

HIS BEATITUDE THEOPHILOS' III ADDRESS AT THE HOLIDAY RECEPTION HOSTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

27 December 2016

Your Excellency, Mr. President, Reuven Rivlin,
Minister of Internal Affairs Arye Machluf Deri
Fellow Leaders of the Faith Communities,
Your Excellencies,
Your Eminences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We greet you, Mr. President, in this season of light and hope for all our peoples with words from the Scriptures:

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is Light and in Him there is no darkness at all,

– (John I:5)

At this time of the year, the eyes of the world are turned toward Bethlehem and the Holy Land, where for millennia the divine-human encounter has been made manifest, and even today

we are living witnesses to sacred history.

We take this opportunity of this holiday gathering to express our gratitude to you for the firmness with which you defend the freedoms that lie at the heart of this democracy, especially the freedom of worship. And we are always encouraged by your commitment to the sacredness of life and your condemnation of all forms of terrorism, as you articulated most recently during your visit to Germany. These fundamental commitments are the basis of any society that understands that we share a common human destiny.

The State of Israel takes pride in the fact that this State was founded on democratic principles in the Middle East and that it guarantees full freedom of worship; and we are confident, Mr. President, that you will continue to resist any restrictions on religious practices.

For generations in this region we have lived by the rights, privileges, and traditions accorded by age-long custom and sanctioned by sacred history, and we who are the spiritual leaders of the faith communities of the Holy Land, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim, remain bound and committed to this foundation of our common life together. These rights, privileges, and traditions are part of the fabric of our region, and we trust that you will ensure that they are never abrogated or restricted.

We are keenly aware at this season of the unspeakable experiences of those who suffer around the world, and especially those who suffer in the countries around us. So many are suffering for the mere fact of their religious allegiance, and as those who serve the moral values of our respective religious traditions, we are deeply concerned. We appeal to all people of good will for an end to violence and for all peoples to have their own legitimate rights of self-

determination and freedom.

Needless to say, the long and unbroken presence of the Jerusalem Church in the Holy Land has safe-guarded the religious and cultural qualities that have shaped our landscape. For our Abrahamic faith has been a beacon of light and this light must never be extinguished.

As we celebrate this holy season, Mr. President, we assure you of our prayers for you and for your family and we wish you a peaceful New Year. May God bless all the peoples of our beloved Holy Land.

Hag Hannukah sammeach.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FOREFATHERS IN THE VILLAGE OF THE SHEPHERDS

On Sunday, the 12th/25th of December 2016, the memory of the Forefathers of Christ, especially Abraham the Patriarch, was celebrated in the Village of the Shepherds where the shepherds had heard the angelic hymn "Glory be to God in the highest

heaven” and were urged to go to Bethlehem, present-day Beit Sahour.

At the Church of the Rum Orthodox Arabic-speaking Community, numbering approximately 7,000 members, Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem was welcomed on the morning of the aforementioned day by Boy Scouts, the Patriarchal Commissioner in Bethlehem, Archbishop Theophylaktos of Jordan, the town priests, and a crowd of faithful. Patriarch Theophilos went on to lead Matins and the divine Liturgy, having as concelebrants Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, and Archbishop Theophylaktos of Jordan. Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the Hegumen, Archimandrite Ignatios, and Hierodeacon Markos prayed with the church priests, Presbyters Savvas, Issah and Ioannis. In attendance was Mr Vassilis Koinis, representative of the Greek Consulate-General.

His Beatitude delivered the sermon in Greek, saying that we honour the Holy Forefathers because through them was the “mystery hidden for long ages past” revealed (Romans 16, 25). According to St Paul: *“Although I am less than the least of all the Lord’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms”* (Ephesians 3, 8-10).

In this very town, the Shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch of their flock, became eye witnesses of this revealed mystery, says the Apostle Luke. *“An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel,*

praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests." (Luke 2, 8-11, 13, 14).

