

HIS BEATITUDE GREETINGS TO THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY ON THE OCCASION OF THE ARMENIAN FEAST OF THE NATIVITY.

21 January 2015

Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Brotherhoods.

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

We greet you, Your Beatitude, the Brotherhood of Saint James and your entire community in the Holy Land as you celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this holy season, Christians everywhere are united in the mystery of the Word made flesh, the Incarnate Logos of God, whose birth in the cave at Bethlehem ushers in the new age in which humanity has been reconciled to God.

As we greet you, Your Beatitude, on this happy feast, we are keenly aware that this New Year brings in its train a tragic anniversary for the Armenian people. The genocide that the Armenian people suffered a century ago remains a terrible stain on human history and we remember especially all those who fled the terror and made their way to the Armenian

community in the Holy Land, where they found refuge, safety and a new life. We assure you and your people that we shall be keeping you in our prayers as the centenary unfolds and especially in April when the commemorations around the world will be focused on who suffered and lost their homes, families and lives in this act man's inhumanity to man.

We live in a world in which, even now, many different ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and communities continue to suffer persecution, violence, and even annihilation. The centenary of the Armenian Genocide, as well as the plight of many in our region today, are stark reminders that we must ever be vigilant in opposing in the strongest possible terms an at every opportunity acts of terrorism, violence, and degradation.

Our mission as those to whom the guardianship and the *diakonia* of the Holy Places has been entrusted is to ensure that all people without distinction are welcomed and cared for when they come for spiritual refreshment. The dialogue between our communities must always be of the highest caliber and commitment so that the world may see the fruits of our mission clearly. Our relationships with those who seek to help and support us both in this region and around the world are also the deepest importance.

As we rejoice together in this holy season, may God bless you, Your Beatitude in your primatial ministry and may God bless the Brotherhood of Saint James and the people of the Armenian community of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. We wish you a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

THEOPHANY EVE AT THE PATRIARCHATE

On Sunday, the 5th/18th of January 2015, the Patriarchate celebrated the Eve of Theophany.

A. The feast in Jerusalem

Early in the morning of the aforementioned day, Matins and the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom were performed at the monastic church of Sts Constantine and Helen, followed by the service of the Small Blessing, led by His Beatitude Theophilos, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

On the conclusion of the Blessing rite, the Patriarch proceeded to the Patriarchate, where a supplication was made and the Patriarchal Polychronism sang. There, His Beatitude welcomed the vicar of the church of Sts Constantine and Helen, Archbishop Theodosios of Sebaste, who had led the rite of the Eve of Theophany at St James Cathedral for the Arab-speaking Community.

B. In the river Jordan

From the Patriarchate, the Patriarch left for the river Jordan, accompanied by Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina.

Driving through Jericho, His Beatitude visited the Monastery of the Prophet Elisha where stands Zacchaeus' sycamore fig tree. The Abbot, Archimandrite Philoumenos, welcomed the Patriarch at his quarters. Then, the Patriarch left to meet with the Palestinian Prefect of Jericho, whom he addressed in Arabic, see link:

<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2015/01/18/9544>

At the end of the meeting, His Beatitude left the territory of the Palestinian state, passing through the iron border gate. From there, He was accompanied by Israeli soldiers to the Monastery of John the Baptist near the river Jordan.

There, in the forecourt of the Monastery, he was warmly welcomed by Israeli army men of the district of Jericho, Boy Scouts and a great crowd, in the presence of Archimandrite Chrysostomos, Abbot at the Monastery of Abba Gerasimus, Primate and Priests of the Patriarchate as well as priests visiting from other Orthodox Churches.

In the church of this monastery, the Patriarch led the Service of the Ninth Hour of Theophany. From there, He led the procession to the river Jordan.

There, on a platform established by the banks of the Jordan, He performed the rite of the Blessing, in the presence of the Greek Consul-General to Jerusalem, before throwing the holy cross in the river where the Lord was baptized.

On the conclusion of the rite, Archimandrite Chrysostomos hosted guests to lunch at the Monastery of Abba Gerasimus.

From the Secretariat-General

<http://youtu.be/KakMPI-Lglw>

<http://youtu.be/7Y3sRSAQJVM>



VISITS TO THE PATRIARCHATE ON THE OCCASION OF CHRISTMAS

On Friday, the 27th of December/9th of January 2015, the day commemorating St Stephen the Protomartyr, representatives of the Christian Communities in Jerusalem visited the Patriarchate, in reciprocation for the visits they received on the occasion of their Christmas.

