

# **EASTER 2019 MESSAGE OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III**

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

to all the members of the Church, grace and mercy and peace  
from the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb  
of the Resurrected Christ.

“Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him” (Mark 16:6).

The Myrrh-bearing Women who came on the morning of the first Saturday to anoint Jesus with myrrh, heard this joyful and hopeful words from the luminous angel who was sitting by the tomb.

The angel's words were confirmed with the sight of the empty tomb, with the “the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself” (John 20:7). Moreover, they were confirmed with the vision of the resurrected Christ. Christ went down to Hades through the cross but Hades did not hold Him. With His descend in Hades, the Lord removed and retrieved from it those who had been bound in hell for centuries, “He stood and cried aloud to those in Hades, enter again Paradise”. “ For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God” (2 Cor. 13:4), He was risen from the dead by His Divine-Human power and appeared to the Myrrh-bearing women and to His disciples many times. He appeared to them at the Upper room on

the first and on the eighth day after His Resurrection (John 20:19 & 26), on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:15), in Jerusalem “the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them” (Luke 24:33), “not as a spirit, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones” (Luke 24:39), but with His illumined and glorified body with the signs of the nails in His hands and feet” (Luke 24:40), asking them “Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them” (Luke 24:41-43).

“To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days” (Acts 1:3), He was then ascended to heaven in glory from the Mount of Olives, He sent to the gathered disciples in the Upper room “another Comforter” from the Father, the Spirit of truth, and through them captivated the whole world, founded and established the Church in it.

The Lord established the Church as the witness of His truth and continuer of His mission. The Church, in the Holy Spirit teaches and preaches Him to be Incarnate, Crucified and Resurrected. It teaches through the word and manifests the teaching through works, while it sanctifies through the Sacraments. It conveys the Divine Grace, transforms the morals, the life and the whole being of the people. It becomes both paradise and heaven, as the troparion says “as we stand in the temple of Thy glory we think we are in heaven”. The Church is an earthly oasis, a spring of living water, of truth and of peace, of righteousness, of brotherhood, of reconciliation, of rapture, and of fulfilled happiness. It deters wars, dispels enmity and unites the nations. The Church preserves and protects the environment and the planet as the creation of God for the habitation of the humankind.

The Church of Jerusalem, as the Mother of Churches, works its pilgrimage, pastoral and salvific mission at the divine dwelling places, at the places that have been sanctified

through the grace of the Incarnate, Crucified and Resurrected from the dead, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. From them, and especially from the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb, though the offering of the bloodless sacrifice "on the salvific and bright night of the luminous day of the Resurrection" we pray for the peace-making of the whole world, and especially for the troubled Middle East, for the cessation of the schisms of the Churches and for the unity of the Orthodox Church in the bond of peace, and greet our reverend flock in all parts of the world along with the noble pilgrims, and wish to all, the joy, the power the hope and the light of the Resurrected Christ.

**Christ is Risen!**

In the Holy City of Jerusalem PASCHA 2019

With Fatherly wishes and Patriarchal blessings

Fervent Supplicant for all before God

**THEOPHILOS III**

**Patriarch of Jerusalem**

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**LETTER FROM THE SECRETARIAT-  
GENERAL OF THE PATRIARCHATE  
OF JERUSALEM TO ANT1 TV**

# STATION                      REGARDING                      MR. ALIKAKOS'                      PUBLISHED                      BOOK

Protoc. No: 133

Honorable Gentlemen,

Regarding the issue that arose from the forthcoming publication by Ekkremes Publications of a book by the journalist Dimitris Alikakos with the title "Redemption – About the Holy Light", we state the following;

1. The writer visited the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and met with its executives initially to meet his spiritual needs and then as part of a survey of the history of our Patriarchate.
2. Any videotaped interviews he claims to have at his disposal took place illegally, without the knowledge of his interlocutors, and of course without the necessary consent.
3. From the videos that have been seen, fraudulent stitching (editing) is evident, in order to extract the "desired" effect, an act which apart from being morally reprehensible, is also criminally verifiable.
4. All necessary legal action towards Google has already been launched in order to remove the videos in question from the internet as tampering, containing misleading and defamatory content, and defying people and Truths of our Faith. In any case, we expressly reserve our generally legitimate right to the necessary legal actions that will take place de facto.
5. What is written in the book in question is a product of fantastic inventive stories of the author with the obvious aim of triggering the believers and gaining economic benefits from the sales of the book. The choice of circulation of the book in question at the given

time, amidst the Holy and Great Lent and as our Church is heading towards the Holy Pascha, proves beyond any doubt the deepest motives of the author and the publishing house.

