

# **AN ADDRESS OF GREETING ON THE OCCASION OF THE RE-DEDICATION OF THE FESTIVAL HALL AT AUGUSTE VICTORIA HOSPITAL**

**His Beatitude Theophilos III**

**Patriarch of Jerusalem**

**6 April 2010**

Your Royal Highness,

Esteemed Representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany,

Dr Uwe Grabe,

Bishop Mounib,

Dear Brothers and Sisters

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Christus ist auferstanden! Er ist wahrhaftig auferstanden!

On this Tuesday of Bright Week, we greet you with the great Paschal greeting of the Church, as we proclaim together the victory of God in the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

On behalf of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the other Churches and Christian communities of the Holy Land, we

welcome you to the Holy City in this holy season, and we wish to extend a special greeting to Your Royal Highness.

As we celebrate the re-dedication of the Festival Hall in this centenary year of the Auguste Victoria Hospital, we recall the role of Your Highness's great grandfather in establishing a hospice and rest home on this site. When it was built, it was among the most modern buildings in Jerusalem and the very first to have electricity.

Over many years, the hospital has gained a reputation for the care and healing of some of the most needy of our region, and all people of good will recognize the important charitable work that is done here in our own day to alleviate suffering, especially among the Palestinian population.

The mission of Auguste Victoria is a reminder to us all of the urgency that is before us to continue to deepen the relationships between the Churches and Christian communities of the Holy Land for the common good of all our people. Many call Jerusalem their spiritual home, and Jerusalem has universal significance. But this must not deafen us to the distinctive Christian voice of this City, a voice that it is our responsibility to articulate in the work of mutual respect, reconciliation and peace.

The Church does not take to itself a worldly political agenda; it lives, we might say, the political agenda; for, as believers, we are members of the πόλις – the "City" – of Christ. The Churches and Christian communities together are called to articulate those highest values that sustain the moral, spiritual and religious well-being of society. Even as the Church in the Holy Land works tirelessly for peace, reconciliation and respectful co-existence, we encourage all those engaged in political life both in our region and abroad

to ensure that bigotry and prejudice give way to the reality of our common humanity and our common destiny in making enough room for all in this transitory world.

The message of the resurrection of Christ is the message of hope that God has brought us from the cross to the resurrection, from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom. This is the reality to which the Church in the Holy Land bears witness, and this is what Jerusalem does and should be – a living testimony to this dynamic divine existence. May your visit to the Holy Land during this most holy time refresh you and fill you with God's peace and joy.

We are pleased to bestow on you, Your Royal Highness, and all those gathered here, our Patriarchal good wishes and the Easter blessing of Jerusalem, and we thank you for the opportunity to be able to extend these words of greeting.

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!

Christus ist auferstanden! Er ist wahrhaftig auferstanden!

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## **INTERVIEW OF H.B. THEOFILOS III TO AL-RAI ABOUT THE US- ISLAMIC WORLD FORUM IN DOHA- QATAR**

On the first day of the Forum, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III gave an interview to the newspaper

Al- Rai. In this interview His Beatitude expressed optimism as far as the success of the 7<sup>th</sup> Forum of Doha resulting in a new beginning towards forming a strong partnership on the basis of mutual respect with the Islamic world.

His Beatitude noted during his interview that the state of Qatar ensured the proper environment which guarantees the success of this Forum wishing for all the participants to take steady and decisive steps towards a new vision which will eliminate the dark memories of the past.

**Al-Rai:                   Your Beatitude, how do you see your participation in the Forum between the US and the Islamic worlds?**

HB:                   We arrived from Jerusalem, after receiving the invitation to participate at this significant Forum which we consider necessary for all leaders of the world in order to meet and discuss many issues of their concern and which will eradicate any negative impression and prejudice from others. In order to achieve this goal we must first familiarize ourselves with each other by approaching each other and attending meetings. We would like to express our gratitude to the state of Qatar which we have visited numerous times in the past and is a good example for developing dialogue and transparency. We also had the honour of meeting with his Highness Sheikh Hamand Ben Khalifah A- Thani. In the state of Qatar there is a Christian community that enjoys all its rights and respect, which is solid proof of the respect and love that prevails in this country.

**Al-Rai:                   What is represented through Your participation in this Forum?**

HB:                   We participate in this significant Forum with

regard to politics and religion, as this is a very important issue. We also participated in two other Forums (sessions in this Forum?) and we have declared Our opinion on many issues. Today politics and diplomacy are in great need of spiritual guidance and advice.

Al-Rai: **Even on religious issues?**

HB: Truly, we must separate religion and politics as to their activities. The clergy should not become politicians and vice versa. However politics and religion must co-operate. Indeed our cultural heritage is based on religion, and has shaped our civilization, therefore politicians are influenced by religion. Either way religion is something positive, not negative.

Al- Rai: **Your Beatitude, according to your understanding how will this Forum contribute to the understanding of the different points of view of the participants and Your meeting with them?**

HB: This helps decisively, not only between American and the Islamic worlds, but between all religions. As you know the conflicts and disputes have very deep roots in history. As for Jerusalem where We come from, it is a unique place of different religions and cultures. It is a place where the three religions share and it is a good model for coexistence regardless of mistaken perceptions which followers of either religion may have for the others.

Al-Rai: **What steps should be followed in order to remove these**

**mistaken perceptions?**

HB: I believe the first step is dialogue and secondly how to work in order to promote the trust between us. We are clergy and having lived in Jerusalem for 40 years believe that this is the core of the problem, the lack of confidence between the opposing parties.

**AL-Rai: Your Beatitude, what are your activities in promoting trust between the followers of these religions.**

HB: Certainly we protect the rights of other religions, we respect them, and ask for this respect in return. Also we work for the spread of knowledge and understanding between all, because ignorance is the main reason for all bad impressions, prejudice of others and the lack of understanding between them.

**Al-Rai: Taking into account that You come from Jerusalem what is Your opinion about the excavations that the Israelis are undertaking?**

HB: In Jerusalem there are many religions, and Jerusalem accommodates them all, not only the three great monotheistic religions Jerusalem is described as the heart of the World, and a very important city to the whole world. Therefore when we see that a religion in the Holy land is exposed to harm or damage we demand and ask for it to be respected. In My opinion all Holy places must be respected by everybody.

**Al-Rai: In the domestic sector, how do you deal with the Palestinian situation?**

HB: We issue announcements where we condemn these acts. We are against any attack on the religion of others and we do not accept certain religions to be exposed to danger from any

other religions.

**Al-Rai: What are the other obstacles for the mutual understanding between Muslims and Christians?**

HB: As I mentioned before it is sometimes the prejudice and the extremism coming from all religions. I don't believe that religion is a source of violence but the opposite. However there are some people who use religion to promote private agendas and various ideologies, and this is a big problem.

**Al-Rai: How do you explain the wars waged by the US in the world and especially against Islamic countries, which reinforce the feelings of hatred between religions?**

HB: Allow me to say that everybody knows the truth of what is happening, and the world has become like a small village due to globalization and international communications. The only manner of exit from these main crises is to understand each other and at the same time to be realistic. We condemn any kind or form of violence irrespective of where it originates. However we must keep in mind that we are human beings and not perfect, that we may make mistakes which create many problems.

**Al-Rai: Do you agree with the term used for war as "a crusade" against the Muslims?**

HB: We must say this, whatever is happening is the result of ignorance from both sides, and because people are no longer interested in religions in our day, this leads to a situation in which there is a lack of respect towards the other side. Now the politicians and the decision makers are convinced that religion plays an important role in social and

political life, although in the past this role has been neglected. Therefore we can say that religion and politics influence each other very much.

Following the interview, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III escorted by the Patriarchal Representative in Qatar Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Makarios and by Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Ieronimos who is serving in Fhes of Jordan, visited and surveyed the works carried out at the church of the Patriarchate in Doha, which is under construction. This church is in honour of Saint Isaac the Syrian and the Great Martyr Saint George. His Beatitude congratulated Rev. Arch. Makarios for his efforts to complete this work.

**Chief Secretary's Office**

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## **THE ANGLICAN ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY THE MOST REVEREND DR. ROWAN WILLIAMS VISITS THE HOLY LAND**

The Archbishop of Canterbury of the Anglican Church the Most Reverend Dr. Rowan Williams, a scholar and writer, well disposed towards Orthodoxy, has visited the Holy Land again. Previously he had visited mainly with the aim of aiding the residents of Bethlehem and had invited His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III to participate in the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Church (19 July -3 August 2008). On



Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> /21<sup>st</sup> of February a reception in his honour was held at the Anglican Church of Saint George the Great Martyr in East Jerusalem by the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem His Eminence Right Reverend Suheil Dawani. Invited to this reception, amongst others were the representatives of the Christian Churches in the Holy Land, representatives of the Department on Christian Communities of the Ministry of Religion, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel and representatives of the Israeli Police in Jerusalem.

At the reception the Archbishop of Canterbury the Most Reverend Dr. Rowan Williams was welcomed on behalf of the Anglican Church in Jerusalem by the Anglican Bishop His Eminence Suheil S. Dawani who thanked him for his visit to the Holy Land, the land where, he said, Lord Jesus Christ deigned to visit in body and was Incarnated for us, the land where a small flock resides, a Christian Community which is now decreasing due to the political tension. His Eminence Suheil Dawani expressed his wish that the mutual respect between the followers of the three Abrahamic religions will constitute the basis and the foundation for peace in Jerusalem whilst retaining its beauty, which is also essentially its diversity.

In the name of the Christian Churches in the Holy Land His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III addressed the Archbishop of Canterbury the Most Reverend Dr. Rowan Williams. His Beatitude was escorted by His Eminence Isihios Archbishop of Capitoliass, His Eminence Aristarhos Archbishop of Constantina, His Eminence Dorotheos Archbishop of Avila, Hierodeacon Fr. Athanasios and the Rum-Orthodox Dr. Halil Andraous.

The address of His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III is as follows:

“Your Grace, the Most Reverend Dr Rowan Williams

Your Eminences

Dear Brothers and Sisters

Distinguished guests

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven”. (Mathew 5:13-16).

On behalf of church leaders in the holy land, We welcome His Grace, The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. rowan Williams to the holy city of Jerusalem.

We are physically only a few hundred meters away from the church of the Holy Sepulcher and a relatively short travel away from Bethlehem’s Church of Nativity.

Despite this close proximity between the two Holy cities, the faithful cannot visit one or the other freely. This situation can only be described as tragic. It is hugely unacceptable when political failures are expressed in restricting freedom of worship especially at a time when we, religious leaders, push for inter-religious dialogue and the principles of convergence and coexistence.

But not all dissimilar ideologies deal with their differences using the same methods practiced by politicians. The convergence between the Orthodox Church and the Anglican Communion carries in its spirit a role model for bringing together diverse ideologies throughout the world.

The dialogue between Orthodox Churches and the Anglican

Communion began in 1973, when the Anglican-Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Discussions held its first meeting in Oxford. Through its first phase of 1976, second phase in 1984 and the conclusion of its third phase concluded in the Cyprus Agreed Statement, considerable agreement was reached over a range of issues.

We and Our Jerusalem Patriarchate of Jerusalem share these important intentions and drive for these honorable fraternal relations.

Our convergence should be developed to include more faiths and take hands –on forms of manifestation through cooperation to achieve justice and peace so as to ultimately bridge the distance between the church of Nativity and the church of Holy Sepulcher.

The current political misfortune lived in the Middle East, especially in our beloved Holy Land, carries within its reality tragic human experiences. We church leaders, guardians of faiths and carriers of holy messages intend and persevere to effect a continuation to merge through dialogue that produces practical unified vision on how responsibility can be taken towards achieving justice and peace and forming a conduit for diffusing tension and support for positive political action.

We speak with utmost sincerity about our existence as clergy and about efforts towards the realization of justice, peace and stability. At the same time, we have to be very cautious in taking the religious dimension of the political conflict and not to mistaken it for a political tool but rather as an integral part of the conflict's resolution.

Such responsibility may touch upon causing a change in the

moral climate that governs this part of the world. Such change, given the nature of the relation between human and religion in the Holy Land, can only be achieved through the solid will of religious leaders and when encouragement is given to our respective congregations to rediscover the true meaning of justice and peace in the ultimate spiritual context.

We believe that we are in the company of one of the world leaders in promoting dialogue and coexistence. The work of Your Grace in this aspect has been inspirational, to say the least, to many of us who share the same values and vision, We commend the statement given Al-Azhar University in Cairo in the Third anniversary of the 11<sup>th</sup> of September terrorist attacks, when Your Grace pointed that the followers of the will of God should not be led into ways of violence. This drives Us to say: no doubt in my mind that The Most Reverend Rowan Williams is one of the utmost "Orthodox" believers in justice and peace for all human kind.

We would also like to extend our thanks and gratitude to our host and friend Bishop Suheil Duawani who has showed great responsibility in supporting and cooperating with many initiatives and events that serve the purpose of promoting Justice and Peace in the Holy Land.

Thank you".

In response, the Archbishop of Canterbury the Most Reverend Dr. Rowan Williams said the following:

'For someone to live in Jerusalem or to visit it is a grace, a blessing, a gift from God, a challenge and an opportunity to self-reflect. The work of God for mankind in the Holy Land

urges and implores us to empathize with Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a city in which all nations are called upon to live 'Let's rise to the mount of the Lord'. This happened on the day of Pentecost and it happens also today. Jerusalem is destined to have its gates open to everyone, but for some they are closed. For some, entrance is excluded.'

'The way of life for the inhabitants throughout the centuries in a Jerusalem which had its doors open to everyone, sets the example for peace in the present. Let's remember the words of the ancient ascetic hermits "our life and our death entirely depends upon the life and death of our neighbour. If our neighbour lives, we live also with him; if he dies we also die with him".

The following Monday 9<sup>th</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> February 2010, the Archbishop of Canterbury the Most Reverend Dr. Rowan Williams, escorted by His Eminence Michael Jackson Anglican Bishop of Ireland, His Eminence Suheil Dawani Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem and other clergy, visited His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III at the Patriarchate.

During this visit His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III addressed the Archbishop of Canterbury as follows:

"Your Grace, Archbishop Rowan

Bishop Suheil,

Bishop Michael,

Your Eminences,

Dear Fathers

With great joy we welcome you, Your Grace Archbishop Rowan, and those with you, to our Patriarchate once again.

As we welcome you, we remember with deep gratitude our time with you at the Lambeth Conference in Canterbury and the Walk of Witness against Global Poverty in London in 2008. We honor you in your archpastoral ministry of peace and justice both at home and around the world, and we recognize the care and concern that you have always shown to the Holy Land. We commend your thoughtfulness, and the wisdom and discretion that always mark your words and deeds.

We are also appreciative of the way in which, by your writings and your primatial ministry, you have helped to deepen the knowledge of Orthodoxy among Western Christians and thereby helped to lay a further foundation for the unity of all Christians.

Your efforts to articulate the message of the Gospel in an increasingly secularized society are a reflection in a different place of the ministry of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem here to maintain the sacredness of Jerusalem and the integrity of the Holy Places in our region.

Jerusalem forms a kind of “universal parish”. Here millions of pilgrims come every year – Jews, Christians, Muslims and even those of no particular religious affiliation – and it is the special ministry of the Patriarchate to offer spiritual consolation and encouragement to all who come in search of the presence of God.

We know that you understand that a strong and vibrant Patriarchate ensures a strong and vibrant Christian presence in the Holy Land. We value your efforts on our behalf and we continue to ask for your prayers as we seek to be a living

sign in the Holy Land of the message of mutual respect, reconciliation and peace that is our responsibility in the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

And in asking for your prayers we assure you of our own prayers for you and for the unity and well-being of the Anglican Communion with which, for so many generations, the Orthodox Church has enjoyed such close and mutually beneficial relations.

Despite the current tensions within the Anglican Communion, we continue to be committed to dialogue. Our dialogue helps us all to re-discover the shared sources of the fullness of the Christian faith, especially in the Holy Scriptures as well as the Church Fathers and Saints whom we hold in common. It is by returning to the shared heritage, we believe, that we shall find the best way of healing the divisions that keep us separated from each other. For it is not in administrative structures or any form of accommodation, but in faith, that our unity in Christ will be firmly established.

