

# MESSAGE OF H.H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III FOR THE FEAST OF PASCHA 2024

THEOPHILOS III

By the Mercy of God, Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem  
and all Palestine,

to all the Church members, grace, mercy, and peace from the  
All-Holy and Life-giving Tome of the Risen Christ.

*“This is a day of festival: at the Awakening of Christ,*

*death has fled away and the light of life has dawned;*

*Adam has risen and dances for joy.*

*Therefore, let us cry aloud and sing a song of victory”*

(Sunday of the Adoration of the Cross, Troparion 1, Ode 1)

Today, the Church of Christ proclaims the gospel of unspeakable joy to the world. It proclaims to the ends of the earth the Resurrection of its Founder and our Saviour Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, the Crucified. Jesus Christ the Son and Word of God, made Incarnate of the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin, born in the flesh and seen on earth. To him who received our human flesh in one hypostasis, the Humanity, and in two natures, the Divine and the human, and was acquainted with us human beings. He taught us ways of repentance, living in peace, solidarity and love, even towards our enemies. He

healed the infirm and the incurable sick and raised the dead. He loved us humans to the end and willingly submitted Himself to death for us, even the death of a dishonourable cross. He shed His divine blood for the forgiveness of our sins. He offered himself a living sacrifice, redeeming and pleasing to God.

Having been crucified by Pontius Pilate and buried, He also went to those in Hades, to those who had died for ages and were held by the devil. He also included these in His saving redemptive work, *"which the Father had given Him to do"* (Jn. 17, 4). These *"were first received by the divine economy beheaded John the Forerunner, who had prepared them for repentance"*. The Lord Jesus Christ, who descended to Hades for three days, also preached to them. Those who believed in Him, He saved from Hades, from the torment of eternal hell. Condescending to them, He resurrected and granted them eternal life saying, *"enter again into Paradise"*. In the completion of this work, Hades had no power over Him. He couldn't keep Him. Hades thought that he had found a man, but encountered God. By the power of the Father and by His self-given divine power, Jesus Christ, the Lord, crushed eternal levers, crushed the locks of death and autonomously *"raised from the dead and resurrected Adam with an almighty hand"*.

The Resurrection of Christ from the dead, that is, His victory against death, does the Church celebrate with joy, singing: *"O life-giving Lord, after Thy dread Resurrection, as Thou brakest not the seals of the Tomb, so when the doors had been shut fast, Thou didst likewise enter and while bringing joy of heart to Thine all-famed Apostles didst grant Thine upright Spirit unto them for the sake of Thine immeasurable and great mercy"* (Thomas' Sunday, Matins, Praises, Troparion 1). This Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, initiated, that is, Christ *"infused"* into His disciples on the first day of the Resurrection, saying, *"Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them "* (John 20,

22). Nevertheless, He transmitted it as well in all His appearances after His resurrection *“by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God”* (Acts 1,3), *“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight”* (Acts 1, 9).

Ascended gloriously into the heavens, Jesus Christ sat down at the right hand of the Father and *“deifying the flesh which He assumed”, He “did not leave His disciples orphans”* (Jn. 14, 18), but sent them instead, from the Father, as it was promised, *“another Comforter”* (John 14:16), the Spirit of truth. He sent the Holy Spirit *“on the day of Pentecost in a sound like a violent breath”* and in divided tongues like fire, which sat on each one of them (Acts 2, 1-3). Through the Holy Spirit, He enlightened and strengthened them and they became fervent heralds of the Cross and of His Resurrection. *“He made the fishermen wise”* and through them *“enchanted the world”*. Through their preaching, they *“planted”* the Church in all the earth until its end, against which, as promised, *“the gates of Hades shall not prevail”* (Matthew 16:18).

To this, as the manifestation of His kingdom on earth, He assigned the work of Evangelism, that is, the ministry of evangelism, to the Father's pleasure, because as the apostle of the nations says, *“God was in Christ, calling the world to Himself”* (2 Cor. 5, 19) *“and because in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”* (Col. 2, 9).

This work of reconciliation is performed by His Body, the Church, through the centuries throughout the world. The Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of the Churches, *“the first to receive remission of sins through the Resurrection”*, does this in the places on earth where Christ appeared in the flesh. To them, both near and afar, peace is preached, especially in these difficult times of war raging in the world and destroying not only property and residence but also human

life.

