

# **PATRIARCH OF THE HOLY CITY PARTICIPATES IN “MY PEACE, I GIVE YOU” CONFERENCE IN JERUSALEM**

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III attended on Thursday, April 18, the ‘My Peace, I Give You’ conference that was held in Jerusalem.

The conference was attended by the Minister of the Moscow City Government, His Excellency Sergey Cheremin, Head of the Department of Foreign, Economic and International Relations, His Eminence Shaykh Mowafaq Ṭarīf, His Excellency the Russian Ambassador to Tel Aviv Anatoly Viktorov, in addition to His Excellency the Consul Dr. Amin Safiya and a number of religious and local figures.

His Beatitude the Patriarch delivered a speech in which he stressed the importance of achieving stability and harmony on the foundations of justice in a time of uncertainty and instability, stressing the importance of Jerusalem as a center for goodness and reconciliation. His Beatitude cited verses from the Holy Gospel to stressing the divine and human bases of peace, and called for international cooperation to promote reconciliation.

The conference participants praised the urgent need for joint and continuous work towards the good of humanity, away from conflicts and wars, expressing their aspiration to convey the voice of peace emanating from Jerusalem to all parts of the world.

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# VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE

On Wednesday, April 4/17, 2024, the following people visited His Beatitude:

1. The Head of the Russian Spiritual Mission to Jerusalem (MISSIA) Archimandrite Vassianos with Archimandrite Nikon.



2. His Eminence Metropolitan Markos of Berlin and Archimandrite Romanos of the ROCOR Church.



3. The Israeli Police for a discussion with the Patriarchate on matters concerning the ceremonies of Holy Week and Easter.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **THE FEAST OF THE ADORATION OF THE CROSS AT THE HOLY MONASTERY OF THE CROSS**

On the Fourth Sunday of Lent, April 1/14, 2024, the feast of the Adoration of the Holy Cross was celebrated in the Holy Monastery of the Holy Cross, located in western New Jerusalem near the Jewish Parliament.

Following the Status Quo, this feast was also celebrated in

the Holy Monastery of the Cross because of the tradition that the wood of the Cross, on which the Lord was crucified for our salvation, was planted by the righteous Lot in the place where the Holy Monastery is located following the directive of Patriarch Abraham.

On this occasion, Vespers was celebrated on Saturday afternoon by Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks with Archimandrite Ieronymos first in rank. On Sunday morning the Divine Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos with the co-celebration of their Eminences, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Archbishops, Aristarchos of Constantina and Methodios of Tabor, the Dragoman Archimandrite Mattheos, the Hegoumen in Madaba, Archimandrite Ieronymos, Priest Ioannis Antoniou and other Priests. The service was attended by the representative of the Greek Consulate General in Jerusalem Mrs Anna Mandika and monks, nuns and members of our flock.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14), the wise Apostle Paul preaches.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Dear Christians,

The power of the Holy and Life-giving Cross of our God and Saviour Christ has gathered us in this holy place, where the three-composed tree was planted and the Monastery of the Cross was built, so that we may solemnly and in thanksgiving venerate the Wood of the Cross, through which, “God our King, before the ages, he hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth” (Ps. 73,12) as David prophetically sings.

Indeed, the one who through sufferings, even though he was

finished on the Cross [Jesus] became the cause of eternal salvation for all who obey him (Heb. 5:9), as preached by Saint Paul.

The Holy Cross, which was shown to be the instrument of redemption, is inextricably linked to death, pain, and the blood of Christ, " In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence" (Eph. 1, 7-8), as the wise Paul says again.

According to the revelation of the Evangelist John, the Cross is the saving tree, i.e. "the tree of life". " To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (Revelation 2,7). And in more detail: "To him who will win in the battle against Satan and sin, I will give him to eat from the tree of life. In other words, I will claim him to enjoy the eternal goods in the Paradise of my Father, Who according to my human nature is also my God", says the Lord.

Athanasios the Great, admiring the plan of God, Who through the cross leads the faithful to salvation and defeats the work of the devil, says: "O divine true wisdom and heavenly thinking! The Cross was set up and idolatry was destroyed. A Cross was raised and a diabolical dynasty was condemned" (P.G. 28, 1056)

The devil was condemned out of God's infinite love for man: " Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Eph. 5, 1-2), Paul preaches.

It is worth noting that the living offering and sacrifice of Christ was made on the wood of the Cross, which is why the Cross is also called an "altar" where " the Lamb of God [was placed] which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Greater still ... here the gift of the altar is laid and by the gift the altar is sanctified”.

In other words, Christ, Who is the gift, is “greater”, i.e. superior to the altar, therefore the altar, i.e. the wood of the cross, is sanctified by the offered gift, the sacrificed Christ. According to St. John of Damascus, the wood of the cross is true and venerable, in which Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice for us...sanctified by the grace of the Holy Body and Blood”, therefore “venerated”. Moreover, “we also venerate the type of the honourable and life-giving cross, even if it is made from other material, not honouring the material, not the birth, but the type as a symbol of Christ”.

In his homily, Saint Sophronios Patriarch of Jerusalem on the veneration of the Holy and Life-giving Cross in the middle week of Holy Pentecost, says in praise: “Hail, Holy Cross, where the Son and Word of God rested His hands and hugged us and brought us to Heavenly Father ... and in you, Holy Cross, the divine blood of the Son and Word of the invisible Father was shed”.

This Holy Cross was prefigured by the Tree of Life, the one planted in heaven by God (where death is through wood, so through wood life and resurrection are given). “This Holy Cross was prefigured by the tree of life, which was planted in Heaven by God. Because death came through wood, life and resurrection had to come through wood” St. John of Damascus says.

And because our God is the Saviour, all people will be saved (Tim. 1’ 2-4) first He planted the tree of life in the middle of Paradise, when the fullness of time had not come, he planted the tree of salvation in the secret Paradise, that is, in the Virgin Mary, from whom Christ sprung from her pure blood, as Saint Cosmas Bishop of Maiuma exclaims in a hymn, saying: “O Theotokos, thou art a mystical paradise, which being untilled hath blossomed forth Christ, by Whom the life-

giving Tree of the Cross was planted in the earth. In worshipping Him now through its exaltation, thee do we magnify" (Katavasiae of the Cross, Ode 9).

The fruit of the life-giving tree of the Cross, my beloved brothers, is the body and blood of Christ risen from the dead, of which we are called to eat and drink according to His command: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." (John 6:53). " He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him" (John 6:56).

The wise Paul often refers to the redemptive blood of Christ's Cross. And this is because, through this blood, we are redeemed (Romans 5,9), we are bought (Eph'. 1,7), we become God's property (Acts 20,28) and the unity and communion between believers in the eucharistic cup is declared (Cor. 10,16/11, 25-28). Moreover, the death of the Lord is reported, and His coming is declared "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

This is why St. John of Damascus says in a hymn: We glorify your life-giving Cross, Christ God, your three-day Resurrection, for by it you renewed the corrupt nature of men, and raised it to the heavens forever, as the only good and philanthropist.

Let us, my beloved brothers, beseech the Mother of God, who gave birth to the One who was lifted up on the Cross, so that by the great power of the Holy Cross we may reach the luminous Resurrection of our Saviour. Amen. Many happy and peaceful returns".

The Liturgy was followed by the service and procession of the Adoration of the Holy Cross.

Finally, the Hegoumen Archimandrite Christodoulos hosted a modest treat at the rectory.

From Secretariat-General

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# RECENT VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE

On Friday, March 30/April 12, 2024, the following people visited His Beatitude:

The Franciscan Deputy Custodian Fr. Dobromir for work-related issues in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Five volunteers from the Holy Metropolis of Patras with the Hegoumen of the Monastery of the Holy Cross Archimandrite Christodoulos, to help prepare for the feast of the Holy Cross, on the 4th Sunday of Lent.





