

THE PRIMATE OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

On Monday 11th/24th of August 2009, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, received the Archbishop and Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada Most Rev. Fredrick James Hiltz, who was escorted by the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem Right Rev. Suheil Dawani.

During the visit a discussion was held about the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate in the Holy Land up to Qatar, where the Patriarchate recently founded a new church. A discussion was also held on the existing religious coexistence in Jerusalem and that real ecumenism is a dialogue and community in love and truth, based on the life of the Church through its history. Further discussion took place on the Holy City of Jerusalem regarding it as the centre of the world, where pilgrims arrive, give praise to God and are transformed.

This work of spiritual completeness and salvation occurs through the Church, existent throughout the centuries in a state of spirituality, yet nevertheless with its physical heritage, its fortune in the sense of the Holy Places, convents, residences, charitable and educational institutions. An important amount of the Patriarchate's budget is disposed for its philanthropic and educational stewardship.

The Anglican Archbishop thanked His Beatitude for the welcome and audience, and referred to their meeting a year ago in the framework of the Lambeth Conference where His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III was invited as a guest of the Archbishop of Canterbury Most Reverend Dr. Rowan Williams.

Chief Secretary's Office

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THE DRUZE COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES AT THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

On Thursday 13th of August 2009, His Beatitude received Dr. Halil Antraous, a Medical doctor from the city of Koufr-Yiasif in North Galilee and member of the Orthodox Church, who is committed to the Patriarchate. Dr. Antraous was accompanied by a team of 10 representatives of the Druze community from an area of the Golan Heights under Syrian rule prior to 1967 and since then under the control of Israel. These Druze residents of the Golan Heights number around 16,000 and are separated from the rest of the Druze of Israel which number around 80,000.

Worldwide the Druze number around 1,500,000. They follow the Muslim religion along with some particular teachings of the Druze faith. The representatives stated, that all people living in Syria are considered as 'Arab Syrians' and not as Muslims, Druze or Christians. An extensive discussion took place on the peacemaking and reconciliatory role of the Patriarchate for the religious co-existence of the peoples in the Holy Land.

Chief Secretary's Office

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THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE IOCC VISIT THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM

On Thursday August 13th 2009, the outgoing Director of the IOCC in Eastern Europe, Mr. Dirk Lackovic-van Gorp, visited His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III together with his successor Mr. Gregory Manzuk.

Within the scope of this visit a discussion took place regarding the charitable activities of the IOCC (INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES, INC.). This organisation is supported by donations from the members of the Orthodox Churches of America, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ecumenical friends. It operates a representation in Jerusalem under a staff of six employees.

During the tenure of Mr. Dirk Lackovic-van Gorp, the organisation financially assisted the Patriarchate in response to the needs of the victims of the military conflict in Gaza. His Beatitude thanked Mr. Dirk Lackovic-van Gorp for this and emphasised, to the visiting representatives of the IOCC, the activities of the Patriarchate where aid and support is needed, such as the construction of churches, housing and schools and thanked them for their financial assistance to date.

The new representative of the IOCC, Mr. Gregory Manzuk, of Slovakian and Ukrainian descent is the son of a long serving priest of the Orthodox Church in America. Mr. Manzuk is a specialist in International Relations and peace. Mr. Dirk Lackovic-van Gorp, assured His Beatitude of the continuance of

the good cooperation from his successor. His Beatitude presented a gift to the new IOCC Director, a commemorative medallion, which was issued for the 2000 years celebration of Christianity.

Chief Secretary's Office

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PARTICIPATION OF HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS III AT THE "EAST-WEST DIALOGUE PEACE-BUILDING SEMINAR"

His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III addressed the "East-West Dialogue Peace-Building Seminar," which took place in Jordan, at the King Hussein Bin Talal Convention Center on August 12th, 2009.

