THE FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE U.S.A. Mr. JIM CARTER, VISITED THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

The former President of the U.S.A, his Excellency Mr. Jim Carter, recently visited the State of Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Gaza.

On Saturday May 13th at 7:00 p.m. the former President of the U.S.A Mr. Jim Carter visited the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the first and oldest religious institution in the Holy Land. The visit was organised with the cooperation of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, members of the World Council of Churches and members of the Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land.

The former President Mr. Carter was escorted by Mr. Hrair Balain, Director of Conflict Resolution at the Carter Centre, Mr. Karin Ryan, Director of the Human Rights Program at the Carter Centre and Mr. Rick Jascula, Trip Director for the Carter Centre and Mr. Samuel Jones.

Present with His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III were members of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre including the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Aristarchos Archbishop of Constantina and His Eminence Methodios Archbishop of Mt. Tabor. Representing the other Christian denominations in the Holy Land were: the Lutheran Bishop in Jerusalem Mr. Munib Younan, the Anglican Bishop Mr. Suheil Dawani, Rev. Fr. Naim Ateek and Rev. Fr. Olav Fykse Tveit of the World Council of Churches.

The meeting took place in an atmosphere of cordiality, mutual

trust and understanding. At the meeting, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem addressed former President Mr. Jim Carter and his escorts as follows:

Your Excellency, President Jimmy Carter

Fellow Members of

the Council of Religious Institutions of The Holy Land

Distinguished Guests,

We thank Your Excellency for this important and cordial visit to our Patriarchate and for your attention to the work of the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land. We are proud to be within, amongst and most importantly, part of this distinguished community of the Holy Land in general and of Jerusalem in particular. We honour and pride ourselves to be patrons, guardians and participants in the continuing history and heritage of these people and this unique culture.

Jerusalem is the embodiment of the sacredness and purity that emanates form the three faiths of the Heavens; Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

We reaffirm the great importance attached to the involvement of the Churches of Christ and reaffirm that The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, also known as the Mother Church, embraces all initiatives that call for peace and justice in the world generally and in our beloved middle east specifically.

Promoting values of peace and justice is of paramount importance. Violence, aggression, hatred and bigotry produce unrest and insecurity; unfortunately have replaced peace and justice that produce security and prosperity. We firmly believe, now exists the possibility for the conflict and hatred to be turned into durable and just peace. One of the main roads that must be travelled to achieving this, is the road of Reconciliation between God and Man made in Christ.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem is witness to the uniqueness of Jerusalem, which is a model for overcoming existing religious, cultural and ethnic particularities, without attempting to destroy them. The opportunity to experience how ethnical-religious entities and Christian denominations live together in harmony, despite the fact that the political environment is in conflict. The focus must always be on fortifying mutual respect and coexistence.

The importance of Christianity and its presence, especially in our beloved Holy Land must be emphasised protected and empowered for not only does it lend itself to keeping liberalism alive but is a great help in facing a difficult present day challenge, namely: the need to maintain the fabric of the societies within this region. This is an ingredient that is so crucial for the future generations across the spectrum of faiths.

Through providing welfare; be it social programs or education, the work of the Churches is clear and must be both supported and expanded.

We all, take this opportunity to declare our commitment to our mission which throughout the ages has been to first uphold Holy Places and Shrines as places of worship accessible to all the faithful, regardless of denomination and diversity; keeping the pilgrims and visitors flocking to this Land.

Your Excellency, distinguished guests, thank you again for being with us and for this opportunity to talk about what is so important to all present here today...peace and continuity for Jerusalem and our beloved Holy Land.

Wishing you every success in your mission and may the Lord almighty light your path and guide you to fulfilment.

Thank you.

His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III emphasized the fact of the diminishing Christian presence in the Holy Land, a community that is not even recognised as a minority, and He touched upon the Patriarchates' contention with the immigration wave and its effort to contain this by fostering, in a spirit of moderation and reconciliation, the relationship between the followers of the religions of the Holy Land and by supporting the common education of Christians and Muslims through the Patriarchate's Community Schools.

The former President of the U.S.A Mr. Jim Carter replied by thanking His Beatitude and the representatives of the other Christian Churches for their warm welcome and said that he considers as a blessing his return visit to the Holy Land, the place where Jesus Christ lived and was crucified.

Mr Carter added that he, as a Christian, regularly attends churches since a young age and preaches at Churches of the Lutheran denomination of which he belongs.

The representatives of the other two denominations spoke to the President and emphasised, as did His Beatitude, the difficulties that Christians face due to the tense political situation in the Holy Land. They referred to the separation of the rest of the Holy Land cities from Jerusalem. The leaders of the Christian Churches in the Holy Land have declared in a common statement in 1994 and more recently on 29th September 2006, Jerusalem to remain an open city for the two peoples giving freedom of access and worship to the followers of the three main religions.