Ms Marian Loubat, representative of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem to the World Council of Churches in Ghana, Africa, to receive His blessing.



The pilgrim Kalliope Mavragani, whose cassock and request His Beatitude blessed, to serve in the Holy Monastery of the sisters of Lazarus Martha and Mary in Bethany, for the Holy Monastery to emerge as a monastic centre of the Patriarchate with a lively Christian witness in the region of Bethany.



On Saturday, March 31/April 13, 2024, His Beatitude received:

A 50-member group of Orthodox Youth from Zdeide and Baane in northern Israel. He accepted and guided them Pastorally and gave each of them a copy of the New Testament in Arabic.



Afterwards, His Beatitude received Mr. Markon Nirman, to receive the blessing for priesthood, following the decision of the Synod.



From Secretariat-General

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# VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE APRIL 9, 2024

On the morning of Tuesday, March 27/April 9, 2024, His Beatitude received:

1. Representation of the Museum of the Bible in Washington, USA under its General Curator, Mr Jeffrey Kloha. They were received by His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos and the Holy Sepulchre Fathers.
2. The Ambassador of Georgia to Israel Mr Zaza Kandelaki with his associates. In this visit, His Beatitude underlined the inalienable and non-negotiable ownership and pilgrimage rights of the Patriarchate to the Holy Monastery of the Holy Cross.
3. Subsequently, His Beatitude received Mr Iyad Sirhan with Mr Cesar Marjieh and explained to them the need to facilitate the pilgrims for the ceremony of the Holy Light on Holy Saturday and the need for assistance from the State of Israel for the installation of water in the Holy Monastery of Tabor.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS AT THE

# SHRINE OF THE ANNUNCIATION IN NAZARETH

On Sunday, March 25 / April 7, 2024, the feast of the Annunciation of Our Lady the Theotokos was celebrated in Nazareth.

On this feast, the whole Church, especially that in Jerusalem, commemorates the fact that the fullness of time has come, God through the Archangel Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary in the city of Nazareth that by the Holy Spirit she will incarnate the Only Begotten Son and His Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. In parallel and according to the standard of the fixed calendar, the feast of the veneration of the Holy Cross was celebrated to strengthen us in the struggle of fasting for the reception of Holy Easter.

On the occasion of this holiday, a celebration was held for a Divine Liturgy in the Holy Church-Shrine of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Nazareth, presided over by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos. Concelebrating with Him were their Eminences, the Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, the Archbishops; Damascene of Yaffo, Aristarchos of Constantina, Methodios of Tabor, Holy Sepulchre Hieromonks, with first in rank the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Head of the Russian Spiritual Mission in Jerusalem (MISSIA) Archimandrite Vassianos, Priests of the area of Nazareth and Acre, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacon Eulogios, at the attendance of a large congregation. The chanting was delivered by the choir of Nazareth and the choir of Beersheba under the Most Reverend Archbishop of Aristovoulos of Madaba in the presence of the President of the Nazareth Community Mr Bassim Asfour, the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel Mr Cezar Marjieh, the representative of the Greek Embassy to Tel Aviv Mr Nikolaos Mavroedis and the representative of Russia to Israel Mr

Vladimir Victorov.

Before the Holy Communion His Beatitude delivered the following Sermon:

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us (Isaiah 7,14 / Matt. 1,23), Isaiah prophesized and the Evangelist Matthew interprets.

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Reverend Christians and pilgrims

The grace of the Holy Spirit which overshadowed the Virgin Mary has gathered us all in this holy place of the biblical city of Nazareth to celebrate the great and redeeming mystery of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, as the psalmist says: “Sing unto the Lord, bless His Name; proclaim from day to day the good tidings of His salvation” (Ps 95,1).

These words of David, “the salvation of God”, are no other than the reply of Archangel Gabriel to the wondering Mariam “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” (Luke 1,34), “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore, also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1,35).

Both the Old and the New Testament are the holy history, the revelation, the revealing of the eternal wisdom and will of God, which is no other than “the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began” (Romans 16,25), which was announced to the Virgin Mary, revealed in Christ and preached by the Apostles. This is the One who “shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest” (Luke 1,32). The



greeting of the Archangel Gabriel, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1,28), and Mariam's words, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1,38), made Mariam the Mother of God, a partaker and contributor to "the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever" (Romans 16,25-27), Saint Paul preaches. And in more detail; this mystery has been revealed now, and it has been confirmed by the prophecies in the scriptures and has become known to all the nations by God's command, so that they may display the obedience befitting to faith. Such an example of obedience of faith was the Virgin Mariam, obeying the words of Archangel Gabriel, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1,38). "Obedience is displayed by faith, not by much knowledge. And when God commands to obey, one should not examine how", Saint John of Damascus says.

Moreover, the Lord Himself "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5,9), while the Virgin Mariam was "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (1 Tim. 3,9). That is why the Archangel told her, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus" (Luke 1,30-31). Saint Theophylaktos says about this, "Righteously He was called Jesus, who came for the salvation of our race; for this name in Greek means salvation, therefore Jesus means salvation".

But what is the salvation, and what does the word saviour mean? "Salvation" is the correction of the foremother Eve's fault, as Saint John of Damascus says, "Rejoice, Mary, thou the only one blessed among women, who has corrected Eve's

fault". "Rejoice the only one blessed among women, thou who has raised the humble race of the fallen women". "Rejoice, for through you we have been saved from an unspeakable curse and have been filled with joy".

"Saviour" means the new Adam, that is God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was conceived in flesh from the Holy Spirit by the pure flesh of the Virgin Mary. "Rejoice, thou who art full of grace", thou who are above all joy and name, from whom the unspeakable joy Christ, is born unto the world and has become the healing of Adam's sorrow", Saint John of Damascus exclaims.

Adam's sorrow is the sin, the death, which befell upon humankind through the first created Adam, while salvation is bestowed through Jesus Christ, who is the "healing", the new Adam, who was born unto the world, the Son and Word of God. He was conceived in a manner incomprehensible to any mind from the pure flesh of the Virgin Mary, that is why the hymnographer of the Church says, "Today the preludes of universal joy move us to sing the prefestal hymn; for behold Gabriel cometh, bringing the good tidings to the Virgin, and shall cry to her: Rejoice, thou who art full of grace, the Lord is with thee" (Apolytikion).

It is noteworthy that the grace Mariam received from God is the same grace that God has given to the members of the Church, "Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1,23) according to Paul. In other words, in the most blessed Virgin Mary the Theotokos, we see the mystery of the Church which God loved and sanctified, "as His bride" (cf. Eph. 5,32). "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom" (John 3,29), John the Evangelist says. The bride is the humankind, which is wed to Christ through the Virgin Mary, Saint Cyril of Alexandria says.

This event, my dear ones, shows the strong bond of the mystery of the Virgin Theotokos and of the mystery of the Church. That

is why Saint John of Damascus exclaims, "Rejoice, thou who art full of grace, through whom we have become members of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church".

We praise and magnify today the Virgin Mary who received the annunciation, "of the salvation of God" and ask her and the theologian John of Damascus: Extend thy mercy most pure Lady, to those who know thee, and look favourably down upon thine servants and their works, and guide them in the path of peace, for all people's eyes are turned unto thee in hope, and have your intercession to your Son and God and our God, to whom be all glory the power and the might, together with His Father without beginning, and the Holy Spirit of the same one essence, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen. Have a blessed Lent and a holy Pascha, through which Adam returned to Paradise".

At the end of the Liturgy, there was a supplication for the donors of the renovation of the shrine and the whole Church, followed by the scouts' parade.

A small reception followed in the hall of the Metropolis.

At noon, a meal was hosted by the Holy Metropolis in a restaurant in the city. His Beatitude addressed those present at the meal through His following address:

"Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1,28).