The Nativity of Christ, said His Beatitude, is about our own rebirth, but also about the progress of God's perfect knowledge through works of justice. This is precisely what the wise Paul tells us in today's excerpt from the Apostles: *"But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator". (Col. 3, 8-10).*

After the divine Liturgy, a reception was hosted at the events hall next to the Church, where the Patriarch addressed the Community and extended wishes for Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

At noon, the Community hosted His Beatitude to lunch at Saint Gabriel, owned by Rum Orthodox, Mr Athanasios Abu Aepa.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/AiC3EcplPTg>



THE FEAST OF ST NICHOLAS AT THE PATRIARCHATE (2016)

A. In the town of Beit Jala

On Monday, the 6th/19th of December 2016, the Patriarchate observed the memory of St Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, Lycia, at St Nicholas Church of the Rum Orthodox, Arabic-speaking Community of the town of Beit Jala, adjacent to Bethlehem.

St Nicholas had lived in the 4th c. AD. He was imprisoned by Diocletian and Maximinus, tortured and liberated when Constantine the Great, with the Edict of Milan in 312 AD, proclaimed that Christianity would be treated benevolently. He was one of the great Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council, in 324 AD, who fervently supported the doctrine of the *homoousion*, the same essence between the Son and the Father.

The divine Liturgy was led by H.B. Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, who had as concelebrants Archbishops Aristarchos of Constantina and Methodios of Tabor, and Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis; Hagiotaphite Hieromonks, the Arabic-speaking priests of the Church, presbyters Sahuan, Paul Alame and Joseph Hondali, and Archdeacon Markos. The Parish Choir sang for a crowd of Orthodox. To the congregation, His Beatitude delivered a sermon in Greek.

“The canon of faith, the image of meekness, St Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, Lycia, gathered all of us here”, said the Patriarch, “in order to observe his sacred memory on a day that coincides with preparations of the celebration of Christ’s incarnation in Bethlehem”.

St Nicholas, the Patriarch added, is recognized as a teacher of moderation, in other words a pedagogue of the faithful in the salvation of their souls. This means that Christians must

excel in virtue, according to the Apostle Peter, who says: *For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.* (2, Peter 1, 5-7).

St Nicholas, the most fervent protector of the Church of Christ, His Beatitude added, “invites us to celebrate the great mystery of the Nativity of Christ with spirituality and not in social, secular and cultural terms. Christmas, Patriarch Theophilos said, is not a cultural event but one that pertains to the fall of sin and the restoration of the salvation of the human kind.

After the divine Liturgy, His Beatitude, accompanied by the town’s Boy Scouts, visited the Community Office before joining lunch hosted by Archimandrite Narcissus and the Community.

B. In the Old City of Jerusalem

The memory of St Nicholas was also observed with Vespers and Divine Liturgy on the morning of the same day, at the homonymous Monastery in the Old City of Jerusalem, led by Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, who had as concelebrants Archimandrite Leontios and Hierodeacon Agapios.

On the conclusion of the liturgy, Archimandrite Aristovoulos distributed blessings among the pilgrims and hosted Primate to a festive reception.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/81NBR7sNMWY>



HIS BEATITUDE SPEECH AT THE CHRISTMAS RECEPTION HOSTED BY H. M. KING ABDULLAH II IN AMMAN.

18 December 2016

Your Majesty.

Your Royal Highnesses,

Esteemed Members of the Government,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Reverend Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this season, as we prepare for the great Feast of the Nativity, we gather here under the auspices of Your Majesty to mark this holy occasion for so many of us and to stand united in our efforts to bring hope to the neediest in our midst. The words of the prophet Isaiah speak clearly to us:

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness -on them light has
shined. (Isaiah 9:2)*

The Christmas Feast is a significant celebration for the Holy Land and indeed for the entire region of the Middle East. Far here the events of our sacred history unfolded; here the divine-human encounter was made manifest in our life: here we have been the witnesses of this sacred history for millennia.

This Feast is significant also for our many peoples who live in the diaspora, and whose hearts turn to this, their homeland, at this season especially. As we express our Christmas greetings to you, Your Majesty, we express them also to all our peoples, at home and abroad, that we may always remember that we are united in the rich heritage that is our common possession here in Jordan and throughout our region.

In this time of joy, let us not forget those who are displaced in our midst from Syria, Iraq, and other countries around us, who have been living and walking in darkness for some time now, to so many of whom the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has given a place of refuge, and who look to God for the hope that the Light of the Incarnate Logos brings to the world. They look also to all of us to be agents of that same hope, and for the very practical assistance that they need to overcome the horrors of war, persecution, violence, and exile from their ancestral homes.