From these places, namely from the Holy and Life-giving Tomb, from where the light of life arose and where the Paschal Resurrection Divine Liturgy is celebrated, the Church of Jerusalem appeals for the cessation of all hostilities, primarily to Gaza, the entire Holy Land and the Middle East. It also appeals for the unity of the Orthodox Churches in the bond of peace and for its unifying testimony to the suffering world, anxiously awaiting for this.

None the least, to its flock in all its normal jurisdiction, Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian state, Qatar and the pilgrims all over the world, it addresses the Easter greeting "Christ is risen" and the triumphant speech of the Saviour, "*Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33).

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, PASCHA 2024

Fervent supplicant for all before God,

**THEOPHILOS III**

**Patriarch of Jerusalem**

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# **PASCHAL GREETING VISITS TO THE WESTERN CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM**

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

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

the Patriarchal delegation and exchanged celebratory speeches.

His Beatitude speech was as follows:

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

*Christ is risen!*

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

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

*We keep this holy season of light and life at a time of deep darkness for our region and our world, and yet we do not shy from proclaiming that Christ has “trampled down death by death,” and given new life to the world.*

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

*We are also grateful that we remain united in our common conviction as the Churches and Christian Communities of the Holy Land in standing against all forms of violence, in calling for an immediate and sustained ceasefire, the release of the hostages, the guarantee of humanitarian aid, access for doctors and medical personnel, and a fresh commitment to*

*a new path forward for our region that leads us away from prejudice, violence, and war to mutual respect, reconciliation, and peace.*

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

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

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

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

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

*peace in our region.*

*Christ is risen!*

*Thank you.”*

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

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

*“Your Beatitude, dear Cardinal Pizzaballa,  
Your Eminences,  
Your Graces,  
Dear Fathers,*

*Christ is risen!*

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

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

*(From the Canon of Pascha)*



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

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

*These are not vain desires: they are the necessary actions that will restore life and well-being, and they accord with the Scriptures. As we read in the Book of Proverbs, It is honorable to resolve a dispute (Prov. 20:3), and in the First Letter of Saint Peter, we understand that since, therefore, Christ suffered in the flesh, [we must] arm ourselves also with the same intention (for whoever has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin), so as to live for the rest of our time in the flesh no longer by human desires but by the will of God (1 Pet. 4:1-2).*

*In addition to our united commitment to peace, justice, and reconciliation in the current war, we remain determined to resist the broadening of areas of conflict in our life. As was the case in 2018, so today in the strongest possible terms we are encouraging the authorities not to over-reach their jurisdiction in attempts to impose illegal and unjust municipal taxation on the Churches that contravene our historical and internationally recognized position and rights. To press this matter in the present circumstances would add an unacceptable level of pressure on the Churches at a time when all people of good will in our region must be focused on the rebuilding of our society, its structures, and*

*communities. We also call on the authorities to refrain from the freezing of all Church assets immediately, so that the Churches can fulfil their mission to serve, to educate, to heal, and to care for those who come to us.*

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

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

*Christ is risen!*

*Thank you."*

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

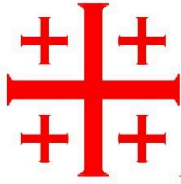






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# **PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF THE CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM – EASTER MESSAGE 2024**



## PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF THE CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM

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### EASTER MESSAGE — 2024

*We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. (Romans 6:9-10)*

We, the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem, while observing two distant dates of commemoration this year, nevertheless join together in unity to proclaim to the world the Good News of Christ's Resurrection, first announced by angels nearly two millennia ago at the empty tomb here in the Holy City of Jerusalem.

This hopeful Easter message not only confirms Christ's triumph over sin and death, but also promises salvation to those who come to our Lord in faith with penitent hearts. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Romans 6:4b-5).

In issuing this Easter proclamation, we fully recognize the intense suffering that surrounds us here in the Holy Land, as well as in many other parts of the world. Speaking more directly to our own circumstances, we repeat our denunciation of all violent actions in the present devastating war, especially those directed against innocent civilians, and we reiterate our call for an immediate and sustained ceasefire.

In concert with these, we renew our plea for the speedy distribution of humanitarian aid; the release of all captives; the unimpeded access of fully-equipped doctors and medical staff to tend the sick and injured; and the opening of internationally facilitated negotiations aimed at ending and moving beyond the present cycle of violence. Only in this way, we believe, can a comprehensive solution be finally advanced for a just and lasting peace here in the land where our Lord sacrificed his life, breaking down the dividing wall of enmity, in order to offer the world the hope for reconciliation (Ephesians 2:14; Colossians 1:20).