Your Eminence, Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth,

Honourable President of the Ecclesiastical Council and respected members,

Dear companions

Today our holy Church celebrates the great universal event of the Annunciation of the Most Blessed Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary and the Adoration of the Precious and Life-giving Cross of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Annunciation of the Theotokos is the "chapter of the salvation of humankind", while the Precious Cross refers to the salvation of the souls of the people. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8,36) the Lord says. "Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven" (Ps. 85,11), the psalmist proclaims.

This message of truth and righteousness is proclaimed by the Gospel of Christ, which has been preached all over the world by the Holy Apostles of Christ. The Mother of all Churches, our Church of Jerusalem has received this Gospel, as the holy consignment from the Holy Apostles, especially from its first Hierarch, James, the Brother of God.

We say this, because Christ says, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness" (John 12,46). This light was granted to the world by the Mother of God, who is praised and magnified today. This unwaning light shines in Christ and through Christ in His Church, and in the Church of Jerusalem, which is founded upon the redeeming blood of the Son of God on the Cross.

This event of the mystery of the Divine Providence and reverence is witnessed throughout the centuries by the Christian presence in the Holy Land, in the cities of Jerusalem Bethlehem and Nazareth.

No one can deny nor refute this truth, that is why we, my dear ones preach and confess the God of love and utmost philanthropy, the Sun of Righteousness and peace and are called to remain steadfast and unshakable in our holy mission. This is what the incarnate from the pure flesh of the Virgin

Mary Son of God ordered His disciples, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5,16).

We do not exaggerate in saying that the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the guarantee of the safekeeping of our faith, intact and unblemished, and the undivided unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. In the Holy place of the Church of Jerusalem, at the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate, "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1,17). And in the blessed place of Nazareth, the Virgin Mary became a receiver of God's grace, hearing the words, "Rejoice, thou who art full of grace".

Many happy and peaceful returns, and a Blessed Pascha!"

Following this, His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth addressed His Beatitude as follows:

"Your Beatitude, Father and Master,

*"Today is the Gospel of joy, virgin festival, those below are joined to those above, Adam is renewed, or Eve is freed from the first sorrow"*! The philanthropy of our Triune God towards us who are made of earth is an inexplicable and unspeakable mystery! The "eternal secret and unknown to angels" through our Lady the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, to us on earth was revealed here, in the Holy City of Nazareth through the Archangel of the Heavenly Powers Gabriel, who was sent to *"bring... the word of salvation"*.

Today we welcome, our Father and Patriarch, like another Archangel Gabriel *"proclaiming the word of truth"*, sealing the archangelic hymn *"Hail, thou who art full of grace"* and presiding over the Feast!

Your Beatitude, we express from the bottom of our hearts gratitude to Your grace, for everything you have contributed to the support of this God-given province. The renovation

works in the Holy Shrine of the Annunciation and in the Metropolitan Holy Church of Saint George, following the blessing and exhortation of Your Beatitude, are commemorated here, works which will remain indelible in time, testifying to the glorious governing of the Church of Jerusalem by Your Holy Beatitude.

Your Beatitude, we wholeheartedly pray that the Lord our God, through the intercessions of the Most Gracious Theotokos Mary and the Archangel Gabriel, grant You good health to continue the wise steering of the mental ship of the Mother of all Churches, the Holy Zion! Many returns.”

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **PILGRIMAGE VISIT GROUP OF COMMUNITIES OF NORTHERN ISRAEL TO THE PATRIARCHATE**

On Saturday, March 24 / April 6, 2024, His Beatitude, our Father, and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos received a group of 400 people, mostly young but also middle-aged and elderly from the Communities of the Patriarchate of the Upper Galilee region under the reverend Priest of the city of Kufr Yassif Fr. Farah Farah.

They thanked His Beatitude for His support to them. They asked for His blessing for the celebration of the Feast of the Annunciation and the Adoration of the Cross and for the visit to the Church of the Resurrection, the Holy Sepulchre, and the Holy Golgotha.

