GREETINGS TO THE HEADS OF THE CHURCHES ON THEIR VISIT TO THE PATRIARCHATE ON THE OCCASION OF PASHA

3rd May 2016

Your Beatitudes,

Your Excellencies,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Respected Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

Christ is risen!

We welcome you to our Patriarchate with great joy in celebration of the Great Feast of Pascha with words from the Easter liturgy:

Christ is risen from the dead.

Now all things are filled with light;

heaven and earth,

and the nethermost parts of the earth;

let all creation, therefore, celebrate the rising of Christ,

whereby it is strengthened.

The whole world rejoices in the light of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is in this light that we are gathered today. We are pleased that our celebration of Easter falls within the Western season of Eastertide, even though you celebrated the feast some weeks ago.

Our celebration of Easter has followed the recent conference on the situation of the Christian community in the Holy Land that was held in Atlanta in the middle of last month. This conference was a crucial vehicle for enabling the Heads of the Churches and Christian communities of the Holy Land to be united in our mission and moral obligation to keep before the conscience of the world the plight of Christians in the Middle East. Our collective voice on that occasion had a huge impact on the many who were present, in a nation that has a great deal of influence on our region.

As the leaders of the Christian communities in the Holy Land, it is our obligation and our joy to be the guardians and servants of the Holy Places, and especially of this Holy City of Jerusalem. We are all witnesses of the sacred history, and we are aware that we are here not for ourselves alone. We are here to give our witness to the power of the cross of the risen Christ, and the hope that this brings.

As we sing in the Midnight Office before the proclamation of the Resurrection, you have stretched out your arms and united all that of old was separated, O Saviour... there is none holy beside you. Here we understand that the cross is the cross not of death and despair, but of hope and new life, for our Lord Jesus Christ has restored the union of heaven and earth, and given eternal life to all. It is for this reason that we can say, O come, all ye faithful, let us worship Christ's holy Resurrection, for behold, through the Cross joy has come to all the world. We know this to be true, because especially on Great and Holy Saturday, in the ceremony of the Holy Fire,

Jerusalem celebrates her unique identity as the spiritual home for all humankind, for it gathers everyone.

For this reason we must not lose hope, and must not be afraid. This is our proclamation to a world that is locked in confusion, uncertainty, fear, and violence, in which so many people are displaced from their homes. What world political leaders cannot offer, even with the best of intentions, we dare to say that the Church of Jerusalem does offer. It is therefore not surprising that once again this year we have seen such a large number of pilgrims, from East and West, from near and far, all coming to Jerusalem for the spiritual refreshment that they receive from the holiness of this City and from the sanctified Light that bursts forth from the Tomb.

Let us remain firm in our common spiritual mission, and let us rejoice in the hope that is ours in the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, a hope that we proclaim to those near and far.

We take this opportunity to congratulate Archbishop Antonios, the new Archbishop of the Coptic community in Jerusalem, as you celebrate your first Easter in Jerusalem. We hope and pray that the consensus for the restoration of the Sacred Edicule that has taken place between the three communities of the Rum Orthodox, the Franciscans, and the Armenians might be an inspiration for the restoration of the remaining parts of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, especially those that are related to our brethren of the Coptic and Ethiopian communities.

We thank you again for your greetings, and may God bless you and all those who are in your pastoral care throughout our beloved Holy Land.

Christ is risen!

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

GREETINGS TO THE FRANCISCAN CUSTODY OF THE HOLY LAND ON THEIR VISIT TO THE PATRIARCHATE ON THE OCCASION OF PASHA

3rd May 2016

Your Excellency,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Respected Brotherhoods,

Dear Fathers,

Christ is risen!

We welcome you warmly, dear Father Dobromir and your brothers, to our Patriarchate in these bright days of the Paschal Feast, and we are delighted that, although you celebrated Easter some weeks ago, we are still in your season of Easter so that we may rejoice together in the light of the Resurrection.

Saint Francis himself captured the exuberance of our Easter joy in his great poem based on Psalm 148, which was translated into English in a famous hymn that includes these words:

Let all things their Creator bless,

and worship him in humbleness, alleluia!

Praise the Father, praise the Son,

and praise the Spirit, Three in One:

O praise him, alleluia!

Our Easter joy is made so much deeper this year in the wake of the historic agreement between our Communities for the restoration of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Tomb. The cooperation and harmony that have been evident throughout this planning has an importance for us, it is true. But our cooperation and harmony have an even greater significance for our common mission here in the Holy Land and our common witness to the world.