While extending this Easter message to Christians and others around the world, we offer our special greetings to those of the faithful in Gaza who have been bearing especially heavy crosses over the past several months. These include those taking refuge inside St. Porphyrios and Holy Family Churches, as well as the courageous staff and volunteers of the Anglican-run Ahli Hospital, along with the patients they serve.

To them and to all who look to Christ's Resurrection in faith, even in the midst of the present darkness, let us affirm with St. Paul this hopeful acclamation: "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

It is in this confident spirit, that, whatever our circumstances, we can join with each other in repeating the ancient and joyous Easter greeting that continues to echo across the ages: "Christ is Risen! (*Al Maseeh Qam! Christos Anesti! Christos haryav i merelotz! Pikhirstos aftonf! Christ est Ressuscite! Cristo è risorto! Christus resurrexit! Meshiha qam! Christos t'ensah em' muhtan! Christus ist auferstanden!*) He is Risen, indeed! Alleluia!"

—The Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem

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# THE FEAST OF CHRISTMAS – CHRISTMAS DAY

The Christmas Feast of Sunday, December 25, 2023/January 7, 2024, began with the Descent in the evening from the entrance to the Baptistery and the entrance to the Basilica, presided over by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias.

Then the sequence of Matins began, as written in the Minaion, in the Catholicon of the Basilica. During this time, His Beatitude, the High Priests and the Priests proceeded to the Grotto, with, the President of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Committee, representative of the President of the Palestinian State Mr Mahmoud Abbas-Abu Mazen, Mr Ramzi Khouri and associates of his office on the right and the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Dimitrios Angelosopoulos on the left and the representative of the King of Jordan.

In the Grotto, a prayer was offered and the Gospel according to Luke was read “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed” (2,1). Afterwards, the Patriarchal Christmas Message was read by the Elder Secretary-General His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina in Greek and by the Protopresbyter Fr Issa Mousleh in Arabic:

“A strange and marvellous mystery do I behold;

the cave is a heaven; the Virgin a cherubic throne;

the manger a space wherein Christ God the

Uncontainable One hath reclined.

Him do we praise and magnify”

*(Christmas Canon, Heirmos of Ode 9)*

Mankind beheld "a strange and marvellous mystery" indeed, as the hymnographer of the Church writes, at the end of times, during the reign of Caesar Octavianus Augustus. We saw God's condescension manifested in Bethlehem of Judea. Fulfilling His promises to the prophets, God "sent redemption to His people". This redemption is the Only Begotten Son and His Word, "of the same essence" as the Father. Through God the Father, He was blessed to be incarnated, to take on human soul, flesh and body from the Holy Spirit and the Ever-Virgin Mary. "As He willed and as He pleased" and as the Evangelist John says, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us". (John 1, 14). For our sake, He "emptied himself" (Phil. 2, 7), and was "secretly born in a cave". He accepted the ultimate poverty; He was born in a cave and wrapped in swaddling clothes; He lay in a manger. In this poverty "the wealth of His Divinity shone". Because of this, "the heaven through the star brought over to Him the Magi as the beginning of the nations" and "precursors of the Church" according to Saint Chrysostom. An angel revealed Him to the shepherds who kept the night watch and a multitude of angels proclaimed Him from heaven through the hymn, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill among men", announcing that God's goodwill for men is peace. This all-pervading Divine peace is brought to the world by God's Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ; He is "the Angel of great counsel, the Prince of peace and the Sun of righteousness".

Based on this Divine revelation, as it was witnessed by eye and ear witnesses in the Holy Scriptures, the Church believes and preaches to its members and the whole world, that Christ is the Saviour and Redeemer of the human race, not as deified man but as God Incarnate, for the salvation, that is, the deification of man. God came down to earth, to raise man to



heaven, because "our conversation remains" (Phil, 3, 20) according to Saint Paul. The Fathers of the Church say incessantly, "God became man and man became divine". And Saint Gregory Palamas proclaims that "the flesh is glorified along with the reception and the glory of the body, which becomes the glory of the Godhead". Through the Incarnation, the Cross, the Resurrection from the dead and His Ascension, Christ as God and man, God-man, sat down at the right hand of the Father after assuming His human nature and paved the deification for those believing in him.