Let us dedicate this time that we are together here at this celebration as a prayer and a commitment, that God may, with our co-operation, bestow upon all those who are suffering, as well as upon us, his bountiful love, mercy, and deliverance.

We all bear testimony to the significant labours and efforts that, under Your Majesty's careful guidance and wisdom, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is expending as we cope with this anguished situation, and we thank you for your vision that, time and again, is showing to the world that the Kingdom is a shining beacon of tolerance and true symbiosis – true co-existence. A tangible example is your Majesty's contribution for the restoration of the Holy Sepulcher.

We also express our gratitude to you, Your Majesty, for this celebration, which builds on your Hashemite heritage and your keen understanding of the natural fabric of our common humanity and our shared society. Please allow us to say again what we have often said, that the Patriarchate of Jerusalem is proud to exercise our service under your gracious Custodianship, as are all those who serve the Holy Places, whether they be Christian or Muslim.

As we keep this festive season, we assure you, Your Majesty, of our prayers for you and all the Royal Family, for the well-being and flourishing of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and we ask God to bless all the peoples of our beloved Holy Land.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

**REMARKS AT THE SEASON'S
GREETINGS RECEPTION HOSTED BY
THE ISRAELI MINISTRY OF
TOURISM – MERCAZ SHIMSHON**

BEIT SCHMUEL.

13 December 2016

Your Excellency, Mr. levin,

Your Excellency, Mr. Halevi,

Respected Members of the Ministry of Tourism,

Fellow Heads of Churches and Religious Leaders,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Once again, as we approach this rich and evocative season of religious observances, the eyes of the world are focused on the Holy Land. And we are reminded that Jerusalem holds a unique place in the hearts of millions of believers around the globe.

It is the dream of a lifetime for thousands of people to be able to come to this Holy City and to this Holy Land on pilgrimage at least once in their life, and so many come more than once. For so many the chief object of their journey is the Holy Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we see their eagerness, their deep desire for spiritual nourishment. As the Psalmist says, so we experience:

*As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you,
O God.*

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

When shall I come and behold the face of God?

(Ps. 42:1)

Countless pilgrims come here driven by this very basic spiritual longing, and pilgrimage has increased as we have been giving attention to the restoration of our most sacred site, the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ – a destination not just for Christian pilgrims, but for pilgrims of other religious traditions as well, who are prompted by the yearnings of their hearts to venerate this most sacred spot.

So we to whom Divine Providence has entrusted the role of servant and guardian of the Holy Places understand the meaning of pilgrimage not in terms of ordinary tourism, but in terms of something more enduring, something more fundamental to our human life and community.

For pilgrimage has to do with the soul of the people, both of the indigenous community of faith as well as of those who journey here from other lands. Pilgrimages give to individuals and to communities a dimension that is not visible to the eye, but is only perceivable by the heart.

The culture of pilgrimage promotes and deepens many aspects of our common human experience that are good in themselves; for example, unity, peace, reconciliation, and mutual understanding. When people from different countries and cultures gather at a Holy Place in prayer and devotion, every difference between them falls away, and they are united in a divine-human encounter that reveals to them that they share a common humanity and that they share a common destiny.

We must, therefore, not simply promote pilgrimage and do all in our power to make it as easy as possible for the faithful to have access to the Holy Places, especially at the time of the Great Feasts. We must not simply count numbers. We must not simply look to the bottom line.

More than anything we must create an atmosphere that positively values pilgrimage and pilgrims, and understands the

role that pilgrims play in deepening all those aspects of our common life to which we are all committed.

Ordinary tourists simply come to look, but pilgrims come to open their hearts and souls

to the Divine. When pilgrims come to the Holy Land, they embrace the land and its

peoples without distinction. They understand the integrity and unity of the Holy Land and its complementary cultures and religious traditions. They sense the importance of the historic significance that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam give to the full identity of the Holy Land. Pilgrimage therefore is the great witness of the sacred history of our Holy Land.

