

HIS BEATITUDE ADDRESS TO THE PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL & MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT.

29 December 2011

Mr. President,

Honorable Ministers, Members of Parliament, Your Eminences,
Dear Reverend Fathers,

Distinguished Guests,

“For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, ‘Peace be within you”. (Ps. 121:8)

We greet you, Your Excellency, and all gathered here, in this festive season. Our purpose is to celebrate the heavenly gift of peace that is so dear to our beloved Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the foundation of peace, and is the precious inheritance that we share as followers of the Abrahamic faiths.

We are honored to be here in celebration of the Holy Season and the New Year. The peoples of the Holy Land in general, and the Christian community in particular, are a living testimony to diversity that makes up our common life, and that is essential to the well-being of all. This occasion gives us the welcome opportunity to listen to each other in our common concerns.

The holy mission of the Churches embodies the uniqueness of the Holy Land. At once sacred and spiritual, this region is the home of three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. We know in our common life the reality of many cultures and ethnic and religious diversity.

The mission of religious leaders throughout the ages has been

essential in safe-guarding the religious character of Jerusalem. It is the role of religion to inspire political leaders to carry out their difficult tasks that are laid on them, for "there is no authority except from God" (Rom. 13:1). But it is also true that the clergy share the burden of leadership in their own moral and pastoral ministry. Just as political leaders must be shaped by the moral principles of their religious traditions, in the same way religious leaders have a role in forming individuals and congregations of faithful people in the exercise of responsible citizenship.

The recent tumultuous events in our region are a prophetic sign which we should all take into serious consideration. We have no choice but to ask ourselves what achievements we must accomplish today, and what leadership we must exercise in the face of these events. Leadership, whether political or religious, should constantly ask itself what can be done to prevent destructive forces from threatening not only our region, but our humanity as a whole. As spiritual leaders our preaching of reconciliation, symbiosis, justice, and peace must always find expression in practice. In other words, we must make courageous decisions now, on the ground for the sake of all, before it is too late.

Mr. President, we commend you highly in standing up against recent sacrilegious acts that were intended to harm the freedom of worship that is practiced in our Holy Land. Your action in condemning strongly all forms of bigotry and prejudice against places of worship, be they Jewish, Christian or Muslim, is a bright example for all leaders to follow.

Jerusalem is the uncontested, shared spiritual symbol of the world, and Jerusalem remains a refuge for pilgrims of all faiths who seek divine encouragement and refreshment of the soul. In this respect, we continue to be appreciative of the efforts of the Authorities in facilitating access for pilgrims and worshippers. Allow us in this regard to underscore concerns that are common to our Christian community as a whole

in which there can be further helpful progress:

- Regular access to Holy Sites;
- Entry visas for clergy;
- The honoring of the tax exempt status that is sanctioned by sacred history; and
- The historic standing of the "Ownership of Church Property."

We continue to affirm that the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, along with our sister Churches, can contribute decisively to stability, reconciliation, and lasting peace in our beloved Holy Land and throughout this region. This is amply illustrated by the work to which we as the Churches have made a commitment in the fully functional Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land. As Your Excellency knows well, this Council promotes mutual respect and understanding of each other's religious and cultural heritage, and does crucial work. We take this opportunity to express our thanks to Mr. Caesar Marie for his efforts to help our Community.

In this Holy Season, we uphold the message of the Incarnate Logos, that peace on earth is possible and attainable, for the Lord says "righteousness and peace will kiss each other" and "faithfulness will spring up from the ground" (Ps 85:10-11).

Mr. President, we express our sincere thanks to you for this cordial invitation and for your gracious hospitality. We pray God's special blessing on the approaching New Year: may our hearts be warmed, our minds enlightened, and the lives of all the citizens of the State of Israel be fulfilled.

Happy New Year and Hanukah Samech.

His Beatitude Theophilus III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

HIS BEATITUDE ADDRESS OF WELCOME TO HIS EXCELLENCY VICTOR YANUKOVYCH, PRESIDENT OF THE UKRAINE.

Jerusalem, 1 December 2011

Your Excellency, Mr. President,

Esteemed Members of the Ukrainian Delegation,

Your Eminences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

“You have come to Jerusalem, the city of the living God.” (cf. Heb. 12:22)

We are glad to welcome you to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the senior Church institution of the Holy Land, and the Mother of All the Churches. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem embodies the history of Jerusalem, and as such the Patriarchate has remained down the ages the light of the City. For this light shines from the Holy Tomb.

The Patriarchate, together with the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, has been entrusted by Divine Providence with the ministry as guardians and servants of the Holy Places. As such, we represent not just ourselves alone, but the whole

Christian world, and especially our Orthodox brothers and sisters in every land. All Christians, and especially Orthodox Christians, have a claim through the Patriarchate to the spiritual citizenship of Jerusalem.

Your Excellency, we welcome you as the leader of a great nation, with a remarkable history and a unique culture, where Orthodoxy has a noble heritage. In the formative years of this heritage, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem had an honored place and role.