Having ascended into heaven, the Incarnate One, the crucified in the flesh and risen from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ, left the Church on earth, that is, the holy disciples and apostles, their successors, the hierarchs, priests and the Christ-named congregation, so that it may fulfil His mission unto the ages; the mission of the teaching, the conciliation and the sanctification of people, so that what was heard on the first night of His Nativity, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace goodwill among men" prevails on earth.

The Church worldwide, especially the blessed Church of Jerusalem, proclaims this word and performs this work, obedient to its founder, as it ministers in the places of His manifestation in the flesh, the first of which was the city of Bethlehem. In the magnificent Constantinian Basilica of the Nativity and the humble Grotto, the Mother of the Churches will celebrate again this year, starting from Jerusalem, keeping its ancient tradition since the days of the pilgrim Aetheria and our late predecessor Patriarch Sophronios.

Filled with the joy of the Nativity of Christ, we address Our Patriarchal and Fatherly wishes and blessings to "every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" (Jn.1, 4, 2), to the pious pilgrims, especially to Our reverend flock in Gaza, along with Our prayers, that Saint Porphyrios remains its protector and of all those suffering there under the raging war.

In particular, we express our gratitude to the President of the Palestinian state, Mahmoud Abbas-Abu Mazen, through his representative, Mr Ramzi Hourri, and we wish him God's strength in the success of his efforts and struggles, including the protection of the tested Palestinian people, to live in peace, justice and prosperity in the context of an absolutely free Palestinian state worthy of international recognition.

In the Holy City of Bethlehem CHRISTMAS 2023

THEOPHILOS III

PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

This was followed by the veneration of the star and the Manger. Then the exit took place from the north gate of the Grotto and the top of the steps of the chapel of the Armenians, to hold the procession three times around the Catholicon and the sides of the Basilica of the Nativity and there was a supplication at the central part of the Church.

When the Entourage reached the iconostasis, His Beatitude started chanting the 9<sup>th</sup> Ode, the service of Matins continued and then the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great. The services were presided over by His Beatitude, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina, Theophanes of Gerassa, Dimitrios of Lydda and Philoumenos of Pella, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, other Holy Sepulchre Priests, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios. Despite the ongoing hostilities in the area, a large congregation of Palestinian Orthodox Christians attended the Vigil.

The Divine Liturgy was also celebrated in the Grotto of the Nativity by His Eminence Archbishop Nectarios of Anthedona, the representative of the Patriarchate in Constantinople.

The Patriarchal Liturgy finished at 3.30 a.m., as per the Status Quo.

After the Vigil the Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem hosted a meal, sharing the plight of the Palestinian people who are being tested by the ongoing war.

In the morning the Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos went down to the Grotto for veneration and left the Basilica, indicating with this act the end of the first day of the Great Feast of Christmas at the Basilica of the Nativity and the Grotto, where Christ our God was born in the flesh.

**From Secretariat-General**

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# **CHRISTMAS 2023 MESSAGE OF HIS HOLY BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III**

“A strange and marvellous mystery do I behold;  
the cave is a heaven; the Virgin a cherubic throne;  
the manger a space wherein Christ God the  
Uncontainable One hath reclined.  
Him do we praise and magnify”

*(Christmas Canon, Heirmos of Ode 9)*

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Based on this Divine revelation, as it was witnessed by eye and ear witnesses in the Holy Scriptures, the Church believes and preaches to its members and the whole world, that Christ is the Saviour and Redeemer of the human race, not as deified man but as God Incarnate, for the salvation, that is, the deification of man. God came down to earth, to raise man to heaven, because "our conversation remains" (Phil, 3, 20) according to Saint Paul. The Fathers of the Church say

incessantly, "God became man and man became divine". And Saint Gregory Palamas proclaims that "the flesh is glorified along with the reception and the glory of the body, which becomes the glory of the Godhead". Through the Incarnation, the Cross, the Resurrection from the dead and His Ascension, Christ as God and man, God-man, sat down at the right hand of the Father after assuming His human nature and paved the deification for those believing in him.

Having ascended into heaven, the Incarnate One, the crucified in the flesh and risen from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ, left the Church on earth, that is, the holy disciples and apostles, their successors, the hierarchs, priests and the Christ-named congregation, so that it may fulfil His mission unto the ages; the mission of the teaching, the conciliation and the sanctification of people, so that what was heard on the first night of His Nativity, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace goodwill among men" prevails on earth.