During His address, His Beatitude expanded on the following matters:

- 1) The great importance of the seminar for the potential contribution of peaceful relations in the area.
- 2) The unique and symbiotic relationship that the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, now over two thousand years old, has developed with the Arab Muslim world, and in particular with the Muslim faithful of the Hashemite Kingdom

of Jordan.

3) The efforts for peace that have been actualized in the area, such as the “Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land”, and the peaceful role that the Patriarchate can play to the forthcoming generations in the context of the basic principles of Christianity.

4) The role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the region and the peaceful coexistence of the Islamic world with the adherents of the other monotheistic religions.

The following is the full text of the speech given by His Beatitude at the seminar:

Remarks at the East-West Dialogue

Peace-Building Seminar

at the king Hussein Bin Talal Convention Center

Jordan

12 August 2009

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

“Your Royal Highness Prince Ghazi,

Distinguished Participants in this Seminar,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We greet you warmly on the occasion of this important seminar and we applaud the choice of subject for our work. In the difficult endeavor of the resolution of conflict and of

building and sustaining peace, the art of dialogue and listening is of supreme consequence.

It is right, also, that we mark at this seminar the leading role that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has played as a "home of peace initiatives". We salute especially the role of His Majesty, King Abdullah II bin al-Hussein, and His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi, whose tireless efforts on behalf of all the peoples of our region and for the promotion of mutual understanding and respect among people of different cultural, ethnic and religious identity are well-known both here and around the world.

In this context we are reminded of the proclamation of *The Amman Message* by His Majesty in 2004, which is itself both an important exposition of the tenets of Islam as well as a milestone in the quest of peaceful co-existence between Islam and those of the other monotheistic faiths.

In these few brief remarks we would like first to highlight the role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in our region. Jordan is indeed the only (Arab) Islamic country in the Middle East in which there is true freedom of religion. Here, where the majority of the population is Muslim, there are flourishing communities of those who adhere to other faiths, especially Christianity. All citizens are given equal protection under the law regardless of religious affiliation and we know from our own experience that Christian and Muslim live side by side in peaceful co-existence.

But more than this, all Jordanian citizens, regardless of religious affiliation, have equal opportunities and rights, and we note the presence of Christians at every level of the society, including business and government.

This integration is a significant achievement and may serve as a model for other countries of our region. We have a long history of living together and we know and understand each

other's culture and customs.

As we think particularly of the subject of this seminar – the art of dialogue and of listening for conflict resolution and peace-building – we recall the familiar words of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of Luke (6:31), Jesus enunciates a central principle of Christian ethics, a principle that is shared by almost every religious tradition in one form or another:

“Do to others as you would have them to do to you”.

Known often as the **“Golden Rule”** this teaching is the basis of what we call the “ethic of reciprocity”, that fundamental understanding of human society that one has a right to just treatment and one has a responsibility to ensure the same just treatment of others.

This is the basis of all proper dialogue and all effective listening.

The Christian faith is not solely a private, personal matter. Christians are commanded by Our Lord to show forth their daily lives. In the Gospel of Matthew (5:16), Jesus reminds us of this with these words: ***“Let your light so shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven”.***

This is a further summons to the Church to be actively involved in the kind of dialogue and listening that leads to the resolution of conflict and the building of lasting and durable peace.

If we may speak for a moment in more theological terms, to listen effectively is not dissimilar from the practice of prayer. Whatever we are engaged in the public liturgical prayer of the Community, or the discipline of private personal prayer and devotion, prayer is first and foremost the act of placing oneself in the presence of God in order to listen.

Without the openness of the Community of faith and the individual believer to God in this profound act of listening, there can be no progress in the spiritual life. This is, we believe, a crucial basis for understanding the task of listening to our fellow human beings.

We have good models upon which to build.

The Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, having existed in this region for 2000 years, has developed deep symbiotic ties with the Arab Muslim world in general and with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in particular. We know the peoples of different religious traditions can live together in peaceful co-existence, for we see its fruits here. And in this way we believe that we have the full trust of others in the Islamic world.