6. The official position of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem for the Service of the Holy Light is that which is included in the program of the Holy Saturday of each year, at the Website of the Patriarchate, in the studies of the Hagiotaphite Fathers and especially of the late Hagiotaphite Kallistos Miliaras in the "Nea Sion" Journal and to what is deduced from the Holy Bible and the Fathers of the Church.

**Jerusalem, 18 March 2019,**

Yours Sincerely,

**ARISTARCHOS**

Archbishop of Constantina

Geronda Secretary-General

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# **MESSAGE OF H.H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM ON THE OCCASION OF EPIPHANY 2019**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we approach the Great Feast of Epiphany, the day in which

our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was baptized in the Jordan River and the Holy Trinity made manifest, we are also thankful that this year, for the first time in more than 50 years, this holy place will be freed from the landmines which have defiled it for so long.

For this, we are grateful for the commitment and meticulous work of the HALO Trust, as well as the cooperation of Israeli and Palestinian authorities together with the Churches. We welcome the coming together of so many people to achieve this clearance as a sign of peace and reconciliation, which We hope can be replicated throughout the Holy Land and in the greater region. We also look forward to continuing to welcome hundreds of thousands of pilgrims each year to the Baptism Site, who can now visit our monasteries and appreciate the fuller experience we knew several decades ago.

The Baptism Site, which we also call Qaser al Yahud, or "crossing place of the Jews," is a meeting point between heaven and earth, venerated by followers of the Abrahamic religions around the world. It was here, around the Jordan River, where according to the New Testament, Saint John the Baptist lived, preached, and baptized believers. The submersion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ into those same waters allows us to enter into the spiritual Promised Land, i.e. the Church. It is by Baptism that we are clothed with the Holy Spirit, for according to Saint Paul, "As many of you have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye all are one in Jesus Christ. And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:26).

We pray, that through our human efforts to reconcile ourselves to this consecrated land which we share, stewarding this physical oasis of divine-human encounter, we also reconcile with one another for the sake of peace, love, and the mutual flourishing of all peoples created by God. May the Light of

Epiphany warm our hearts and enlighten our minds in this New Year, and always.

With Our Patriarchal blessings and best wishes.

Holy City of Jerusalem January 2019

THEOPHILOS III PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

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**MESSAGE OF HIS BEATITUDE THE  
PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM  
THEOPHILOS III ON THE  
OCCASION OF CHRISTMAS 2018**

*“Make ready, O Bethlehem, let the manger be prepared,*

*Let the Cave show its welcome.*

*The truth is come the shadow is passed away;*

*God hath appeared from a Virgin unto men,*

*Formed as we are and deifying that which He hath assumed.”*

*(Plagal of fourth Tone by Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem)*

During the joyful Twelve-day festivities of Christmas, and especially on this day of Christ's Nativity, primarily the Church, celebrates in doxology and thanksgiving but also the whole of humanity, socially participates in the celebration of a supernatural and extraordinary event, a strange and paradox mystery that surpasses any human reasoning.

This festal event is the incarnation of God the Word. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1,14) according to the Evangelist of love. In the excess of His love towards man, God our Father found it pleasing that His Son would become the Son of man, being incarnate and born in the flesh from the All-holy and pure Virgin. "God was seen in the flesh on earth and consorted with the people", according to the hymn writer of the Church. "The Son of God", writes the God-bearing Holy Father John of Damascus, "partakes of the worst, namely, our human nature, so that He may reform man in Himself according to the image and likeness of the Father and grant us the communion in life, and deliver us from corruption, becoming the First among us to lead our resurrection and thus renew our villainous and crushed body"(Ed. Orthodox Faith, Vol. 77). This philanthropic action of God is called by St. Gregory the Theologian "epidemic of God on earth, so that we humans may emigrate in heaven" (PG 36, 316A).