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In the Holy City of Bethlehem CHRISTMAS 2023

THEOPHILOS III  
PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

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**EMBRACING UNITY: H.B.  
THEOPHILOS III'S LETTER TO  
H.H. KIRILL STRESSES  
IMPORTANCE OF UNITY, AND  
EXTENDS DEVOTIONS ON HIS  
HOLINESS BIRTHDAY AT THE HOLY  
TOMB OF JESUS CHRIST**

ΕΛΛΗΝΟΡΘΟΔΟΣΙΟΝ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΕΙΟΝ  
ΙΕΡΟΣΟΛΥΜΩΝ



GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE  
JERUSALEM



No. 669

**His Holiness Patriarch Kirill**  
Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia  
Moscow  
RUSSIA

Your Holiness, dear Brother and Fellow Concelebrant in the Lord,

On the happy occasion of your birthday celebrations, we greet you from the Holy City of Jerusalem, and we wish to extend our warmest fraternal best wishes to you. It is a sadness to us that we cannot join in these celebrations in person so that we might enjoy together the full expression of the unity and communion that we share in the Divine Liturgy.

As you are fully aware, we face a most difficult ongoing situation here where our people are enduring tremendous hardship and violence, and this prevents us from being with you. However, we shall offer a devotions for you at the Holy Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Even as we do our utmost to support and to minister to our people here, we are committed to our spiritual mission to uphold the unity of the Orthodox Church and to do all in our power to contribute to the healing of the unhappy divisions that exists between our Orthodox sisters and brothers in Russia and Ukraine. We are grateful to you for the encouragement in this process that you gave after our recent announcement in September and we further appreciate your support echoed in the October meeting of the representatives of Russia's religious communities. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem has always had a special concern for the unity of the Church, and has acted across the ages when the need was calling. We shall be devoted in our efforts to continue this legacy and to uphold in every possible way the journey of reconciliation that we started in Amman, with care and accommodation to all our fellow Orthodox primates.

May the Prince of Peace, whose Nativity in the Holy Grotto of Bethlehem we are preparing now to celebrate, strengthen you in your primatial ministry, and may he bring lasting peace and reconciliation to our beloved Holy Land and to our Holy Orthodox Church in every part of the world.

With fraternal love in Christ.

**THEOPHILOS III**  
Patriarch of Jerusalem

Holy City of Jerusalem  
Monday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023

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# PASCHA 2023 MESSAGE BY HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III

THEOPHILOS III

By the grace of God, Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem  
and of all Palestine

to the congregation of the Church, grace and mercy and peace  
from the Holy and Life-giving Sepulchre of the Risen Christ.

*Come ye receive light from the unwaning light and glorify  
Christ who is risen from the dead*

“It was very early at dawn on that day, the first of the Sabbaths” after the Crucifixion and burial of our Lord Jesus Christ. The women who followed Jesus from Galilee went into the city and “had bought sweet spices, that they might come to anoint the body of the Lord Jesus” (Mark 16, 1). When they arrived at the door of the sepulchre, the bright angel sitting on it said, “Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him” (Mark 16, 6 – 7).

“The Lord shewed himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen by them for forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God”



(Acts 1,3).“Making intercession for us from there” (Rom, 8, 34), He sent us another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, “who proceeds from the Father (Jn. 15, 26). This Spirit of the Son enlightened His holy disciples and apostles and strengthened and transformed and highlighted Spirit-bearing preachers of the Gospel. Through them, He enchanted the whole world and established the Church at its ends, which He redeemed with His blood. As the body of Christ, the Church is the steward of His sanctifying and redeeming mission on earth. It performs the redeeming sacraments and preaches to the world, as He did, peace, reconciliation and love to all, even the enemies. We pray in the Churches, along with Saint Basil the Great, “let the schisms of the churches cease, the heresies and revolutions be suppressed”, and “give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully” (1 Tim. 5,14).

The fulfilment of this mission rests particularly on the Church of the Holy Land. The Church “being” in Jerusalem, which from the empty and Holy Sepulchre, the source of the Resurrection, has been persecuted since the beginning, and recently severely, but struggles undefied, “as if dying and behold we live” (2 Cor. 6,9) preaching Christ Crucified and Resurrected and receiving its children, “from the west and the north and the sea and the east” through the sweet melodic greeting “Christ is risen” and through Our Patriarchal wishes and Fatherly blessings.

In the Holy City of Jerusalem

PASCHA 2023

Fervent supplicant for all before God

**THEOPHILOS III**

**Patriarch of Jerusalem**

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# LETTERS OF CONDOLENCE TO THE FAMILIES OF THE VICTIMS OF THE FATAL RAILWAY ACCIDENT IN TEMPI

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem expresses its deepest condolences to the families of the victims of the fatal train accident in Tempi, Larissa Prefecture, through the following letters of our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III to the Primate of the Church of Greece His Beatitude Archbishop of Athens and all Greece Hieronymos and to the Prime Minister of Greece His Excellency Mr Kyriakos Mitsotakis, which are as follows in Greek:

Άριθμ. Πρωτ. 63

Μακαριώτατε Αρχιεπίσκοπε Ἀθηνῶν καί πάσης Ἑλλάδος καί Πρόεδρε τῆς Ἱερᾶς Συνόδου τῆς ἐν Ἑλλάδι Ἀγιωτάτης Ἐκκλησίας ἐν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ, λίαν ἀγαπητέ ἀδελφέ καί συλλειτουργέ τῆς Ἡμῶν Μετριότητος **Κύριε Ἱερώνυμε**. Τήν Ὑμετέραν περισπούδαστον Ἡμῖν Μακαριότητα ἐν φιλήματι ἀγίῳ περιπτυσσόμενοι, ἡδέως προσαγορεύομεν.

Διά τῶν Πατριαρχικῶν ἀδελφικῶν Ἡμῶν Γραμμάτων τούτων, μετ' ἄλγους ψυχῆς ἐπικοινωνοῦμεν μετά τῆς Ὑμετέρας λίαν Περισπουδάστου Ἡμῖν Μακαριότητος, ἵνα ἐκφράσωμεν τήν βαθεῖαν θλίψιν καί συμπαράστασιν Ἡμῶν διά τό ἐπισυμβάν εἰς τήν κοιλάδα τῶν Τεμπῶν ἀπροσδόκητον σιδηροδρομικόν δυστύχημα, ἐν ᾧ ἐφονεύθησαν δεκάδες ἀνθρώπων κυρίως νεαρᾶς ἡλικίας.

Συμμετέχοντες εἰς τό ἐθνικόν πένθος καί συλλυπούμενοι τῇ Ὑμετέρᾳ Μακαριότητι καί τοῖς πενθοῦσι συγγενέσι τῶν θυμάτων,

προσευχόμεθα ἀπό τοῦ Φρικτοῦ Γολγοθᾶ ὑπέρ ἀναπαύσεως τῶν φονευθέντων ἐν χώρᾳ ζώντων μετά δικαίων, ἐξ ὕψους παρηγορίας τῶν πενθούντων συγγενῶν αὐτῶν καί ὑπέρ ταχείας ἰάσεως τῶν τραυματισθέντων. Προσέτι δέ ὑψώνομεν χεῖρα ἰκέτιδα τῷ Δεσπότη τῶν ὅλων Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ ἡμῶν, παρακαλοῦντες Αὐτόν, ὅπως φυλάσῃ τό Γένος ἡμῶν καί τήν ἀνθρωπότητα ἅπασαν ἀπό «θανάτου, πένθους καί λιμοῦ» (πρβλ. Ἀποκ. 18,8).

Ἐφ' οἷς, ἀποδιδόντες Αὐτῇ τόν ἐν Κυρίῳ ἀσπασμόν ἀπό τοῦ Παναγίου καί Ζωοδόχου Τάφου τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Χριστοῦ, διατελοῦμεν.

Ἐν τῇ Ἁγίᾳ Πόλει Ἱερουσαλήμ ,βκγ' Φεβρουαρίου ιζ'.