As you make your State Visit to Israel, nevertheless we welcome you to this Holy Place as a pilgrim, and as a devout member of our Church. Your visit to us is an eloquent testimony to the importance of religion in the life of our modern society. The Scriptures remind us that we “do not live by bread alone” (Matt. 4:4), and religion enables human beings to find meaning in their lives meaning that is crucial for the well-being not simply of the individual, but also of society as a whole. For no society can long endure without the depth of meaning that true religion provides, and we all understand the role of religion in promoting peace, justice, and reconciliation.

We would like to assure you that we watch carefully the unfolding developments in your country and your region in both the civic and the ecclesiastical realms. The Church has always been a force of cohesion and unity in our respective countries, and in this respect we wish to emphasise that we are ready to make our contribution to strengthen this cohesion and further the unity of the Church. Let us, in the words of Saint Paul, “make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).

We are happy that the brotherly relations between the Ukrainian people and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem are deeply rooted. This has no more visible expression than the many thousands of pilgrims from the Ukraine who come to the Holy

Land every year, and whom we receive here on almost a daily basis. We see for ourselves the devotion of the Ukrainian people for the Holy Places and for the Patriarchate.

It is for this reason that we would like to take this occasion to bestow upon you, Your Excellency, the highest decoration of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. May this be a sign of a bright future for relations between us.

We wish you a pleasant stay in the Holy Land, and every success in your mission.

We assure you also of our prayers for His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir, and through you we send our greetings to him.

May God bless you, and may God bless the peoples of the Ukraine.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

Theophilos III,

Patriarch of Jerusalem

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**HIS BEATITUDE ADDRESS AT THE
10th GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE**

MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN PAPHOS, CYPRUS 29-30 NOVEMBER 2011

Your Beatitude Archbishop Chrysostomos,

Your Beatitudes,

Secretary General Mr. Girghis,

Your Eminence Metropolitan Georgios of Paphos,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Reverend Fathers,

Dear Pastors,

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

“Blessed is who comes in the name of the Lord.”

We are delighted and honored to be at this 10th General Assembly of the Middle East Council of Churches.

We wish to express our gratitude to our host, Your Beatitude Archbishop Chrysostomos II, for your welcome and your efforts in support of the work of the Council. We assure Your Beatitude of our fervent prayers for your primatial ministry and for the people of our beloved neighbouring country of Cyprus. We wish also to acknowledge Your Eminence Metropolitan Georgios of Paphos, in whose Holy Metropolis we are meeting.

As we gather here in the name of the Lord, we are focused on our theme of looking forward to the renewed life of the Middle East Council of Churches. Please permit us in this address to

make a few specific remarks in this regard.

First, let us notice the work that has been accomplished by the Task Force over the past two years, especially with respect to restructuring the Council. This General Assembly will be examining this work and approving a way forward at this meeting. We also want to thank the member Churches for their financial help in enabling the Council to sustain its mission in this challenging period. We cannot continue without such financial support from all our members.

Having engaged in the crucial work of restructuring the Council, we must strengthen the capacity of the Council to foresee and anticipate problems and misunderstandings before they occur. This sort of internal foresight is fundamental to any healthy organization and we accomplish this best by effective meetings and communication. If they are caught early, most problems can be dealt with relatively easily and this is one of the primary goals of the restructuring work that has been done. Vigilance in this area of our work must remain high, because the unity of our mission must be clear to all.

As we move forward, we must also re-commit ourselves to the principle that the Council is not a vehicle for the agendas of individual member Churches or their leaders. As a Council, we respect the right of individual Churches and their leaders to speak and act as their circumstances dictate and we all have our own means for the discussion and publication of those matters that affect our own Churches and communities. Yet, at all times, with regard to the ongoing work of this Council, we are to keep our collective mission at the forefront of our work.

With respect to this mission, let us outline the way ahead as we see it.

As the Churches of the Middle East, we have three broad

responsibilities, which this Council exists to support:

1) As Churches, we have the prime moral obligation to oversee and pastor our congregations and communities. As leaders of the Churches, the needs of our people and their joys and hopes of the future must be our first concern and we must give our best efforts to this sacred ministry without delay. There is no time of distractions from this task and we must overcome our human weakness and give ourselves for the life of our people. This commitment lay at the heart of Our Lord's earthly ministry and as his followers we are bound by the same sacrificial and life-giving endeavor.

2) As Churches, we also have a moral obligation to all the peoples, cultures and countries of our region, regardless of their religious affiliation. The Christian Church in the Middle East, which has existed here without interruption from the earliest days, is native to this part of the world. We are not foreigners here, we are an essential part of the unique life of our region and our presence is an irreplaceable factor in the future stability of the Middle East.

Here we would like to remind this General Assembly of the pioneering work of many leaders and particularly of His Majesty King Abdullah II and His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, in the area of interfaith understanding and dialogue and we commend the work of The Amman Message, The Common Word Initiative and the new World Interfaith Harmony Week, which we shall observe on January 2012. We encourage the Council to be proactive in finding ways to participate in these activities.

3) And then as Churches we have a further moral obligation in the world. Peace and reconciliation in the Middle East are the responsibility of all, but as Churches and leaders we must show the world not only that we are capable of leading our congregations, but also that we are capable of making our essential contribution to lasting peace and genuine

reconciliation between Christian communities as well as between Christians, Jews, Muslims and all those who call this region their home. With respect to the work of this General Assembly, we shall be a living witness to the world in our ability to organize the effective mission of this Council. And so we see that the unity of our purpose and mission is essential not just to the work of the Middle East Council of Churches; It is essential also to building the confidence of the world in the ability of the Churches here to make our contribution to the reconciliation of our many religious and ethnic communities. The last several months of developments in our region, that is, in our respective countries, should be a clear message to us that, as a Council and as Churches, we no longer have the luxury of petty squabbles.

There are many ways in which we can accomplish the mission of this Council, but let us not forget the increasing importance of the use of the modern means of communication, like the internet and social media. Our website is one of our primary tools in this respect and through it we can reach around the world. We encourage this Assembly to ensure that the Council's website is user-friendly in a number of languages and up-to-date in the information it communicates.

In looking to the future of the Christian presence and its dynamics in our region, we understand the fear to the stability of the Churches that emigration poses. It is true that emigration diminishes the Christian population of the Middle East, but it is also true that the movement of individuals and groups has always been a part of our life and will doubtless continue to be so.

No less important is the future status of the Holy City of Jerusalem. As a city, as a spiritual and ecumenical reality and as a witness to the crucified and risen Lord, not only in the Holy Land, but throughout the Middle East and beyond, Jerusalem is the focus of hope – the hope of all the people of the world. The future status of Jerusalem as a visible,

tangible place of true symbiosis must be plain for all to see and this Council has a leading role to play in ensuring this.

As to peace and stability in our region, we must not forget Cyprus, where the need of reconciliation is as urgent as ever. We must do our best for a united and independent island, so that Greece Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot may live in the same peace, reconciliation and true symbiosis for which we hope for all peoples of our region.

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ, the challenges before us are clear; the mission of this Council is paramount. It is our fervent prayer that this Assembly will propose and carry out to a successful completion a specific plan to accomplish all these goals. As we have emphasized, our work together and the strength of the Middle East Council of Churches are of life-saving significance, especially at a time of inevitable change and serious threat to the Christian presence here.

The world looks forward to a renewed and strong Middle East Council of Churches. Let us not disappoint those, both near and far, who look to our Council for leadership in trust and hope. The stakes are high and it is inconceivable that we shall not rise to the challenges before us.

At this time, as the Churches are preparing in the Nativity Fast and the season of Advent for the celebration of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, may the One True Light, the Son of Justice that comes into the world enlighten our minds and warm hearts also, that we may be true and faithful witnesses to God the Father who loved the world so much, that he sent his only-begotten Son Emmanuel into the world.

Thank you.

Additional remark for an appropriate moment:

Please allow us also to mention the work of Father Ibrahim Dabour, who has seen the representative of the Patriarchate of

Jerusalem to the Council for the last decade and who has given invaluable service to this work.

HIS BEATITUDE ADDRESS OF WELCOME TO THE INTER- PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY ON ORTHODOXY IN AMMAN, JORDAN

Christian Communities in the Holy Land: Presence, Rights,
Fears and Hopes

H.B. Theophilos III Patriarch of Jerusalem

15 November 2011

Mr. Abdul Karim Dughmi,

Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies,

Mr. Sergei Popov,

President of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly,

Your Eminences,

Dear Fathers,

Distinguished Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in
unity! (Ps 132).

It is great honor for us to address this assembly.

First, please allow us to express our gratitude to His Majesty King Abdullah II for the courageous steps that he has taken to ensure democratic principles and religious freedom in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and to provide leadership in a time of great change on our region.

We should draw on this great example of religious diversity and tolerance existing here in this beloved Kingdom and build further on the well-established initiatives that have culminated into the "Amman Message" and the "Common Word" which truly engaged both the opinion and efforts of communities around the world to strive to understand each other and see the religious diversity of the fundamental fabric of our society.

We also congratulate Mr. Dughmi on his recent election as Speaker of Chamber of Deputies of the Jordanian National Assembly, and we wish him strength and success in his new and important role.

My dear friends, since the founding of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy, your Assembly has sought to keep the life and witness of Orthodoxy in the civic realm. The Articles of your Founding Act quite properly refer to the "ecumenical and unifying spirit of Orthodoxy" and the "unifying role" of Orthodox culture, as well as to your "support of human rights and religious freedoms" of all people both in Europe and around the world. (Founding Act, Article 3, Sections c, e and f). It is to these noble aims that we wish to speak today.

For millennia, the Middle East has been a special place. Here great cultures have arisen and here great religious traditions have met and shaped civilization. Judaism, Christianity and Islam have, quite literally, grown up together here over centuries. It is important for us to remember that Christianity is not alien to this region, but native to it..We

are part and parcel of the unique cultural and religious make-up of the Middle East...

In spite of the fact that communities here are designated by religious affiliation and so appear to the outsider as distinctly separate from each other, let us not forget that they share a common history, as well as common linguistic and cultural roots and social customs. In this commonality, we begin to see the force of what in Greek is called symbiosis – a genuine living together in which many conventional categories are crossed as the people of this region live their daily lives, create families, do their work, seek to be faithful to their religious tradition and we are loyal to their national allegiance.

In just this environment of symbiosis do we see the “ecumenical and unifying spirit of Orthodox Christianity” in action. The mission of the Church in this region is, in part, to sustain and support this unique symbiosis so that all our peoples may live in peace, security and justice.

The Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the oldest continuous religious institution in the Middle East and we have been faithful to this mission, conscious of the power of the “unifying force” of Orthodox faith and culture.

This unifying force of Orthodox faith and culture is founded on an understanding of the nature of the Orthodox Church. The nature of the Orthodox Church is based on a relationship of autocephalous and autonomous Local Churches that fully acknowledge the integrity of each Church and therefore have succeeded over the centuries to live with a vibrant “unity in diversity”. This diversity by no means lessens the strength of the fabric of our unity.

This means that the gift of cultural, linguistic and national diversity which so characterizes the Local Orthodox Church is not a threat to the unity of the Church, but a testimony to

the true nature of the "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and our witness throughout the oikoumene – the entire world. Wherever the Orthodox Church is, we are truly local and truly integrated in the culture and life of the people.

The Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem has always been faithful to our mission down the ages as the Local Orthodox Church of this region, the region of the Holy Land, which of course embraces the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. We have a unique and precious integrity. Here we embrace in our own unity a great diversity and so we live the ecumenical and unifying spirit of Orthodoxy completely. Into this Local Church we welcome both immigrants from various countries who come to live here, as well as pilgrims from all over the world who visit the Holy Places and find spiritual refreshment.

The integrity of our unity in diversity has been threatened more recently by external powers. While we appreciate the concern that others have for the peace and stability of our region, we sometimes discern that, under the pretext of concern for the Christian communities of the Holy Land, these external powers are attempting to make inroads in order to promote their own political purposes. The best help is always founded on true and sincere respect and sensitivity to the nature of the communities one is trying to support. Unfortunately this respect and sensitivity are sometimes lacking.

We honor your good intentions to be aware of our life and to be of encouragement to the Christian communities of the Middle East. If you wish to be of real support to the mission of the Christian communities of our region, it is incumbent upon you to ensure that the nations you represent and especially those that have an Orthodox heritage, are careful of your intention. We feel that we have to assay this, because the threat to our integrity comes sometimes not from the stranger, but from brothers and sisters.

The Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which has the jurisdiction over all Palestine as well as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is able and willing to be of assistance to all people of goodwill who seek to foster the mission of the Church. The Patriarchate is recognized by the political authorities of the Middle East as the senior Christian institution with a special role of leadership in representing the Christian voice of this land. Let us not forget that, from the very beginning, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem has been the guardian and servant of the Holy Places. As such it has played and continues to play, the primary role in guaranteeing the Christian presence in the Middle East with integrity. For, through our pastoral and educational efforts, the mission of the Church here is purely spiritual and religious.

However, in our humble opinion, the greatest threat to the ongoing life of the Christian communities here and in the broader area of the Middle East is the concern both for the fundamental issue of unity of religious communities as well as the future status of the Holy City of Jerusalem. We mention Jerusalem because it is at the heart of Christianity, as much as it is at the heart of Judaism and, of course, of Islam. We refer to Jerusalem because it is a unifying point of reference for all the Christian denominations and religious communities that make up the landscape of our region. Right up to our own day, Jerusalem remains the well from which we all seek to drink the deep waters of our Abrahamic traditions.

In any future for Jerusalem, the living presence of the Church is essential and we must do nothing that compromises the integrity of the Local Church and therefore of the local Christians. The focus of our Christian brothers and sisters around the world should be the strengthening of our Christian communities, in and through the Patriarchate of Jerusalem which continues to live the "unifying role" of Orthodoxy here and around the world.

We are a people of hope. Here in this Holy Land, the Land of

our sacred history, we encounter the living Christ in the life of the living community of the Church as well as in the sites that we associate with the life, ministry, passion and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We encourage you in your work as the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy to uphold the well-being, the unity and the unique mission of the Orthodox Church of this region. The Holy Places, common to all religious communities, are like a mother hen that gathers her children under her wings. For as long as the current status of the Holy Places is guaranteed and as long as the mission of the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem is supported by our Orthodox brothers and sisters around the world, we see no reason to be afraid or hopeless. For this is the way that our privileges and rights are assured, while no discrimination befalls any other.

Once again, we welcome you. And may we learn even more completely to live the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who said:

Let your light so shine before others,

so that they may see your good works,

and give glory to your Father in Heaven. (Mat.5:16)

May God bless you and the nations you represent and may God bless our beloved Kingdom of Jordan and all our peoples.

Thank you.

AN ADDRESS OF GREETING TO

H. E. HILARION, METROPOLITAN OF ROCOR.

An Address of Greeting to His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion
Metropolitan of Eastern America and the New York Diocese and
First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia.

The Divine Liturgy

The Convent of Saint Mary Magdalene

Sunday, 4 September

Your Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Archimandrite Tikhon,

Mother Elizabeth,

Beloved monastics,

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

Christ is in our Midst!

As we continue to keep the Afterfeast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, we are glad to welcome you, our dear brother Metropolitan Hilarion, to Jerusalem. In this church on the Mount of Olives, we are very near to Mary's tomb, and we pray fervently to her today for you and for your arch pastoral ministry.

As we remember the gathering of the Apostles for the falling asleep of Theotokos,

We recall the words of the Psalmist, who said

How very good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! (Ps 132: 1)

The Church of Jerusalem, the Mother of all the Churches, is happy to have gathered under her wings all those faithful Christians who, over the years and because of difficult circumstances, have been separated from the bosom of their homeland and of their own Local Orthodox Churches.

Today by our presence at this Eucharist gathering, we celebrate the fullness of the communion of the Mother Church of Jerusalem with all her children, and we celebrate the fullness of the communion of the Mother Church of Jerusalem with all her children, and we celebrate the coming together of the brothers and sisters of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The restoration of canonical communion between the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia is a living sign of the ecumenical and catholic life of the Orthodox Church. In just this ecumenical and catholic life does the Orthodox Church give witness to the power of love and humility that produces the fruit of reconciliation and unity. This is the will of God for the Church.

Our unity in the Orthodox Church is for the sake of our common mission, and our unity is our chief assurance of the respect that each Local Orthodox Churches has for the integrity of other Local Churches. In our common life there is no place for suspicion, mistrust, or antagonism. As we say in this and every Divine Liturgy,

“Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Holy, Consubstantial and undivided Trinity!”

Let us guard our unity and our proper relationships as gifts from God.

We give thanks to Almighty God that through the *diakonia* of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Christianity has taken deep root in this Holy Land over the centuries. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem not only represents the Orthodox world in the Holy Land; the Patriarchate also guarantees the Christian presence in the Holy Places and ensures that these sites retain their fundamental spiritual significance and are accessible to all pilgrims without distinction. Since the earliest times, the Brotherhood of the Holy Tomb has been faithful in this ministry.

So as we welcome you, Your Eminence, we do so fully conscious of the communion of brotherly love that exists between us, and that is sustained by the witness of the living faith of the Church in this Holy Land. We are certain that this same true brotherly love, by God's Grace, will always characterize the relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

We extend to you, and to Archimandrite Tikhon and Mother Elizabeth and to all the faithful gathered here our Patriarchal blessing, and our best wishes to you as you continue on your pilgrimage in the Holy Land. As a sign of this blessing, we are pleased to present to you this encolpion.

We pray for Your Eminence many years!

Thank you.

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

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HIS BEATITUDE ADDRESS AT THE OPENING SESSION FOR THE MEETING OF THE HEADS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES OF THE MIDDLE EAST.

The Baptismal Site

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 01 August 2011

“Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” Psalm:133.

Your Beatitude, Patriarch of Antioch Kirios Ignatios,

Your Beatitude Archbishop of Cyprus, Kirios Chrysostomos,

**Your Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of Hermopolis,
Representative of His Beatitude Patriarch of Alexandria,**

Reverend Fathers, distinguished guests, brothers and sisters,

With a joyful heart we express Our warmest greetings on this special gathering that demonstrates our unity and oneness in the Holy Spirit of Christ, which has brought us to this part

of the Holy Land, that is under the protection and rule of His Majesty King Abdullah II.

We are grateful to His Majesty, our beloved King Abdulla II, and his government that were extremely cooperative in hosting us in this dear Holy Land. We greatly value His Majesty's diligence and vision in both, continuing and furthering, the freedoms that exist in Jordan and always point to this great example of living together, co-existence and of symbiosis.

We are here, at the Baptismal site of our Lord, in order to confirm Our mission as the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic church. Our mission as the Eastern Orthodox Church, known as the Rum Orthodox Church, is to be a living witness to the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ and the saving power of His baptism, that by and through it, Christ has made us members of His Kingdom.

Our mission is to spread the message of Christ's sacrificial love and peace for God is love, "if someone says ' I love God' and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God, whom he has not seen?" John 4:20.

The Middle East region which has been the motherland of Abraham's children, Muslims, Christians and Jews, has enriched them with great religious and cultural heritage that has shaped and formed our modern civilization. A civilization that embraces freedom of expression, diversity of religious affiliation and ethnic identity which at the same time constitutes a harmonious symbiosis.

Today the very fabric of this harmonious symbiotic, cultural and religious diversity is threatened by the dark, invisible forces who want to impose their own conception of peace and co-existence.

The Christian presence that constitutes an inseparable and

integral part of the Middle East countries [Cyprus included], is experiencing despair, uncertainty and difficulty and this is no more evident than in our region; but we must not fear. It is precisely for this reason that we have come to join with our Christian brothers and sisters in encouraging them to continue their lives in hope and strength and help in sustaining peace, justice, mutual respect and true co-existence.

For we are not the masters of history. We serve the master of history, who in truth is the eschaton, fulfilment and completion of all things. It is in this context that we as ritual leaders are announcing the Middle East Rum Orthodox Churches initiative; in order to serve the good interest and concerns of the Christians of the Middle East and beyond.

I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to all the endeavours of His Royal Highness, Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad and recognise his attentiveness in further developing this Holy Site.

Allow me please to express our sincere thanks and gratitude to all those who sacrificed their time in order for this to become a reality not in the least the team here at the Baptismal Site.

Last but not least we like to thank the director of Our Middle East Council of Churches office in Amman, Miss Wafa Goussous.

Thank you all and may God bless our deliberations.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

HIS BEATITUDE ADDRESS IN HONOUR OF CHURCH LEADERS AT THE ORTHODOX HEAD OF CHURCHES MEETING IN AMMAN-JORDAN.

31 July 2011

An Address at the Dinner in honour of His Beatitude Ignatius IV, the Patriarch of Antioch, His Beatitude Chrysostomos II, the Archbishop of Cyprus, His Grace Bishop Nicholaos, the Representative of His Beatitude Theodoros II, the Patriarch of Alexandria and Representatives of the Royal Family and the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Your Beatitudes, my dear Brother Primates,

Your Eminences,

Yours Graces,

Reverend Fathers,

Your Royal Highnesses,

Esteemed Members of the Government,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters

“Your children like olive branches around your table. Thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.” (Psalm 127:3).

It is a great honour for us to host this dinner for all our distinguished guests with us this evening, who are like olive branches around this table. We come here as those who fear and

love God, and who seek to serve God faithfully. This gathering is of paramount importance because it takes place at a delicate time for our region, as we experience unrest and change.

This evening we remember our forebears, Patriarch Sophronios and the Caliph Omar ibn al-Khattab, and the foundation that they laid in the Al-'Udha Al-'Umariyyah in the year 637 for the peaceful co-existence of Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land. We recall that Patriarch Sophronios acted not simply on his own behalf, but as the recognized leader of all Christians in the region. And the Caliph Omar, too, entered into this treaty on behalf of the Islamic leadership as a whole. As a consequence, this treaty has formed an historic basis for the relationship between our Christian civilization and our Arab Muslim civilization and our life together in the Holy Land for many centuries.

We who are here this evening are the heirs of Patriarch Sophronios and Caliph Omar. The presence of leaders of the Rum Orthodox Church of our region demonstrates the united witness to the historical relationship of the Church to the land and all our peoples. The presence of representatives of the Jordanian Royal Family and the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan this evening is an eloquent testimony to the ongoing guardianship of the religious heritage of our region that is yours.

We sit round this table today as the descendants of Patriarch Sophronios and Caliph Omar ibn al-Khattab, We inherit their awesome responsibility, and we are acutely aware, as the Scriptures remind us, that we "bear one another's burdens" (Galatians, 6:2).

This great foundation, on which our present work is based, is once again threatened. The religious; cultural, and historic principles and circumstances of co-existence that have shaped and formed us are at risk. It is to ensure that this crucial

heritage is preserved that is the primary motivation for our gathering.

To the Rum Orthodox here this evening we would like to emphasize the urgency living out the unity that is ours as we provide leadership in our region. We are called to join with our fellow leaders of other Christian churches and communities for the sake of the well-being of all. And we are further called to act together with our Muslim brothers and sisters who are our compatriots in our respective countries.

To our Muslim brothers and sisters here with us this evening we have a similar challenge. As you look to the beginning of the holy season of Ramadan, a time of recollection and re-commitment, we encourage you to be leaders in a new collaboration on behalf of peace and justice for all our people.

Whether we are Muslim or Christian, we cannot allow the forces of division to disrupt our historic relationship. And let us not forget that as we share this meal together, this common food is a powerful and effective sign of our common nature as members of the human family and our common destiny.

Thank you all for being at this dinner this evening, and for showing such solidarity for the sake of our region and all our peoples.

And now would you please rise and join us in a toast to His Majesty King Abdullah, under whose gracious encouragement we meet, and who has been instrumental in following in the footsteps of Omar ibn al-Khattab to ensure the great heritage of the Al-'Umariyyah that has been handed on to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Your Beatitudes, Ladies and Gentleman – the King.

Please would you join me in a second toast to His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius, His Beatitude Archbishop Chrysostomos, and

to the other Church leaders here who labour diligently in our mission of safe-guarding not only the spiritual freedom of our people, but also in protecting and maintaining national order and unity in a time of great difficulty,

Dear friends, I give you Their Beatitudes and our fellow leaders.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

THE PRESIDENT OF THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC MR. KAROLOS PAPOULIAS VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE.

On Monday, 28th of June / 11th of July, the President of the Hellenic Republic His Excellency Mr. Karolos Papoulias, visited the Patriarchate of Jerusalem during his time in the Holy Land in the context of his official visit to the State of Israel and to the Palestinian Authority.

His Excellency the President was accompanied during this visit by his wife Mrs. Maria Papoulia and by political collaborators namely the Foreign Minister Stavros Lambrinidis, the Culture and Tourism Minister Pavlos Geroulanos, and the Deputy Environment, Energy and Climate Change Minister Yannis

Maniatis. Escorts included the General Secretary of the Presidency of the Republic Ambassador Mr. Georgiou, Mr. Themistocleous Dimidou who has been General Consul of Greece in Jerusalem in the past, Mr. Dapharanou who has also been Consul of Greece in Jerusalem and the current General Consul of Greece in Jerusalem Mr. Sotirios Athanasiou. Upon his arrival, the President of the Hellenic Republic was received at the Patriarchate by His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III along with Archbishops and other members of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre and members of the Greek Community where upon they headed to the Church of Resurrection by way of the Christian Road.

Within the Church of Resurrection, His Excellency the President along with his wife and escorts and guided by His Beatitude, venerated the Stone of Anointment, the Holy Sepulchre, the Catholicon of the Church of Resurrection and the Chapel of Adam located under the Holy Calvary.

Then the President venerated part of the Honoured Cross kept adjacent to Adam's Chapel at the Office of the Church Resurrection where they were received by the Sacristan Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Isidoros along with monks serving the Church of Resurrection.

Exiting the Church of Resurrection, His Excellency the President ascended to the Patriarchate again via the Christian Road and was received therein by His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III who addressed the honorable guest with the following:

"Your Excellency, President of the Hellenic Republic

Mr. Karolos Papoulias,

It is with joy and emotion that the venerable Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre welcomes Your Excellency and Your escort at the august Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Your official visit to the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority is very significant, not only for the political status and state of affairs of the land and the wider region of the Middle East, but also for the multi-dimensional mission of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem which incarnates the ecumenical character of the spiritual, religious and cultural heritage of Rum Hellenism.

The Hellenic nation, as an inextricable part of the pious and royal genus of the Rum Orthodox, rightfully boasts about its self-sown and inalienable privileges and sovereign titles and rights on the world-wide veneration sites such as those of the Church of the Resurrection and the Church of the Constantine Basilica in Bethlehem. This is because the moral and material contribution of the Patriarchate, through the centuries, towards and for the safeguard and preservation of the holy veneration sites, as well as towards and for of the intra-religious and the intra-Christian status quo of the Holy City of Jerusalem, happens to be absolute, undisputed and will remain undiminished.

It goes without saying that our pious Christian flock looks towards the national centre of Hellenism and its institutional representatives as the point of reference and as the point of its cultural identity respectively.

Mr. President,

The known and 'demonstrated with deeds' interest of the Hellenic state and of You personally, for the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Christian presence in the Holy Places, as well as for the peaceful coexistence and symbiosis of the people of the Middle East, has not escaped Our attention.

For this we kindly ask, on behalf of Our Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre and on behalf of Myself personally, that you accept the honorary distinction of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre and along with this commemorative present.

We wish you success in Your peaceful mission."

During this address His Beatitude also conferred upon His Excellency the President of the Hellenic Republic the highest distinction of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre.

In addition to conferring the Order to the President, His Beatitude also presented His Excellency with a mother of pearl icon of the Last Supper and the book on the History of the Church of Jerusalem by the member of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre and latterly, Archbishop of Athens, Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, in its new Edition and benefaction of the Management of the official website of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. To the President's wife His Beatitude presented a golden cross and to the members of his escort, Jerusalemite blessings.

The President Mr. Papoulias presented His Beatitude with a laureate garland made of gold and expressed his gratitude for the decoration he received stating that this personal honour transcends to the whole of the Hellenic nation, which intends to overcome the economic crisis that has befallen upon it.

His Beatitude added that the nation with the power of the Honoured Cross of our Saviour Jesus Christ will look forward to the Resurrection.

Chief Secretary's Office.

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H . B . ADDRESS TO THE

DELEGATIONS OF THE LOCAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES TO THE MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES.

Amman, Jordan, 2 July 2011

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Reverend Fathers,

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Christ is in our midst!

We greet you in love in the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and we bring to you the spiritual blessings of the Holy Places.

The opportunity of this meeting in preparation for the General Assembly enables us to emphasize the crucial importance of the renewal of the Middle East Council of Churches. We are keen to encourage this work and to state clearly our commitment to the mission of the Council, which is to make possible the united voice of the Christian communities in the Middle East.

This mission is as urgent now as it has ever been, and we believe that this mission is paramount. The message of the Council of peace and unity is a life-giving witness, especially in this critical time for our region.

We as the Orthodox Church have a leading role to play in ensuring that the Council remains focused and clear in this mission. It is essential that we do not become distracted by

loyalties of prejudices that compromise our collective witness to Our Lord Jesus Christ and the sacrificial work of the Church and all her members.

In preparation for the General Assembly, it is our hope and expectation that we shall pay particular attention to the points that have been raised for us in the documents for this meeting. Among them we should like to underscore especially these matters:

- 1) We must clarify the issue of the Secretary General , and establish terms of office.
- 2) We must call upon all leaders to attend the upcoming General Assembly as a priority.
- 3) We must pay close attention to the report of the delegation from the Patriarchate of Alexandria on the latest developments on the work of the Council in Syria.
- 4) We must give our best efforts to the examination of the record of our recent past meetings with respect to the work of the Task Force.

As we do this work to strengthen the effectiveness of the Council, we cannot overstate the weight that we assign to the significance of the renewal of the Council. We live in stern times, and we must be resolute in ensuring that we offer to the world a clear and united Christian voice. This is the greatest gift that the Council can give to our region and the world, and it is our dearest hope that this will be the focus of all our endeavors.

As we gather, we give special thanks to His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan for his encouragement and support of the work of this Council. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan remains a shining example in our region of democracy, progress and peaceful co- existence, where Christians enjoy real freedom of worship. May God richly bless the Kingdom and all its peoples.

My sisters and brothers, we assure you of our deep gratitude for your hard work and your commitment to the Council and its mission. These are not easy times for our region or for the world. Each of our local Orthodox Churches faces both challenges and opportunities and our role in the Middle East Council of Churches is of the utmost significance.

We have a God-given responsibility to be a living witness of the “grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit”, so that the world may know the saving Gospel in our own day.

We ask for God’s mercy and help and we assure you all of our Patriarchal blessing and our Love in the Lord.

Thank you.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

H.B. THEOPHILOS III ADDRESS TO THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCH IN JERUSALEM, ON THE OCCASION OF THE EASTER VISIT TO THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE.

An Address to His Beatitude Tarkom Manoogian the Armenian Patriarch in Jerusalem and the Members of the Brotherhood of

Saint James on the Occasion of the Easter Visit of the Delegation of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Reverend Fathers,

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

While the Tomb was sealed,

You, O Life, did shine were shut,

You came to your disciples, O Resurrection of all,

renewing through them an upright Spirit in us

according to your great mercy.

(Apolytikion for the Sunday of Saint Thomas)

Today We greet you, Your Beatitude, in the words of this great hymn for the Sunday of Saint Thomas, and we extend to you and to the Brotherhood of Saint James our Easter Greetings and thank you for your reception. We also wish to express our best wishes and prayers to you for health and strength in your ministry.

The upright Spirit of God is the gift to us of the risen Christ. This Spirit has renewed our hearts in the light of the Resurrection, and this same Spirit will support us all and help us to continue our mission as guardians and servants of the Holy Places. The Spirit has renewal that shines from the Tomb of Our Lord Jesus Christ strengthens not only us, but the whole world.

This God-given mission has always been important. But its

importance has only increased in our own time as the world experiences terrible hardship, despair, and hopelessness. The eyes of the world turn to Jerusalem in hope, and especially to the Jerusalem of the passion, the cross, the tomb and the Resurrection. Everyone looks to Jerusalem for spiritual refreshment. Just as "a deer longs for flowing streams," so do the souls of all long for God on this City, the City that has been entrusted to our care and witness. (cf. Psalm 42 .)

People from every land have great spiritual and moral expectations of Jerusalem and the Holy Places. We know that the Holy Places are not just stones. They are living realities of the presence of God and God's activity in sacred history. The life giving Spirit of Our Risen Lord Jesus Christ reveals this reality in and through our ministry in the Holy Places, and we are summoned to unity in our common mission so that the world may always look to the Holy Places in hope, certainty, and liberation of fear.

Throughout history humanity has suffered many atrocities, and many nations including our own, have known the experience of genocide. Genocide is nothing less than a participation in the passion and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ. And yet we declare that the end of the cross is the Resurrection, for Christ our God shines forth from the Tomb.

In this bright season of Easter, let us continue to live and serve in this renewing Spirit of Our Lord Jesus Christ. May the Light that shines from the Tomb gladden our hearts and enlighten our minds, and renew in us faith, hope, and love, so that our mission here in the Holy Land, and in the Holy City of Jerusalem in particular, may be a beacon of the hope of resurrection, not only to ourselves, but to believers of other faiths as well.

Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed!

3 May 2011, His Beatitude Theophilus III,

Patriarch of Jerusalem.