In the context of these scheduled visits, representatives of the Franciscan Friars in the Holy Land arrived at the Patriarchate, followed by other Christian Communities, namely Lutherans, Anglicans and Pro-Chalcedonians, Armenians, Copts, Syrians and Ethiopians.

The heads of Churches and their attendants were received by His Beatitude, Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem, in the presence of Hagiotaphite Fathers.

In the context of addresses made during the visits, the Birth in flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ was underlined as a starting point of cooperation for the support of Christians in the Holy Land and the promotion of peace in the area.

The work performed by the Churches was especially noted by Patriarch Theophilos in his own speech, in English, firstly to the Franciscans and subsequently to the rest of the Communities, see link: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2015/01/09/11186>

The Patriarch's address to the Armenians may be reached here: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2015/01/09/11190>

From the Secretariat-General

<httpv://youtu.be/gWfFRv0UUX4>



CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE IN JERUSALEM ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR CHRISTMAS VISIT TO THE PATRIARCHATE.

9th of January 2015

Your Eminence Archbishop Aris Shirvanian,
Your Eminences,
Your Graces,
Beloved Members of our Respective Fraternities,
Dear Fathers,

We welcome you to our Patriarchate with these joyful words from Matins of the Nativity:

*Come, O faithful,
let us go to see where Christ was born!
We shall follow the Wise Men, kings from the East,
and be led by the guiding star to the place where angels sing
unceasing praise.*

*Shepherds in the fields offer fitting hymns:
Glory in the highest to him who today was born of the Virgin
Theotokos in a cave in Bethlehem of Judah!"*

Like the Wise Men and the shepherds of old, we in our turn

come to the cave to worship the Incarnate Logos, our Lord Jesus Christ, whose birth restores the dignity of our human nature and signals the dawn of our renewed human destiny.

Our Lord's nativity reminds us in unambiguous terms of the divine-human partnership that is the icon for us not just of our relationship with God, but of our relationship with our fellow human beings. In our region, for centuries we have known the integrity that comes from the diversity of our peoples, cultures, ethnicities, and religions. Without this diversity, the Holy Land in particular and the Middle East in general would be so diminished as to lose an essential element of their identity.

The preservation of this identity depends in large measure on the Church and on the committed co-operation between our various communities, especially those of us to whom God's providence has entrusted the ministry of guarding-and serving the Holy Places. The Holy Places are the guarantee not only of our sacred history, but of the Christian character of the Holy Land, and their well-being must always be a concern that unites us beyond our differences. There is no place for rivalry, ambition, pride, or envy. We all come to the cave at Bethlehem at Christmas as equal suppliants before the throne of God on earth, and we must always outdo one another in the spirit of co-operation and commitment to ensuring that the Holy Places are maintained and preserved.

At this holy season, of course, Bethlehem is the object of our devotion and the object of the devotion of the world. As one of the oldest churches in continuous use in the world, the Basilica of the Nativity has a special call on our attention, especially at this time when our communities must work closely together for its repair and renovation. In this work the Churches are joined by many others in both the civic and religious

realm, and our task is to allow nothing to stand between us and the successful completion of the restoration of the

Basilica.

Over many centuries we have learnt in our region the power of dialogue. Dialogue deepens respect and understanding, and helps to build partnerships for common work and mission. The health of the dialogue between the Churches of the Holy Land is a crucial witness both to our local communities as well as to the world, which looks to us, and to Bethlehem in particular at this time of the year, in hope. The eyes of a hurting world are on us.

In this holy season, therefore, we renew our encouragement to all in our respective communities to a committed and fruitful dialogue so that we may serve the Holy Places and those who worship at them more effectively and faithfully. May God bless you, Your Beatitude, in your primatial ministry, and may God bless our respective fraternities and communities, and all the peoples of our beloved Holy Land.

Thank you.

His Beatitude
THEOPHILOS III
Patriarch of Jerusalem.

**CHRISTMAS GREETINGS TO THE
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
CHRISTIAN CHURCHES ON THE**

OCCASION OF THEIR CHRISTMAS VISIT TO THE PATRIARCHATE.