We also believe that the Patriarchate can be a true bridge of trust in the task of the healing of memories. As we all know, memories in this region are deep and have a lasting effect on our common life. As we think of East-West dialogue, we cannot forget, for example, the searing memory of the crusades, which still colors the understanding of many in our region towards the West. This is not the only memory that must be healed, and we can all think of others.

This is not to say that others do not have an urgent part to play in the peace process. But we do believe that the Patriarchate has a unique role in reducing the effect of such bad memories between East and West. Islam first met Christianity in the Orthodox Church, and the best way forward in the healing of memories is in the mutual understanding – the dialogue and listening – between the original local Church of this region and Islam.

In this connection we note also the work of two other bodies that are engaged in similar work to this seminar. Last March we were in London for the C-1 World Dialogue which is co-

chaired by the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Sheikh Dr. Ali Gomaa, and the Bishop of London, Dr. Richard Chartres. His Excellency Dr. Mustafa Ceric, the Grand Mufti of Bosnia, and we are founding Vice Chairs of this Dialogue. His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi also had had a significant role in the establishment of this Dialogue.

In addition to this Dialogue, there is the work of the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land, which continues to be a force for conflict resolution and peace-making in our region. Only last week, members of the Council met in Jerusalem to examine the question of education and the provision of textbooks for schools in both Israel and the Palestinian Authority that seek to tell truthfully the complex and often difficult story of our Holy Land.

We cannot emphasize too strongly how significant the subject of this seminar is, and the potential contribution that this seminar can make to the peace process. And we would also like to emphasize the urgent need for actions to follow words. In the theological traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the concepts for “word” and “action” are closely related, and we must live out that relationship in all that we do to ensure that this region may become an even greater beacon of hope to those who seek to build a new future for humanity throughout the world.

We thank you for your invitation to give these remarks, and we pray for God’s blessing upon His Majesty and all the Royal Family, and upon all the people of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, as well as upon all of you and upon the work of this seminar.

God bless you – Thank you”

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THE 'COUNCIL OF THE RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS OF THE HOLY LAND' CONVENES IN JERUSALEM

His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III participated in the assembly of the 'Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land' that took place on August 5th, 2009, at the American Colony Hotel in East Jerusalem.

The 'Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land' was first formed in the year 2005. It was formed with the initiative of the U.S. State Department and with the agreement of representatives of the three religions of the Holy Land, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, to continue and complete the task of the Alexandria Interfaith Summit, convened in 2002 at Alexandria, namely the peace initiative of religions to contribute towards the solution of the Israeli – Palestinian issue.

The primary objectives of this council are:

1. To foster an environment of mutual respect between the followers of the three religions in the Holy Land, and the respect of the Holy Places sacred therein.
2. The avoidance of defamation, offence or derogatory representations to the other, and to respect the individual dignity and freedom of people.
3. The respect of the religious character of Jerusalem, and the possibility to secure open access to the city for the followers of the three religions and all people that visit it.

The members of this Council believe that the three religions are able to contribute to the peace and reconciliation and the fostering of a political climate of detente. Without a solution to the religious problem of Jerusalem, it is not possible for a political solution to exist.

The primary theme of the present meeting concerned was of school text books for schools in Israel and the Palestinian Authority, entitled 'The Israeli Palestinian School Book Project'. The conference started with a brief welcoming address by the convener of the Council, Rev. Dr. Trond Bakkevitz, who underlined the importance of the school text books in the schools of Israel and Palestinian Authority for the rapprochement of the two peoples, the fostering of a climate of political trust, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

At this meeting the following leaders of the Christian Churches of the Holy Land took part: His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, His Beatitude Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem Fuad Twal, and former Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem His Beatitude Michelle Sabah, Canon Dr. Shehadeh Shehadeh on behalf of the Anglican Bishop Rev. Suheil Dawani, Lutheran Bishop Munib Younan and others. The representatives of Judaism were the Director General of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel Mr. Oded Wiener, Rabbi of Savion David Brodman, the Chief Rabbi of the city of Haifa Shear Yeshuv Cohen and the interfaith advisor to the Chief Rabbinate Rabbi David Rosen.