In the conversation that followed, the former President of the U.S.A Mr. Jim Carter stated that his personal intention and that of the U.S.A is to support a resolution to the problem of the Israeli-Palestinian issue, the formation of two viable states; a viability based on designated and acknowledged borders, locally and internationally, according to the road map, based on respect of independence, freedom and security of

the citizens of each state.

Mr. Jim Carter mentioned that during his recent travels through Damascus, he visited the site of Apostle Paul's house where he sojourned. For the success of his peace mission Mr. Carter implored the prayers of all.

His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III offered former President Mr. Jim Carter a handcrafted silver plated manger, depicting the birth of Christ, as well as a precious volume of the history of the Patriarchate, printed in Greek and English, in celebration of 2000 years of Christianity. In addition Dr. John Tleel offered the President an autobiographical book entitled "I am Jerusalem" which comprises selected material from his personal archive about Jerusalem, the Patriarchate and the Greek Community.

The Chief Secretary's Office

ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder

RECENT MEETINGS OF THE BEATITUDE

On Tuesday, 21st January/3rd February 2009, His Beatitude received some students of the German Seminary of Benedictine monks of the Church of Dormition of the Theotokos on Mount Zion and answered questions on the pastoral role of the Patriarchate at the Holy Land and the Orthodox prerequisites for participation in the Ecumenical dialogue.

On Thursday, 23rd January/3rd February 2009, His Beatitude

received a ten-member inter-religious Norwegian ecclesiastic delegation, headed by the Lutheran bishop of Oslo, Mr. Ole Christian M. Kvarme to updated them on the ecclesiastic and political situation in the Holy Land and on the aid of its residents.

On Friday 24th January/6th February 2009, His Beatitude received a five- member team who were released from concentration camps of the Republic of Serbska and talked to them about the unifying and the conciliatory power of the Orthodox Church in Orthodox Christian States. Then, His Beatitude received Mr. John Nduna, Director of ACT (International Action by Churches Together), a Department of the World Council of Churches, in charge of the moral and humanitarian aid and relief to Gaza, along with Mr.Dirk Lackovic-Van Gorp, Director of the IOCC (INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES).(Photo 1)

On Saturday, 25th of January/7th of February 2009, His Beatitude received a delegation from the World Council of Churches within the framework of the program "Palestine and Israel Ecumenical Forum" with Rev. Dr. Olav Fuske Tveit in charge (Photo 2)

Afterwards, His Beatitude received a group of representatives of Christianity, Judaism and Islam of the "Department for Peace, Reconciliation and Interfaith Dialogue-Clergy for Peace" along with Doctor Chalil Andraous from Koufr-Giasif. Finally, His Beatitude received representatives of the GreekOrthodox community of Remli regarding the assistance for the development of the Community School. In the evening of the same day, His Beatitude officiated in the ceremony of the cutting of the New Year's cake in the Greek Club of the New City of Jerusalem, near the monastery of Saint Symeon the Receiver of the Lord at Katamonas.

This club was founded in 1902 by expatriate Greeks who lived

in Jerusalem, for the strengthening of the ties with the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and the boosting of the Christian and national conscience. Today, the club numbers about 40 members who voluntarily offer their services for the organisation of cultural activities with Greek Christian character, in cooperation with the Patriarchate.

The ceremony was attended by Agiotafites and members of the Greek Community of the Old and New City of Jerusalem. The ceremony was honoured with his presence, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem, Mr. Sotirios Athanasiou.

His Beatitude was addressed by the President of the Greek Community, Mr. Vasilios Tzaferis. In response, His Beatitude wished the President and the members of the community, a happy, blessed and prosperous in the Lord New Year, and thanked Mr. Vasilios Tzaferis for his support to the Greek community and the Patriarchate.

From the Chief-Secretariat

ngg_shortcode_1_placeholder

ATTENDANCE OF DR CHRISTOS NIKOLAOU AND MRS EKATERINI DIAMANTOPOULOU AT THE PATRIARCHATE

Today, the three-day visit to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem by the most honourable guests, Dr Christos Nikolaou, General Manager of the Patriarchate's website and Mrs Ekaterini Diamantopoulou, Deputy Administrator of the non-governmental organization (NGO) "Romiosini", came to a close. On the one hand, Dr Nikolaou presented His Beatitude the official website of the Patriarchate as well as the under construction website of the NGO "Romiosini", where among other things many panoramic depictions of the Holy Shrines will be accessible. On the other hand, Mrs Ekaterini Diamantopoulou presented His Beatitude, the activities of the first year of the NGO 'Romiosini'. His Beatitude congratulated them on the scope of their work and gave them guidelines not only on the development of the Patriarchate's websites but also for the ongoing undertaking of the NGO "Romiosini". Special reference was made to the impending 1st World Conference of the NGO "Romiosini" which is going to be held at the Athens War Museum on the 30th-31st of next May with the topic. "Romiosini throughout the ages".