Τῆς Ὑμετέρας Πεφιλημένης Μακαριότητος

Ἀγαπητός ἐν Χριστῷ ἀδελφός

**ΘΕΟΦΙΛΟΣ Γ΄**

**Πατριάρχης Ἱεροσολύμων**

Ἀριθμ. Πρωτ. 61

Ἐξοχώτατε,

Μετ' ἄλγους ψυχῆς ἐπικοινωνοῦμεν μετά τῆς Ὑμετέρας λίαν Τετιμημένης Ἡμῖν Ἐξοχότητος, ἵνα ἐκφράσωμεν τήν βαθεῖαν θλίψιν καί συμπάραστασιν Ἡμῶν διά τό ἐπισυμβάν εἰς τήν κοιλάδα τῶν Τεμπῶν ἀπροσδόκητον σιδηροδρομικόν δυστύχημα, ἐν ᾧ ἐφονεύθησαν δεκάδες ἀνθρώπων κυρίως νεαρᾶς ἡλικίας.

Συμμετέχοντες εἰς τό ἐθνικόν πένθος καί συλλυπούμενοι τῇ Ὑμετέρᾳ Ἐξοχώτητι καί τοῖς πενθοῦσι συγγενέσι τῶν θυμάτων, προσευχόμεθα ἀπό τοῦ Φρικτοῦ Γολγοθᾶ ὑπέρ ἀναπαύσεως τῶν φονευθέντων ἐν χώρᾳ ζώντων μετά δικαίων, ἐξ ὕψους παρηγορίας τῶν πενθούντων συγγενῶν αὐτῶν καί ὑπέρ ταχείας ἰάσεως τῶν τραυματισθέντων. Προσέτι δέ ὑψώνομεν χεῖρα ἰκέτιδα τῷ Δεσπότη

τῶν ὅλων Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ ἡμῶν, παρακαλοῦντες Αὐτόν, ὅπως φυλάσῃ τό Γένος ἡμῶν καί τήν ἀνθρωπότητα ἅπασαν ἀπό «θανάτου, πένθους καί λιμοῦ» (πρβλ. Ἀποκ. 18,8).

Ἐπί δέ τούτοις, ἐπιδαφιλεύοντες τῇ Ὑμετέρα Ἐξοχότητι τὰς Πατριαρχικάς Ἡμῶν εὐχάς καί εὐλογίας ἀπό τοῦ Παναγίου καί Ζωοδόχου Τάφου, διατελοῦμεν.

Ἐν τῇ Ἁγίᾳ Πόλει Ἱερουσαλήμ ,βκγ´ Φεβρουαρίου ιζ´.

Τῆς Ὑμετέρας Τετιμημένης Ἐξοχότητος

Διάπυρος πρὸς Κύριον Εὐχέτης,

**ΘΕΟΦΙΛΟΣ Γ´**

**Πατριάρχης Ἱεροσολύμων**

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# **THE LETTER OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF ATHENS AND ALL GREECE IERONYMOS ABOUT THE HOLY MONASTERY OF SINAI**

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem publishes the letter of His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos

under Protocol no. 788 and from December 21, 2022, to His Beatitude Archbishop of Athens and All Greece Ieronymos regarding the Autocephalous regime of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine of Sinai and the canonical order in the case of the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in it, under a Bishop of other ecclesiastical jurisdictions.

This letter reads as follows:

No. Prot.

788

Your Beatitude Archbishop of Athens and all Greece and President of the Holy Synod of the Holy Church in Christ God in Greece, dear brother and co-minister of Our Mediocrity Mr Ieronymos. Embracing you in a holy kiss we humbly admonish Your Beatitude.

Through these Patriarchal fraternal Letters of Ours, we communicate in the spirit of fraternal love in Christ after Your most beloved and widely studied Beatitude, taking the occasion from this year's feast of the Holy Glorious Great Martyr Catherine the All-wise in the Holy Monastery of the God-trodden Mount Sinai.

As you know, the long-standing canonical tradition of our Orthodox Church, witnessed in most canonical and synodical documents, (e.g. in the Canonical Letter of the Patriarch of Constantinople Gennadius Scholarios to Maximus Sophianus Hegoumen of the Monastery of Sinai, in the decisions of the Synodical Assembly in Cairo in the year 1557 under the Patriarchs Joachim of Alexandria, Joachim of Antioch and Germanos of Jerusalem, in the decision of the Holy Synod in Moscow in the year 1667, in the Patriarchal Letter of the Ecumenical Patriarch Methodius III), and also in the creeds, the confession which the Archbishops of Sinai have been giving up to the present time before the Patriarchs of Jerusalem at their ordination, as well as in the valid Constitution of the

Patriarch of Jerusalem Chrysanthos, which defines this Monastery as being within the limits of the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, for centuries Autocephalous, Autonomous and Independent, administered by the Holy Synod of the Sinaitic Fathers.

