primarily neither tourist attractions nor national monuments.

The Holy Places are, needless to say, primarily *sacrosanct* sites, and this is the character that they must always display. Here, in these places, the faithful believe that God entered human history in a unique way. We remind ourselves always that Holy Places have so far secured and sustained the Christian presence in the region.

Allow us and in this context to underline the concerns common to our Christian community as a whole. We acknowledge the many positive steps that the State of Israel has taken to evaluate our concerns, such as:

- Free movement of the faithful;
- Examination of entry visas for clerics;
- Exemption from taxation;
- The historic standing of the ownership of Church property.

The historic rights, privileges and ancient customs accorded to the Patriarchate and to Christian communities have been articulated over generations in what we now call the “Status Quo.”

A fundamental provision of the consecutive international agreements that has sustained the resilience of the “Status Quo” is the moral obligation of the ruling civil authority to exercise the power of arbitration when serious disputes arise. The sole purpose of the arbitration of the ruling civil authority is to restore harmonious co-operation and order, without altering the instrumental mechanisms implied by the “Status Quo.”

We believe firmly that our Churches can contribute

significantly to stability, reconciliation, and a lasting peace in our beloved Holy Land and our wider region, which is such an imperative in our day.

History has shown us that the solution to attaining peace is not violence, but dialogue. It is dialogue that builds trust and mutual acceptance, and that shows us the way forward. We cannot but strongly condemn violence wherever it occurs, and the Patriarchate as well as the Churches support all efforts to build a lasting peace and security to which everyone, regardless of religious affiliation or cultural identity, is entitled.

Your Excellency, we express our sincere thanks to you for this cordial invitation and for your gracious hospitality. We pray God's special blessing on the approaching New Year: may our hearts be warmed, our minds enlightened, and the lives of all the citizens of the State of Israel be fulfilled.

Happy New Year and Hanoucha Samech.

ADDRESS TO THE CONFERENCE OF THE HELLENIC NEUROLOGICAL SOCIETY IN JERUSALEM

Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

Mr Sitzogiou,

The President of the Hellenic Neurological Society

Distinguished Participants,

Dear Friends.

It is an honour to welcome the Conference of the Hellenic Neurological Society to the Holy City of Jerusalem, and the Patriarchate is greatly pleased with the special privilege of hosting this important event at our seminary of Mount Sion. You are committed to the advancement of your scientific discipline, but you also understand the importance of your work for the collective benefit: of humanity. – the Christian faith stakes its claim on two fundamental truths: that humankind is made “in the image and likeness of God, and that God himself redeemed and restored the dignity of human nature when God took on our human life in all its fullness in the birth of Jesus Christ.

The Orthodox Church has, since the earliest days of the apostolic community, been concerned with the life of the whole person. The Church understands the human person to be not simply a physical shell that is filled with a soul, but as a unique individual who, in both body and soul, has eternal significance. It is the faith of the Church that, as God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, so too will God raise all those who sleep to a life in which all creation will be made new for eternity. For just this reason has the Christian faith been called “the ultimate materialism,” for we understand that the material, the physical, is of inestimable worth. God has not created us simply to throw us away.

This is clear in the sacramental life of the Church, not least in the mystery of the anointing of the sick. Every year on the Great and Holy Wednesday, the Church blesses oil for the anointing of those who suffer from both spiritual and physical

illnesses. When the faithful person is anointed, the priest says:

Holy Father, Physician of souls and bodies, Who sent Thine Only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ Who healed every illness and delivered from death, heal Thy servant from the weakness that holds his body, of either body or soul, and enliven him by the grace of Thy Christ, by the prayers of the All-holy Lady Theotokos and all the Saints. Amen.

By anointing those who are sick, whether they suffer in body, mind or spirit, the Church is not attempting to compete with medicine. Quite the contrary. In the mystery of the anointing of the sick the Church declares that human suffering has a call on her attention and ministry. The Church also declares that she is united with God in the support and sustenance of suffering humanity. The Church becomes a partner with the medical profession in caring for the sick. It is not God's will that people suffer, and so God gives us special grace and strength to endure the suffering and illness that are an inevitable part of our mortal life. Our Lord himself attended to the sick and the suffering, and has showed us the way. It is interesting to note that the Greek word *therapeia* means both "worship" and "healing,"

Consequently, the Church has always embraced and greatly valued the medical profession. The Church understands the faithful life of prayer and sacrament to be a necessary part of attention of physicians. Ideally, the ministry of the Church and the work of the medical profession is a collaboration and not a competition: together we can do better work for suffering humanity than we can do on our own. For the gifts that the Church dispenses and the gifts that medicine dispenses come from the same source, who is the God who is good and loves humankind.

The rich tradition of the Church attempts to embody this

integrated approach to our human life. Saint Luke the Evangelist is our model. In the East, Christians venerate Saint Luke as an artist, as the painter of the first icon. Once again, in her tradition of iconography, the Church declares her confidence in the ability of humanity to reflect divinity, and in the ability of this world to be a window into heaven. In the West, Saint Luke is venerated principally as a physician. So the Church upholds the honour in which she has always held the medical profession. In one person, then, we have both painter and doctor, artist and scientist, the one who ministers both to the soul and the body. Let us not forget that this same man was also a preacher of the Gospel, and gave us both the Gospel that bears his name as well as the Acts of the Apostles. Saint Luke is therefore himself an icon of the vision of the Church for the integration of medicine, spirituality, and the saving message of the Gospel.

The Holy Scriptures give us important grounding for our understanding of the medical profession. In the book of Sirach we read one of the great tributes to the work of the physicians, and it is worth quoting at some length:

Honour physicians for their services, for the Lord created them; for their gift of healing comes from the most high ... The skill of physicians makes them distinguished ... The Lord created medicines out of the earth, and the sensible will not despise them... By them the physician heals and takes away pain; the pharmacist makes a mixture from them. God's works will never be finished, and from him health spreads over all the earth ...give the physician his place, for the Lord created him; do not let him leave you, for you need him. There may come a time when recovery lies in the hands of physicians, for they too pray to the Lord that he grant them success in diagnosis and in healing, for the sake of preserving life. (Sirach 38:l-8, 12-14 *passim*)

“For the sake of preserving life.” In these words we

understand the co-operation that exists between God and the physician: God is the author of all life, and since their fundamental mission is to preserve and enhance life, by extension the physician shares in the creative and sustaining Spirit of God.

One of the great contributions of Byzantine civilization to the world was the hospital, and this is itself testimony to the importance that the Orthodox Church has long attached to the medical profession. Of course the practice of medicine has existed in one form or another since antiquity, but there is clear evidence that the hospital as we have come to understand it in a modern sense was born in the Byzantine Empire.

One of the first such hospitals, the Basileiada, was built by Saint Basil the Great, who wrote to Eustathius the physician in one of his letters: Humanity is the regular business of all you, who practice as physicians. And, in my opinion, to put your science at the head and front of life's pursuits is to decide reasonably and rightly. This at all events seems to be the case if man's most precious possession, life, is painful and not worth living, unless it be lived in health, and if for health we are dependent on your skill. In your own case medicine is seen, as it were, with two right hands: you enlarge the accepted limits of *philanthropiaby* not confining the application of your skill to men's bodies, but by attending also to the cure of the diseases of their souls. (Letter 189)

In his oration in honour of Saint Basil, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus recounts to us that saint Basil "greeted the sick like brothers:" "Basil's care was for the sick, and for the relief of their wounds, and the imitation of Christ, by cleansing leprosy, not by a word, but in deed." (Oratian 43.63). Saint Basil himself suggested that medical science "represents detachment from what is not: necessary and fulfils

that which is incomplete. "He said that medicine is the image on earth of treatment that is intended to bring peace to the human soul and is a "pattern of the treatment pertinent to the soul."

But it was the twelfth-century Byzantine emperor John II Komnenos who endowed the famous *xenon* at the Monastery of the Pantocrator in Constantinople and so changed the course of the history of hospitals and medical care. In his ground-breaking study, *The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire*, Professor Timothy Miller tells the remarkable story of the Pantocrator *xenon*. This *xenon* had 50 beds for hospital patients, as well as a home for older men. It was heated, and there were linens on the beds, good lighting and bathing and sewage systems. There was an organized profession of *archiatroi*, *hypurgoi*, and *hyperetai*, and we know also of the existence of women doctors in Byzantium – *the hiatrainai* – long before their emergence in the West.

As the inheritors of this great tradition, the Church continues to emphasize the importance of the healing of the soul. This is our part of the partnership of healing. The theologian Ioannis Romanidis reminds us that "the treatment of the *psyche*" – in other words, the treatment of the essence of what it means to be human – "is at the core of our ... tradition."

Neurology is a highly specialized discipline that deals with disorders of the nervous system. Yours is a highly complex discipline, and the arena of your research and clinical work corresponds to the arena that the Church describes as the *psyche*. The Patristic literature has much to say about the *psyche* that corresponds too much that also concerns the profession of neurology. For the Fathers, what we now call the human nervous system was the beater for them of human strength and power as well as the power of the human *psyche*. Just as

the body can be well or ill, so too can the *psyche*. In the Patristic literature, of course, it is sin that is the main threat to the health of the human person. In his *Commentary of the psalms* Saint Cyril of Alexandria speaks of a proaponeurosis, a "weakening," while the Fathers remind us that sin destroys human strength. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem says that sin "burns." It "cuts" into the very nerves of the human *psyche*, it crushes the "mental" backbone of the *psyche*, and it darkens the light of the heart. The heart is the throne of the soul, and it is God's Word that energizes the human *psyche* and gives it substance and purpose. The Word of God is the true physician of the heart, and God's Word became flesh for no other reason than to support our human nature, heal our hearts, restore health to our human *psyche*, and transform us in his strength and stability.

We discover, therefore, that the modern specialty of neurology deals with matters that have occupied the Church since her earliest days as she has sought to strengthen the faithful in "the healing of our souls and bodies,"

Medicine is dedicated to the safeguarding of human health and the well-being of the whole person. The concerns of medicine are not confined to the biological therapeutic process alone, but extend to the whole range of social, cultural and political concerns. If human health is both a scientific and a religious matter, social, cultural and political forces affect it as well. In other words, just as the Orthodox Church seeks, in her therapeutic ministry by Word and Sacrament, to help human beings grow more and more into God's image and likeness, so does the medical profession, in your therapeutic ministry of diagnosis and treatment, attempt to heal the traumas that affect human lives. In our different but complementary ways, we are both significant reference points for tolerance, respect and the mutual acceptance of all.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the most ancient religious Institution in continuous existence in the Holy Land, has been throughout our history at the forefront of the efforts to ensure the prosperity, reconciliation and progress of the local population. From the ancient hostel and hospital of *Hosiou Sabba* in Jericho and Jerusalem, to the first printing press in Palestine, to the hospitals in the Holy Land, the Patriarchate has always attempted to care for the whole human person and the welfare of those who reside in this region.

Your presence here is a testimony of the partnership of spirituality and medicine that is so necessary in our time as we all seek to proclaim to a world that seems increasingly in different to the holiness of life the infinite worth of the individual human person. May God strengthen you in your own work of *therapeia*, and may God bless the work of this conference.

Thank you very much for being here.