From the Chief-Secretariat

THE PRISON AUTHORITY OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL GRANDED A CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION TO PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

Your Beatitude,

Bless us! This letter is to report and explain to You, for which reason Your Beatitude has been presented with a certificate of appreciation from the Prison Authority of the State of Israel.

We, Prothiereus Romanos Raduan, Hieromonk Seraphim Goldberg and Alexander Frel, as a group, visit Orthodox Christian prisoners in places of confinement throughout Israel on a regular basis (about once a month). This work was started in 2003 by His Eminence Timothy, Metropolitan of Vostra, and since then we have been visiting a total amount of about 40 prisoners in a dozen different prisons located in the Center (Ramla and the Tel Aviv area), the North (Tiberias, Afula and Haifa areas), and the South (Beersheva).

Our visits are carried out separately from other private visits and consist of prayer, reading the Holy Scripture, discussion, confession and, since January 2005, the Divine Liturgy twice a year, once at Christmas time and the second at Easter in one of the prisons, Ayalon in Ramla, where we have about 20 Orthodox Christian prisoners. We also performed the Divine Liturgy once in Tselmon, a prison near Tiberias. With the authorization of the prison authorities we performed the holy sacrament of baptism upon a Russian-speaking Israeli prisoner, who was registered as a Christian, but who was not baptized, and the holy sacrament of marriage upon an Israeli Arab prisoner. Most of the Orthodox Christian prisoners, whom we visit, are Russian-speaking Israelis, but we do have some Israeli Arabs, a Moldovan and a Greek.

We began this work in 2003 upon the invitation of the prisoners themselves, who found us through some Latin nuns. Prisoners started calling, asking us to come and we applied for and received a special permission from the Prison Security through the Prison Rabbinate. We have to renew the permission

every six months. We have maintained a close contact with the prisoners since that time both through our visits and by telephone. We bring the prisoners agiasma, antidoron, Orthodox Christian spiritual books, icons, crosses, candles and incense. We also maintain contact with the 5 of our prisoners, who have finished their sentences and are now free, as well as with relatives of prisoners.

We thank our All-Merciful Lord Jesus Christ for this blessing, and we pray that He may allow us to continue this work for the salvation of His creation and for His glory.

Attached herewith please find a report on the meeting, which was held at the Prison Administration in Ramla by the Chief Rabbi of Prisons in Israel, Yakutiel Yehuda Wizner, on February 16, 2009, during which we were presented with the above-mentioned certificate.

Soliciting Your Beatitude's prayers and blessings,

Prothiereus Romanos Raduan

Hieromonk Seraphim Goldberg

Alexander Frel

Jerusalem

February 18, 2009

Cc: T.E. Aristarchos, Archbishop of Constantina, Chief Secretary of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem & Theofylaktos, Archbishop of Jordan.

Report on meeting at Prison Administration in Ramla on

February 16, 2009

On February 16, 2009, we, Prothiereus Romanos Raduan, Hieromonk Seraphim Goldberg and Alexander Frel, as a group visiting Orthodox Christian prisoners in places of confinement in the State of Israel, attended a meeting for Christian volunteers held by the Rabbinate of State Prisons at the headquarters of the Prison Administration in Ramla. The goal of the meeting was not announced ahead of time. Despite the fact that there was no formal invitation, the meeting itself was formal and we were asked from which organization we come. Our response was that we come from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The meeting was called: "Evaluation and Recognition of the Work of Christian Volunteers"

Presiding over the meeting: Chief Rabbi Yakutiel Yehuda Wizner, Head of the Prison Rabbinate,

Present at the meeting: **Deputy Chief Rabbis Shlomi Cohen & Ofer Elmeliah, Chief Rabbi of Central Prisons Salman, Lt. Col. Ian Domnitz, Chief of International Relations.**

Prothiereus Romanos Raduan, Hieromonk Seraphim Goldberg & Alexander Frel (Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem).

Spanish & English-speaking clergy & nuns (6 representatives from the Latin Patriarchate), who visit Latin prisoners.

Agnes Shehadeh, director of the "House of Mercy", a Uniate organization, which actively visits prisoners regardless of their faith and their families and provides services to exprisoners. With her were a Uniate priest, a Maronite priest & 4 more representatives.

Anis Barghoum & 5 more representatives of the "House of Light", a Protestant organization, which actively visits prisoners and their families and offers them gifts.

Retired Brig. General Zvi Givati from "Christian friends of Israel" with a Romanian Protestant.

Chief Rabbi Wizner opened the meeting in Hebrew with a comment on the strength of repentance and the rehabilitation of prisoners through religion, a theme he felt all of us as religious people could associate with. He mentioned that his goal is to strengthen the activities of Christian organizations in Israeli prisons. He said that there are now 700 Christian prisoners in Israel. He informed us that he has just promoted 3 new chief rabbis for the northern, central and southern prisons, asking us to arrange our meeting through them. (In the past we arranged for our meetings through the rabbi of each prison). His words were translated into English by Lt. Col. Ian Domnitz, Chief of International Relations.

Chief Rabbi Wizner introduced his colleagues and gave a summary of what the meeting was going to be about: thanking us, presenting us with certificates and a debate on our activities. He then asked us to introduce ourselves. We did and all of us thanked him for the invitation and some spoke briefly about their activities and the problems that we encounter during our visits (delays, refusal to bring food to the prisoners, etc). Chief Rabbi Wizner said that the rabbis encounter similar difficulties.

Following the introductions, Chief Rabbi Wizner presented 4 organizations with a certificate of recognition, underlining its activities. Only the "Christian Friends of Israel" were not rewarded. The meeting and the presentation of certificates was extensively covered by a photographer.

Last of all, Chief Rabbi Wizner asked us to synchronize our efforts and announced the forming of a steering committee after Passover. When asked for more precise information, he said that we would be informed after Passover.

ngg shortcode 2 placeholder

VISIT OF GREEK EXPATRIATE FROM THE USA, MR. KAPETANAKIS, TO THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

On Thursday, January 28th of 2009, Greek expatriate, Mr. Leonidas Kapetanakis, paid a visit to His Beatitude, with whose blessing and help transferred financial assistance to the Greek Orthodox Community in Gaza.

From the Office of His Beatitude

SPEECH BY PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III, ON BEHALF OF ALL THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

OF THE HOLY LAND, BEFORE THE PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL

Mr President,

Honourable Ministers,

Members of Parliament,

Distinguished Guests,

At the turn of the year, we greet you warmly in this season of renewal and hope, and we thank you for this opportunity to address you.

Events and gatherings such as this are of great importance both for celebrating the common bonds of our humanity, and for reminding ourselves of those fundamental values that are essential to our common life. Humanity today is confronted on every side with harsh forces of disrespect and even humiliation. And sadly much of this is taking place in the guise of religious allegiance and in the name of Almighty Cod.

The special position of the Churches ensures the uniqueness of Jerusalem as a city of sacred significance and the religious character of the Holy Land as a whole. This region is home to the three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. And it is a living witness to multi-culturalism and, most importantly, to ethnic and religious diversity. We who make up the community of the Holy Land in general, and we who are Christians in particular, must always strive to speak with one voice, stressing a united vision for peace and harmonious co-existence.

We are always glad to affirm that the Churches, in good times

and in bad, never cease to serve our people and accomplish our mission and pastoral ministry, locally, regionally, and, ecumenically.

In our capacity as the Mother Church of the Holy Land and because of our unique historical presence, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem takes seriously our vocation of service. We are an anchor of Christian existence here and we are committed to advancing interfaith dialogue and maintaining the fabric of our society.

As we said recently to a gathering of the Diplomatic Corps here in Jerusalem, hard times must not blind us to the ties that bind us. When relationships are strained, we do not always like to admit that we are as closely related as we are. But we shall walk blindly on the road to peace if we do not appreciate the heritage of inter-religious co-existence that is ours in this region. We see a real chance for peace and recognise many courageous people of conviction and action. We must build on every opportunity for peace and reconciliation not just for ourselves, but for the generations to come.

The world looks to us for leadership. In countries that have emerged from decades of Communist government, for example, there is a desire to learn from us about the ordering of society in which there is genuine freedom of religion and inter-faith co-operation and mutual respect. We in the Holy Land can give a gift to the rest of the world that no other people can give, for we have a heritage of living together in this region that is generations old. It is not too strong to assert that the future of our world is deeply connected to the future that we build in the Holy Land for all our people.

Over the years, Our Patriarchate has laboured to promote understanding between the religious communities and advance

dialogue. We have the utmost confidence in the responsibility that the State of Israel has taken for the Christian Churches and communities.

We are highly appreciative of all those who support the spiritual integrity of Our Patriarchate and of our sister Christian Churches and communities. This support contributes to enabling the Churches to exercise our legitimate rights, privileges, and ancient customs.

