

HEADS OF CHURCHES INVITED TO CHRISTMAS LUNCH BY PRESIDENT ABU MAZEN

On Saturday the 8th/21st December 2013, the Heads of Churches of the Holy Land and their retinue were invited to lunch at the Intercontinental hotel, near Bethlehem, by the President of the Palestinian Autonomy, Mr Mahmoud Abbas Abu Mazen. Mr Mazen was represented by the Chairman of the Palestinian Committee of Christian Affairs, Mr Hanne Amire, and Committee members.

The Patriarchate was represented by His Beatitude Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, accompanied by the Patriarchal Commissioner in Bethlehem, His Eminence Theophylaktos, Archbishop of Jordan, and by presbyter f. Issa Musleh, liaison with the Arabic Mass Media.

During lunch, His Beatitude addressed the Chairman and the members of the Committee of Christian Affairs, as well as their lunch-guests, in Arabic. His speech may be reached here: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2013/12/24/2992>

From the Secretariat-General

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLIEST BEATITUDE, THEOPHILOS III,

PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM, CHRISTMAS 2013

*Behold the Virgin, begetting God in flesh,
in the city of Bethlehem, inside the Cavern,
the entire universe has been enriched,
rejoice and dance,
associate with servants
— for the Lord has come near everyone.*

(Matins Oikos 20, December)

The one, holy, catholic and apostolic Orthodox Church of Christ, across the world, celebrates today a miraculous and sublime event which transcends every human intellect and concept.

It celebrates the event of the birth in flesh of the Son and Word of God, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, incarnate and made man from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.

This event, God the Father had wanted since centuries ago and for it He had prepared men through His holy prophets and “*the Law as guardian*” (Gal. 3, 24) in His Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit.

“*But when the fullness of time had come*” (Gal. 4, 4) during the reign of Caesar Octavius Augustus, he revealed so in this very city, Bethlehem, “*which is by no means least among the rulers of Judah*”(Matt. 2, 6), and in this plain cavern.

Here, in this land, God the Father had deigned that His hitherto fleshless and timeless Son be born in flesh and

appear in time. Here came the Magi from the East, led by a bright star, and saw an infant in the arms of the Virgin and worshipped Him, offering Him their presents of *'gold, frankincense and myrrh'* (Matt. 2, 11). The Shepherds worshipped Him too, those living in the fields near the town of the Shepherds. Here too the angelic hymn of peace was heard from the heavens: *"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests"* (Luke 2, 14).

And this happened because God, who had made man, never ceased to love and seek him, even when man was distant from Him. God sought man in his complex, endless and pointless philosophical quests, and in his sinful and pernicious achievements, but He did not decline him; instead, according to the god-bearing saint Cyril, Archbishop of Alexandria, *"He appropriated humanity and, without confusion, incorporated flesh and received man"* (On the Right Faith, PG 76, 1181D) during the mission in the world and the incarnation of His Son.

Willingly executing the will of His Father, Christ, *"though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich"* (II Cor. 8,9). Being a citizen on the earth and associating with men as Theanthropos, God-Man, perfect God and perfect man, he benefited them in many different ways. He offered charity to the needy and the poor. He incorporated our human nature and elevated it to the heavens through the Cross, the Resurrection and the Ascension.

The Church, His holy body, through the effusion of the Holy Spirit, carries on His sanctifying and philanthropic work on earth. Through the centuries, the Church has been endlessly consecrating its members, cultivating, humanizing and adorning the customs of men, supporting the sacred institution of family, feeding the poor; today it sustains in deed the victims of the financial crisis and invites humanity to resolution and reconciliation, peace and justice, philanthropy, love and benefaction.

Even more so, the Church of Jerusalem, the first to evangelize the birth of Christ, prays from this Cavern and this Constantinian Basilica, of which it has proved a faithful guardian through the centuries, for peace and goodness in the entire world, for the end of acts of violence in the Middle East and elsewhere, for the cessation of terrorist activities, for respect of religious freedom and worship, for the liberation of the abducted hierarchs and nuns of the sister Church of Antioch and for the reconciliation and unification of all.

In the Holy City of Bethlehem, **CHRISTMAS 2013.**

Fervently praying to the Lord,

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem



THE FEAST OF ST NIKOLAS AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Thursday the 6th/19th of December 2013, the feast of St Nikolas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra, Lycia, was celebrated at the church dedicated to him in the town of Bet-Jala, which lies between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, to the right of Rachel's tomb on the way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem.

In this town, which numbers approximately fifteen thousand inhabitants, Christians and Muslims alike, the Patriarchate has always maintained a Greek Orthodox Arab-speaking community

(Rum Orthodox), of about seven thousand members.

To this community, His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, arrived on the morning of the aforementioned day, and was received at the hegoumen's quarters by Archimandrite f. Narkissos.

From there, His Beatitude proceeded to the Church of St Nikolas, where he was welcomed by priests at the entrance.

His Beatitude led the Matins service and the Divine Liturgy. Co-officiating were the Patriarchal Commissioner, the Most Reverend Isychios, Metropolitan of Kapitolias; the Elder Secretary-General, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina; the Patriarchal Commissioner in Bethlehem, His Eminence Theophylaktos, Archbishop of Jordan; and the Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod, His Eminence Demetrios, Archbishop of Lydda; the vicar priests of Bet-Jala, fathers Nikolaos, Georgios, Joseph and Paul; Archdeacon f. Evlogios and deacon f. Martyrios. The church choir chanted in the Byzantine style under the direction of Mr Ibrahim Karkar, in the presence of a great crowd of Orthodox faithful.

To this congregation His Beatitude preached the Word of God. This is an excerpt from His speech:

[...] "The great, indeed, gift that the Lord offered through His incarnate presence in the world, is the peace and the light of His *theognosia*, the knowledge of God. And Christ came", says the Apostle Paul, "and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near" (Ephes. 2, 17). And Jesus Christ says: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (Jn, 8, 12).

It is precisely of this light and peace of the mystery of the divine economy that our father Nikolaos became both a communicant and a teacher. [...]

In other words, St Nikolas proved himself to be a true disciple of Christ, namely an apostle and preacher of His Gospel in the example of the Apostle Paul, who says: "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ" (II Cor. 4, 5-6).

And this we say, my dears, because our holy Hierarch had been in word and deed a fervent guardian and advocate of the pure and healthy teaching of the Gospel, which is the proper and salvaging, or better said, the healing faith of the one, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church; of the faith, we repeat, which was clearly inscribed by the Fathers of the Church, successors of the holy apostles, through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, in the first Ecumenical Synod which convened in Nicaea, Asia Minor, in 325 AD, under the great and pious emperor St Constantine the Equal of the Apostles.

During this Ecumenical Synod, as is well known, Bishop Nikolaos of Myra, Lycia, bravely opposed the heretical teachings of Arius who in essence denied the divinity of the incarnate Logos, our Lord, Jesus Christ, from the pure blood of the Ever Virgin Mary. For this reason, St Nikolas was named the Canon of the Orthodox Faith, namely the Christian faith." [...]

A great crowd proceeded to receive the holy Communion and the antidoron from the hands of His Beatitude, along with His blessings.

At the conclusion of the divine Liturgy, a procession took place around the Church and in the chapel of St Nikolas, specifically a cavern underneath the Church.

A reception followed at the hall of the Church, where the Patriarchal retinue and others were hosted to lunch offered by

the hegoumen and the Bet-Jala Community Council.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/yIxJQ0SM2Ls>



GREEK DEFENSE MINISTER VISITS PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday the 2nd/15th of December 2013, the Minister of Defense of Greece, Mr Demetrios Avramopoulos, visited the Patriarchate in the context of a political visit to the state of Israel. Mr Avramopoulos was accompanied by his associates, political and military alike, Mr Aristeidis Kalogeropoulos, European Affairs Secretary, the Chief of the Hellenic National Defense General Staff, Mr Michael Kostarakos, the Greek Ambassador to Israel, Mr Spyridon Lambrides, and the Consul-General of Greece to Jerusalem, Mr Georgios Zacharoudiakis.

The Minister was warmly received by HB Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, in the company of Hagiotaphite members.

During his visit, the Minister told His Beatitude that “we are here at the Patriarchate with great love and respect for You, in order to receive Your wish and declare our support, because You have upgraded the representation of the Patriarchate, and brought peace to it; and for this we congratulate You”.

In His response, His Beatitude said “we happily welcome you as the representative of our country, Greece, the protector of

the Patriarchate, of the Rum Orthodox in Israel, the Palestinian Autonomy, Jordan, and Qatar. This position of Greece was achieved owing to the efforts of the late Benedict, Patriarch of Jerusalem. The place of Christians as a religious entity in the Middle East is indeed crucial. For them, and for the future of Jerusalem, the role of the Patriarchate is of great importance. The Patriarchate preserves the religious and political status of Jerusalem. The sites of pilgrimage lie at the core of international interest".

"As a result of its position, the Patriarchate is involved in the problems of the city of Jerusalem, yet being impartial itself, greatly contributes to their solution, drawing on its moral and material power and property".

The Minister responded by expressing his joy over the upgraded level of life and action of the Patriarchate and its relations with the local authority.

"Greece is aware" said the Minister, "of the historical, religious and national role of the Patriarchate and, despite the country's adversities, stands by the Patriarchate's heavy heritage. Greece is content over the reestablishment of peace in the life of the Patriarchate. The Patriarchate lies in an area that is at the crossroads of several peoples, nations and interests. We ask for Your blessing".

His Beatitude also referred to the role of the Patriarchate in the promotion of peace negotiations, to its active participation in the renovation of the roof of the Basilica in Bethlehem, and the renovation of the Monastery of John the Baptist in the Jordan.

In this framework, the Minister offered His Beatitude a silver box, whilst His Beatitude offered Mr Avramopoulos a large icon of Theotokos Jerusalemite, a mother-of-pearl representation of the Nativity, and the book "History of Jerusalem" by Chrysostomos Papadopoulos. The Minister's associates were

offered icons of the All-Holy Sepulcher and other Jerusalemite eulogias.

Seen out by His Beatitude, the Minister and his retinue continued on foot to venerate the All-Holy Sepulcher.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/8cpVy0kkhR4>



H.B. THEOPHILOS III ADDRESS TO THE COUNCIL OF THE GERMAN EVANGELICAN CHURCH.

JERUSALEM, Sunday 15 December 2013.

Your Eminence Bishop Younan Mounib,

Reverend Dr. Nikolaus Shneider, Head of the Council of the
Evangelical Church in Germany,

Reverend Propst Wolfgang Schmidt,

Dear friends,

Christ is born; glorify Him!

Christ comes from heaven; go and meet Him!

Christ is on earth; be exalted!

Sing to the Lord, all the earth!

And praise him in gladness, O you peoples,

for he has been glorified!

With this Church hymn, we celebrate the Christmas season.

It is an honor for Us to have been invited to be with you here tonight at this distinguished ecumenical gathering, so close to the very place of the crucifixion, that is to say, the place of redemption.

The supreme gift our Lord has given us with His incarnate presence in the world and redemptive work is "His peace." For as Saint Paul writes, Our Lord Jesus Christ reconciled all things to himself, whether things on earth, that is to say whether men with God and men between themselves, or those things in heaven, that is to say, the angels whom he reconciled with all of us" (Coll. 120). This great gift, he had already foretold to His disciples just before His Crucifixion, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you" (John 14:27).

Your pilgrimage in our beloved Holy Land during this Christmas season is highly appreciated. For we, the Church leadership of Jerusalem, together with our communities, look at it as a tangible sign of the solidarity that is provided by our ecumenical fellowship.

However, this fellowship is not exclusive, but rather, inclusive. For we do not speak on behalf of ourselves alone in saying that regardless of our affiliation, we are all sons of Abraham. Jerusalem, together with Bethlehem, are reminders to all of us that the Almighty God is the God of reconciliation and peace.

This very Christmas holiday is precisely the time to realize that the knowledge of God's will is imperative in order to work toward peace and reconciliation for the people of our Holy Land and for the people of our neighboring countries who are now severely suffering under unspeakable persecution.

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder. His name will be the Angel of Great Counsel, for I shall bring peace upon the rulers, peace and health by Him" (Isaiah 9:6), declares the great Prophet Isaiah today and right now.

As the world looks to our Holy City of Jerusalem during this holy season for light, for hope, and for peace, let us pray that the light of the Incarnate Divine Logos would prevail and dwell in the hearts of all of us, and especially of those who have been given the power from above to lead our world.

Merry Christmas and God bless your mission.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

**SECOND OFFICIAL RESPONSE OF
HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH**

THEOPHILOS III OF JERUSALEM TO HIS BEATITUDE JOHN X OF ANTIOCH CONCERNING THE JURISDICTION OF THE EMIRATE OF QATAR

Translated by Theodoros Pritsis, M.Div., Th.M.

Reference No.

1020

Your Beatitude, Most Eminent Patriarch John of the Great City of God, Antioch and all the East, Our most beloved brother and concelebrant of Our Humility in Christ our God. We embrace Your Most Beloved Beatitude in the Lord and We greet You with exceeding joy.

We have recently received Your Beatitude's letter (Reference No. 396/2013) dated October 19th, 2013, which conveys to Us the opinion of Your most Holy and Sacred Synod regarding Us and the decision of Our Holy and Sacred Synod to elect and ordain Archbishop Makarios of Qatar. We have read your letter with great attention, together with Our Holy and Sacred Synod, and have studied it closely.

We gladly bring forth Our best possible response, and on behalf of the Holy and Sacred Synod, first desire to inform You that We deeply share in the difficulties, adversities and trials of the sister Church of Antioch and of the Syrian

people, which we have shown through our long cooperation with Your predecessor, the ever-memorable Patriarch Ignatios of Antioch, in the meetings of the Primate of the Senior Patriarchates of the Middle East in Jordan and Cyprus, and their visit to the European Union. We have also shown Our active support for the displaced Syrian people and our brethren in the Zaatar refugee camp in Jordan, and by condemning the abduction of the two hierarchs, Your consanguineous brother Metropolitan Paul of Aleppo and Alexandretta and hierarch of the Syriac-Jacobite Church, Metropolitan Grigorios of Aleppo.

The issue at hand, which should not have been an issue to begin with, is that the sister Church of Antioch has an underlying problem with the election and ordination of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Qatar. We have extensively explained the reasons for the canonical presence and pastoral activity of our Patriarchate in the Emirate of Qatar in Our response letter to You (reference no. 213) dated March 19th, 2013. So allow Us not to repeat to You the same explanation in this present letter.

In this present letter of response it is enough for Us to even acknowledge the concern raised by the Church of Antioch at the expense of the Church of Jerusalem. We never went and protested to any other sister Orthodox Church, but responded to the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece, sending Our own delegation, which met with both Your delegation and that of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece.

In this meeting, which was under the auspices of the then Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, Mr. Kostas Tsiaras, and the Director of the Department of Ecclesiastical and Religious Affairs, Mr. Charalambos Manassis, statements and comparisons were presented by both the Patriarchate of Antioch and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem regarding the

canonical jurisdiction of the Emirate of Qatar, and no agreement was reached by anyone concerning the issue. The delegation of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem suggested that a committee of Canon Law professors be assembled, which would study the entire issue and decide.

We now suggest dialogue so this issue can be resolved. However, in the instance that Your Beatitude does not accept dialogue, as You have told Us in Your recent letter, and reach a point where You do not recognize the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, We are very saddened because this act will not only break up the in-Christ communion and unity of Our two neighboring sister Churches, but also the entire Orthodox Church. Nevertheless, in such a possible deplorable situation, We will not cease in praying for the sister Church of Antioch and will continue to observe the communion of Christ-like love.

Awaiting Your positive response to the formation of a committee for the study of the entire issue, We send Our embrace in-Christ from the All-Holy and Life-Giving Tomb, We remain,

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, the 11th of October 2013

To Your Honored Beatitude

Beloved Brother in the Lord,

THEOPHILOS III

PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

REMARKS AT THE LIGHTING OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE IN JAFFA.

Jaffa, Sunday, 8, December 2013

Mr. Mayor,

Your Eminences,

Distinguished Civic and Community Representatives,

Esteemed Leaders of the Religious Communities,

Reverend Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen

We greet you with joy today as we gather here in the Season of Light, when the faithful of different traditions look to God for that divine illumination that only God can bestow. As we move from the lights of Chanukah to the lights of Christmas, we are reminded that the human spirit longs to be joined to God, and that true enlightenment comes only from the Creator of light. For the Lord says, *"I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life"* (John 8:12).

We bear in mind that here in Jaffa the population is especially known to be comprised of Jews, Christians and Muslims living side by side. The search for divine illumination is at the heart of our respective traditions, and

the future belongs to those who build communities of mutual respect, trust, and peaceful coexistence. We pray that the Almighty God, who is the Lord of light, illuminate the minds and warm the hearts of all of us, especially political leaders both globally and locally so that the light of peace amongst people of different faiths would prevail.

With the Psalmist we sing, *"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear?"* (Ps. 26 (27):1) and *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light upon my path"* (Ps. 118 (119):105. In this season, and especially during crucial and challenging times for our region, we are made deeply aware that we are all called to follow that light from God, which leads us into a deeper relationship with Him and with our fellow human beings. For mere human light can often blind us, but God's light reveals to us the path of eternal human destiny, which we all share.

May the lights of this tree be a constant reminder to all who look upon it of God "who is our everlasting Light" and "our Glory."

May God bless you!

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

HEADS OF JORDAN CHURCHES MEET

TO SET UP A COUNCIL

On Thursday, the 22nd of November/5th of December 2013, a Council of the Heads of Jordan Churches was convened in Amman.

The Council has been recently established and recognized by the state of Jordan as the legitimate body authorized to deal with issues pertaining to Christians inhabiting its dominion.

His Beatitude Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, made a speech at the meeting, commenting on the *modus operandi* of the Jordanian Council of Churches and its purposes. In English, the speech may be read here:
<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2013/12/05/3350>

From the Secretariat-General



ADDRESS OF H.B. THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM IN THE COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES IN JORDAN.

Amman, 5-12-2013

“Behold, now, what is so good as for brothers to dwell together in unity?”, says the Psalm, [Ps. 132(133)]

Your Beatitudes

Your Eminences

Dear Reverend Fathers

The grace of God has brought us together, in order to inaugurate the recently established Council of Churches of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The formation of the National Council of Jordan, which was initiated by His Highness Emir Ghazi, and with the blessing of His Majesty King Abdullah II, constitutes an indeed historic event for our recognized churches, which are called to play a decisive role vis a vis the challenges which our Middle East region is confronted with, in general, and in particular our Christian faithful in this very critical time through which we are passing.

We give glory to God as we commence our deliberations during this blessed and hopeful season of Christmas. The main purpose of our gathering here in Amman is to address structural and administrative issues, which concern the functioning of our Jordanian Council of Churches such as:

- a) The appointment of a coordinator for the council, and
- b) Confirmation that this Council of the Churches is the sole legitimate body authorized to communicate with the official governmental and civic offices in Jordan in relation to all general Christian affairs and issues of common concern. It shall be made clear from the outset that each Church will continue to sustain the right to communicate directly through its spiritual leader in relation to all its specific and private affairs.

Furthermore, to agree that the new by-laws shall be effected for the Council. For this purpose, we need to appoint a committee comprised of representatives of our Churches.

It should be mentioned that an administrative office should be set up, sponsored by the Church currently in charge, which will change on a rotating basis.

Other issues at our immediate attention are:

a) The proposed changes to the Jordanian matrimonial law, that is,

matters of divorce, inheritance, marriages, etc, especially the civil procedures relating to the ecclesiastical courts. In this regard, we must give our recommendation to the government, and therefore, a committee of legal personnel should be formed.

b) There are various requests from Christian groups who want to join the council and to be recognized by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

c) Any other business related to the purposes of our gathering

It should be made crystal clear that the intention of the Jordanian authorities is to help and encourage the spiritual and pastoral mission of our respective Churches, especially right now as our Churches in Syria, Egypt and elsewhere are experiencing the precise persecution as that of the early Church, and it in no way intends to interfere with the internal ecclesiastical canons and laws that regulate or dictate the independent governance of our Churches.

In closing these brief remarks, we would like to express our deep gratitude to His Majesty King Abdullah II, and not in the least, our appreciation to His Highness Emir Ghazi for his tireless efforts to support our shared mission.

God Bless our deliberations.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

CHRISTMAS MARKET OF THE HOLY ARCHBISHOPRIC OF QATAR

The Holy Archbishopric of Qatar organized on Friday the 16th/29th of November 2013, a market exhibiting gifts and other seasonal handworks, memorabilia, items of Christian worship and foodstuff in the forecourt of the Church of Sts Isaac and George in Doha.

The Orthodox Fraternity of the Myrophorae, made up of Arab-speaking, Greek-speaking, Greek-Cypriot, Serbian, Romanian and Ukrainian women, members of the congregation, participated in the organization of the event, in collaboration with the Youth Association and pupils at the Catechism Schools of the Parish.

The market attracted a great crowd, as the multinational congregation was given the opportunity to participate in artistic performance and delicious cookery.

From the Holy Archbishopric of Qatar