The incarnation of God the Word by the Ever-Virgin takes place at the time of the world census, during the reign of Caesar Octavian Augustus, when Herod was the King in the town of Bethlehem in Judea (Luke 2,1 & Matt. 2,1). Then, as there was no place for them in the inn (Luke 2,7), Christ "in a hidden way, was born in a cave and laid in a manger". Nevertheless, the *kenosis* of the Incarnation and the birth in the flesh of God the Word is hidden from the mighty ones of the earth, and it becomes known to people by God in heavens. God summons wise men from the East bearing gifts with a star (Matt. 2,1) and with angels He informs the shepherds who stayed overnight in the fields and sang "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth



peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2,14).

This heavenly and divine message of peace from the Master of peace, the Angel of the great Will, namely, of the reconciliation, of God's condescension towards us men, of the pardon, the ultimate humility, which reached the point of the sacrifice on the Cross, is embraced, appropriated, proclaimed, exercised and preached by the Church which has been founded by the Incarnate Christ, towards all those near and afar, to its members as well as the whole world, regardless of race, religion, nationality, colour and language, calling us and saying just as the Apostle of the nations did, "receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Romans 15,7). The Church especially projects this message to the powerful ones of the earth, who direct the lives of people and determine the developments in the Middle East and in the Holy Land, so that they may not be puffed up with pride, but being magnates, they may minister in righteousness and truth, for the prosperity the dignity and the freedom of their people.

The Mother of Churches, having par excellence the privilege among all Churches, of the blessing to minister the Incarnate Christ in the God-receiving Cave and at the Basilica built above it by the Emperors Constantine and Justinian, prays for the peace-making in the Middle East, prosperity of the city of Bethlehem, the unity of the Churches, and wishes to its Christian Congregation within its jurisdiction and all over the world, life, health, peace, prosperity, progress, success, diligence, and salvation, and to the pilgrims, the grace, the power, and the peace and the blessing of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who became an infant for our sake and was born in the flesh from the Ever-Virgin Mary.

In the Holy City of Bethlehem, **CHRISTMAS 2018**

Fervent prayer for all before God,

## THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

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# ADDRESS OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM AT THE GRADUATION CEREMONY IN RAMALLAH

On Saturday, April 29/May 12, 2018, at the Graduation ceremony of the Ramallah School Students of the Patriarchate, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed those present at the ceremony through the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, underlining the following;

Your Grace Archimandrite Mattheos, Chairman of the Schools Board of the Patriarchate in the State of Palestine,

Respected School Manager Mr. Richard Zananiri,

Dear parents and teachers,

Tonight's Graduation Ceremony of the Greek Orthodox School students of the Patriarchate in the town of Ramallah is a great honour for us; this is an annual event that brings joy to all. Our hearts are filled with happiness because we are among people whom we dearly love. These students would not have come to this point in their lives, had there not been a common effort between the school teaching staff and their

families. All of you have been watering this effort with the water of knowledge, of studying and love for many years; and today you reap the fruit of this effort and of your hard work. We make an appeal to all of you to strengthen the relationship of the school with the family.

Dear Students,

Beloved Children in Christ,

Today is the end of one field of your life and the beginning of another, similar to your school progress, which is filled with studying and participation in knowledge. In this new field you will distinguish the difference between the higher and the secondary education. For this reason I encourage you to always seek studying and education, because this is the way that leads to knowledge and the fulfillment of man's goals.

All religions lead man in the seeking of wisdom and the civil laws allow the citizens study at the educational institutions, in order to contribute to the building to the society and the elevation of civilization. According to the Old Testament (Ecclesiastes 2:26) "For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God".

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem does not hesitate when it comes to support its schools and stand by them, and toil day and night for the provision of all necessary things in all fields, without distinction for their progress. The annual students' ceremonies and distinctions are the greatest proof of the success and progress of these schools, by the help of God and the common care of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, "The Mother of Churches" with the School Board.

We would like to congratulate the Management, the Teachers, and the students for this year's progress and we wish them God's blessing for the success of their goals.