Here again we mention something about which we have spoken recently. For in respect to the rights, privileges and the ancient customs of the Churches, we must never detract from the fundamental nature and purpose of the Holy Places. Here we are speaking primarily of the Christian Holy Places, but the same principle applies to all. We are particularly concerned at present with the attitude that considers the Ho!y Places to be either primarily tourist attractions or places of national heritage. While we appreciate the sentiment that can underlie these attitudes, it is our responsibility to remind those who have the power to make such decisions, of the fact that the Holy Places are primarily neither tourist attractions nor national monuments.

The Holy Places are, needless to say, primarily sacrosanct sites, and this is the character that they must always display. Here, in these places, the faithful believe that God entered human history in a unique way. We remind ourselves always that Holy Places have so far secured and sustained the Christian presence in the region.

Allow us and in this context 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, such as:

- Free movement of the faithful;
- Examination of entry visas for clerics;
- Exemption from taxation;
- The historic standing of the ownership of Church property.

The historic rights, privileges and ancient customs accorded to the Patriarchate and to Christian communities have been articulated over generations in what we now call the "Status Quo."

A fundamental provision of the consecutive international agreements that has sustained the resilience of the "Status Quo" is the moral obligation of the ruling civil authority to exercise the power of arbitration when serious disputes arise. The sole purpose of the arbitration of the ruling civil authority is to restore harmonious co-operation and order, without altering the instrumental mechanisms implied by the "Status Quo."

We believe firmly that our Churches can contribute significantly to stability, reconciliation, and a lasting peace in our beloved Holy Land and our wider region, which is such an imperative in our day.

History has shown us that the solution to attaining peace is not violence, but dialogue. It is dialogue that builds trust and mutual acceptance, and that shows us the way forward. We cannot but strongly condemn violence wherever it occurs, and the Patriarchate as well as the Churches support all efforts to build a lasting peace and security to which everyone, regardless of religious affiliation or cultural identity, is entitled.

Your Excellency, we express our sincere thanks to you for this cordial invitation and for your gracious hospitality. We pray God's special blessing on the approaching New Year: may our hearts be warmed, our minds enlightened, and the lives of all the citizens of the State of Israel be fulfilled.

Happy New Year and Hanoucha Samech.

MESSAGE OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS III ON THE CHRISTMAS OF 2008

Let us now go even unto Bethlehem

and see this thing which is come to pass,

which the Lord

hath made known unto us (Luke 2:15)

The Church, the body of Christ, which perpetuates His salvific work on earth, to day cries out again to all the people, to those who are near and to those who are afar, to her members as well as the whole world, the saving truth.

It proclaims the fact that the God of our fathers, who in the beginning created man out of love, in His image and likeness, without tolerating the distortion of His image that occurred with the fall, recreated him at the end of times. He recreated and reborn His creature in a way that surpasses human

understanding and strength. God achieved this with the incarnation and becoming man of His Only Son through the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. "When the time arrived, God sent His Son, who was born of a woman and under the law" (Gal. 4:4). God proceeded in the restoration of man by making man one with Himself. God, Himself became in the person of Jesus Christ the same as His creature, namely man, with all the irreproachable human passions. "He descended to human nature, without losing His attribute that He is God, receiving the human not as foreign, but as truly His", according to Saint Kyrillos of Alexandria (On king Theodosios, PG 76, 1169D). God appeared in the flesh at a specific time in history. "He came to the world, as man", without however by this losing His divine glory, by His Godbearing Father. (On the true faith, PG 76, 1177). He was born as man, during the time of emperor Caesar Augustus, in Bethlehem of Judea.

This mystery that transcends all understanding was realized far from all evil of this world. Christ "secretly was born in the cave", not powerfully and by force, without possessing any rule or authority, but with baby frailty and weakness, with humility and purity. He was revealed in the cave to pure and clean souls that could apprehend Him and embrace Him. He was visibly revealed first to the Virgin Mary, who admired and was astonished, seeing that in her was performed what the angel had foretold her in Nazareth. She was first to see the Invisible (Lord) lying in the manger and wrap Him in swaddling clothes, Him who cannot be contained. Joseph, her husband, is accompanying the Virgin and the child to Egypt. Simple in heart shepherds at the adjacent village, living in the open, are guided by the angels who sing in heaven the "Glory in the highest", and passing by Bethlehem, they see the baby wrapped and lying in the manger. The Magi coming from the East with gifts, prostrate with reverence before the newly born king.

From these faithful eye witnesses and deacons, this mystery is rendered to the Church. And first to this Church, which guards

with the Hagiotaphitic Brotherhood the Holy Places that received the mystery of the divine revelation. This Church erected magnificent and beautiful churches at the Most Holy Shrines, such as the Constantinian and Justinian Basilica of the Greek Orthodox over the Divine Cave. In her the Christians of the Holy Land and all pious pilgrims who flock from the ends of the world, are sanctified through the ages. In her their identity is formed, the ethos of love, of peace, of reconciliation and their harmonious cohabitation with the followers of other religions at the Holy Land. From this Church and from this place the evangelical salvific truth emanated to the whole world.

The fact of the divine kenosis and condescension the Church cries out today for some 2000 years in remembrance of the Birth of Christ. It proclaims that Christ "emptied" Himself by assuming the form of servant (Phil 2:7), so that man would not remain on earth in his fall, but ascend to heaven. This kenosis starting with the incarnation and through the flesh birth of the Son of God, extends to the Cross and the tomb, from where resurrection occurred.

This divine and philanthropic way, the Church displays as valuable treasure of the truth, as an infallible compass of life even for today's man. She shares with him her experience and certainty that the answer to the question on the matter of life and the resolution of human problems is found in the adoption and application of the philanthropic attitude of life, that was revealed by Christ. That the consequence of the denial of the message of God by the people and of their departure from God is today obvious in humanity as never before. The raging wars, the military and terrorist violence, the destructive rage of the irrational which is unlawfully and unjustly manifested against simple and innocent people, the unequal distribution of physical and social goods and the resulting looming economic crisis, which nations and banks anxiously try to contain.

From this Sacred Cave, and the bosom of the Mother of the Churches, we bless with Patriarchal and Paternal blessings the members of this flock, which have been entrusted to us, at the Holy Land and everywhere and prompt them, to embrace Christ, who became man in the flesh and have Him as life's guide and we direct a plea to the powerful of the world to adopt as their goal the maintenance of peace and justice without force, and the freedom and wellbeing of the people.

In the Holy City of Bethlehem, Christmas 2008.

Ardent blesser in the Lord,

Theophilos 3rd

Patriarch of Jerusalem

ADDRESS TO THE CONFERENCE OF THE HELLENIC NEUROLOGICAL SOCIETY IN JERUSALEM

Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

Mr Sitzogiou,

The President of the Hellenic Neurological Society
Distinguished Participants,

Dear Friends.

It is an honour to welcome the Conference of the Hellenic Neurological Society to the Holy City of Jerusalem, and the Patriarchate is greatly pleased with the special privilege of hosting this important event at our seminary of Mount Sion. You are committed to the advancement of your scientific discipline, but you also understand the importance of your work for the collective benefit: of humanity. — the Christian faith stakes its claim on two fundamental truths: that humankind is made ''in the image and likeness of God, and that God himself redeemed and restored the dignity of human nature when Cod took on our human life in all its fullness in the birth of Jesus Christ.

The Orthodox Church has, since the earliest days of the apostolic community, been concerned with the life of the whole person. The Church understands the human person to be not simply a physical shell that is filled with a soul, but as a unique individual who, in both body and soul, has eternal significance. It is the faith of the Church that, as God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, so too will God raise all those who sleep to a life in which all creation will be made new for eternity. For just this reason has the Christian faith been called "the ultimate materialism," for we understand that the material, the physical, is of inestimable worth. God has not created us simply to throw us away.

This is clear in the sacramental life of the Church, not least in the mystery of the anointing of the sick. Every year on the Great and Holy Wednesday, the Church blesses oil for the anointing of those who suffer from both spiritual and physical illnesses. When the faithful person is anointed, the priest says:

Holy Father, Physician of souls and bodies, Who sent Thine Only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ Who healed every

illness and delivered from death, heal Thy servant from the weakness that holds his body, of either body at soul, and enliven him by the grace of Thy Christ, by the prayers of the All-holy Lady Theotokos and all the Saints. Amen.

By anointing those who are sick, whether they suffer in body, mind or spirit, the Church is not attempting to compete with medicine. Quite the contrary. In the mystery of the anointing of the sick the Church declares that human suffering has a call on her attention and ministry. The Church also declares that she is united with God in the support and sustenance of suffering humanity. The Church becomes a partner with the medical profession in caring for the sick. It is not God's will that people suffer, and so God gives us special grace and strength to endure the suffering and illness that are an inevitable part of our mortal life. Our Lord himself attended to the sick and the suffering, and has showed us the way. It is interesting to note that the Greek word therapeia means both "worship" and "healing,"

Consequently, the Church has always embraced and greatly valued the medical profession. The Church understands the faithful life of prayer and sacrament to be a necessary part of attention of physicians. Ideally, the ministry of the Church and the work of the medical profession is a collaboration and not a competition: together we can do better work for suffering humanity than we can do on our own. For the gifts that the Church dispenses and the gifts that medicine dispenses come from the same source, who is the God who is good and loves humankind.

The rich tradition of the Church attempts to embody this integrated approach to our human life. Saint Luke the Evangelist is our model. In the East, Christians venerate Saint Luke as an artist, as the painter of the first icon. Once again, in her tradition of iconography, the Church

declares her confidence in the ability of humanity to reflect divinity, and in the ability of this world to be a window into heaven. In the West, Saint Luke is venerated principally as a physician. So the Church upholds the honour in which she has always held the medical profession. In one person, then, we have both painter and doctor, artist and scientist, the one who ministers both to the soul and the body. Let us not forget that this same man was also a preacher of the Gospel, and gave us both the Gospel that bears his name as well as the Acts of the Apostles. Saint Luke is therefore himself an icon of the vision of the Church for the integration of medicine, spirituality, and the saving message of the Gospel.

The Holy Scriptures give us important grounding for our understanding of the medical profession. In the book of Sirach we read one of the great tributes to the work of the physicians, and it is worth quoting at some length:

Honour physicians for their services, for the Lord created them; for their gift of healing comes from the most high ... The skill of physicians makes them distinguished ... The Lord created medicines out of the earth, and the sensible will not despise them... By them the physician heals and takes away pain; the pharmacist makes a mixture from them. God's works will never be finished, and from him health spreads over all the earth ...give the physician his place, for the Lord created him; do not let him leave you, for you need him. There may come a time when recovery lies in the hands of physicians, for they too pray to the Lord that he grant them success in diagnosis and in healing, for the sake of preserving life. (Sirach 38:1-8, 12-14 passim)

"For the sake of preserving life." In these words we understand the co-operation that exists between God and the physician: God is the author of all life, and since their fundamental mission is to preserve and enhance life, by extension the physician shares in the creative and sustaining

Spirit of God.

One of the great contributions of Byzantine civilization to the world was the hospital, and this is itself testimony to the importance that the Orthodox Church has long attached to the medical profession. Of course the practice of medicine has exited in one form or another since antiquity, but there is clear evidence that the hospital as we have come to understand it in a modern sense was born in the Byzantine Empire.

One of the first such hospitals, the Basileiada, was built by Saint Basil the Great, who wrote to Eustathius the physician in one of his letters: Humanity is the regular business of all you, who practice as physicians. And, in my opinion, to put your science at the head and front of life's pursuits is to decide reasonably and rightly. This at all events seems to be the case if man's most precious possession, life, is painful and not worth living, unless it be lived in health, and if for health we are dependent on your skill. In your own case medicine is seen, as it were, with two right hands: you enlarge the accepted limits of philanthropiaby not confining the application of your skill to men's bodies, but by attending also to the cure of the diseases of their souls. (Letter 189)

In his oration in honour of Saint Basil, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus recounts to us that saint Basil "greeted the sick like brothers:" "Basil's care was for the sick, and for the relief of their wounds, and the imitation of Christ, by cleansing leprosy, not by a word, but in deed." (Oratian 43.63). Saint Basil himself suggested that medical science "represents detachment from what is not: necessary and fulfils that which is incomplete. "He said that medicine is the image on earth of treatment that is intended to bring peace to the human soul and is a "pattern of the treatment pertinent to the soul."

But it was the twelfth-century Byzantine emperor john II Komnenos who endowed the famous xenon at the Monastery of the Pantocrator in Conscantinople and so changed the course of the history of hospitals and medical care. In his ground-breaking study, The Birth of the Hospital in the Byzantine Empire, Professor Timothy Miller tells the remarkable story of the Panrocrator xenon. This xenon had 50 beds for hospital patients, as well as a home for older men. It was heated, and there were linens on the beds, good lighting and bathing and sewage systems. There was an organized profession of archiatroi, hypurgoi, and hyperetai, and we know also of the existence of women doctors in Byzantium — the hiatrainai— long before there emergence in the West.

As the inheritors of this great tradition, the Church continues to emphasise the importance of the healing of the soul. This is our part of the partnership of healing. The theologian Ioannis Romanidis reminds us that "the treatment of the psyche" — in other words, the treatment of the essence of what it means to be human — "is at the core of our ... tradition."

Neurology is a highly specialized discipline that deals with disorders of the nervous system. Yours is a highly complex discipline, and the arena of your research and clinical work corresponds to the arena that the Church describes as the psyche. The Patristic literature has much to say about the psyche that corresponds too much that also concerns the profession of neurology. For the Fathers, what we now call the human nervous system was the beater for them of human strength and power as well as the power of the human psyche. Just as the body can be well or ill, so too can the psyche. In the Patristic literature, of course, it is sin that is the main threat to the health of the human person. In his Commentary of the psalmsSaint Cyril of Alexandria speaks of a proaponeurosis, a "weakening," while the Fathers remind us

that sin destroys human strength. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem says that sin "burns." It "cuts" into the very nerves of the human psyche, it crushes the "mental" backbone of the psyche, and it darkens the light of the heart. The heart is the throne of the soul, and it is God's Word that energizes the human psyche and gives it substance and purpose. The Word of God is the true physician of the heart, and God's Word became flesh for no other reason than to support our human nature, heal our hearts, restore health to our human psyche, and transform us in his strength and stability.

We discover, therefore, that the modern specialty of neurology deals with matters that have occupied the Church since her earliest days as she has sought to strengthen the faithful in "the healing of our souls and bodies,"

Medicine is dedicated to the safeguarding of human health and the well-being of the whole person. The concerns of medicine are not confined to the biological therapeutic process alone, but extend to the whole range of social, cultural and political concerns. If human health is both a scientific and a religious matter, social, cultural and political forces affect it as well. In other words, just as the Orthodox Church seeks, in her therapeutic ministry by Word and Sacrament, to help human beings grow more and more into God's image and likeness, so does the medical profession, in your therapeutic ministry of diagnosis and treatment, attempt to heal the traumas that affect human lives. In our different but complementary ways, we are both significant reference points for tolerance, respect and the mutual acceptance of all.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the most ancient religious Institution in continuous existence in the Holy Land, has been throughout our history at the forefront of the efforts to ensure the prosperity, reconciliation and progress of the local population. From the ancient hostel and hospital of

Hosiou Sabba in Jericho and Jerusalem, to the first printing press in Palestine, to the hospitals in the Holy Land, the Patriarchate has always attempted to care for the whole human person and the welfare of those who reside in this region.

Your presence here is a testimony of the partnership of spirituality and medicine that is so necessary in our time as we all seek to proclaim to a world that seems increasingly in different to the holiness of life the infinite worth of the individual human person. May God strengthen your in your own work of therapeia, and may God bless the work of this conference.

Thank you very much for being here.

BLESSING OF HIS BEATITUDE THEOPHILOS III, PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM, TO VISITORS OF THE PATRIARCHATE'S NEWS GATE

To the Readers

Beloved in the Lord Children of Our Mediocrity,

The Heritage, on the one hand, of the Most Sacred Shrines, those visible evidence of the presence on earth of the incarnate and salvific Economy of the Son and Word of God, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, on the other hand, the Ecclesiastic Community in the Holy Land, the continuation of the ancient Judeo-Christian Community, the Church of Jerusalem

and of Palestine, are the pride of our Patriarchate, of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, pride which the Hagiotaphitic Brotherhood (Brotherhood of the Sepulcher) and the indigenous flock have guarded for many centuries, with sacrifices of blood, ever pouring sweat and untold amounts of money.

This Heritage of the Holy Lands of Grace which fills the pilgrims flocking from the ends of the world, with the holy spiritual springs of contrition, repentance, consciousness and love of Christ, pouring of the Holy Spirit, from the deified Flesh of Christ, this Heritage is deservedly presented to people by the Church of Jerusalem, in every way and with full vigour, towards sanctification and salvation. The Church of Jerusalem could not find more suitable a way towards this end than the presentation in the World Wide Web, with which it also hopes not only to acquaint the faithful with its largely unknown history and various struggles in the Holy Land, sanctify the senses of the spectators and the rational aspect of their soul through the vision of the Holy Shrines and the narratives about them, but also to facilitate the arrival of pilgrims to the Holy Land and of all those willing to struggle together and help the Church of Jerusalem.

This website, fruit of unselfish effort and pious toil of friends and contributors of the Most Holy Sepulcher, the first official website of the Church of Jerusalem, will continuously be enriched, God willing, with information concerning every sector of our ecclesiastic life. The "aerial" electromagnetic data of contemporary technology, though inferior to the tangible writing with ink and paper, is capable however to likewise constitute a carrier of salvific concepts that lead to the uncreated deliverance in Christ.

May the Grace and Tradition of the Holy Lands, the treasure of the Hagiotaphites, be to all a steady guide of Orthodox Faith and Life. According to the early Jerusalemite Monks, God's Holy City of Jerusalem is "the eye and beacon of the whole world, having received the word of the Gospel in keeping with the prophetic saying, that from Sion the law shall come out, and the word of the Lord shall come out of Jerusalem" and her inhabitants are "as if they touch the truth every day with their own hands through these Venerable Landmarks, in which the mystery of the incarnation of the great God our Saviour was performed"[i]. Invoking the grace of these Venerable Lands on all of you, we bestow upon you Our Paternal wishes and Patriarchal blessings.

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, in the month of May, of the Saviour's year 2007.

Ardently blesser in the Lord

Theophilos III Patriarch of Jerusalem

[i] Cyril of Skythopolis, The Life of Our Father, Hosios Savvas 57.Ed. Schwartz Editions, Kyrillos von Skythopolis, Hinrichs Verlag, Leipzig 1939, p. 154.

×