It was not possible for representatives of the Islamic community and the Palestinian Authority to attend due to the recently created political tension. Present, however, was Mr. Basri Saleh, Deputy Minister of Planning of the Palestinian Authority, representatives of the field of education from Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and also representatives of foreign diplomatic delegations.

After the opening address of the Secretary, His Beatitude

Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III addressed the participants at the meeting in the name of the Christian religious leaders as follows:

Remarks at the Planning Meeting

Of the Israeli-Palestinian School Book Project

Under the auspices of the Council of the Religious Institutions

Of the Holy Land

At the American Colony Hotel

Jerusalem

5 August 2009

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

Your Excellencies,

Honourable Ministers,

Members of the Council,

Brothers and Sisters,

Dear Friends,

We greet you warmly, and we welcome you all to the Holy City of Jerusalem for this important planning meeting for the Israeli-Palestinian School Book Project. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate remains a dedicated member and firm supporter of the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land and we recognize the importance of this particular project.

The commitment of the Patriarchate to education is well known. We have a great deal of experience in the field of education in our region and our schools are well known both for the quality of the education that they provide, as well as for the welcome that we give to study, regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation.

Education is, of course, one of the chief methods, by which we are able to fight prejudice and ignorance. No society can thrive without a strong educational system and education brings with it a deeper understanding of our world and equips our young people with the tools and skills that enable them to become citizens who are able to make a contribution to our common life.

Education is not simply utilitarian: learning is good for its own sake, and we all know the benefits that come from an education, that strives to broaden the mind and challenge the intellect. In the Christian tradition we have long understood the value of a broad education.

Ignorance is the main cause of distance and difficulty between our communities, and ignorance is one of the factors of life in our region that is the most important to address and correct. Whatever our personal beliefs and convictions, we must know about each other. Jewish students must know about the Christianity and Islam; Christians must know about Judaism and Islam, and Muslims must have a basic grasp of Judaism and Christianity. And they must know and begin to appreciate each other's histories in this region.

Jerusalem, in this case, and We mean the Old City, should be declared and turned into an inter-faith and multi-culture study centre.

In particular, we should ensure that the Old City of Jerusalem -which is a living community- remains for us a unique opportunity for interfaith and multi-cultural study. Here in Jerusalem we can experience at first hand an interfaith and multi-cultural society living in co-existence.

The future of the Holy Land depends on the building of a society of genuine diversity, mutual respect and reconciliation. In this task education is key, and the Council can and must do all in its power to ensure that our schools and young people have the best trained teachers and the best resources possible, and to this end We are pleased to support the School Book Project and We look forward to seeing the fruits of its work.

Rabbi David Rosen hereby representing the Chief Rabbinate of Israel followed His Beatitude with another address, referring to the Alexandria Interfaith Summit, the forerunner of this Council, consisting of political and religious personalities of Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths, with their own initiative and purpose of contributing to the efforts of peace in the Middle East. He also mentioned the meeting of the religious leaders in Washington, prior to the Annapolis Summit. He thanked Rev. Dr. Trond Bakkevitz for his strength in mobilizing the initiative of peace and overcoming the disappointments of our local failures.

He also thanked the representatives of the Norwegian Government and the U.S.A for their efforts towards peace. He underlined the importance of the Council's mission to promote mutual respect between the three religions, individual human dignity and freedom, and the stance against insult and defamation of others. "These beginnings indeed constitute," he said 'the basis of a peaceful political solution and reconciliation'.

Mr. Louis Moreno, the representative of the American Embassy,

continued. Mr. Moreno noted that beyond the importance of upholding the Road Map and beyond the importance of the existence of two states, there is great importance in the avoidance of creating a climate of heated atmosphere and combating the undermining of one national entity by the other.