This tradition and order from the days of Our election to the Patriarchal Throne, We also, conforming to the Canonical Principles, which were established by Our predecessors, including the great Sinaitic Patriarch of Jerusalem Nektarios, have totally respected, without any intervention neither in the internal administrative issues of the Monastery nor in its external activities.

These being strictly observed, however, a problem has been created recently, as it were, from the non-notification of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem by the Sinaitic Fathers, for the invitation of Hierarchs from other Ecclesiastical jurisdictions, for the purpose of the celebration of the Divine Eucharist in the Holy Monastery, in particular on the feast of Saint Catherine. Every year We send a delegation for this feast, without knowing which High Priests of other Churches we will meet there, thus making Our representatives witnesses of canonical disorder.

At the Divine Liturgy of the feast of Saint Catherine this year, His Eminence the Metropolitan Nikolaos of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki, presided, without any knowledge on Our part, and he commemorated in the Divine Liturgy, apparently due to a misunderstanding, the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece and the Archbishop of Sinai, without any mention of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, in contrast to the liturgical and canonical order that existed in the Venerable Patriarchates. We wonder if the Autonomy of the Monastery or its "Autocephalous", as the Sinai Fathers claim, annuls the order of the Diptychs and on what canonical basis is this annulment based.

We make known to Your Beatitude that through the above we do

not express an intention to catalyze the “Autocephalous” character of the management of the Monastery, but on the contrary, we intend to protect its Status in everything within the framework of the normal mandates of the Fathers and Synods (35th of the Apostles, 2nd of the Second Ecumenical Council, 20th of Quinisext Council, 13th and 22nd of the Antioch Council, etc.), so we asked the Sinai Fathers to observe the normal order on this issue to ensure “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4.3).

Collocating these, we kindly request from Your Beatitude to recommend to the High Priests of the Church of Greece, any time they wish to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in the Holy Monastery of the God-trodden Mount Sinai, to inform the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, like the High Priests of the Other Orthodox Churches do because the Autonomy of the Monastery does not annul the fact that the Monastery does not stand in some abstract placement but on normal grounds of the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Whence, attributing to You the embracing in the Lord from the Holy and Life-Giving Tomb of our Saviour Christ, we remain.

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, December 21, 2022

Your Beatitude's

Beloved brother in Christ

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

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# THE ELECTION OF THE NEW ARCHBISHOP OF CYPRUS GEORGIOS

On the morning of Saturday, December 11/24, 2022, following a Divine Liturgy in the Cathedral Church of the Holy Apostle Barnabas of the Holy Archdiocese of Cyprus and following a standard electoral procedure, in accordance with the new Statutory Law of the Church of Cyprus, the election of the former Metropolitan Georgios of Paphos to Archbishop of New Justiniana and all of Cyprus took place.

On this election, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III sent the following congratulatory Letter to the Archbishop-elect:

Your Beatitude Archbishop of New Justiniana and All Cyprus, in Christ God, dearly beloved and profound brother and co-minister of Our Mediocrity **Mr Georgios**. Embracing Your Holy Beatitude in a holy kiss, we humbly invoke the supreme blessing.

With pleasure, we have been informed of the ascension of Your highly praised and widely studied Beatitude to the Archbishopric and National Throne of the Most Holy Apostolic Church of Cyprus in succession to the blessed Archbishop Chrysostomos.

We also make haste from thence, from the Holy Land, to heartily congratulate You and pray in the Grotto of the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, for a blessed, fruitful and in the Holy Spirit governing, a hierarchical and pastoral ministry for the preservation of the sacred legacy of our Orthodox Faith and restoration of the unity of the people of long-suffering Cyprus.

At this time, when schisms and dissensions are shaking the unity of our One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church,



every reasonable effort is required on the part of all the Primate of the local Orthodox brotherly Churches to ensure and preserve the God-ordered unity “that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. Rom. 15:6).

Wherefore, congratulating You on the meritorious election of Your Beatitude to the Office of the Primate of the Church of the saint-bearing land of Cyprus and kissing You fraternally with a holy kiss, from the Most Sacred and God-receiving Grotto, we remain.

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2022.

Your Holy Beatitude's

Beloved brother in Christ

**THEOPHILOS III**

Patriarch of Jerusalem

**From Secretariat-General**