9th of January 2015

Your Beatitudes,
Your Eminences,
Your Graces,
Beloved Members of our Respective Fraternities,
Dear Fathers,

We greet you with joy on this glorious Feast of the Nativity,

*Today He, who holds the whole creation "in his hand is born of
a Virgin,*

*He, whose essence none can touch is bound in swaddling clothes
as a mortal man.*

*God, who in the beginning fashioned the heavens, lies in a
manger.*

*He who rained manna on his people in the wilderness is fed on
milk from*

*His Mother's breast. The Bridegroom of the Church summons the
Wise Men;*

*The Son of the Virgin accepts their gifts. We worship your
birth, O Christ,*

(Stichera Tone 6 from the Royal Hours of Christmas Eve)

And as we greet you and enjoy the warmth of this celebration, we remember that in this great mystery of the Incarnation of the Logos, God has united earth and heaven, and restored to humanity our eternal destiny. In this act of love, God has begun a new dialogue between the human and the divine, a dialogue that finds its highest and clearest testimony in the

Holy Places. Here, in the Holy Land, God and humanity have enjoyed a unique intimacy, and this intimacy finds its most obvious manifestation in the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

On this great feast, our region remains in grave difficulty. There is violence, persecution, and the displacement of large populations on a vast scale, and ancient communities are under threat- Our long history of co-existence and that diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious landscape that give to the Middle East its essential integrity are under threat as never before in modern times. As we celebrate the nativity of the Prince of Peace, we affirm again in the strongest possible terms the condemnation by the Churches of the Holy Land of all forms of violence, terrorism, intimidation, and prejudice.

The eternal and harmonious dialogue between God and humanity that is inaugurated by the Incarnation must find expression in our own life in the Holy Land. Over time, we have come to understand that true dialogue bears the fruit of compassion, deeper mutual understanding, and effective co-operation. Perhaps the most visible fruit of our common dialogue as Churches was the meeting here in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher of His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew and His Holiness Pope Francis last May. We cannot, we must not, underestimate the power of such demonstrations of the fruit of dialogue in a world that is torn by divisions and despair.

Our chief responsibility as the spiritual leaders of the Churches of the Holy Land is to ensure the integrity of the Christian character of the Holy Land and of the Holy Cities of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and to build up the vitality of the Christian presence here. In this essential mission, dialogue must play a major role. And the results of our fraternal dialogue must be visible for all to see. For then the world will see, in the words of the Psalmist, that

Mercy and truth will meet together;

Righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

(Psalm 84 [85]: 11 [10])

As we keep this holy season in our Churches, let us keep before us always the divine-human dialogue that calls us all into a new relationship with God and with each other. The eyes of the world are always on the Holy Land at this time of the year, and the world must see among us the image of the heavenly Jerusalem and the living example of peace, reconciliation, and mutual respect.

Thank you for your Christmas greetings. May God grant to all the peoples of our region his deep and abiding peace! May God strengthen in the political leaders of our region and the world the commitment to peace. And may God nurture in the hearts of all of us the love of that "peace that passes all understanding" (Phil. 4:7).

Thank you.

His Beatitude
THEOPHILOS III
Patriarch of Jerusalem.

**HIS BEATITUDE ADDRESS AT THE
ANNUAL RECEPTION ON THE EVE
OF THE NEW YEAR IN HONOR OF**

THE HEADS OF CHURCHES, HOSTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL.

30 December 2014

**Address at the Annual Reception on the Eve of the New Year
in honour of the Heads of the Churches
hosted by His Honour Mr. Reuven Rivlin
the President of Israel
with the Honourable Gilad Arden, Minister of the Interior**

Your Excellency, Mr. President

Your Excellency, Mr. Arden

Your Eminences

Your Graces

Distinguished Members of the Government and Civic Leaders

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this joyous season of light, We greet you, Mr. President,
with the words of the Psalmist:

Your word is a lantern to my feet, and a light upon my path
(Ps. 118 (119): 105)

It is you who light my lamp; the Lord, my God, lights up my
darkness

(Ps. 17 (18): 29 (28))

The Holy Land, which is home to all of us, shines with the
divine Light. Here God and humanity have known a special and
unique intimacy. In this season in particular, the world,
caught up in the darkness of violence, poverty, persecution,
and war looks to us, the communities of the Holy Land, for
renewed hope and inspiration.

Hope and inspiration must, of course, find expression in
practical ways, so that we may address the very real needs and
concerns of the people, whom we serve, both as elected

officials and religious leaders. Our precise tasks as political and religious leaders may be different, but first and foremost our care is always our people. In this region, we recognize the diversity of our peoples, and we understand that the harmonious co-existence of the Abrahamic faiths is essential to the integrity of the Holy Land.

As we acknowledge the importance of this harmonious co-existence, we must make it clear that the Churches condemn all violence, all acts of terror, and all attempts to persecute individuals and communities. We also condemn all crimes that are committed against shrines, places of worship, cemeteries, and other sacred sites. The peace that we seek for our region can never be built on the foundation of such acts.

In the work of building a society based on peace, justice, and reconciliation, we have learnt the power of dialogue. To be engaged in constructive dialogue does not mean that we have to settle every question, or reach a full consensus in every matter. The power of dialogue rests precisely in the fruit that it bears.

The chief fruit of genuine dialogue is a spirit of deeper understanding. Dialogue reduces tension, eradicates prejudice, and promotes compassion. These fruits of dialogue are essential to the health of the human community.

The Christian communities of the Holy Land place dialogue at the centre of our common mission. Although divided in some respects, the Churches have been committed to dialogue, and are now enjoying the fruits of this endeavor. We have worked seriously to eradicate animosity and prejudice, and to heal memories, and although this work continues, and there is still much to do, we have seen its results. Perhaps the most striking recent example of the fruits of our dialogue was the meeting earlier this year of His Holiness Pope Francis and His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. This visible expression of common purpose was

dialogue in action, and we cannot underestimate the power of such action to shape the consciousness of our people. When words fail us, our actions may speak more eloquently.

The Holy Land is a living witness to the dialogue between God and humanity. Here God and humanity have conversed down the ages. Here the divine presence has been made manifest among us. Here sacred history and eternity have met. In the divine-human dialogue we have the paradigm for our own dialogue among our different faith traditions and peoples. Dialogue in human affairs is therefore not a choice for us, but an inherent responsibility. Where true dialogue exists, the divine light shines brightly.

It is in this regard that the Status Quo has been, and remains, an essential foundation of true dialogue, and it is therefore the responsibility of all of us, whether in the civic or the religious sphere, to ensure that the traditional rights of all are upheld and respected. This Status Quo has deep roots in our collective history and consciousness, as well as sanctioned practices on the ground, which help to preserve the essential diversity of our region and beloved Holy Land.

In the interest of maintaining the Status Quo emerges the concern to ensure freedom of access for our faithful to the Holy Places for the celebration of the feasts of the Church. We indeed appreciate the difficult work of the authorities in maintaining safety and order, and we acknowledge the good will of many in leadership. But we also urge continued earnest attempts to find ways to expand and guarantee access for our respective communities and the many thousands of pilgrims who come to the Holy Land to take part in ceremonies of worship throughout the year.

It should be mentioned that the Heads of Churches of the Holy Land do not represent ourselves and our respective communities only. We represent the entire Christian world. Under the

universally acknowledged senior status of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, we play a unique and crucial role as bridge-builders in the work of reconciliation and the deepening of co-existence throughout our region. It is precisely because of our collective role that Jerusalem and the Holy Land maintain their unique religious, cultural and ethnic landscape.

As we celebrate this season of light, let us remember that committed, respectful dialogue is the truest basis for the longing of all our hearts for peace and reconciliation.

As we greet you, Mr. President, on behalf of the Churches and Christian communities of the Holy Land on this special occasion, your first holiday season in your honourable presidential office, may God bless you in your new responsibilities, and may God bless our beloved Holy Land.

We wish you a happy and peaceful New Year. Hag sammeach!

Thank you.

His Beatitude
THEOPHILOS III
Patriarch of Jerusalem

**HIS BEATITUDE SPEECH ON THE
OCCASION OF THE CHRISTMAS**

VISIT TO THE FRANCISCAN CUSTODY

27 December 2014

Dear Father Pizzaballa.

Your Eminences.

Your Graces.

Beloved Members of our Respective Fraternities,

With the joy of the angels, we greet you after your celebration of the Feast of the Nativity with the words of one of the great hymns of the Orthodox Church:

*Your birth, O Christ our God,
Has shed the light of knowledge upon the earth.
For by your birth those who adored stars,
Were taught by a star, to worship you,
The Sun of Justice, and to know you,
The Dawn from on high.
O Lord, glory to you,
(Apolytikion of the Nativity)*

The Light that breaks into our darkened world at Christmas is the one, true, uncreated Light, the incarnate Logos, whose birth at Bethlehem signifies the great reconciliation of heaven and earth. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is at once fully human and fully divine, has bridged the great chasm between God and humanity for ever.

We have been entrusted with the common mission of serving and guarding the Holy

Places, which are both the witness of the Incarnation and the guarantee of our presence in the Holy Land. At this season the eyes of the world are turned to the Holy Land and to the Christian communities here in eagerness and hope. Our joy and responsibility is to keep alive the Gospel of God's love, reconciliation, and peace, and our mission is to keep the Light of Christmas burning brightly both for our local Christian faithful as well as for the whole world. For the One who is the "Sun of Justice and the Dawn from on high" must reach to all humanity, particularly at a time when our region and our world are plunged into terrible difficulty and darkness. And those who bear the name of Christ are persecuted together with their innocent fellow-men.

One of the good signs of hope to the world is the mutual co-operation and mutual understanding that exists between our Fraternities. Those who are entrusted with the care of the Holy Places must exemplify the highest ideals and disciplines of dialogue and an ability to work together for the benefit of all, especially the many thousands of pilgrims who come to us every year for spiritual refreshment.

We know that dialogue and mutual co-operation bear genuine fruits, for we see it here. And we know that such dialogue and mutual co-operation are essential for the benefit of the Holy Places, the maintenance of the Christian character of Jerusalem, and the strengthening of the Christian presence in our region. All of us who have been called to this responsibility of leadership in the Christian communities of the Holy Land must place this work at the forefront of our attention at all times, so that together we may ensure the well-being of all.

The co-operation between our Fraternities bears fruit every day for the sake of the faithful, and contributed significantly to the great event of reconciliation that occurred last May at the meeting here in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre between His Holiness Pope Francis and His All-

Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew.

We pray especially at this Christmas season that this co-operation will grow and deepen. Dialogue has been proven to be the most effective means not just of resolving disputes but of reaching a deeper appreciation of the gifts of our respective communities, establishing agreements, and furthering the work of our common mission in ensuring that Jerusalem and the Holy Land continue to be a beacon of hope for the world.

We wish you, dear Father Pizzaballa, the Franciscan Fraternity, and all your people, a very happy and holy Christmas and a peaceful New Year, May God bless you.

Thank you.

His Beatitude
THEOPHILOS III
Patriarch of Jerusalem

**H.B. THEOPHILOS III GREETING
AT THE RECEPTION GIVEN BY DR
UZI LANDAU & MR AMIR HALEVI
AT THE MERCAZSHIMSHCN- BEIT
SHMUEL**

23 December 2014

Dr Landau,
Mr. Halevi,
Your Beatitudes,

**Your Eminences,
Your Graces,
Beloved Leaders of the Jewish and Muslim Communities of
Jerusalem,
Distinguished Civic Leaders,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is an honor for us to address this gathering during this holiday season on behalf of the Christian communities of the Holy Land, and we thank you, Dr Landau and MrHalevi, for bringing us together today.

At this time of the year, when the eyes of the world are focused on the Holy Land, our hearts are turned both to our local indigenous Christian communities as well as to the many thousands of pilgrims who make their way to the Holy Places, especially at Christmas. Both the local Christian communities and our pilgrims remind us of the universal significance of the Holy Places.

For all of us who call the Holy Land our home, Jew, Christian, and Muslim, the Holy Places, many of which we share, are not simply places of private devotion. They are also a sign to us of genuine interfaith dialogue and relationship. For here divinity and humanity have enjoyed true physical and spiritual relationship and dialogue. They realize for us our common human nature and our common human destiny.

At Christmas and Hannukah we celebrate the feast of the divine, uncreated light. That light does not discriminate, but shines on all. This is the light that has been revealed in human history to our forebears, and just as they were enlightened and showed us the way, so we must follow in their footsteps and show the way to others.

Recent sad and devastating events in our region cannot extinguish this divine light, and we to whom the spiritual leadership of our communities has been entrusted cannot be

distracted or put off our course. Our mission has always been, and continues to be, to point to this light, so that it may be a clear beacon to a world in terrible need of the reconciliation and the love of God.

This light has been revealed to us in particular times and places in history. Therefore we who follow the three great Abrahamic traditions of faith believe firmly that the light is truth, and that truth is light. We should not be, we cannot be, afraid of the darkness. As we read in the Psalms:

*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be
afraid?*

Psalms 26 (27): 1-2

Our God-given mission is precisely this: to guard and proclaim this light as the hope of the world, the sustenance of our local Communities and the encouragement of pilgrims. The Holy City of Jerusalem, the home of us all is essential to this spiritual mission, and no one has the right to attempt to extinguish this light.

We wish to thank you, Dr Landau and MrHalevi, for your efforts in helping to maintain Holy Land as a safe place for pilgrims, and for all that you do to support the leadership of the Christian communities. In this holiday season, may God bless you your work, and may God bless all the peoples of the Holy Land.

We wish all a Happy Christmas and ChagSammeach.

Thank you.

His Beatitude
THEOPHILOS III
Patriarch of Jerusalem

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM OFFICIATES IN AQABA, JORDAN

On Sunday, the 24th of November/7th of December, H.B. Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem officiated at the Patriarchal Church of St Nikolas in Aqaba.

This fine Church, standing at the center of Aqaba, a city in the Northern boundaries of the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, was built by the late Patriarch Diodoros of Jerusalem. Adjacent to the Church is a school, a hall of events and the priest's residence.

Owing to its geographical position and its port, Aqaba, a city of approximately 100.000 residents, is today a trade center. What is more, its climate has elevated it to a tourist destination. The city is the See of the Rum Orthodox Arab-speaking Community of St Nikolas, numbering approximately three hundred families.

The Patriarch of Jerusalem officiated at the divine Liturgy commemorating the feasts of the Presentation of Theotokos and of St Nikolas, Bishop of Myra, Lycia. Co-officiating were Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina; the Patriarchal Commissioner in Northern Jordan, Archbishop Philoumenos of Pella; the Abbot in Fhes, Archimandrite Ieronymos; Presbyter Vassilios, Archdeacon Evlogios and deacon Ioannis of Irbet. A great crowd of faithful participated in the service.

To the pious congregation, attending mass to receive the blessing of Patriarch Theophilos, His Beatitude preached the

Word of God in Greek.

In Arabic, the homily may be reached here:
<https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/ar/2014/12/07/8677>

Several among the faithful received Communion. On the conclusion of mass, His Beatitude offered a pectoral cross and a blessing cross to Steward f. Vassilios.

Extending his thanks, the priest invited His Beatitude to return to the city and bless the flock, once His pastoral obligations allow Him to do so.

After mass, His Beatitude distributed gifts to pre-school children, before visiting the school's premises.

At noon, He was attended lunch offered by the community aboard a boat in the Gulf of Aqaba.

In the evening, He attended dinner hosted in His honour at the hotel.

On the following morning, His Beatitude arrived in Amman, to return to Jerusalem on the evening of Monday.

From the Secretariat-General



**HIS BEATITUDE ADDRESS TO THE
DELEGATION FROM THE**

GOVERNMENT OF HUNGARY ON THEIR VISIT TO THE PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM.

2 December 2014

Your Excellency, Dr. Zsolt Semjén Deputy Prime Minister
Distinguished Members of the Delegation,
Dear Friends

We welcome you warmly to the Holy City of Jerusalem and to our Patriarchate, and as we do so, we remember with warmth and gratitude our own visit to your beloved country two years ago. At that time we were impressed by the commitment of the government and the people of Hungary to the Holy Land, and we are glad that the ties that bind your country to this region are deepening.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem shoulders the mission of preserving the integrity of the Holy Land. This integrity is predicated on the well-being, security, and flourishing of all our peoples. Here Jews, Christians and Muslims and others have lived together for millennia, and here we must forge a future in which all these communities can live in an atmosphere of peace, justice, and reconciliation. There is no other possible future here that respects the true identity and integrity of the Holy Land.

This means, of course, a stable and flourishing Christian community. We Christians are native to this region, and the Christian community appreciates deeply the support that we have received from the Hungarian government over the years. In addition to many other things, your government has supplied much-needed and valuable scholarships to young people in our Palestinian Christian communities, and we know the

transforming effect that education has on our young people.

In this way, the Patriarchate forms a living bridge of spiritual encouragement between the government and people of Hungary, the Palestinian Authority and the State of Israel. At a time when our region is experiencing the breakdown of so many structures and traditional relationships, along with ensuing chaos, war, and terribly acts of terrorism and brutality, these bridges of hope are all the more crucial for us to build and maintain. We are deeply thankful for the efforts of your government in this work, and we are always delighted to welcome pilgrims from Hungary to the Holy Places, where they find spiritual refreshment.

Thank you for the honour that you have bestowed upon us, which we receive with humility and gratitude not on our own behalf, but on behalf of the Patriarchate, the Brotherhood of the Holy Tomb, and all the faithful of the Rum Orthodox Church in the Holy Land, and in recognition of the important bonds between the Patriarchate and our people in this region and the people of Hungary, we wish to bestow on you, Your Excellency, the Cross of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

May these mutual recognitions be signs of the commitment that we all must have for peace and reconciliation in the Holy Land and throughout the Middle East. May God bless your visit to the Holy Land, and may God bless all the peoples of your beloved country of Hungary.

Thank you

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem