

CHRISTMAS 2022 MESSAGE OF HIS HOLY BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III

*“Let Heaven greatly rejoice, let earth make merry;
the Lamb of God is born upon the earth for our sake,
and He granteth the whole world His divine redemption”.*

(Sessional Hymn, Christmas Matins)

Today, the human race everywhere rejoices and is glad. The whole creation rejoices. The whole world celebrates, because “the unheard has been heard”, the things hushed up for centuries have been revealed. What are these unheard things, for which “the world that has heard them is dancing?” It is the joyful news that God’s promises have been fulfilled. That the visions of the prophets have been openly revealed, and the expectations of the nations have been fulfilled.

Out of extreme philanthropy, God came to earth to raise man to heaven. God in Christ assumed our human nature. He assumed man and made him unmistakably a sharer of His Divinity, “communicant of divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4). In unspeakable joy, the Church thankfully sings: “God has sent redemption to His people”. The all-pervading God, “when the fulness of the time was come, sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4,4-5). He “Who, being in the form of God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2, 6-8) according to the Apostle Paul.

According to Saint Chrysostom (Homily on Matthew 3:13), “He accepted to be conceived in the womb of a virgin and to come

from thence in the form of our nature", and according to Saint Cyril of Alexandria: "the Only Begotten Word of God was communicated in flesh and blood, thus a man who took on flesh and making it His, was born in the flesh through the Holy and Theotokos Mary" (PG 77, 1205A). According to this Father, this whole event, "that is, God emigrated on earth, in order to make man a citizen of heaven and to join him in the heavenly chorea, for this we too must offer to God, Who honoured us, as a just reward the modesty of works, philanthropy, hospitality, love, love towards our brethren" (PG 77, 4690).

This supernatural mystery of the incarnation, and nativity in the flesh of the Son and Word of God, was revealed to people locally and historically, in place and time, in Bethlehem the Holy, in this humble Cave, during the monarchy of Caesar Octavian Augustus. It was not revealed to the then mighty men of the earth, workers of power, violence and impiety, but to simple, without malice people; to the wise explorers of the universe led by a celestial star and to shepherds led by singing angels, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill among men" (Luke 2, 14). Those who were called and came fell down and prostrated themselves, "They saw the One-without-beginning (Anarchus) being an infant in the cave."

The incarnate King in Bethlehem carried on His shoulders and throughout His incarnate life on earth this promise of God, "peace on earth and goodwill among men", which the angels announced from heaven. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, raised the dead. By words and deeds, he taught peace, love even towards the enemies and delivered the Church as a legacy to his apostles, which He redeemed with His own blood on the Cross. Ever since the days of His Resurrection from the dead and His Ascension to heaven, the Church obeying His command preaches His word "to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8) and reminds people that those alive on earth "have their conversation in heaven" (Phil. 3:20), they are predestined not to fight each other in "chariots and horses", not to shed

blood on the earth killing each other endlessly, but to ascend to heaven.

In this sanctifying ministry to Christ, God and His people, the local Church of Jerusalem is also strengthened from these holy places of His appearance in the flesh, silent but true witnesses of Him as a person and of His work. From this place of His Nativity in the flesh, Bethlehem, from the Holy and God-receiving Cave and the Constantine and Justinian Basilica of this Nativity, it preaches to its Christian congregation in the Holy Land and all over the world, and to the pious pilgrims of the period of the Twelve days, that again, "today the universe is filled with joy, Christ is born of the Virgin."

In the Holy City of Bethlehem, Christmas 2022.

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

THE FUNERAL SERVICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF CYPRUS CHRYSOSTOMOS II

At noon on Saturday, October 30 / November 12, 2022, the funeral service of the Eminent Archbishop of the Autocephalous Church of Cyprus and ethnarch of the great island, Chrysostomos II, took place in the holy Cathedral of the Archdiocese of Cyprus dedicated to the founder of the Church of Cyprus Apostle Barnabas.

His Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew officiated the service, with the co-celebration of the members of the Cypriot Hierarchy and the participation in prayer of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Alexandria Theodore representatives from other Orthodox Churches.

Among the political authorities who attended the service were, the President of Cyprus, Mr Nikos Anastasiadis and the President of the Hellenic Republic, Mrs Aikaterini Sakellaropoulou.

The obituary was delivered by His Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, on behalf of the Church of Cyprus and the Holy Synod of Cyprus, His Eminence the Metropolitan Georgios of Paphos, as well as Mr Anastasiadis and Mrs Sakellaropoulou.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem was represented by the Exarch of the Holy Sepulchre in Cyprus, His Eminence Metropolitan Timotheos of Bostra, who read the official address of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos as follows:

“To His Eminence Metropolitan **Georgios** of Paphos, governor of the Holy Archdiocese of Cyprus, a beloved brother in the Lord and co-minister of Our Mediocrity, holy greeting in Christ Jesus.

The comforting saying of the Apostle Paul, “for this perishable thing shall be clothed with incorruption” (1 Cor. 15:53), captured our minds upon hearing, after many years of painful illness, the departure in the Lord of the blessed and dearest brother of Ours Archbishop of Cyprus Chrysostomos II.

“As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth” (Ps. 102,15), the departed wise Primate, at first decorated the Holy Monastery of Saint Neophytos, to which he dedicated himself since his childhood and served as a Hegoumen, promoting the Monastery greatly; later on he was unanimously appointed as the Shepherd and Metropolitan of the Holy Metropolis of

Paphos, where he developed a rich pastoral activity, building many Holy Churches, supporting the penitent brothers and especially taking care of the formation of the holy clergy and the spiritual cultivation of His flock.

Since the year 2006, the "candle" had been placed "upon the candlestick" (Lk. 11:33) and steered the noetic ship of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Cyprus, "not giving sleep to his eyes, or slumber to his eyelids" (Ps. 131,4), in order to see the Church that was entrusted to him prosper both spiritually and materially, to be free and alive. He was involved in very important works, such as the revision of the Chart of the Church of Cyprus, the upgrading of the Synodical institution by the appointment of Metropolitans and Regional Bishops and the establishment of the Theological School of the Church of Cyprus, so that the work of the Church of Cyprus can be fully carried out as an Autocephalous Apostolic Church. It is worth remembering that he was a warm supporter of the unified State of Cyprus, free of occupation and other alien powers.

Nevertheless, we can attribute Paul's words to Him: " Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:28). Indeed, the blessed Primate practically manifested His interest on behalf of the Venerable Patriarchates of the Middle East to support the needy Christians of that region and the majority of the meetings of the Council of Churches of the Middle East were hosted by Him, on the great island of Cyprus. His interest in Our Venerable Patriarchate was also manifested, on the one hand, through the approval of the re-establishment of the Exarchate of the Holy Sepulchre in Nicosia, thus continuing the work of the occupied, until now, Exarchate in the Holy Monastery of Saint Chrysostomos Koutsoventis, and on the other, through the granting of scholarships to young people of Our flock to study in the School for Priests of the Church of Cyprus. The fraternal ties

and the loving cooperation of our Churches yielded spiritual fruits.

Being present and witnesses of Christ's Resurrection in Jerusalem, let us make haste to address the blessed Primate through "Christ is Risen!". "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (1 Thess. 4,13). This perishable body, " is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15,43-44). Being certain of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, we also believe in the prophetic saying that " Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise" (Isaiah 26,19).

We send prayers and beseech Christ our God Who rose from the Tomb, for the repose of the blessed soul of the departed Archbishop in the land of the living and the tents of the righteous, as in that day of Judgment, "may he shine like the sun with his angels in eternal life along with our Lord Jesus Christ, seeing him and being seen and reaping the joy from Him" (John Damascene).

Wherefore, deeply condoling with your Eminence, the honourable members of the Holy and Sacred Synod and all the pious congregation of the Holy Church of Cyprus, we greet you from the Holy and Life-giving Tomb with a holy kiss and remain.

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, October 25, 2022

Beloved brother in Christ,

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem"

In the middle of the solemn events by the Cypriot Church and State and the representatives of the State and the Church of Greece and the other Orthodox Churches, the body of the late respected Primate was taken up and buried in the underground tomb for which he had made provisions, under the Cathedral.

From Secretariat-General

LETTER OF CONDOLENCE FOR THE DEPARTURE OF THE BLESSED ARCHBISHOP CHRYSOSTOMOS OF CYPRUS

On the morning of Monday, October 25 / November 7, 2022, the blessed Archbishop of Cyprus Chrysostomos II passed away after a long illness.

On this occasion, our Blessed Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos sent the following letter of condolence to the Church of Cyprus:

To His Eminence the Metropolitan Georgios of Paphos, governor of the Holy Archdiocese of Cyprus, beloved brother in the Lord and co-minister of Our Mediocrity, holy greetings in Christ Jesus.

Through Our Patriarchal brotherly Letter we express the deep condolences of the Church of Jerusalem and Mother of Churches, as well as Our personal ones, to the brotherly Autocephalous Church of Cyprus, and to your quite beloved Eminence, for the departure in the Lord of the blessed Shepherd of the great

island of Cyprus Chrysostomos II, our brother and co-minister.

Saddened as is appropriate on the separation from Our beloved brother in Christ, we nevertheless remember, deservedly so, the God-pleasing and quite remarkable historical Episcopal work of the departed, and pray fervently from the Horrendous Golgotha for the repose of his soul in the land of the living along with the holy and the righteous, and for the comfort of the Church of Cyprus on this difficult period of the vacancy of its Throne.

Wherefore, in deep sympathy and thanks to your Eminence, to the honourable members of the Holy and Sacred Synod and to all the pious congregation of the Holy Church of Cyprus, we greet you from the Holy and Life-Giving Tomb with a holy kiss and remain.

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, October 25, 2022

Beloved brother in Christ,

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

PASCHA 2022 MESSAGE OF H.H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III

THEOPHILOS III

By the mercy of God Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem

And all Palestine

To all the congregation of the Church, grace, mercy and peace

From the Holy and Life-giving Sepulchre

Of the Resurrected Christ

“Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Matthew 28, 5-6).

With these comforting words, the Myrrh-bearing Women were encouraged by “the angel that hath come down from heaven and moved the stone of the tomb”, where the crucified Jesus Christ the Nazarene had been buried. The Myrrh-bearing Women, who bore the myrrh in tears, were astounded by the vision of the empty tomb, for this reason, the angel encouraged them with his presence and with the words: “fear not ye”. Appearing “like lightning and white like snow”, he was sitting at the tomb and said to the women: “I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen”. And he was not ashamed to call Him crucified, for this was the good chapter”, according to Saint Chrysostom.

The bright like lightning angel announced something unheard of and impossible for the people. He announced what could happen only by the providence, the will and the power of God. That Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son and Word of God, and crucified in the flesh, having been buried, was risen from the dead and co-resurrected the human flesh He had received along with the whole Adam, by a mighty hand. Out of love for man, Saint Chrysostom explains, “having risen from the royal thrones, God entered the earth and even Hades, and the devil became an opponent not to a naked God but to a God hidden within the human nature” and we see “death being released by death and the curse annulling the curse, and through these, the tyranny

of the devil in all things he prevailed is now abolished". Indeed, through the Saviour's death, the tyranny of death has been abolished. "Through the Cross, joy came unto the whole world". Hades became bitter and therefore he was mocked, thinking that he received a common mortal. That is why, in the faith and power of Christ's Resurrection, the Apostle of nations rephrases the prophesy: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15, 54-55).

The Myrrh-bearing women experienced the Resurrection not only from the vision of the empty Tomb and the Angel and the hearing of his words but also from the vision of the Resurrected Lord Himself. "Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me" (Matthew 28, 9-10). Indeed, for forty days the Lord appeared many times as the Apostle Paul testifies, "And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles" (1 Corinthians 15, 5-7), speaking to them, confirming His crucified and resurrected body, receiving food and eating before them. Finally, receiving the worship of the eleven in Galilee, the mountain where Jesus had appointed them, He ordered them to go and teach all nations (Matthew 28, 16-19).

Fulfilling this command, the Apostles received the Holy Spirit and preached unto the ends of the world "the one they had seen with their own eyes and touched with their own hands", they enchanted the universe, becoming the twelve pillars of the body of the Church, while Christ is its cornerstone. The body of the Church that has been built by the Lord, for which He said "the gates of hell shall not overcome it" (Matthew 16,18), continues throughout the centuries His sanctifying and

redeeming mission through His Disciples and their heirs, the Bishops and Priests. In its crucified-and-resurrected course in the world, the Church, vivified by the blood of the Cross, from which it was created, conveys power, hope and joy for the creation, maintenance, refreshment and restoration of man from the ruins and the ashes of wars, repeating the comforting invitation of Christ, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11,28).

The Church of Jerusalem, appointed by the Resurrected Christ Himself to serve at the places of His appearance in the flesh, being under pressure, especially recently, by radical extremist and hostile to it elements, however, not crushed by them, fights bravely in one accord and unity for the rights of the Christian presence and its flock in the Holy Land and welcomes the pious pilgrims during their pilgrimage as its own flock and sends to them and its pious flock all over the world the Paschal greeting "Christ is risen from the dead, by death He hath tumbled down death and to those in the grave He hath given life!"

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, Pascha 2022

Fervent supplicant for all before God,

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem

/ΚΟΥΣΑΝ ΌΤΙ

THE FEAST OF CHRISTMAS AT THE

PATRIARCHATE

1. On Friday, 25 December/ 7 January 2022, the Patriarchate celebrated the Feast of Christmas according to the established Status Quo.

On Wednesday 23 December 2021/ 5 January 2022 H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos presided at the reading of the Royal Hours of Christmas to lighten the program of Christmas Eve in Bethlehem.

On Christmas Eve the Patriarchal Entourage headed for Jaffa Gate accompanied by the Police Force

and the Scouts to get on the vehicles to go to the Monastery of Prophet Elias by the ancient Monastery of the Seat.

At the Monastery of Prophet Elias, His Beatitude was welcomed by the Mayors and Officials of the Beit Jala, Beit Sahour and Bethlehem, the representatives of the Israeli Civil Authorities and the representative of the Ministry of Religion of Israel Mr Cecar Marjeh. A prayer was read the Caretaker of the Monastery Monk Achilios offered a reception for all.

Then the Patriarchal Entourage left with the Israeli horsemen leading the procession until Rachel's tomb. From there the Palestinian motorcycle riders escorted the Patriarchal Entourage to the Square of the Basilica of the Nativity, where His Beatitude was welcomed by the Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem, His Eminence Metropolitan Benedictos of Diosaecearea.

From the square, the Hagiotaphite and Arab-speaking Priests along with a large crowd of people led the Patriarchal Entourage to the Basilica, under the chanting of Christmas hymns. The Entourage entered the Church through its humble door and proceeded from the Catholicon to Saint Nikolaos' chapel, went down to the Cave and the Manger for veneration

and came up to the Catholicon through the north gate.

The Service of the Royal Hours of Christmas began, followed by Vespers, the blessing of bread and the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, under the Greek and Arabic chanting with the attendance of local faithful Christians but not pilgrims due to covid restrictions. The Service finished at 15.30 according to the Status Quo.

The Service was followed by a reception.

In the evening the Hegoumen, His Eminence Metropolitan Benedict of Diocaesarea hosted a formal reception for his distinguished guests, among whom were, the Representative of Palestinian Autonomy, Prime Minister Mohammad Ibrahim Shtayyeh and the representative of Jordan, Mazin Abdellah Hilal Al Farrayeh, Minister of Interior. His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed those present with an address which was read by Fr Issa Mousleh in Arabic.

In his address, His Beatitude underlined the pressures that the Christian Community faces by the radicals in Jerusalem and the power of the Church through the risen Sun of Righteousness to face and overcome those challenges, offering projects of benefit, such as the recent beginning of the construction of the project Lana/Jerusalem and the restoration of Prophet Elias Monastery.

This was the conclusion of Christmas Eve by the Patriarchate in Bethlehem, in anticipation of the main Christmas Feast the next day.

2. Christmas Day

The Christmas Feast began with Matins on Friday night 25 December through the official entry from the Baptism Gate, with the Entreaty and the Six Psalms, led by the Patriarchal

Commissioner, His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias.

During Matins, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and His Entourage came from the Catholicon to the Holy Altar, where He put on His Patriarchal Liturgical vestments and by His blessings the Archbishops and Priests put on their liturgical vestments.

With the beginning of the Kathisma "Come all ye faithful let us see where Christ was born..." procession went from the Altar to the Holy Cave from its south gate, while the Representative of Palestinian Autonomy, Prime Minister Mohammad Ibrahim Shtayyeh, the President of the Palestinian Committee on Christian Affairs, Ramzi Chouri, and the representative of Jordan, Mazin Abdellah Hilal Al Farrayeh, Minister of Interior followed on the right side, along with the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem Mr Evangelos Vlioras.

The Gospel narrative of the Nativity was read in the God-receiving Cave, followed by His Beatitude's Christmas message, which was read in Greek by Geronda Secretary-General, His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, and in Arabic by the Patriarchate's press representative, Priests Issa Mousleh. The Christmas message follows below:

"Heaven and earth are made one today

for Christ is born.

Today God is come upon the earth

and man is gone up into the Heavens.

Today He Who by nature is invisible, for man's sake is seen in the flesh".

(Sticheron 2 of the Christmas Entreaty)

This event, this mystery, is celebrated today in a solemn way

in praise and thanksgiving throughout the world by the Orthodox Church of Christ, especially by the Church of Jerusalem and the city of Bethlehem. The Church celebrates the superficial event of the meeting and union of heaven and earth, the fact that God descended to earth, to ascend man to heaven.

This happened "as God was pleased, as He knew". The Father was pleased, the Word became flesh and we saw God become Incarnate. In His immeasurable love for man, according to the traversing into heaven Paul, "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4-5). According to the hymnographer of the Church, "the One Who was born before Lucifer from the Father without a mother, became man from the Virgin on earth, without a Father". "He Who Is, became for our sakes what He was not". The Only Begotten Son and Word of God became also the Son of man from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, a God-man, in one hypostasis and two natures. He became poor for us, so that we may become rich, He emptied Himself, so that we may become full, He came down to earth for us, so that we may rise up to heaven, He became an infant for us, so that we may become adults, "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). According to Athanasius the Great, "for our salvation, He appeared to us in a human body" (On Incarnation, P.G.1, p. 228). According to Saint Chrysostom, "God of Whom no one can speak about, Who is without form and beyond knowledge and equal to the Son, came through a Virgin's womb and condescended to be born by a woman" (Holily 2, On the Gospel according to Matthew).

Before the vision of this mystery, even the hymnographer of the Church proclaims in ecstasy: "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" (Christmas Katavasias, ode nine). Indeed, the cave became heaven. In this cave of Bethlehem in Judea, in this particular time, during the monarchy of Caesar Octavian Augustus, God reveals Himself to men, in Christ, in a bodily form. The One without beginning receives a beginning, the Invisible is seen. God reveals to men the Incarnate epiphany of His Son using elements of nature; a bright star leading the Persian Wise Kings and scientists, who "came and stood at the place where the infant was". This wondrous epiphany He also reveals through His Angels, who were chanting in choir: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill among men", and calling the hard-working men, the shepherds who kept the night watch of their flocks. God calls both groups of men as witnesses and preachers, as accomplishers and partakers of His work. Responding to the Divine invitation, they came and "falling before their faces, they worshipped...for they saw in the cave an infant without beginning lying down". They came to know and spoke about and proclaimed the mystery they saw, the shepherds in their town, and the Magi to their hometown Babylon, having escaped "Herod as a trifler".

The Incarnation and Nativity according to the flesh of Christ, which we worship, awaiting the coming of the Holy Theophany, is only the beginning of God's redeeming mysteries to man. Its succession of events is Christ's full mission, which He inaugurated on earth "as the great angel of God's will". Having come from the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, lived on earth and communed with the people, He inaugurated, founded and established the Kingdom of God and His Kingdom on earth, which is one with His body, and that is the Church. The Church continues and perpetuates His mission of conciliation, reconciliation, peaceful coexistence and love among people. The Incarnate Lord established this work with His teaching and blood through His sacrifice on the Cross. He founded a mission of sanctification, remission of sins and of education, taming and transforming the ethics of the people. Starting from

Bethlehem's cave, Christ conquered, or better say, enchanted the whole universe, without an army, without weapons, but only through those illiterate to the world twelve Apostles, who, however, were educated by the Holy Spirit. The Church as the Kingdom of God on earth increased, multiplied and silently became great, without any fan recruitment, but with the integration of members through Baptism. Its head is the Incarnate Lord, the Redeemer of the world. As long as humanity does not agree and follow Christ's message, the King Who was born, this life becomes a living hell, in battles, wars and injustice, which we often see even today; if however, humanity accepts and applies it, its life is transformed into heaven.

This Pastoral mission of sanctification, pilgrimage, reconciliation, the pacifying, does the Church of Jerusalem unceasingly apply since its foundation, at the Places of Grace, and today, at the very place of the Nativity in the flesh of its Founder, in the Holy Bethlehem, at the God-receiving Cave and the Basilica of the Nativity built by Constantine and Justine. From these holy places, it prays for the peace and good condition of the whole world, especially for its Rum-Orthodox flock living in the Palestinian State, as well as for all the Palestinian people, and supports with all its power and through all the peaceful means, its President, His Excellency Mahmoud Abbas Abu Mazen, who honoured our Feast through his representative Dr Mohammad Ibrahim Shtayyeh. It prays to successfully complete its campaign for the keeping of its established by the International Community Status Quo in Jerusalem and the full recognition of the Palestinian State by all the countries of the world.

In the Holy City of Bethlehem, Christmas 2021

Fervent supplicant for all before God

Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem"

After these, there was the veneration at the Star and the Manger and the procession exited the Cave from the north gate, to continue the litany around the Basilica three times until it stopped in the middle of the Church for a prayer.

The Service continued with Matins in the Basilica, led by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with the co-celebration of their Eminences, the Archbishops; Theophanes of Gerassa, Aristarchos of Constantina, Philoumenos of Pella and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the representatives from the Patriarchates of Mosco and Romania, Priests from Bethlehem and Deacons, as the chanting was delivered by Hierodeacon Simeon in Greek on the right, and the Bethlehem choir in Arabic on the left under the lead of Mr Laurence Samour.

The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom followed, with the dismissal at 03:30 a.m. according to the Status Quo. The Divine Liturgy was also celebrated in the God-receiving Cave by His Eminence Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias.

At the end of the Service, the Patriarchal Entourage went to the Hegoumeneion from the Baptism Gate, where the new Hegoumen, His Eminence Metropolitan Benedictos of Diosaecarea hosted a reception.

At 09:00 a.m. on Christmas morning, the Elder Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos went down to the Holy Cave for veneration and by this act, the Despotic Feast of Christmas in Bethlehem came to an end.

From Secretariat-General

CHRISTMAS 2021 MESSAGE OF H.H. BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III

"Heaven and earth are made one today

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Mary, a God-man, in one hypostasis and two natures. He became poor for us, so that we may become rich, He emptied Himself, so that we may become full, He came down to earth for us, so that we may rise up to heaven, He became an infant for us, so that we may become adults, "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). According to Athanasius the Great, "for our salvation, He appeared to us in a human body" (On Incarnation, P.G.1, p. 228). According to Saint Chrysostom, "God of Whom no one can speak about, Who is without form and beyond knowledge and equal to the Son, came through a Virgin's womb and condescended to be born by a woman" (Homily 2, On the Gospel according to Matthew).

Before the vision of this mystery, even the hymnographer of the Church proclaims in ecstasy: "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" (Christmas Katavasias, ode nine). Indeed, the cave became heaven. In this cave of Bethlehem in Judea, in this particular time, during the monarchy of Caesar Octavian Augustus, God reveals Himself to men, in Christ, in a bodily form. The One without beginning receives a beginning, the Invisible is seen. God reveals to men the Incarnate epiphany of His Son using elements of nature; a bright star leading the Persian Wise Kings and scientists, who "came and stood at the place where the infant was". This wondrous epiphany He also reveals through His Angels, who were chanting in choir: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill among men", and calling the hard-working men, the shepherds who kept the night watch of their flocks. God calls both groups of men as witnesses and preachers, as accomplishers and partakers of His work. Responding to the Divine invitation, they came and "falling before their faces, they worshipped...for they saw in the cave an infant without beginning lying down". They came to know and spoke about and proclaimed the mystery they saw, the shepherds

in their town, and the Magi to their hometown Babylon, having escaped "Herod as a trifler".

The Incarnation and Nativity according to the flesh of Christ, which we worship, awaiting the coming of the Holy Theophany, is only the beginning of God's redeeming mysteries to man. Its succession of events is Christ's full mission, which He inaugurated on earth "as the great angel of God's will". Having come from the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, lived on earth and communed with the people, He inaugurated, founded and established the Kingdom of God and His Kingdom on earth, which is one with His body, and that is the Church. The Church continues and perpetuates His mission of conciliation, reconciliation, peaceful coexistence and love among people. The Incarnate Lord established this work with His teaching and blood through His sacrifice on the Cross. He founded a mission of sanctification, remission of sins and of education, taming and transforming the ethics of the people. Starting from Bethlehem's cave, Christ conquered, or better say, enchanted the whole universe, without an army, without weapons, but only through those illiterate to the world twelve Apostles, who however, were educated by the Holy Spirit. The Church as the Kingdom of God on earth increased, multiplied and silently became great, without any fan recruitment, but with the integration of members through Baptism. Its head is the Incarnate Lord, the Redeemer of the world. As long as humanity does not agree and follow Christ's message, the King Who was born, this life becomes a living hell, in battles, wars and injustice, which we often see even today; if however, humanity accepts and applies it, its life is transformed into heaven.

This Pastoral mission of sanctification, pilgrimage, reconciliation, the pacifying, does the Church of Jerusalem unceasingly apply since its foundation, at the Places of Grace, and today, at the very place of the Nativity in the flesh of its Founder, in the Holy Bethlehem, at the God-receiving Cave and the Basilica of the Nativity built by

Constantine and Justine. From these holy places, it prays for the peace and good condition of the whole world, especially for the Middle East, for the liberation of the tested humanity from the various mutations of the infectious disease, and wishes to its pious flock in its jurisdiction all over the world, as well as to the reverend pilgrims, to pass this Feast of the Nativity of Christ in full health and abundance of Divine blessings.

In the Holy City of Bethlehem, Christmas 2021

Fervent supplicant for all before God

Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

PATRIARCHAL CIRCULAR FOR THE CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS

For the celebration of the Despotic feast of Christmas according to the ecclesiastical tradition and order, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed the flock with the following circular:

Prot. No

734

To the most devout and reverend Stewards and Priests of the parishes and the honourable Presidents and members of the Local Councils of our flock all over the jurisdiction of our Patriarchate, dearest children in the Lord of Our Mediocrity, grace and peace from God the Father.

Beloved children in the Lord,

Acting pastorally and Fatherly, we communicate with you in writing to remind you once again, that the Christmas Feast, as a great Despotic one, has been celebrated since antiquity with the befitting liturgical brilliance by our Patriarchate and the venerable Hagiotaphite Brotherhood on 25th December (old calendar) which corresponds to 7th January (new calendar), and our Christian congregation follows this rule.

“Keeping that which is committed to thy trust”, namely the consignment (ref. 1 Tim. 6:20) of the Patriarchs and Teachers before Us, and “following after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Romans 14:19), we urge the Priests of our flock so that on the day of 12th December (old calendar), which corresponds to 25th December (new calendar) they open the Holy Churches and observe the service of our Father among the Saints Spyridon, Bishop of Trimythus the wonderworker, which includes the Catavasias and other pre-festal Christmas hymns, and not the service of Christmas day of 25th December; after the service of Matins the Divine Liturgy should be celebrated.

As is well known, the adoption of the new calendar brought the Orthodox Church face to face with pastoral issues, which also have social implications, which we are called to face with a sense of responsibility. During this day, after the observed service of the feast of Saint Spyridon, the members of the Greek Orthodox flock may proceed to demonstrations of a social but not ecclesiastical character.

Expecting your conformity to Our prompting, for the celebration of the great feast of Christmas in peace in unity, We abundantly bestow our Fatherly wishes and Patriarchal blessings from the All-holy and Life-giving Tomb and remain,

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, 13 November 2021

Fervent Supplicant for all before God,

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

MESSAGE BY HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III FOR PASCHA 2021

By the mercy of God the Patriarch of the Holy City of
Jerusalem

and all of Palestine

to all the gathering of the Church, grace and mercy and peace
from the All-Holy and Life-giving Tomb of the Risen Christ

*“Now all things are filled with light,
heaven and earth and the nethermost regions of the earth.*

Let all creation, therefore,

celebrate the arising of Christ, whereby it is established.

(Troparion Ode 3 of the Easter Canon by John Damascene)

Indeed, the rising from the dead of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ filled the universe with the unweaning and unending light. The Son and Word of God, who became Incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the Crucified, having suffered in the flesh, was buried, descended in Hades and conquered death. By His death He conquered death. Being in Hades for three days, He preached to those in Hades, the bound ones of old, and liberated them from him. He set them free from the baleful torment of the remorse of conscience, from the pitch-black darkness of ignorance and the unbearable despair, and brought them back into Paradise. Having completed His Father's work on earth, He also completed it in the depths of the earth, in Hades. "The immaculate body of the Redeemer of our souls saw no corruption of death". By His own power, He was risen from the dead, along with the human flesh He had assumed and by His mighty hand co-resurrected the Forefather Adam and his reposed descendants.

God sent an angel to announce to men this supernatural work of the renewal and regeneration of His creature through the Resurrection of Christ. The bright angel who rolled the stone of the Tomb and sat on it told the myrrh-bearing women: "Be not affrighted: 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 all-bright angelic vision and the joyful announcement was completed, confirmed and sealed by the vision of Him, the Risen from the dead Lord. With His luminous and glorified body, having His side pierced and with visible the signs of the nails in His hands and feet, "He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils" (Mark 16:9), saying to her: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father" (John 20:19). Likewise, He appeared "the same day at evening, being the first day of the

week, when the doors were shut to the disciples in the Upper Room and saith unto them, Peace be unto you", and "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" ... "whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" ... "And after eight days again, He appeared to His disciples who were within, and Thomas with them", correcting his good disbelief into steadfast faith and calling "blessed those that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:19-29). Indeed, "how wise are His judgements" the hymnographer chants, while He made Peter realize His Resurrection only by the clothes that were laid aside in the Tomb, on the other hand, He was walking along with Luke and Cleopas and did not reveal Himself directly to them during their conversation but "He sat at meat with them, took bread, and blessed it...and their eyes were opened, and they knew Him" (Luke 24:30-31). Immediately after that, Oh the marvel of His omnipresence, "He stood in Jerusalem among their midst" saying to them, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" ... and asked of them "Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb" (Luke 24:36-43); as Saint John Damascene explains, "not because He needed to eat after the Resurrection, but verifying thus the truth of His Resurrection".

In these ways, "He shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3), "while they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9), and "He ascended up on high" (Psalm 68:19, Eph. 4:8), deifying the whole substance He had assumed from us, namely our human nature through His Incarnation, He sat at the right of the Father "coming again in glory to judge both the living and the dead".

Having fulfilled His Promise therein, He sent to us another Comforter through the Father, the Spirit of truth, and

enlightened, strengthened, vivified and gladdened the Holy Disciples and Apostles, and through them, His body, the Church. By this grace and the power given by Him, the Church continues His redemptive mission on earth. It receives people, makes them its members through baptism “unites them with Christ”, humanizes them through His teaching of conciliation, peace, concord and love, not only towards our fellow men but even towards our enemies, sanctifies them through the sacraments, makes them workers of beneficiary deeds in society and upon their death, it transfers them to the heavenly life, with joy and cheerfulness, where they relish the eternal light of the Trinitarian God in the hope of the Resurrection unto eternal life.

The Church of Jerusalem, which according to the psalmist “the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob” (Psalm 87:2), “was the first to receive the remission of sins through the resurrection”, and now co-suffers with the Covid-19 pandemic plague, and prays from the empty and Life-giving Tomb for the healing of all people who suffer from it, for the return of the pilgrims to the Holy Land, for the peace and stability in the world and in the Middle East, and especially for the health, prosperity and salvation of its Christian congregation all over the world.

In the Holy City of Jerusalem **PASCHA 2021.**

With Patriarchal blessings,

Fervent supplicant for all before God,

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

OPEN LETTER FROM HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III

Our Orthodox unity is our daily prayer

My dear Brothers, fellow Primates and Concelebrants in the Lord Jesus Christ,

One year ago this week, we gathered in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to build our common fellowship in the pursuit of a dialogue of love for the sake of the unity of the Local Orthodox Churches. After two days of prayer and fraternal discussion, we emerged with greater determination to pursue deeper communion, and to address our common challenges together.

None of us imagined that we were meeting on the cusp of a global health catastrophe the scale of which has not been seen in our lifetimes. We remember before God our late brother Patriarch Irinej of Serbia, who was with us in Jordan, and who is now asleep in the Lord. We pray that God may grant him rest with the saints in the place of refreshment and light. We pray daily, remembering each of you, offering our praise, thanksgiving, and intercessions, and knowing that *His grace is sufficient for us, whose power is made perfect in our weakness* (cf 2 Cor. 12:9).

This pandemic has required us all to look to our own communities, those whom God has called us to serve, to lift up their hearts from despair and turn to the Lord who gives us

hope. For we know that *while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God* (Rom. 5:8-9).

Here in our own Holy City of Jerusalem, we have been strengthened and sustained by your prayers. As has been true across the world, our fellow human beings in the Holy Land have suffered hardship through the pandemic. We ask that you continue to pray for us, as we continually pray for you from the Life-Giving Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is merciful, and has given to his creatures the knowledge and skill to develop medicines and vaccines to end this deadly pandemic. As we look forward to brighter days this year, we are reminded of our common commitment to gather for prayer and fellowship. We pray that this may be possible later in this year.

Let us continue to uphold one another in prayer, and seek ways in which our Local Orthodox Churches might bring hope, blessing, and joy to one another. For Saint Paul says, *Bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ* (Gal. 6:2). We also join together in prayer for our brother, His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, and our fellow Orthodox primates, and we look forward to serving together to further the unity of our communion.

As we begin our pre-Lenten preparation for the great feast of Pascha, we listen to these words of hymnographer of the Triodion:

Brethren, let us not pray as the Pharisee: for he who exalts himself shall be humbled. Let us humble ourselves before God, and with fasting cry aloud as the Publican: God be merciful to us sinners.

With brotherly love in Christ.

CHRISTMAS 2020 MESSAGE OF HIS HOLY BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III

“The Father was well pleased: the Word is become flesh,
and the Virgin hath given birth unto God become man.
A star is the herald; Magi worship; shepherds marvel;
and creation doth rejoice.”

(Troparion of Christmas praises)

Today, the Church celebrates festively in doxology and thanksgiving God's condensation to man. Today, the Church preaches to its members and proclaims to the world and the whole universe, the bond and the union of heaven with earth, and the meeting of God with man. Today, God's word “I will dwell in them, and walk in them” (Leviticus 26: 11 – 2 Corinthians 6:16) is fulfilled. Today, God's compassion has exceeded His righteousness. Today, God has filled the creation with pardon and redemption. Today, God “hath visited and redeemed his people” (Luke 1:68). Today, God “reconciles the world unto himself, in Christ” (2 Cor. 5:19). Today, “the times of ignorance God winked at” (Acts 17:30) along with the times of man's sin, and has visited him in His Only-Begotten Son and Word.

Acting in exceeding philanthropy, God was pleased, in the last ages, that His Word and Only-Begotten Son, the beloved, who is One Essence with the Father and sits along with Him in His Throne, would appear in the world visibly and in bodily form. According to the Evangelist of love, "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Sharing the same will with the Father, the Son received flesh through the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. He received a logical and soulful flesh and was born in the flesh by the Virgin. In this manner, Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14 / Matt. 1:23). As the hymnographer says, "God becomes a man, in order to make man a God". As the established Father of the Church, Saint Athanasios says: "the Word of God became incarnate, so that we may be deified, and He revealed Himself in a bodily form, so that we may receive the nature of the invisible Father" (On the Incarnation, 54). How was this made possible? How was the conception made, without consummation? It was made possible, because as the Angel announced to the Virgin, "that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35), and because it is written: "the order of nature is overruled to those things that God wills". The Virgin gave birth to the Incarnate God, not to the deified man, and is therefore magnified as the Mother of God (Theotokos). This was done for the rebirth, the reformation and the transformation of the whole humankind. Man was received by God in Christ, in order to partake of His deity, as Saint Peter says: "that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter, 1:4), and become "a new creation", according to the Apostle of Nations (2 Cor. 5:17 / Gal. 6:15). This very respectable change of man, namely, his change from earthly to heavenly man, is made possible in a secret manner, with the condensation of man, because the Incarnate Christ has received the whole man – "Thou entirely assumed my whole self in a union without confusion", the Church chants.

This heavenly and God-originated mystery is being witnessed by its descent and manifestation in the course of human history. It is revealed throughout the universe and to the area of the not-in-the-least minimal Holy Bethlehem, at the time of the people's census during the reign of the Roman Emperor Octavian Augustus. The whole creation is being invited to participate in this event. The heavens guide the Wise Men, the Persian scientists and kings from afar, with a bright star, introducing the Church of the gentiles through them. The Angels from heaven chant "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace", summoning the shepherds who kept the night watch from the nearby Beit Sahour. Wise Men and shepherds together, come and bow down in reverence, to venerate and offer their gifts, because they "recognize the timeless infant lying in the cave".

He, who put on human flesh for us, who became an infant in the flesh, was born in a cave and was placed in a manger, dressed in swaddling clothes, is the One who "began to be about thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23), who was made known and was believed to be Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of man, from Nazareth, the God-man, in One Hypostasis of two natures, wills and actions. He is "anointed by God with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil" (Acts 10:38), and through the Cross, the Resurrection from the dead and His Ascension, He ascended the form of Incarnation that He had received, and made it sit on the right side of the Father and deified it.

Having sat on the right side of the Father, Christ sent to His disciples the Comforter, the Spirit of consolation, the Spirit of enlightenment of the mind and of will-power. His mission of reconciliation of God with man, of peace, of love, even love for one's enemies, of the sanctification and remission of sins, did He hand over to His body the Church, that "Christ also loved, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25), and He is its head. The Church is not only the testimony of Christ's

beneficial incarnate presence on earth, but also the continuator of His mission; It receives the man from the beginning of his life until his death; through baptism, it makes man its member, it tames and beautifies his morals; it opposes any kind of violence; it feeds the hungry, liberates the prisoners; it is an oasis of a source of living water in the desert and loneliness of the people, a place of prayer for the healing of the covid-19 patients, and a provider of support to those affected by the protective measures against this plague.

The Church of Jerusalem and the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, the guardian of the All-holy Shrines, works on this mission in the region of the historic appearance of the Incarnate Christ, and today, in the very place of His Nativity, the humble and God-receiving Cave and the modest manger, in the magnificent Basilica which was built by the Byzantine Emperors Constantine and Justine. Exclaiming in joy “an infant was born unto us, a son was given to us”, it prays for the peace of the Middle East, the prosperity of its flock here and all over the world, and for the coming again of the pious pilgrims, so that they may co-celebrate the Metropolis of the feasts with the Mother of Churches, at the place where the Master of peace was born.

In the Holy City Bethlehem,

CHRISTMAS 2020

Fervent supplicant for all before God,

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