Moreover we pray for the good outcome of the hopes of the Palestinian people in gaining their freedom, its human rights and independence under the good leadership of His Excellency the President of the State of Palestine Mahmoud Abas Abu Mazen, for the prevailing of universal peace and especially in the sensitive Middle East region.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude and respect to the School Manager Mr. Richard Zananiri, who is responsible for the great percentage of the school's success, who works wholeheartedly for the progress and development of this school. We would also like to thank all of you and the staff of this Greek Orthodox institution, with great love and Patriarchal prayers and blessings.

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

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# **PASCHAL GREETINGS TO THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR PASCHAL VISIT TO THE PATRIARCHATE**

10 April 2018

**This speech was not delivered in person,**

**but is sent to the Armenian community**

**via this website.**

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

Your Beatitude Patriarch Nourhan,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

Christ is risen!

We welcome you to our Patriarchate in this Bright Week, and we thank you for your Easter greetings. As we celebrate together this Feast of Feasts, we do so in the words of this Paschal hymn;

*Let us arise in the deep dawn and,  
instead of myrrh, offer praise to the Master;  
we shall see Christ, the Sun of Righteousness,  
who causes life to dawn for all.*

(Ode Five of Pascha, Hermos)

Our witness as those to whom Divine Providence has entrusted the diakonia of the Holy Places is to this new life of the Resurrection that Christ has given to all. Even in the most challenging of times and the most difficult of circumstances, this is the true Light that shines in the darkness and which the darkness cannot overcome (John 1:5).

Our witness to this Divine Light, which is the hope of all the world, is never more evident than in our united purpose and

action. We have seen the fruits of this unity of purpose and action again and again in recent months, from the co-operation of our communities in the restoration of the Sacred Edicule to our commitment in the face of attempts by radical elements in our society to undermine the Status Quo that guarantees the freedom of the Churches.

Our Joint action has shown to people near and far and to our communities our firm determination to continue in our witness to the values of the Gospel.

We give thanks to God, especially this year that during these most Holy Days we have lived into the true provisions of the Status Quo, and the Paschal celebrations of our communities have occurred in peace and harmony.

Even as we celebrate this Paschal Feast, we cannot rest on our laurels. The new life that shines from the Holy Tomb calls us into an ever-deepening understanding and mutual respect that require constant attentiveness and support. The world continues to be broken by violence, unrest, and bloodshed, and many do not know the Uncreated Light that shines forth from our Lord and His Tomb. Our unity of purpose in protecting the mission of the Church in the Holy City of Jerusalem in particular and in this region in general is a great sign of hope for the world.

Our spiritual mission as guardians and servants of the Holy Places is to ensure, as best as we can, that the new life that the risen Christ causes to dawn for all, is made manifest in our witness, in our own service to ensure that the Holy Places remain accessible to all without distinction. The countless pilgrims who have joined us for this Feast of Feasts this year, as well as our own local communities here, are our great joy, for they are the living testimony to the spiritual energy of the Holy Places, and their devotion is a great encouragement to us in our vocation.

May God bless you, Your Beatitude, in this joyful Eastertide, as well as you Brotherhood and the Armenian community. May the Light of Righteousness warm our hearts and enlighten our minds.

Christ is risen!

Thank you.

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**PASCHAL GREETINGS TO THE  
ARMENIAN COMMUNITY FROM  
H.H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF  
JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III**

10 April 2018

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His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

Your Beatitude Patriarch Nourhan,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

Christ is risen!

We greet you, Your Beatitude, the members of your Brotherhood, and the Armenian Community of Jerusalem and the Holy Land, and wish you the blessings of this Holy and Great Paschal Feast. As we sing at this time;

*In your light, O Master, shall we see light,*

*O lover of mankind;*

*for you rose from the dead,*

*granting salvation to the human race,*

*that all creation may glorify you.*

(From the Resurrection Stichera)

As we keep this holy and most joyful Feast, we cannot forget that the message of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is a universal message to the world. Even as we have been entrusted with the guardianship of the Holy Places, so we have been entrusted, as were the first apostles, with this divine message. For in this Paschal Feast salvation has been granted to the entire human race, and the world looks to Jerusalem in hope in this season of Paschal light.

The glory of the risen Christ lies in the sacrificial humility of his cross. Our Lord Jesus Christ was obedient to the Father in everything, and he humbled himself, even to death on the cross, so that the world might live through Him.

As we read in the Letter to the Philippians,

*Christ humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross (Phil. 2:8).*



So it is for the Church, that in suffering we may come to know the risen life of our Lord, who has given us the promise that he will be with us always, "even to the end of the ages" (Mt. 28:20). When humanity suffers, so the Church suffers with her children, and the burden rests with us to keep the hope of the Resurrection alive. Once again we are experiencing violence in our region, and we face the despair that such disruption of the human community inevitably brings in its wake. We cannot rest from our spiritual mission, for it is only from the Empty Tomb that the world will receive the healing and new life which we long for.

As Saint Paul says,

*We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8:22-23).*

As we keep this Paschal Feast, we wish to express to you, Your Beatitude, our appreciation for our deepening understanding of purpose in the face of the many challenges that the Christian communities of our City and region face. We must continue to stand firm and together not for our sake, but for the sake of the spiritual mission of the Holy Places, which are the inexhaustible wells of hope and spiritual refreshment.

May the Light of the Resurrection guide your steps, Your Beatitude, and may you, your Brotherhood and the Armenian community of the Holy Land, enjoy the Paschal fruits of peace and reconciliation.

Christ is risen!

Thank you.

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**PASCHAL GREETINGS TO THE  
CUSTOS AND THE FRANCISCAN  
FRATERNITY OF THE HOLY LAND  
ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR  
EASTER VISIT TO THE  
PATRIARCHATE**

10 April 2018

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

Your Paternity, dear Father Francesco,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Respected Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

Christ is risen!

We welcome you, dear Father Francesco, and we thank you for the Easter greetings that you have brought to us together with your Brotherhood. This is a time of great rejoicing for all people, for this is the Feast that proclaims God's salvation. As we sing today,

*Come all you nations,  
learn the power of this awesome mystery:  
for Christ our Saviour,  
the Word who was in the beginning,  
was crucified for us, and was buried of his own will,  
and arose from the dead,  
that he might save all things.*

(From the Resurrection Stichera)

It is here in Jerusalem, in the Incarnate Light that shines from the Empty Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all the nations learn the power of the new life of the Resurrection. It is here in Jerusalem that we see the vision of the gathering of the nations of the world as countless pilgrims from every land, journey here to receive this Light and to enter into this awesome mystery. It is here in Jerusalem that the salvation of the world and the fulfillment of all things in Christ has begun.

Of all this we are the witnesses. We give thanks to Almighty God that in our unity of purpose we have accomplished together so much for the sake of the Christian communities in the Holy Land and in our region, and for the integrity of the Holy Places.

And we wish to express our gratitude to you, dear Father Francesco, for your dedication and hard work in this regard. In the deepening understanding of our common mission to bear witness to the love and values of the Gospel, the world takes great hope, for they see the overcoming of prejudice and division for the sake of a higher purpose. And so they are renewed in hope, even in a time of renewed violence and strife both near and far.

The work before us continues. There is no rest from our diakonia of the Holy Places or from our pastoral and spiritual mission to our own communities in the region, especially to those who are suffering particularly at this time. The human heart longs for freedom, peace, justice, and safety from danger, and the Church embraces suffering humanity wherever the human family is in any need. It is precisely in times of doubt, uncertainty, and fear that the Holy Places are revealed most fully as the touchstones for us and for the world of prayer. As Saint Paul exhorts us;

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

(1 Thess. 5.16)

May God give us his grace at this Paschal Feast to continue to be faithful in our vocation, and may God bless you, dear Father Francesco, your Brotherhood, and all the communities entrusted to your care.

Christ is risen!

Thank you.

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**PASCHAL GREETINGS TO THE  
APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATOR OF  
THE LATIN PATRIARCHATE IN**

# JERUSALEM

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

Your Excellency, dear Archbishop Pizzaballa

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Dear Fathers,

We greet you, dear Archbishop Pizzaballa, along with the Bishops, clergy and faithful of the Latin Patriarchate, as you celebrate Easter. This is a time for rejoicing in the great mercy of God, as we sing in a Paschal hymn:

*Come on this auspicious day of the Resurrection,*

*let us partake of the new fruit of the vine of the divine  
gladness*

*and of the Kingdom of Christ,*

*praising him as God unto the ages.*

(Ode 8, Troparion)

Even in the face of unprecedented difficulties and challenges for the Christian communities of our region, we are called always to hold fast to this divine gladness, and to the praise of God, who is our hope and our salvation.

As Saint Paul says in the Second Letter to the Corinthians;

“Therefore, since it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart...afflicted in every way,

but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies" (2 Cor. 4:1, 8-10).

We share a moral obligation to the faithful to our martyria to the Empty Tomb, which is full of the divine life. Our responsibility in this matter is great, and has been laid on us by Divine Providence, and we rejoice in the deepening unity of trust and purpose that exists between our communities. We commend you in your pastoral ministry, and we wish to express once again our appreciation for your leadership in clear vision.

If proof were needed of the supreme importance of our united efforts in the safeguarding of the Holy Sites and of the historic rights and privileges to the Churches, we need only think of our indigenous Christian communities of this region and their witnesses to the life of the Church from the very beginning. And we are constantly aware of the ever-growing influx of pilgrims, week by week, month by month, who are an evident and measurable proof that the Holy Sites, and this Holy Land, must remain open to all without distinction or discrimination, as well as of spiritual refreshment in a world that is so terribly wounded by violence, oppression, poverty, the displacement of populations, and injustice.

May we always be faithful to our spiritual vocation. Even when the situation may seem hopeless to others, may we always shine with the hope of the resurrection, radiating divine gladness, and praising the One who brings eternal life to all. In certain circumstances, when decisions are necessary, may we always have the courage to act in the strength that the Almighty God gives in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May God bless you, dear Archbishop Pizzaballa, and all those

committed to your charge, and may you have a blessed and joyous Easter Feast.

Christ is risen!

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# **PASCHAL GREETINGS TO THE CUSTOS AND THE FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY OF THE HOLY LAND**

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

Your Paternity, Dear Father Francesco,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

As you celebrate the Feast of Feasts, we bring you the warm greetings of the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and we remember these words from an Easter hymn:

*Though you descended to the grave, O Immortal One,*

*yet you destroyed the power of Hades,*

*and arose a victor, O Christ our God,*

*calling to the myrrh-bearing women,  
Rejoice, and giving peace to your Apostles,  
O you who grants resurrection to the Fallen.*

(Kontakion, Plagal of the 4th Tone)

Here we understand that the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ brings a new kind of peace – peace especially to the Apostles. But He also gives a new kind of peace to the world, the peace that comes from the hope of eternal life that is given to us in the uncreated Light that shines from the Holy Tomb.

We rejoice in the peace that comes to us the followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that unites us in the common spiritual mission of the Holy Places. Our two Brotherhoods have seen a deepening peace and unity of purpose through the renovation of the Sacred Edicule and now in the face of the new and unprecedented threats against the integrity of the Christian communities of our beloved Holy Land. Once again, we wish to express our appreciation for your ready co-operation with us in all these challenges.

While deeply regrettable, our recent joint decision, along with the Armenian Patriarchate, to close the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in protest to various actions by radical elements in our society, emphasised not just to the authorities here, but to the whole world, our united front. May this new harmony between us, that has been shaped and formed by unforeseen circumstances, lead us to new paths of a deeper union in Christ and mutual trust and regard. As Saint Paul reminds us in the Letter to the Ephesians:

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of



the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1-3).

Here again we hear of the peace that is the fruit of the resurrection, and which is the gift of Almighty God to the world and especially to his Church. It is our mission so to live in this peace of the resurrection that the world may see and know the saving truth of the Gospel.

May “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7). We assure you, dear Father Francesco, and your Brotherhood and the communities that you serve, of our fervent prayers, and we wish you a joyous and peaceful Paschal Feast.

Christ is risen!

Thank you.