This year Christians in both the East and the West enjoy the opportunity of celebrating the Feast of the Resurrection on the same day, and so we have also entered into the fast of Great Lent together.

'Attend, O Heaven, and I will speak, and will sing of Christ, who came to dwell among us in flesh which he took from the Virgin'.

We sing these words at the beginning of Great Lent in the Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete, and they remind us of the truth that we begin Lent with the remembrance of the Incarnation of the Logos. Our celebration of the Sunday of

Orthodoxy yesterday is just this, an affirmation that God came to share our human nature, and so to teach us that our human nature comes from the same divine source.

In this spirit of our common humanity redeemed by Our Lord Jesus Christ, we bestow our Patriarchal blessing on your trip to the Holy Land, and we thank you again for your visit to the Patriarchate”.

To this address the Archbishop of Canterbury the Most Reverend Dr. Rowan Williams responded broadly as follows:

‘It is for us, Your Beatitude, Bishop of the Jerusalem Church, a particular pleasure to meet with you again. We highly appreciate the stance of your Church and Your acceptance and participation in the Lambeth Conference. We pray for your Church as the local Church of Jerusalem that contributed greatly in conserving the Christian presence and identity in the Holy Land. The increasing presence of Christians in the Holy Land is a gift from God to the world. This is indeed possible because the Lord said to Paul, the Apostle of the Nations: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (B’ Corinthians 12,9)

Regarding the ‘Sunday of Orthodoxy’ which You celebrated yesterday, the Anglican Church views the decision of the 7<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Synod on the reinstatement of the Holy Icons that they truly reflect the uncreated Light of the Lord and from Him as a source is diffused to the (faces) Saints. For all this we thank God and we thank Your Beatitude for the testimony which You give.

In light of the forthcoming visit of the Archbishop of



Canterbury to Gaza the following day, His Beatitude spoke regarding the support of our Patriarchate for the people who were affected during last year's clashes. His Beatitude spoke to the Archbishop of Canterbury about the financial and managerial crisis of the Middle East Council of Churches and the efforts of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem to upgrade its role as a Christian organization, empowering it to be a single unified Christian voice and a testament for Christians in the Middle East and for the peaceful co-existence of Christians and Muslims. For this His Beatitude requested the support of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

When asked about his Church, the Archbishop of Canterbury explained that it is founded on the apostolic faith and tradition, in which its structure is not hierarchical but based on a collective way of life and administration. However this system has a weakness in co-operation which sometimes creates difficulties, because each of the thirty one (31) Anglican Churches sometimes decides on its own regarding issues which require a collective undertaking and decision making process such as bioethics, sexuality and women in the priesthood, etc.

The Most Reverend Dr. Rowan Williams said 'This is why we invited other Christian Churches, like Yours, to the Lambeth Conference to listen and to be of help. We have accepted the ordination of women into the priesthood and we are already facing the ordination of women to the level of Bishop which has become a serious problem for us.

In addition the Church of England takes part constitutionally in the issuing of state laws. This privilege is difficult because the truth has to be confessed in a secular environment'.

'The Church of England has experienced a decline in the

participation in sacraments of its believers over the last fifty years. In the last twenty years protestant groups have emerged with intentions rather of evangelizing and not so in participating in the sacraments.

However in the last five to six years around five hundred New Congregations of our Anglican Church have surfaced. This is encouraging, as well as the advent of approximately twenty people who were ordained into the priesthood. I consider these to be signs of God's Grace within our Church, for which we implore Your prayers'.

His Beatitude concluded by referring to the historical connections of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem with the Anglican Church and the British Commonwealth. His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III thanked the Anglican Church for their help towards the church of Jerusalem in Qatar during the first stages of its founding there and accepted an invitation from the Archbishop of Canterbury for an official visit to the Anglican Church when time permits.

His Beatitude offered the Archbishop of Canterbury a commemorative gift for his visit to the Patriarchate, a ceramic icon of 'Theotokos of Bethlehem' and the Patriarchate's precious publication of sacred objects with illustrations from the Church of Resurrection edited by Professor Nikolaos Olymbiou. To the escort of the Archbishop, His Eminence Michael Jackson Bishop of Ireland, His Beatitude offered a book of illuminated manuscripts of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem by Professor Vokotopoulos. To the rest of the escorts, medals were given depicting 1500 years of the history of Jerusalem together with a photo album on ceremonies of Jerusalem by photographer Ms. Gali Tibbon.

The Archbishop of Canterbury kindly reciprocated by offering his Beatitude a volume of prose by English authors regarding

the spirituality of the Anglican Church.

Also present at the meeting was the elderly Jerusalemite Dr. Ioannis Tlil, an old and distinguished member of the Church and Jerusalem's community, who offered to the Archbishop of Canterbury a book entitled 'I am Jerusalem'. This was followed by a commemorative photograph taken for the visit of the Anglican delegation with His Beatitude at the Throne.

**Chief Secretary's Office**

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# **SPEECH TO THE MAYOR AND THE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT OF JERUSALEM**

**His Beatitude**

**THEOPHILOS III**

**Patriarch of Jerusalem**

**The New Year 2009**

**26<sup>th</sup> January 2010**

Your Excellency, Mr Barkat, Mayor of Jerusalem,  
Honorable Members of the Municipal Government,  
Distinguished Guest,

"Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day

following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem". (Luke 13:33 ).

By the grace of God we meet here again this year as: "children under the wings of Jerusalem" (Isaiah). This distinguished gathering of spiritual leaders, municipal officers, diplomats and honorable guests is all because of our commitment and love for this Holy City of Jerusalem.

These days we celebrate the New Year and we take the opportunity to celebrate the uniqueness of Jerusalem. The fact that our city is sacred to all of us who represent the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, is the main factor for the inducement it raises among the people of the world. But the city is also greatly valued for its multi-cultural and ethnico-religious diversity. These characteristics which synthesize the identity of Jerusalem must drive us to effect the conclusion that more effort should be exerted to join our forces for the peace of this Holy City and against anything resisting the makeup of this great place.

Experience has shown Us that Authority, whether given through public or internal elections or appointment, is given by the grace of God, for it is a great responsibility and harbors with it great accountability. It is not at all a license to power or a justification to exclude our surrounding factors or the interest of those who are around us.

Our Church establishments follow and guard spiritual rituals. In addition these long standing Christian institutions have provided for a lot more. They bear the responsibilities that touch upon people's spiritual and material needs. We run civil service institutions and along with the governmental authorities we share the burden of providing education, health services and social care. Moreover, our historic, i.e.

spiritual and physical heritage, as well as our moral mission justly entitles us to be taken in account; and this no less than for the common benefit of all.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the “Mother Church”, together with the Christian Churches have jealously guarded the historic rights, privileges and ancient customs through what has been accepted as the “Status Quo”; and to continue the guarantee of protection for those interests, especially related to Holy Places and to our communities, efforts should be enhanced to further apply “the practice of abstention from interference”. That, of course, without infringing upon the responsibilities and duties of the civic authority.

Let us be reminded that this City is not an earthly reality alone; but a reflection of the heavenly Jerusalem that has enough space to accommodate all of her children with love and forgiveness; for we all are answerable to the Almighty, who in the words of the Prophet:

“...shall rejoice over you...For there shall be no one like you, O Jerusalem...” (Isaiah 62:4-7)

**Happy New Year!**

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**AN ADDRESS TO THE BULGARIAN  
PRIME MINISTER MR BOYKO**

# **BORISSOR**

**His Beatitude Theophilos III**

**Patriarch of Jerusalem**

12 January 2010

Your Excellency, the Prime Minister of Bulgaria

Your Eminences

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Christ is born! Let us glorify Him!

We greet you during these days of the Feast of the Nativity, when the Church throughout the world rejoices with the angels at the birth of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

You have come to the Holy Land and to the Patriarchate at a time when the world looks to Bethlehem and to the promise of the Prince of Peace, and we encourage you in your pilgrimage.

We wish to convey through you our fraternal greetings and prayers to His Holiness Patriarch Maxim and to all the faithful of the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria. We know the deep Christian faith of the Bulgarian people, and we appreciate the growing number of pilgrims who are coming to the Holy Land now after many years in which such pilgrimages were not so easy to make.

In the Holy Land, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem represents in a special way the entire Christian world, and in a unique way the Orthodox Christian world. By God's providence, as the Local and Senior Orthodox Church of this region, it is our great blessing and privilege to be the guardians and servants of the Holy places, and it is our duty and our joy to embrace without discrimination all Orthodox Christians who either

visit here or who live here, regardless of their national origins and languages.

In his First Letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul reminds us of that diversity in unity that is of the essence of the Church: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord" (I Cor. 12:4). In the Holy Land, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem lives not only the magnificence of the Orthodox Faith in all its fullness; we live also the life of the Church in all its fullness, for we embrace our diversity within the unity that is the gift of Christ to the Church.

In this spirit of diversity in unity, we welcome you to the Holy Land, which is our home and the home of all people of good will. Needless to say that the Patriarchate is playing a leading role in promoting peace justice and reconciliation and maintaining the special religious cultural and social status of the Holy City of Jerusalem.

We thank you again for your kindnesses to us and we assure you of our prayers and we bestow upon you our Patriarchal blessing.

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**ADDRESS OF H.B. THEOFILOS III  
TO THE HEADS OF THE CHURCHES  
ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR  
VISIT TO THE PATRIARCHATE FOR**

# CHRISTMAS

Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences,

Your Excellencies,

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

***“Christ is born! Let us glorify Him!***

***Christ descends from the heavens! Let us welcome Him!”***

With this jubilant hymn, the Church welcomes the incarnate Logos, the One who was in the beginning with the Father, the One who contains earth and heaven and yet who deigns to be contained in the womb of the Theotokos.

**Christ is born! Let us glorify Him!**

We greet you in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, whom we celebrate in this happy season as Emmanuel, God-with-us, and we thank you for coming to the Patriarchate and for your kind Christmas greetings. We remember you always in our prayers, as we pray every day for the unity of all believers in Christ.

The Feast of the Nativity according to the flesh of Our Lord Jesus Christ is for all of us the assurance that heaven has come down to earth. By becoming a human being for our sake in Jesus Christ, God shows us the way to full union with him, the way of ***theosis***, the journey to the divine life which is the gift to all who believe.

The presence of the Church in the Holy Land from the very beginning of the Christian era is an eloquent and tangible witness to this truth of history and of faith. As the Churches and Christian communities of the Holy Land, we share a common witness to the One who has come among us as incarnate Peace



and Justice.

But the message of the Nativity is not directed simply to Christians. It is a message of hope for the world. We Christians proclaim that hope has a face – the face of Jesus Christ – and that this hope has consequences for the way in which we order our life as the human family. For 2000 years the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem has given itself in witness to this apostolic message of the Gospel, and we celebrate with you the ministry that we share in announcing to the world that God has broken into human history in this Holy Land. May our proclamation of the saving Gospel be always our primary mission and evidenced in our common witness.

In this time of rejoicing, let us not neglect to repent of those times when we have neglected to show forth in our lives what we proclaim with our lips. Let this Feast be a time of re-commitment to that mutual respect that must exist between the Churches, so that those who see us may rejoice with us. It is not enough to pay lip service to common witness and proclamation: **we must live the Gospel in our relationships with each other, and translate it into action even among ourselves. It is unacceptable for the Holy Places to be the theatre of the acting out of our differences.** May the One who is Incarnate Peace and reconciliation give us the grace to make that peace and reconciliation real among ourselves.

With this renewed commitment, we shall live more worthily into our inheritance as those to whom great riches have been entrusted. And our witness to a hurting world that longs to hear the message of the Prince of Peace will be strong and vital. And we shall be able to say in the strength of unity and mutual respect:

***“Today Christ is born in Bethlehem of the Virgin.***

***Today He who is without a beginning begins,***

***And the Word is made flesh.***

*The powers of Heaven rejoice,*

*The earth and her people are jubilant;*

*The Wise Men bring gifts to the Lord,*

*The shepherds marvel at the One who is born;*

*And we sing without ceasing:*

*Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will toward all people”.*

We wish all of you, your communities, and your families, a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**HIS BEATITUDE THEOPHILOS III**

**Patriarch of Jerusalem**

**9 January 2010**

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**HIS BEATITUDE' S ADDRESS ON  
BEHALF OF ALL THE CHRISTIAN  
COMMUNITIES OF THE HOLY LAND,  
BEFORE THE PRESIDENT OF  
ISRAEL MR SHIMON PERES**

“Mr President,

Honourable Ministers,

Members of Parliament,

Distinguished Guests,

“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 called the Angel of Great Counsel; for I shall bring peace upon the rulers, peace and health by Him. Great shall be His government, and of His peace there is no end...” (Isaiah 9:5&6).

Events and gatherings such as this one are of great importance for promoting values that are greatly needed in our present day.

The special character and position of the Churches is alluring to the uniqueness of this Holy Land. Sacred and spiritual, this region is host to the three monotheistic religions; Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as well as being host to multi-culturalism and most importantly ethnico-religious diversity. We, the community of the Holy Land in general and Christians in particular must always strive to speak united, invigorating one vision for peace and harmonious co-existence.

As we have recently said to a conference for interfaith dialogue at Georgetown University in Washington DC, in the cause of denouncing violence and promoting peace-building, the role of religious leaders, especially the clergy, is both crucial and fundamental. We do not believe that clergy should take the role of politicians; clergy have different, but equally serious ethical, social and pastoral responsibilities. But we do consider that, just as political leaders must be shaped by the moral principles of their religious traditions, in the same way religious leaders have a role in forming congregations and communities of faithful people to exercise responsible citizenship. This role manifests itself at the grass-roots level through educating our congregations and the general public on the importance of peaceful symbiosis; in providing social services that focus on

the equality of all people regardless of religious or ethnic affiliations; In taking strong positions in denouncing all forms of violent acts; in leading and participating in public and private dialogue between different religious communities and ethnicities; And in supporting initiatives, institutions and leaders who are committed to the same social and civic good.

As we have gathered here today in a clear expression and manifestation of inter-religious history, understanding and existence, we have to admit that political polarization and ideological zeal and eagerness have increasingly posed a serious challenge to our humble efforts and great intentions. Since we have accepted the calling of the Almighty to become servants of His divine message, it is our duty to relentlessly enhance our efforts for improving the living and socio-economic conditions in which people of the Holy Land experience, thus further promoting a peaceful and just solution to alleviate the suffering of all affected.

To many people around the world the relationship between religion and political unrest has been complicated and vulnerable; It is our obligation as religious leaders, to lay foundations enabling all political efforts to defuse such complexity and present religion as the most effective tool in reconciliation and peace building.

The historic rights, privileges and ancient customs, accorded to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and to the Christian churches in the Holy Land, have been substantiated during the many years in what we now call the "Status Quo". This doctrine, especially in our beloved Holy Land must be safeguarded by the understanding, respect and protection of the "**laissez faire**" practiced by the governing authority to ensure our very existence and help further our work of calming effect and inducement of peace.

We are appreciative of the Authorities' efforts in facilitating the access for pilgrims and worshipers and we commend them to continue and push further this holy and important provision; and allow Us to say: "more can always be done". In this context and to underline the concerns common to our Christian community as a whole, We acknowledge the many positive steps that the State of Israel has taken to evaluate our concerns, and We stress the need for the continuation of progress for:

- Free movement of the faithful;
- Provisions of entry visas for clerics;
- Honouring the privileges of Tax exemption sanctioned by the sacred history; and
- The historic standing of the ownership of Church property.

The inauspicious endeavours to attaining peace should not be ignored this festive season. This should be a reminder amidst our joyful celebrations that God's will is loud and clear for both the political and religious leadership to persevere in our commitment to reaching peace.

Our work as religious leaders in the Birthplace of the Prophetic and Incarnate message is to raise awareness amongst people that peace not war, dialogue not indifference, respect not bigotry and bridges not barriers are the way to forge lasting peaceful ties between believers of the various faiths who share this Holy Land namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Rest assured that both the Christian institutions and leadership, in the Holy Land are willing to employ their blessings and resources in furthering peace in the region because we believe that this constitutes one of the fundamental commandments of our faith which solidifies our

existence and determines our mission.

Our fraternal noble wishes for this happy occasion on the New Year to all Jews, Christians and Muslims, who persistently pursued peace during times of great turmoil, as they set a role model for all those who believe in the true prophetic message of the incarnation of the divine logos. And to those, we extend our hand for assistance and offer our humble blessings.

As the custodians and servants of the Holy Places that bare testimony to the sacred history of redemption and salvation of human kind, we time and again commit ourselves to promoting peace and invite every human being to “soul searching”; in order to recognize the other’s entitlement to peace, respect and dignity; and we should always remember to behave in the same way as we would like people to behave towards us. For it is written “...whatever you want man to do to you do also to them for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12)

Your Excellency, we express our sincere thanks to you for this cordial invitation and courteous hosting. We call upon the Lord Almighty to bless this coming New Year with fruitful achievements to warm our hearts, enlighten our minds and guide all the citizens of the State of Israel to fulfillment and prosperity.

Happy New Year.

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**HIS BEATITUDE’ S ADDRESS TO**

# THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES GENERAL MEETING OF THE PALESTINE ISRAEL ECUMENICAL FORUM IN BETHLEHEM

*“Your Excellencies, Your Eminencies,*

*Distinguished participants,*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

*We greet you warmly on the occasion of this important Forum, with the Christmas message, the message of the reconciliation between heaven and earth which took place on the very locality over which this blessed meeting is taking place. Two years have passed since the launch of this initiative in Amman and much have been achieved through promoting this incarnate message of reconciliation, not only between God and man, but also between humans sharing common humanity. We re-applaud the choice of subject for our work and in the difficult endeavor of the resolution of conflict and of building and sustaining peace, for the art of dialogue and listening is of supreme consequence.*

*While the hearts and minds of hundreds of millions of people around the world turn to Bethlehem around this time of the year, the people in Bethlehem and in the Holy Land turn their hearts and minds to the world in search for assistance, hoping for peace to reach this part of the world. For many years Christmas in the Holy Land registers an irony of reality. Jesus Christ, the incarnate Logos of God the Father, intervened our human history and liberated our humanity from the evil of darkness by shedding upon us the light of wisdom,*

*the light of righteousness. Where the world joyfully celebrates Christmas, the people who share this very earth over which Jesus Christ delivered this message, live deprived of practical manifestation of this message of peace. From within this scene of unrest and instability emerges this community of the Almighty as an "endangered" component of the Holy Land to add to the issues we have to address, practically on the ground, in order to fulfill the commitments we made before the Lord and amongst ourselves.*

*As we convene around this dedicated manifestation to inter-religious action for peace and justice in this part of the world, represented in the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum, we have to admit that political polarization and ideological zeal and eagerness have increasingly posed a serious challenge to our humble efforts and great intentions. Since we have accepted the Lord's calling to become servants of his message, it is our duty to relentlessly increase our efforts for improving the living and socio-economic conditions in which people of the Holy Land experience, thus further promoting a peaceful and just solution to alleviate the suffering.*

*To many people around the world the relationship between religion and political unrest has been complicated and vulnerable; it is our obligation, as religious leaders, to lay foundations enabling all political efforts to defuse such complexity and present religion as the most effective tool in peace building.*

*We believe that the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum constitutes a legitimate platform from which, to launch comprehensive and collective efforts towards achieving peace that could be felt by individuals in our communities within the Holy Land. Prophet Jeremiah laments by saying: "Peace, peace. But where is peace? They were ashamed because they failed". (Jer. 6:14-15). We are confronted with political*



*inability to carry on, but we need to submit to the fact that there is no shame in perseverance. We encourage and stand by politicians and decision makers to be more courageous and determined as ever, in order to fulfill the Lord's message of peace, justice and reconciliation.*

*The Patriarchate of Jerusalem once again loudly reaffirms its commitment and support for all peace initiatives in our beloved region and calls upon all concerned parties to join efforts and to rise up to the challenge imposed upon our common humanity in a manner that will lead to the formation of a "de facto" united front for peace in the middle east/ capable of invariably defeating all forms of extremism through dialogue and awareness.*

*We thank you for your invitation to give these remarks, and we pray for God's blessing upon all of you and upon the work of this seminar and upon all people working for peace. For "blessed are the peace-makers" (Matth. 5,9).*

*So that the voice crying in the wilderness (Matth. 3:3) would be transformed; praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2:14).*

*Thank you.*

*Bethlehem, 11 December 2009*

***Theophilos III,***

*Patriarch of Jerusalem*

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# **HIS BEATITUDE VISITS THE PHILANTHROPIC INSTITUTION 'SIKSEK' IN BETHANY**

A nursing home for the elderly and people with special needs with the name 'Four Homes of Mercy' or 'Siksek', has been operating continuously since 1940 in the area of Bethany, not far from the Holy Convent of Martha and Maria, the sisters of Lazarus.

This philanthropic complex of buildings was established by the personal initiative of the Siksek, an Orthodox family, with the blessing of the late Patriarch of Jerusalem Venedictos and land which was donated by King Hussein of Jordan in 1962, and operates due to the initiatives and donations from philanthropic donors, organizations, and individuals.

The residents of this institution live free of charge, and irrespective of dogma or religion, are people such as the elderly, the infirm, adults and mainly children with mental or physical disabilities that are either serious or incurable. The social offering to society of this institution is recognized locally and internationally. The dedicated service of the personnel and the transparency of the management of the Institution provide trust for financial donations which transcend the economic stalemate and continues to operate.

This institution has on its premises an Orthodox Chapel where priests of the Patriarchate are invited to perform the Holy Liturgy and other services.

His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III responded to the invitation of the Institution to perform the ceremony of the Sanctification of the water in occasion of the renovated parts inauguration. The renovation of these parts was possible with the sponsorship of the Welfare Association,

the National Development Centre (NDC), and Liz Mulford with the French Cooperation. His Beatitude was escorted by His Eminence Isychios Metropolitan of Capitolas, the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Aristarchos Archbishop of Constantina, Reverend Archimandrite Fr. Ieronymos, deacon Rev.Fr. Athanasios and Dr. Ioannou Tleel who has been a staff member for many years.

Amongst the participants at the ceremony were Mr. Gregor Manzuk , Representative of the IOCC organization, the President of the Pontifical Mission, Mr. Sami el Youssef, and the Vice President of the Wehdat Alquds Organisation, Mr. Ahmad Rowedi.

At the entrance of the institution, His Beatitude was welcomed by the Board of Directors of the Institution and representatives of the Philanthropic Institutions of the Saint Jacob Cathedral of Jerusalem, from whence they escorted Him to the Chapel, where they chanted at the ceremony of the Sanctification of the water. His Beatitude inaugurated the renovated new parts and blessed them. After the ceremony, a modest reception followed where Dr. Eiden, replacement Director of the Institution, addressed His Beatitude and the participants. Dr. Eiden referred to the more than seventy year old social service of the Institution and the improvement of the quality of living conditions and therapy of the patients from its renovated parts, as well as to the honour His Beatitude gives with his presence to the workers and residents.

His Beatitude praised the management, the board and the staff for the dedicated service to the patients, offered a contribution of \$5,000 USD and was then shown the wards of the patients, which He blessed with the Sanctified water.

### **Chief Secretary's Office**

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# **HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III DELIVERS A MESSAGE OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE IN JERUSALEM**

On Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> /16<sup>th</sup> of September 2009, a ceremony was held by the Israeli Police at the Police Headquarters, next to the Russian Mission (Mascobiyeh), on occasion of the Jewish New Year. At this gathering, invited where also representatives of the Christian communities in the Holy Land and notables.

At the start of the ceremony, the Rabbi of Jerusalem spoke of the past year as being one of blessings but also of difficulties. The previous year with its difficulties has ended and a new one is coming. *"This period" the Rabbi said "is a time for forgiveness between us and God. We wish for good times to come, times of peace for Israel"*.

Following on, the Mayor of Jerusalem, Mr. Nir Barkat, spoke and said that it is a privilege for us to serve and live in Jerusalem, a city in the heart of Israel, upon which billions of people around the world focus. It is our duty to take advantage of this. The Mayor then thanked the Police for their cooperation, for their numerous activities and wished that the New Year to be one of joy, peace, security and a year of decreased disputes and contentions.

In conclusion the Mayor expressed his condolences to those families whose members, policemen, had fallen victims in the

line of duty.

After this, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III addressed the attendees on behalf of the Christian leaders of the Holy Land, as follows:

## **Address to the Jerusalem Police at Rosh Hashanah**

**His Beatitude Theophilos III**

**Patriarch of Jerusalem**

**16 September 2009.**

*“Mayor of Jerusalem Mr. Barkat*

*The head of the Jerusalem Police Mr. Franco.*

*Respected Members of the Jerusalem Police,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*As we celebrate the high holy day of Rosh Hashanah, we greet you warmly on our behalf on the behalf of our fellow Christian leaders here. We value our important relationship and the cooperation and good understanding that have long existed between us.*

*We recognize that yours is a complicated and frequently difficult job. The eyes of the world are so often focused on the Holy Places in this Holy City – a city that is dear and holy to Jew, Christian and Muslim alike. Even those who profess no religious belief understand the significance of Jerusalem for the entire human family. This means that your work is often in the spotlight, and that you are subject to unusually high levels that mistakes and shortcomings are quickly noticed, while faithful duty often goes unrecognized.*

*For our part, we salute you today for the responsible work that you do to keep public order, especially during the*

*periods of the various holy days, religious celebrations, and civic holidays in the Old City. Whether it is Ramadan, or Passover, or Easter, the well-being of all depends on your presence and judgment. Pilgrims must have access to the Holy Places during religious festivals, and the City must be safe and accessible for all.*

*We note with particular appreciation your duty during the recent Feast of the Dormition that coincided with the beginning of Ramadan. Every year, the crowded procession moves from the courtyard of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to Gethsemane. There are always many pilgrims, and it is a challenge to manage such large numbers of people. This year everything went smoothly and uneventfully, and the pilgrims were deeply appreciative of the police. May the good experience and the handling of the safety of everyone at the Feast of the Dormition be an inspiration to us to ensure that proper accommodation is made also for the needs of pilgrims for the Ceremony of the Holy Fire.*

*As we reflect on this and many other similar occasions when your work has ensured the safety and security of so many, we encourage you to continue to maintain the highest standards of professional conduct and decorum in the face of your many and heavy duties. At this new year, may you deepen your commitment to the dignity of your profession as those to whom a great trust has been given.*

*The prophet Isaiah reminds us eloquently of “the heart of Jerusalem.” ‘Speak to the heart of Jerusalem’, says Isaiah. (Isaiah 40:1).*

*To us in our religious and spiritual mission, and to you in your civic responsibility, has the care of ‘heart of Jerusalem’ been entrusted. This is both a sacred and a public duty. We thank you for the role that you play in caring for the heart of Jerusalem, a heart that beats with life for all and especially for faithful of the three monotheistic Faiths,*

*and we wish you and your families a happy and blessed New Year. Thank you".*

**Chief Secretary's Office**