The project for the restoration of the Sacred Edicule is an inspiration to many Churches and Christian leaders at home and abroad. We to whom the guardianship and the diakonia of the Holy Places has been entrusted, and to whom the pastoral care of the Christian presence in the Holy Land has been given have a responsibility to act for the good of all. We say this because we are here not for ourselves alone, but to be a witness to the world of the living hope of the Resurrection. Our unity of purpose in this matter is therefore significant beyond this project itself, and we pray that it may be an encouragement to others in their work together for the sake of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We take this opportunity of your visit to us to express our gratitude to Father Pierbattista, with whom we have enjoyed a warm relationship, and whose personal leadership in this common work has been instrumental. We wish him well as he lays down the office of Custos and takes on new responsibilities, and we thank him, through you, for the significant contributions he has made during his many years of service as your Minister Provincial. We look forward to an equally beneficial and mutual relationship with the new Custos.

We are grateful to you for your Easter greetings, dear Father Dobromir, and we pray that our risen Lord Jesus Christ will bless you, your Brotherhood, and all those to whom you minister in our beloved Holy Land.

Christ is risen!

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

MESSAGE BY H.B. THEOPHILOS, PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM, ON

THE OCCASION OF EASTER 2016

24/04/2016

In the Holy City of Jerusalem, EASTER 2016

THEOPHILOS III

By the grace of God Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and all Palestine

of all the congregation of the Church, grace and mercy and peace

from the Holy Sepulchre
of the Resurrected Christ.

"Hail, O Holy Sion,

mother of Churches,

dwelling of God;

For you were the first to receive

the absolution of sins

through the Resurrection"

(Vesper's sticheron of the Resurrection, tone d).

There was, in the early matutinal hours, darkness engulfing the tomb where the Crucified Jesus Christ the Nazarene, king of the Jews, had been buried. Abounding darkness too in the minds of Mary and the other women who had gone with her to the monument. Added to the sorrow of the Cross was the bewilderment before the view of the stone taken away, perplexity at the sight of the empty tomb, and despair because "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they had put him!" (Jn 20, 2).

But God was faithfully "administering salvation on earth". God, who had wanted to save mankind through the incarnation and crucifixion of His Son the Monogenes, did not leave Him in the tomb to waste away. Christ, crucified and buried, was resurrected by the power of the Father and His divine competence. He vanquished the forces of the darkness and Hades, the devil, and rose from the dead, encountering Adam and his genus.

This hopeful message "by a pair of light-bringing angels" inside the tomb was proclaimed to Mary Magdalene and her accompanying women, transforming their sorrow to joy. This joy was infinitely augmented by the view of Jesus Himself, with the wounds of the nails upon His palms, resurrected, bright and glorified, telling them "Greetings", upon which "they took hold of His feet and worshipped Him" (Matthew 18,9).

Eye witnesses of this supernatural fact of the resurrection of the Crucified Jesus Christ from the dead were not only the Myrrhbearers but also the Disciples, who had rushed to the tomb and they too saw "the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself" (Jn 20, 7).

To confirm His Resurrection to the apostles "whom the Lord had chosen, He gave many convictions that He was alive" (Acts 1, 2-3), as in the gallery "on the evening of that first day of the week" (Jn 20, 19), on the way to Emmaus, when "He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself" (Luke 24, 27), and when "He blessed the

bread" (Luke 24, 30) on the Tiberian Sea, when He asked them for "something to eat" and on His instruction "they hauled in the net full of fish" (Jn 21 5-6) and "He took the bread and gave it to them and He did the same with the fish" (John 21, 13) and when "He led them out to Bethany" (Luke 24, 50) and "before the eyes of the disciples, He was taken up to heavens" (Acts 1, 9) and sat on the right of the Father and sanctified, glorified and deified our human nature.

Then, fulfilling His promise, the Lord sent from the Father another Paraclete that illuminated their intellect "in tongues of fire and they spoke in other languages" (Acts 2, 3) of the greatness of God, first in Jerusalem and from there to the ends of the earth, entrancing the world and attracting with their preaching several peoples aboard the ship of the Church.

The Church, the Holy Body of Christ, acquired by His honest blood, springing by Him on earth and sealed by the Holy Spirit, has been assigned to perform His redeeming work across the world. The Church preaches dialogue, reconciliation and peace; it heals man's wounds, it sanctifies and saves him, consoles him spiritually and relieves him materially, shares its bread with the poor and the needy and offers tangible support to castaways, refugees and victims of violence and terrorism.

The Church of Jerusalem, the Holy Sion, the first to receive absolution of sins through the Resurrection, guardian of the Holy Lands as silent witnesses to the appearance of Christ on earth, extends wishes from the Most Holy and Life-giving Sepulchre, to its flock and to pious pilgrims: health, peace, stability, prosperity and a joyful festive period, proclaiming in unspoken joy "Christ Has Risen"!

With Paternal and Patriarchal blessings,

Ardently blesser in the Lord,

THEOPHILOS III

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS AT THE CONFERENCE "PURSUING PEACE & STRENGTHENING PRESENCE" THE ATLANTA SUMMIT OF AMERICAN & PALESTINIAN CHURCHES

THE CARTER CENTER, ATLANTA, CA 19 April 2016

"The Church and its Roots in the Holy Land"

Your Beatitudes,

Your Eminences,

Reverend Fathers and Pastors

Distinguished Representatives of the Churches in the U.S.A.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are honored to be here at this important conference, that brings together Christians from the Holy Land and the United States, both for deepening collaborative efforts between us for peace-building as well as for finding new ways of supporting and strengthening the Christian communities of the region.

We are pleased to be sharing the podium this afternoon with the Heads of the Churches of the Holy Land, and we would like to acknowledge especially all those who have made this conference possible, especially Mr. Hanna Amireh, the Chairman of the Committee on Church Affairs of the State of Palestine, and the Carter Center here in Atlanta.

Our subject for these introductory remarks is "The Church and its Roots in the Holy Land," and this is the right place to begin. To speak of "roots" and "rootedness" is to speak in very specific and profoundly theological and spiritual, as well as historical, terms.

We all understand the deep historical roots of the Church in the Middle East in general and in the Holy Land in particular. The Church was revealed at Pentecost in Jerusalem, and from those beginnings there has been a continuous Christian presence in the region. Over the centuries the Church has maintained our living presence in the face of a range of political, social, religious, and military changes. We have maintained our responsibility to be the guardians and the servants of the Holy Places, a responsibility that has been entrusted to us by Divine Providence, established by the life of the Church, affirmed by the Covenant of Omar ibn Al-Khattab, and guaranteed by the Status Quo, which was itself introduced by the international community. We have always borne witness to the religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity of the Holy Land.

In particular, we know that the presence of the Church has not only been a part of the political history of the region; Christianity has been a witness to its sacred history, and this sacred history embraces not only Christianity, but also to the other Abrahamic traditions, Judaism and Islam. Our roots drink of the same spiritual nourishment and Christianity

is a natural and essential component of the spiritual geography of our region:

If our historical roots are clear enough, it is our theological and spiritual rootedness to which we would like to address a few brief comments. The Holy Land is the meeting place between Divinity and humanity, where God and human beings have conversed together. The-Holy Land is the place where heaven and earth are joined, where the Incarnate Logos took flesh, was born, lived among us, suffered death, and was raised from the tomb. For Christians, and indeed for others there is no doubting the eternal significance of this encounter between God and humanity in this specific place and in a specific time in history.

And while the Incarnation is certainly a matter of history, it is also a matter of faith. Our rootedness as Christians comes not just from our long history, which has shaped and formed our living in this land; it comes from the relationship that we have with the living God and the his followers.

As we are reminded in Saint Paul's Letter to the Ephesians,

I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

(Eph. 3:16-19)

Such rootedness is of profound significance for the Christian presence in the Holy Land, for our rootedness is deep within the heart of God himself.

Nor can we forget another fundamental theological truth that

waters the roots of the Church in the Holy Land. We embrace the understanding that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and this truth is the foundation for our understanding of the human person. But more than this, by extension we say that not only do we share a common humanity that is a mirror to us of God; we are also created of the same earth. The Church in the Holy Land not only has deep roots; we are created from the very earth in which those roots are anchored. And we return to this same earth.

This earth belongs to all. The particular earth of the Holy Land is not only our common home; it is our common origin and our common destiny. According to the Book of Genesis, we were "formed from the dust of the earth" (Gen. 2:7), and this common origin must be a reminder that we are united in a new common purpose to work together for the well-being and the flourishing of all who call the Holy Land their home and Jerusalem both their physical and spiritual capitol.

To be rooted, to speak of the roots of the Church in the Holy Land, then, is to speak at several levels, historical, spiritual, theological, even political — all of them significant. The Christian presence in Jerusalem and the Holy Land, and indeed throughout the entire Middle East, is under pressure in a way that is unprecedented in recent times. Christians face violence, displacement, and persecution, and they are often forced into migration, as are members of other religious affiliations. Once again the roots of the Church in the Holy Land are being watered by human blood.

In the face of such atrocities, we must not be fatalistic; our rootedness in the Holy Land and our witness to sacred history must nourish in us the gifts of the Spirit of which Saint Paul speaks so eloquently in the Letter to the Galatians:

In contrast to the fruits of a worldly mind, Saint Paul asserts that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and

self-control

(Gal . 5:22-23)

These fruits of the Spirit enable us to be free of possessiveness and make it possible for us: to see each other as those who are made in the image and likeness of God and who share a common humanity and a common destiny.

We live on the earth and not in heaven, and of course we remain deeply concerned for the future of the Christian presence in the Holy Land, as well as for the future of the Christian character of Jerusalem; without invalidating the legitimate claims of others. We are not interested in superiority over others, but we affirm that the long history and culture of our region in all its diversity has been shaped and formed by this Christian presence and the Holy Places

Christianity has produced in our region a civilization that is inclusive not exclusive. A civilization that values the rich diversity of peoples, languages, cultures, and traditions. A civilization that is practiced in the art of enabling diverse communities to live alongside each other, not simply in peace, but in a fruitful co-existence and harmony in which we honor the best and noblest in the other.

As an illustration of this, we wish to acknowledge the contribution of non-Christian leaders in the current ongoing historic restoration of the Sacred Aedicule of the Holy Tomb, a group of leaders that includes His Majesty King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, His Excellency the President of the Palestinian State, and others.

This is the kind of fruit that our roots in the Holy Land have produced, this Holy Land that encompasses the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the States of Palestine of Israel. Our rootedness, like our spiritual mission, exists not for ourselves alone, but so that the Church in the Holy Land may remain an eternal witness to our region, and a beacon to the

world — a world that is crying out for hope and spiritual refreshment.

May this summit be a further step along the way of establishing reconciliation, mutual respect, vital coexistence, and a: lasting peace, so that all who call Jerusalem, the Holy Land, and the Middle East their home may flourish and glorify the Name of our common Creator.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

NTUA PROFESSORS VISIT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Saturday the 3rd/16th of April 2016, the Scientific Diagnostic Team of the NTUA, assigned with conducting a study on the protection, conservation and restoration of the Aedicula of the Holy Sepulchre, composed of Ms Antonia Moropoulou and Messrs. Mouzakis and Korres, visited the Patriarchate.

The distinguished scientists were received by H.B. Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, in the presence of the Elder Secretary-General, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina. At

the meeting, the Patriarch spoke of the significance of the Aedicula and the Holy Sepulchre to Christians in the Holy Land and across the world, but also to followers of other religions and to the political authorities of the region.

In the presence of Theodosios Mitropoulos, architect of the Church of the Resurrection, the three expert professors went on to discuss with the Patriarch manners in which the innovative study can be implemented, in terms of the order, transportation, customs clearance, safekeeping and usage of materials for the solidification of the monument. It was also agreed that in the course of such works, the worship schedules of the three Communities and free access and veneration of pilgrims from the Holy Land and from across the world must not be violated.

From the Secretariat-General

httpv://youtu.be/bAMld5KYFus



REMARKS AT A MEETING OF THE PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL WITH THE HEADS OF THE CHURCHES & CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES OF THE HOLY LAND.

13 April 2016

Your Beatitudes,

Your Graces,

Your Eminences,

Respected Members of the Government,

Beloved Members of our Respective Brotherhoods^

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are grateful to be able to be with you to join our voices in the condemnation of violence and terrorism, wherever it .takes place, and especially in our region. The Holy Land is a beacon of hope to the World, and when the Holy Land and our peoples suffer violence of any kind, the bright light of that beacon of hope dims. We must always stand united against violence of any kind from whatever source it comes, and we are grateful, Mr. President, for your strong stand in precisely this regard.

As we reflect upon such matters, we are reminded of the words of the Psalmist, who wrote these haunting words:

"Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in their hearts;

there is no fear of God before their eyes.

For they flatter themselves in their own eyes

that their iniquity cannot be found out and hated.

The words of their mouths are mischief and deceit;

they have ceased to act wisely and do good.

They piot mischief white on their beds;

they are set on a way that is not good; they do not reject

evi"l.

Psalm 35 (36) :1-4

The Scriptures are clear. Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, and are endowed by with free will. Sin and evil are not inherent in our human nature, for human nature was created good by God. Rather sin and evil happen when men and women "cease to act wisely and do good." In other words, sin and evil are acts of humankind's free will, and, as we would say, the wrong use of free will.

The fruits of such a misuse of free will are many and destructive, but perhaps the most virulent of these fruits of the misuse of free will is arrogance. Arrogance is free will's worst expression, for it blinds us to everyone and everything around us, and enables us to treat other human beings as means to our own ends.

In this terrible and terrifying misuse of free will are violence and terrorism born. We are right to condemn violence and terrorism, but we are also under a moral obligation to be very clear about the origins, from which such destructive actions emerge.

Yet we are not without hope, for in the same psalm that is so clear about the consequences of the misuse of our free will, there is a declaration of the power of the love and mercy of God:

"Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens,

your faithfulness to the clouds.

Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your judgments are like the great deep;

you save humans and animals alike, O Lord.

How precious is your steadfast love. O God!

All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house,

and you give them drink from the river of your delights.

For with you is the fountain of life;

in your light we see light".

Psalm 35 (36), 5-9

We assure you, Your Excellency, of our ongoing commitment to the spiritual work of opposing the forces of sin and evil and in condemning violence and terrorism. May God bless you, Mr. President, in your work of the defense and well-being of all the peoples of this land, and may we together build a safe and secure future for all our communities.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH

OF JERUSALEM AT THE FOURTH STASIS OF THE SALUTATIONS IN HAIFA

On Friday, the 26th of March/8th of April 2016, H.B. Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, led the Fourth Stasis of the Salutations of Theotokos at the Rum Orthodox Arabic-speaking Community of Haifa, wherein stands a church dedicated to the Prophet Elias, on the slope of Mount Carmel.

Co-officiating were the former Metropolitan of Zambia, Joachim, and Primates visiting from the Patriarchate of Moscow, namely Metropolitan Alexandros of Pereyaslav-Khmelnitsky and Vishnevsky, Metropolitan Symeon of Vinitski and Barsky, and Archbishop Vladimir of Dneprodzerzhinsk and Tsaritsnanski. Also, the hegumen in Fhes, Archimandrite Ieronymos; the head of the Community, presbyter Demetrios, and Archdeacon Evlogios. Attending the service were several Orthodox faithful from the parish.

During mass, His Beatitude delivered a sermon in Arabic.

Upon the apolysis, father Demetrios and the Community Council hosted the Patriarch and His Entourage to a reception.

From the Secretariat-General

httpv://youtu.be/4y2khS27zM8



PRIMATES OF THE PATRIARCHATE OF MOSCOW VISIT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday, the 26th of March/8th of April 2016, Primates of the Patriarchate of Moscow, namely Metropolitans Alexandros of Pereyaslav-Khmelnitsky and Vishnevsky, Symeon of Vinitski and Barsky, and Archbishop Vladimir of Dneprodzerzhinsk and Tsaritsnanski, accompanied by priests, visited the Patriarchate.

They were welcomed by H.B. Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, in the presence of Hagiotaphite Fathers.

The Primates extended thanks to His Beatitude for their participation in the feast of the Annunciation in Nazareth and, as a token of gratitude, offered Him a silver teapot.

In the context of the meeting, an interesting discussion took place on the recent meeting between Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and Pope Francis in Latin America.

Reference was also made on the Great Synod of Orthodoxy, scheduled to convene during the period of the Holy Pentecost of the current year, on the issues to be discussed there and on the need for Orthodox Churches to support each other.

In view of their next meeting on Holy Saturday during the Holy Light ceremony, the Primates went on to venerate at the Holy Sepulchre and participate in the nocturnal Divine Liturgy.

From the Secretariat-General

httpv://youtu.be/Tze4x9h1ac0



REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SWEDISH INSTITUTE OF JERUSALEM VISIT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Friday, the 16th of March/8th of April 2016, representatives of the Swedish Theological Institute near David's Gatte, namely Ms Kerstin Enlund, Ms Ann Sofie Lasell and Mr Per Inge Liden, Chairman of Bilda, visited the Patriarchate.

At the meeting, an interesting discussion took place on the peacemaking and cultural activity of the Swedish Institute in Jerusalem and its collaboration with the Patriarchate.

His Beatitude expressed content over such collaboration and wished that they carry on their work. Wishes were also extended for a Happy Easter.

From the Secretariat-General

httpv://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPQl7jUDvK4



FRIGATE PSARA OF THE HELLENIC NAVY VISITS THE HOLY LANDS

On Friday, the 26th of March/8th of April 2016, the crew of the Frigate Psara of the Hellenic Navy visited the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Having called at the port of Haifa on the occasion of its collaboration with the American and Israeli navy, the crew went on to visit Jerusalem.

The crew was warmly received at the Hall of the Throne by Patriarch Theophilos, who talked of the importance of the Holy Shrines and of the age-long presence of the Rum Orthodox in the region of the Middle East. After the exchange of gifts, the crew carried on their pilgrimage.

From the Secretariat-General

httpv://youtu.be/0xUouH7rWrU