So pilgrimage helps diverse peoples from many lands near and far understand each other at a deeper level. And we know the testimony of so many pilgrims, who have been changed as they come from their own countries and cultures to a place where all countries and cultures gather, mingle, worship together, and understand the spiritual mission of Jerusalem as the city that gathers the nations in its embrace.

Pilgrims bring great hope when they come here, hope for an encounter with the living God, hope for a deeper spiritual life, hope for eternal meaning in a world of fleeting superficialities. They bring hope to us.

In their turn, pilgrims take away from the Holy Places a fresh energy when they return to their homes. This has been so from the beginning, when the earliest pilgrims would come to the Holy Land, participate in worship here, and then return to their own communities to bring our customs and religious observances to those who would never have the chance to come here.

We are therefore always vigilant to keep the Holy Places as places of spiritual encounter.

The Holy Places are a tangible sign of hope for our world, precisely because they are the focus of this divine-human encounter, and therefore of the infinite possibility that peace, mutual respect, and reconciliation give to the human community. The Rum Orthodox Patriarchate, along with our sisters and brothers of the other Christian communities of the Holy Land, continues to facilitate the spiritual journeys of all who come here in the humility and longing of pilgrimage.

We wish to express our gratitude to you, Your Excellencies, and to all those in government, who display the necessary sensitivity to the true nature of the Holy Places that is rightly theirs.

We value and appreciate this initiative that gives us the opportunity to be together and share our common concerns and commitments so that together we can improve the accessibility of the Holy Places to all who come here. So far our co-operation and mutual understanding between the Ministry and our Churches has been proved to be extremely conducive to the encouragement of pilgrimages to the Holy Land, and for this we are appreciative. And we look forward to a deeper co-operation so that pilgrims have the basic services which they would normally expect to have, as they do in the area around the Sea of Galilee, including Kafer Nahum.

We wish you peace and happiness in this holiday Season.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM SPEAKS AT ISRAELI MINISTRY OF TOURISM

At noon of the 30th of November/13th of December 2016, the Beit Schmueel Institution outside the walls of Jerusalem, near David's Gate, hosted an event organized by the Israeli Ministry of Tourism on the occasion of Christmas, the New Year and Hannukah.

Attending the event were the Leaders of Jerusalem Churches with their attendants.

Addressing the distinguished guests, the Minister of Tourist, Mr Yariv Levin, underlined the need for a spirit of tolerance amongst members of different religions and nationalities in the state of Israel for their peaceful coexistence and the attraction of tourists.

Patriarch Theophilos spoke on behalf of Christian Churches. The Patriarch's speech may be reached here: <http://www.jo-newsgate.net/en/2016/12/13/28351>

From the Secretariat-General



THE FEAST OF HIEROMARTYR ST

PHILOUMEN THE HAGIOTAPHITE AT JACOB'S WELL (2016)

On Tuesday, the 16th/29th of November 2016, the Patriarchate observed the memory of St Philoumen the Hagiotaphite and Hieromartyr at Jacob's Well, the site of his martyrdom.

Hailing from Orounta, Cyprus, St Philoumen, Hagiotaphite since a young age, was serving as hegumen at Jacob's Well when, in 1979, he was attacked by a fanatic Jew and suffered death at the chapel near the Well.

He was canonized by the Church of Jerusalem in 2009, on the site where the Lord had revealed Himself to the Samaritan woman. His relic is kept at the chapel dedicated to his name, to the south of St Photini Church, built by the hegumen, Hieromonk Ioustinos. To the north side of the church, a chapel has been attached, dedicated to St Ioustinos, philosopher and martyr from Nablus.

The divine Liturgy was led by Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem, having as concelebrants Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Zambia and Hagiotaphite Hieromonks such as Archimandrites Ignatios and Mathew, and Hierodeacons Markos and Demetrios. Archimandrite Aristovoulos sang on the right in Greek, Arabic, Russian and Romanian, whilst the Choir of the Community of Raffidia sang in Arabic. The service was attended by a pious congregation from Greece, Russia, Romania, Ukraine and Cyprus.

During His sermon, Patriarch Theophilos said Hieromartyr Philoumenos had, since childhood, listened to the biddings of St Paul, saying: *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this*

world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12, 1-2).