His Beatitude blessed them and wished them the rest of the

Holy and Great Lent in health, humility, and all virtues. He also gave each of them a copy of the New Testament in the Arabic language.

From **Secretariat-General**

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## **HIS BEATITUDE DECORATES THE METROPOLITAN OF VOLOKOLAMSK WITH THE GRAND COMMANDER MEDAL**

On Tuesday, April 2, His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III welcomed His Eminence Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department of External Church Relations of the Patriarchate of Moscow, at the Patriarchate's headquarters in Jerusalem.

His Eminence was accompanied by the Reverend Father Nikolai Balasov, the Head of the Russian MISSIA in Jerusalem Archimandrite Vassianos, the Deputy of Metropolitan Anthony Father Igor Iakimchuk and the Metropolitan's secretary deacon Nikolai Vasin, who were a special delegation on behalf of His Beatitude Patriarch Cyril of Moscow.

In recognition of the contribution of His Eminence to the unity of the Church, His Beatitude awarded him with the medal of the Grand Commander of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre.

His Eminence thanked His Beatitude for this decoration and

emphasized the importance of His Beatitude's work and support towards the unity of the Church, his support for the Moscow Patriarchate, and his commitment to the unity of the Orthodox Churches and for the Christians in the Holy Land.

During the meeting, His Eminence Metropolitan Anthony conveyed the brotherly osculation of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril and his thanks for the letter of condolences regarding the recent terrorist attack on Crocus City Hall in Moscow.

In return, His Beatitude asked to convey His brotherly greetings to the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril.

**From Secretariat-General**

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## **PASCHAL GREETING VISITS TO THE WESTERN CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM**

On Tuesday morning, April 2, the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher led by His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, extended their Paschal greetings to the Western Churches in Jerusalem who have celebrated Christ's resurrection on Sunday.

The Jerusalem Patriarchate delegation headed first to the Franciscan brotherhood near the New Gate, where His Paternity Father Francesco Patton, Custodian of the Holy Land, received the Patriarchal delegation and exchanged celebratory speeches.



His Beatitude speech was as follows:

*“Your Paternity, dear Father Francesco,  
Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods,  
Dear Fathers,*

*Christ is risen!*

*We greet you, dear Father Francesco, and your Brotherhood, as you celebrate the Feast of Feasts, and we are mindful of the words of the Paschal Liturgy:*

*Come, receive the Light that is never overtaken by night,  
and glorify Christ, who is risen from the dead.*

*We keep this holy season of light and life at a time of deep darkness for our region and our world, and yet we do not shy from proclaiming that Christ has “trampled down death by death,” and given new life to the world.*

*It is our spiritual mission to keep the Light of the Gospel shining even in the most difficult of circumstances and the most hopeless of situations. To this end we are steadfast in proclaiming the message of salvation that is given to us and to all humanity in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. As our Lord has said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live” (John 11:25).*

*We are also grateful that we remain united in our common conviction as the Churches and Christian Communities of the Holy Land in standing against all forms of violence, in calling for an immediate and sustained ceasefire, the release of the hostages, the guarantee of humanitarian aid, access for doctors and medical personnel, and a fresh commitment to a new path forward for our region that leads us away from prejudice, violence, and war to mutual respect,*

*reconciliation, and peace.*

*We wish to express our appreciation to you, dear Father Francesco, for your clear commitment to these goals, and we are encouraged by our fraternal co-operation. In the face of such terrible conflict, the readiness of the Churches to join together in a common witness and a common cause is not only a sign of our strength; it is also a visible sign of hope for our peoples in the Holy Land and for all people of good will around the world.*

*We cannot but mention other challenges that affect our mission. Once again the Israeli municipal authorities are raising the issue of illegal and unfair municipal taxes on church property and even moved to freeze our bank accounts. This would deprive us of essential resources that enable us to run our church, charitable, educational, and other essential services.*

*We call on the local authorities to respect our historic and universally-recognised rights, so that we can carry out our spiritual mission without impediment or interference.*

*We are beset by dangers all around. And yet we are not afraid and we do not give up hope. For we are community that believes in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. As Saint Paul reminds us, affliction produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us (Rom. 5:3-5).*

*May this joyous feast of Easter be a hopeful time for you and your Brotherhood, and for all our peoples, as we rejoice in the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ over sin and death, and may this season bring us a new and tangible path to a lasting peace in our region.*

*Christ is risen!*

*Thank you."*

Later the delegation headed to the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem, where the Brotherhood was received by His Beatitude Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, and the accompanying Bishops and priests.

Their Beatitudes exchanged Paschal greetings and speeches, highlighting the importance of faith and patience. His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos speech reads as follow:

*"Your Beatitude, dear Cardinal Pizzaballa,  
Your Eminences,  
Your Graces,  
Dear Fathers,*

*Christ is risen!*

*We are pleased to rejoice with you, dear Cardinal Pizzaballa, as you and your communities celebrate the great feast of Easter. As Saint John of Damascus has written:*

*Meet it is that the heavens should rejoice,  
and that the earth should be glad,  
and that the whole world, both visible and invisible,  
should keep the feast;  
for Christ our everlasting joy has arisen.*

*(From the Canon of Pascha)*

*Even in the face of the terrible difficulties that we are facing in our region, we must not let violence and war rob us of the everlasting joy of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, for it is precisely this hope that sustains us, our*

*communities, and the world.*

*The resurrection, by which our Lord Jesus Christ destroyed sin and death, strengthens us in our resolve to be witnesses for peace and reconciliation. We shall not waver in our calls for an immediate sustained ceasefire, the release of hostages, the effective delivery of humanitarian aid, safe access for medical personnel and supplies, and a new resolution to chart a pathway to peace that promises a future for all those who call the Holy Land our home.*

*These are not vain desires: they are the necessary actions that will restore life and well-being, and they accord with the Scriptures. As we read in the Book of Proverbs, It is honorable to resolve a dispute (Prov. 20:3), and in the First Letter of Saint Peter, we understand that since, therefore, Christ suffered in the flesh, [we must] arm ourselves also with the same intention (for whoever has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin), so as to live for the rest of our time in the flesh no longer by human desires but by the will of God (1 Pet. 4:1-2).*

*In addition to our united commitment to peace, justice, and reconciliation in the current war, we remain determined to resist the broadening of areas of conflict in our life. As was the case in 2018, so today in the strongest possible terms we are encouraging the authorities not to over-reach their jurisdiction in attempts to impose illegal and unjust municipal taxation on the Churches that contravene our historical and internationally recognized position and rights. To press this matter in the present circumstances would add an unacceptable level of pressure on the Churches at a time when all people of good will in our region must be focused on the rebuilding of our society, its structures, and communities. We also call on the authorities to refrain from the freezing of all Church assets immediately, so that the Churches can fulfil their mission to serve, to educate, to heal, and to care for those who come to us.*

*We continue to be grateful to you, Your Beatitude, for your steadfastness in the pastoral care of our communities and for your dedication to our shared efforts within our council of the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches. At no time has our mutual support and alliance been more crucial for the well-being and future of the Christian presence in the Holy Land. Our co-operation is one of the few signs of hope in our increasingly fractured and disrupted society.*

*May God strengthen you in your pastoral ministry, and may God sustain us all as we seek to be faithful to our spiritual mission of proclaiming the joy and the hope of the resurrection.*

*Christ is risen!*

*Thank you."*

Lastly, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem, together with His Eminence Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina headed to the Mount of Olives to greet Archbishop Adolfo Tito Yllana, the Apostolic Nuncio to the Holy See.









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## VISITS TO HIS BEATITUDE

On Saturday, March 16/30, 2024, representatives of the Councils of most of the Communities of the Metropolis of Acre – Ptolemais under the President of the Council of Acre, Mr. Fouad Brek, visited H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos.

From Secretariat-General