Successively Mr. Greg Markese emphasized the value of this Project for the preparation of the peaceful coexistence of the two peoples.

Rev. Dr. Trond Bakkevitz, in between speakers, also highlighted how important the churches, schools and the various educational organisations are in spreading the teaching about the human person as an image of God.

Following this dialogue, Chair Professor Race Wexler, a member of the Council and a representative of the U.S. State Department, underlined the importance of education for peaceful coexistence, and noted that this had been the inspiration of the 'Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land'. He analysed the methods of actualising this project through the gathering of information and acquiring knowledge through special teams, assisted by the education ministries of the countries involved in the initiative towards peace. At the end of the meeting, Rev. Dr. Trond Bakkevitz expressed his satisfaction of the level of the presentations and pointed out the absence of the Palestinian and Muslim presence. The responsibility for the appointment of these representatives lay with the Palestinian Authority.

During the lunch of the Representatives at the Council, a discussion took place regarding the drafting of a statement about the future of Jerusalem. The outline of the exchange of views was as follows:

'This matter, namely the future of Jerusalem, was discussed by some members of the Council in Oslo and Washington. All religions have a place in Jerusalem; all religions have a

historic bond with Jerusalem. When referring to Jerusalem, we mean the Old City. The heart of the problem is essentially two places of pilgrimage: the Temple of Solomon and the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron. At these places there is mutual distrust between followers of Judaism and Islam. The respect for the history and the confines of each religion, as in the case of Patriarch Sofronios and the Khalif Omar Hatamb, is possible to constitute the outset for the solution of the political problem. There is the view that the political problem creates the religious one, while there is the prevailing notion that the religious problem at these sacred places is also creating the political polarization. Through education is fostered a climate of religious tolerance and coexistence'.

An examination then took place of the scheduled planning of the activities for the 'Council of Religious Leaders of the Holy Land' in the year 2009 to 2010. Specifically this included prioritising Jerusalem; open access to the Holy Places, education, the political interaction of the Council towards the Israeli government, the Palestinian Authority and Non Governmental Organisations. Final concerns included the creation of a website for the Council, the appointment of new Islamic representation on the Council, and the determination of dates for the next two convocations of the Council; November 3rd, 2009 and April 22nd, 2010.

Chief Secretary's Office

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MESSAGE TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Mr. Guirguis Saleh

Secretary General of MECC,

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We send you our greetings in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ from the Holy City of Jerusalem. We have been kept up to date with the work of the Middle East Council of Churches, and we are pleased that our delegate, Archbishop of Abela Mr. Dorotheos, is able to represent us at this meeting of the Executive Committee.

We remain committed to the stated purposes and goals of the mission of the Middle East Council of Churches. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem is always ready to work in collaboration with all the people of good will for the well-being of our region, and we wish especially to acknowledge the efforts of our fellow Christians from other Churches and Christian communities in this regard. Such collaboration represents for us that respectful co-existence of people of different religious, cultural and ethnic identities that we believe is essential for the integrity of the life of the Middle East.

However, our concern about the present state of affairs in the Middle East Council of Churches continues. We wish respectfully to remind the Executive Committee of the resolutions of the 9thh General Assembly of the MECC in Paphos, Cyprus, which was held from 27 to 30 November 2007. It was at this meeting that the need for re-structuring the organization was acknowledged.

Subsequently, the MECC has admitted a serious financial crisis, a crisis that is being felt by many organizations around the world. At later meetings of the Executive Committee in Beirut and Kykkos, although the deepening crisis was known, no action was taken.

We note with sadness a distinct lack of progress in setting the MECC on the firm footing that was articulated in Paphos. Instead, the financial crisis has deepened.

We acknowledge with gratitude the hard work of many in the MECC to ensure that the Council is faithful to its goals and mission, and we understand the many challenges that faces the Council in its work. It is all the more important in our view that the Council remains absolutely committed to its vision and mission.

Therefore with great reluctance we are forced to admit that we lack confidence in the current Secretariat Staff and the SCAF of the MECC, and it seems to us that the following two courses of action are the only courses of action now open to the MECC in order to move forward:

1. Given the deepening crisis and the clear lack of progress in re-structuring the organization, and given the inability of the present Secretariat Staff and SCAF both to acknowledge this publicly and to propose effective solutions, it would seem that the honorable next course of action would be for the current Secretariat and SCAF Staff to submit their resignations, and for the Council to elect and appoint a new body of Secretariat Staff and SCAF with the clear mandate to execute a strategic plan that will accomplish the goals set at the 9th general assembly in 2007 as well as ensure the financial solvency of MECC and
2. that the newly elected and appointed secretariat Staff

and SCAF will provide to member Churches an open strategic plan to set the MECC on its proper course. With an expectation of regular reports and accountability to member Churches.

We realize that these may be difficult recommendations for some to hear, but we articulate them out of deep concern for the MECC itself. If we are not ready and prepared to proceed along these lines with firm clear and focused action then there is no likelihood that the MECC can accomplish the good work that lies at the heart of its urgent mission to the peoples of our region who so desperately need the leadership of the Churches in establishing peace, reconciliation and a proper co-existence of all.

We pray for God's blessing upon your work during this meeting, and we urge you to take this necessary action for the future of the MECC.

Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

President for the Eastern Orthodox Churches of MECC.

**PREPARING THE WAY FOR THE
BAPTISM OF PILGRIMS AT THE**

JORDAN RIVER

His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III visited the Holy Monastery of St. John the Baptist by the Jordan River and the traditional Biblical place where the Lord was baptised. The visit took place on Wednesday July 8th 2009 in cooperation with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Ministry of Tourism of Israel. During the visit, the Ministry was represented by its Senior Deputy Director-General Mr. Raphael Ben-Hur and his colleagues, while His Beatitude was escorted by the Elder Chief Secretary His Eminence Aristarchos Archbishop of Constantina, the Superior of St. Gerasimos Rev. Archimandrite Chrysostomos and deacon Rev. Fr. Athanasios.

This area has been a military zone since 1967 and the Israeli Defence Forces permit pilgrims to visit the site twice a year, on the 5th /18th of January, the eve of Epiphany, for the ceremony of the Blessing of the waters performed by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem and, on Holy Tuesday, for the traditional pilgrimage baptism of believers. This allowance resulted from a suggestion made by the late Patriarch of Jerusalem Diodoros I to the I.D.F authorities.

The I.D.F, in cooperation with the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, provided access to the site on the occasion of the Patriarch's visit to view the premises of the Holy Monastery of St. John the Baptist, partially demolished since 1967 and to assess the possibility for its renovation. Approval for renovation work already exists and in order for the project to be initiated, it requires the submission of an architectural site analysis and the goodwill of a benefactor to finance the expenses.

After the visit to the Holy Monastery, His Beatitude together with Mr. Raphael Ben-Hur, the General military Commanding officer of Jericho Mr. Itzik Deri, the General military

Commanding officer of Bethlehem Mr. Iyad Sirhan, the civil engineer Mr. Ofer Meital and the architect Mr. Ron Margolin, visited the place of the Baptism at the Jordan River and inspected the works carried out by the I.D.F, namely the support of the river bed for the safe access of pilgrims to the river waters and the construction of a stone platform and stone roofing for the performing of the Blessing of the waters ceremony by the Patriarch. This platform and its surroundings is the Patriarchates' property.

The Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III conveyed appreciation for the cooperation between the Ministry of Tourism and the Israeli Defence Forces which led to this facilitation, an event that preludes the gradual and permanent prevalence of peace, enabling the more frequent and easy visitation of pilgrims for their customary baptism and sanctification at the traditional Biblical place of the Lord's Baptism.

Chief Secretary's Office

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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 from 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

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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 Greek Orthodox 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

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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