“If we wish to receive the light of the Gospel’s glory”, the Patriarch said, “we must conform to Christ in His death, participate in His persecutions and sufferings, so that we somehow attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3, 11).

“In other words”, His Beatitude said, “without temptation, trials and adversities, it is impossible for us to become worthy of the salvation of our souls” and went on to add that the memory of the holy martyrs calls us to realize that a Christian’s way of life is not of this world but must be inspired from the words of our God and Saviour, Christ.

In Arabic, the Patriarch’s sermon can be reached here:
<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2016/11/30/25767>

On the conclusion of the divine Liturgy, the hegumen hosted guests to a reception followed by monastic lunch.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/PlzyZEuCz44>



CONSECRATION OF ST GEORGE

CHURCH IN PEKI'IN, NORTHERN ISRAEL

On Saturday, the 13th/26th of November 2016, H.B. Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, performed the consecration ceremony for St George the Great Martyr Church of the Rum Orthodox Arabic-speaking Community in the town of Peki'in, Northern Israel, that falls under the Bishopric of Acre.

Built over recent years, the Church was decorated on the economic and moral subvention of the Patriarchate so as to serve the veneration needs of the aforementioned community, in light of the narrowness of the earlier Church.

His Beatitude led the divine Liturgy, having as concelebrants Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Metropolitan Joachim of Zambia, Archimandrite Mathew, the Master-of-Ceremonies, f. Bartholomew, and Hierodeacon Markos, as well as the church priest, f. Athanasios, and Arabic-speaking priests from adjacent towns. Archimandrite Philotheos, Patriarchal Commissioner in Accra sang for the Orthodox congregation of the parish.

During His sermon, Patriarch Theophilos referred to the words of the Evangelist John: *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1, 14) and *“out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given* (John 1, 16).

“In truth”, His Beatitude said, “the Church of Christ, disseminated across the entire world, offers the bloodless sacrifice, namely the symbols of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ in altars consecrated by Christ”. “Christ”, Patriarch Theophilos added, “entered the House of God, namely heavenly Church, through the curtain that is His own flesh and blood,

according to St Paul: *Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body* (Hebrews 10, 19).

Patriarch Theophilos also spoke of St John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, faithful friend of the Arch-Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and His emulator par excellence.

In Arabic, the sermon can be reached here:

<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2016/11/26/25685>

A great crowd participated in the Holy Communion, receiving the Patriarch's blessing after the apolysis.

Patriarch Theophilos offered an icon of St George for the new Church.

On the conclusion of the divine Liturgy, the Community hosted His Beatitude to lunch, during which He spoke in Arabic, see link:

<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2016/11/26/25687>

Patriarch Theophilos then offered Church Commissioner Soukri the amount of 25.000 shekel for the completion of the decoration of the Church.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/V0R8iK0ZuG0>



THE 11TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ENTHRONEMENT OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

On Tuesday, the 9th/22nd of November 2016, the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood celebrated the 11th anniversary of the Enthronement of His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, at the glorious Throne of St James the Brother of God.

Doxology was held in the Church of the Resurrection at 10:30 am, led by His Beatitude, who had as concelebrants Primate and Priests. In attendance were members of the Greek Parish and the Arabic-speaking congregation, in the presence of the Greek Consul in Jerusalem, Mr Christos Sofianopoulos.

After Doxology, clerics and laypersons paid their respect to His Beatitude.

In his address, the Elder Secretary-General called the enthronement of Patriarch Theophilos a very important event, marking the unity of the institution of the Church, particularly the cessation of the tempest that had tossed but not sunk the boat of the Church of Sion. "Judging ourselves in humility according to Christ", Archbishop Aristarchos said, "we can see we have done our best to respond to the mission and the work we have been assigned, the heritage we have received from our ever-memorable Fathers, to guard and to complete before delivering it, integral and enriched".

Archbishop Aristarchos also referred to the relations of the Patriarchate with the other Orthodox Churches, e.g. the Patriarchate of Serbia, cultivated during the visit of Patriarch Theophilos to Serbia, and Mount Athos, where the Patriarch had led the feast for the Dormition of St Anne.

The Patriarchate's participation in the Holy and Great Synod of Orthodoxy, held in Crete during the summer, as well as its support of Christians persecuted in the Middle East were also pointed out.

The crown of the achievements of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, said Archbishop Aristarchos, is the ongoing project on the restoration of the Aedicula of the Holy Sepulchre, in agreement with the three major Communities, and in accordance with a study conducted by the NTUA.

In his own address, the Greek Consul-General expressed the respect, love and gratitude of Greece for the great pastoral work of His Beatitude, the safekeeping of the Holy Shrines and the promotion of the ecumenical values of Orthodoxy.

"The Greek State and the Greek faithful", said Mr Sofianopoulos, always endow you with their love and dedication, visiting the Patriarchate as humble pilgrims, thus proving the significance they ascribe to Your work and the work of the Hagiotaphite Fathers".

Other representatives of the congregation and the sister Orthodox Churches addressed His Beatitude, who replied in Greek, referring specifically to the restoration of the Holy Sepulchre, the importance of which does not pertain only to this most holy monument, but also to the situation of Christians in the Middle East, tried by a civil war on the one hand and expatriation of thousands on the other hand.

In closing, His Beatitude Theophilos extended thanks to all those honouring Him with their presence on the anniversary of His enthronement.

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/AsuVG75NlBg>



HIS BEATITUDE THEOPHILOS III SPEECH AT THE CELEBRATIONS IN MOSCOW IN THE PRESENCE OF H.H. PATRIARCH KIRILL.

20 November 2016

Your Holiness, dear Brother and Concelebrator of the Lord

Your Excellencies,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Respected Members of the Government

Christ is in our midst!

We greet you Your Holiness, our dear Brother with the joy that comes from the Holy Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ in Jerusalem and we bring you the greeting of the Church of the Holy Land. On this auspicious occasion, we remember the words of the Psalmist, who wrote,

On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God. (Ps. 22:10)

We celebrate many birthdays: physical birthdays, spiritual birthdays, the birthday of the Church. All birthdays are reminders to us of new life, of resurrection. Today we remember the 33 Martyrs of Miletene, and we recall that martyrdom is itself also a kind of heavenly birthday.

In the Gospel that we have read at today's Liturgy, we hear the story of the raising of Jairus' daughter. This miracle is nothing less than the re-birth of the young woman, and is a sign to us of our re-birth in Jesus Christ.

This great concelebration of the Divine Liturgy is yet another revelation of our new birth in Christ. In spite of our human weaknesses and shortcomings, we are spiritually reborn in this Eucharistic miracle. Every time we concelebrate the Divine Liturgy, our experience of Pentecost at Jerusalem is renewed, and on this occasion especially we rejoice in the deep unity of the Churches of Jerusalem and Russia.

As we give thanks to God today for so many things. "God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us has made us alive together with Christ (Eph: 2.4) and so we glorify the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ for the renewal of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ. For, as Saint Paul says in the Epistle to the Ephesians, "God has destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will," and this adoption is itself a new birth. The restoration of the Sacred Edicule is itself another tangible sign of our unity, because while the Tomb itself is empty, the Tomb gives us new life, and the common Chalice that we share enrafts us into Christ's Body.

So the Eucharist makes the Church, and every time we partake of the Chalice, we experience our re-birth in Christ. Our concelebration of the Divine Liturgy with you, dear Brother,

and with the other primates and brother bishops here, with the gathered

Clergy, monastics, and faithful, is yet a further visible expression of our sobornost – the true unity and synodality of the Church. This unity and synodality of the Church continue to be vital and secure in the Holy Spirit.

On our behalf and on behalf of the Jerusalem Church, we take this blessed opportunity on this auspicious day to congratulate you, Your Holiness, and to wish you many years of primatial service in the Church. And we take this opportunity to express our gratitude to His Excellency the President for his staunch defense of the values of the Holy Bible over against the liberal values of many democracies, and we thank him especially for his support of the Church in the Holy Land in general and of the restoration of the Church of the Nativity in particular.

May God bless all the peoples of our beloved Russia, and may God grant peace and reconciliation in the Holy City of Jerusalem and throughout the Holy Land, which is our common home.

Mnogaya leta.

Spasiba

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem