

H. B. ADDRESSES TO THE LEADERS OF CHURCHES ON OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS.

"Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The feast of Christmas is the *Metropolis* of all feasts, according to St. John Chrysostomos.

Indeed, Christmas is the *Metropolis* of all feasts. For, it is the feast of God's philanthropy i.e. God's love, peace, justice and reconciliation, for His own creation, Adam and Eve, who have been made after His image and likeness. This Christmas and festive gathering give us once again the opportunity to demonstrate our Christian mission here, in this land, where heavens meet with earth and where from the incarnate message of peace was spread all over the World.

We, I mean Christians, as a living witness of the unique and universal historical event that has shaped and formed our civilization. A civilization of absolute respect and dignity for the human being continue to bare witness, despite the many difficulties and obstacles that we are experiencing in our everyday life and activities.

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, who was born at the time of the Roman Emperor Augustus Caesar in the humble cave of Bethlehem, is always born to us, who worship Him and to those who are willing to receive the knowledge of the Incarnate Truth, the light of His peace and His justice.

Christmas, I repeat, is the feast of God's love to us, the humans.

Our mission as Christians is precisely this: to loudly pronounce and practically tangibly communicate to our fellow

human Christian message. For is God, the Father's incarnate Love in the person of Jesus Christ, born from the pure blood of Virgin Mary of Nazareth, that has hypostatic existence and therefore prevails over all forms of dark and evil powers.

Christ is born, Blessed and Happy New Year".

Jerusalem, 10-1-2011.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

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HIS BEATITUDE THEOPHILOS ' III, SPEECH BEFORE THE PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL FOR THE NEW YEAR 2011.

Mr President,

Honourable Ministers,

Members of Parliament,

Distinguished Guests,

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Emmanuel". (Isaiah 7:14)

We are highly appreciative of what is a traditional gathering in which we share the Season's cheerfulness, in particular the Christmas spirit, and impart our messages of hope. Events and gatherings such as this are of great significance both for celebrating the common bonds of our humanity, and for reminding ourselves of those fundamental moral values that are essential to our common life. Humanity today is confronted and confused on every side with dark forces of disrespect and even humiliation. And unfortunately much of this is being done in the pretence of religious allegiance and in the name of Almighty God.

As we are here today in a clear expression and manifestation of inter-religious and inter-cultural understanding, presence and symbiosis, it should be acknowledged that any form of polarization; political, social or ideological, have increasingly posed a serious challenge to our humble efforts and our sincere intentions.

We are thankful to the Authorities' efforts in facilitating the access for pilgrims and worshipers that has enhanced a great number of Christian pilgrims from around the world. We commend them to continue this holy and important provision; and allow us to say: "more can always be done" on the local and regional frame. Also we acknowledge the many positive steps that the State of Israel has taken to evaluate our concerns, and we stress the need for the continuation of progress on:

- Continued free movement of the faithful;
- Availability of entry visas for clerics; and
- Honouring the privileges of Tax exemption sanctioned by the sacred history as well as by the historic standing of the "Ownership of Church Property".

The ineffective endeavours to attaining peace should not be disregarded this festive season. This should be a reminder amidst our joyful celebrations that God's will is loud and

clear for both the political and religious leadership to persevere in our commitment to reaching reconciliation and peace.

It is our mission, as servants of the Lord and thus of our fellow man, to relentlessly enhance our efforts for improving the living and socio-economic conditions in which people of the Holy Land are passing through and to alleviating the suffering of all affected. We are confronted with challenges and raised concerns for our communities over peaceful coexistence and we feel the urgency to address this, diffuse it and channel the positive outcome to achieving peace.

We are cautious about the rising negative sentiments fuelled by extremists and appeal for the fact that we consider all humans as equal to one another. A perception substantiated in the monotheistic faiths and upheld by the many decent citizens who also feel threatened by the moral decline witnessed today.

Christian institutions and Leadership, in the Holy land, have committed themselves by employing their blessings and resources in constituting peace and reconciliation in the region; for we firmly believe that this enjoins one of the divine commandments of our faith which solidifies our existence and determines our mission.

Our fraternal noble wishes for this happy occasion on the New Year to all Jews, Christians and Muslims, who persistently pursued peace during times of great turmoil, as they set a role model for all those who are inspired by the true and historic prophetic message of the incarnation of the divine logos.

As the custodians and servants of the Holy Places that bare testimony to the sacred history of redemption and salvation of human kind, we time and again commit ourselves to promoting peace and invite every human being to "soul searching"; in order to recognize the other's entitlement to peace, respect

and dignity; and we should always remember to behave in the same way as we would like people to behave towards us. For it is written: "... whatever you want man to do to you do also to them for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12)

Your Excellency, we express our sincere thanks to you for this cordial invitation and for your gracious hospitality. We pray God for his special blessing upon the approaching New Year: may the Divine spirit of this Festive Season warm our hearts, enlighten our minds, and fulfil the lives of all the citizens of the State of Israel. Happy New Year and Hanoucha Samech.

For, as prophet Isaiah says: "... unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. His name will be called the Angel of Great Counsel, for I shall bring peace upon the rulers, peace and health by Him. Great shall be His government, and of His peace there is no end..." (Isaiah 9:6&7).

His Beatitude

Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

29 December 2010

**H.B. THEOPHILOS' ADDRESS OF
WELCOME TO H.B. METROPOLITAN**

SAWA OF WARSAW AND ALL POLAND.

Your Beatitude,

We welcome you with great joy again to the Holy City of Jerusalem, to our Patriarchate and to our monastery in the name of our crucified and risen Lord, Jesus Christ! Once again, let us say that your presence among us evokes happy remembrances of our recent visit to the Holy Polish Autocephalous Church, and we rejoice in the ever-deepening ties that bind the Polish Autocephalous Church with the Patriarch of Jerusalem, "the first-born of all the Churches." These ties have received the great blessing of our con-celebration last night of the Divine Eucharist in which we demonstrated our witness to our unity in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. The roots of Orthodoxy in Poland go deep. It was the great Saints Cyril and Methodios who first brought the Gospel to the region in the 9th century. It is in their footsteps that the Patriarchs of Jerusalem have followed and cared for the Orthodox faith, which has lived on in among your people, in good times as well as in challenging times. As we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented- of whom the world was not worthy", (Hb. 11:37). Allow us to say that today, after almost a century since you took your place among the autocephalous Orthodox Churches of the world, you have emerged as a beacon of the light and the selfless love of Christ, of peace and reconciliation.

We can say this because during our fraternal visit to the Polish Orthodox Church, we became a witness of the breath and strength of your life and ministry. Your seven dioceses as

well as your military chaplaincy, your flourishing monastic communities, your schools, and your centers for the care of the elderly and those in need, as well as Your Beatitude's important influence both in Church and society, are an eloquent testimony not just to your common life, but to the witness of Orthodoxy in our modern world. In the work in promoting Orthodox culture and in your ministry to young people, you ensure the vitality of Orthodoxy in our society.

The Polish Orthodox Church lives out its life in a unique situation where the cultures of East and West meet. The concern of Poland for the deepening of relations between people of our different faiths and cultures, and especially with respect to the peoples of our region, is a great encouragement to us. As Orthodox Christians in Poland, in and through your fraternal relationship with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, you have a unique way of demonstrating your concern on behalf of your government and people. Here we can see the importance of Orthodoxy in the international arena in a special way. And it is in this respect that the Orthodox Church maintains its genuine inclusiveness and openness.

The Orthodox Church values deeply its life of unity in diversity, its insistence on the dignity of the human person, and its witness to genuine inclusiveness and openness. Throughout our history, the Orthodox Church has stood firmly for peace in our region and for the well-being of the entire human family.

We celebrate today once again the historic relationship and the unity of faith that exist between our two sister Churches, and our common witness to the role of a living, vital Orthodoxy in our world. We give thanks to God for your primatial ministry, Your Beatitude, and we offer our fervent prayers for our brothers in the Polish episcopate, and for all your clergy and people.

May our risen Lord Jesus Christ richly bless your pilgrimage

to the Holy Land, and may God bless all the people of your beloved country of Poland.

And we offer this toast for your Beatitude.

Thank you.

Jerusalem, 28 November 2010

His Beatitude Theophilos III

Patriarch of Jerusalem

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H. B. PATRIARCH THEOPHILOS ADDRESS AT THE MEETING WITH THE HONORABLE TARJA HALONEN, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FINLAND.

His Beatitude Theophilos III, Patriarch of Jerusalem

Helsinki, 13 September 2010

Your Excellency, Madame President,

Your Eminence, Archbishop Leo,

Your Eminence, Metropolitan Amvrosios,

Your Eminences,

Distinguished Civic and Governmental Leaders,

Dear Fathers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for us to be received by you today, Madame President, and it has been a great joy for us to be in your beloved country on this, the first fraternal visitation of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem to the Finnish Orthodox Church. We have visited the Church's many holy sites and historic churches, and we have been heartened by the devotion of the people and the active ministry of the Orthodox Church.

Christianity first came to Finland almost 1000 years ago, and your Christian history has helped to shape the unique character of the Finnish people. Indeed it was the notable Lutheran pastor of the New Testament in 1548, became known as "the father of the written Finnish language".

Yet Finland is unique among the nations of the world in recognizing not one, but two established State Churches, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Finnish Orthodox Church. This is a public recognition of the remarkable history of this nation and of two great Christian traditions that have shaped the life of the people.

In the course of the history of the last century, Finland has played a crucial role in the struggle of the nations, and in the survival of Orthodoxy in this region. Indeed the Finnish Orthodox Church has known within the intimacy of its own life something of the pain and difficulty of these wider international struggles. The monastery of New Valamo, which we visited last week, is but one shining testimony not simply to the determination of Orthodox believers, but also to the strength of the spirit of the Finnish people in the face of immense challenges.

But through the determination of many over the years, both in

Church and State, the Finnish Orthodox Church has emerged from the position of a foreign jurisdiction to be a true local Orthodox Church of the Finnish people. The Church enjoys autonomous status under the omophorion of the Patriarch of Constantinople and worships in the Finnish language. It has its own monasteries and a seminary, its deepening unique spirituality, its beautiful musical tradition, and its growing list of significant Orthodox leaders, both among the clergy and the laity. We rejoice at the living witness of the Finnish Orthodox Church and its place in the world-wide Orthodox *oikoumene*, as well as in the special relationship that exists between the Finnish Orthodox Church and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

In recognition, therefore, of the Orthodox history of your country, and of the role of the Finnish Orthodox Church as a state Church, we desire to bestow upon you the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

This Order is a sign of the special place that the Finnish Orthodox Church and all the people of Finland have in our heart, and of the fraternal affection that our visitation of the Finnish Orthodox Church represents.

We pray that the warm personal ties that now bind the Finnish Orthodox Church with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem may continue to deepen. We look forward to the possibility of welcoming you, dear Madame President, to the Holy City of Jerusalem in due course, and we commit ourselves to the pastoral care of all Finnish people who come to the Holy Land on pilgrimage.

May God bless you, the government of this noble Republic, the Finnish Orthodox Church, and all the people of your nation, who are also dear to us.

Thank you once again for your gracious welcome and reception.

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HIS BEATITUDE THEOPHILOS III ADDRESS AT THE DIVINE LITURGY AT THE USPENSKI CATHEDRAL IN HELSINKI.

His Beatitude Theophilos III, Patriarch of Jerusalem

12 September 2010

Your Eminence, Archbishop Leo,

Your Eminence, Metropolitan Ambrosios,

Your Eminences,

Dear Fathers of this Cathedral,

Respected Civic and Governmental Leaders,

Brothers and Sisters,

We come to this historic and holy church with deep joy, and we thank you, dear Metropolitan Ambrosios, for your brotherly welcome to concelebrate this Liturgy in your Cathedral. We also thank you, dear Archbishop Leo, for the warm hospitality that you have shown to us throughout our fraternal visitation of the Finnish Orthodox Church.

We also wish to acknowledge the presence of respected civic and governmental leaders here today. The Finnish Orthodox Church enjoys a special place in the life of the people of Finland, and shares with the Evangelical Lutheran Church the position of a national church. This is a proper acknowledgement of the role that the Orthodox Church has

played in the history of this region, and we rejoice in the ability of the Finnish Orthodox Church to exercise its important ministry freely in this country.

This great Uspenski Cathedral is dedicated to the Dormition of the Mother of God. Founded in the middle of the 19th century, this church is said to be the largest Orthodox Church building in Western and Northern Europe, and it has shined as a beacon of hope in good times and in bad. As we celebrate this Liturgy today, we remember in our prayers all those who labored, and suffered, on behalf of all the people of this region in times of trouble and pressure. This holy church, itself an icon of heaven on earth, has been for many generations a sign of the enduring hope that is ours in God through Our Lord Jesus Christ, and through the prayers and protection of his All-pure Mother.

On the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, which we celebrated only a few days ago at the end of August, we sang this hymn:

“She who is higher than the heavens and more glorious than the cherubim, she who is held in greater honour than all creation she, who by reason of her surpassing purity became the receiver of the everlasting Essence, today commends her most pure soul into the hands of her Son. With her all things are filled with joy, and she bestows great mercy upon us”.

With these words the hymn writer patriarch Anatolios describes the wondrous and paradoxical even of the Dormition. For “the source of life is laid in the tomb, and the tomb itself becomes a ladder to heaven”.

The apostles were gathered miraculously from the corners of the world to be present at the Virgin’s death and her empty tomb is a testament both to her natural death, and to her *metastasis*, her *translation*, into the hands of her Son. As we sing, “At the departing, O Virgin Mother of God, to him who

was ineffably born of thee, James the first bishop and brother of the Lord was there, and so was Peter... and the whole sacred fellowship of the apostles". As the successor of James, the Patriarch of Jerusalem is the living link to this sacred event, and as the continuation of the apostolic community, we Orthodox throughout the world represent in our own day this apostolic witness to the fullness of faith. And so we are able to participate in this Eucharist in this great cathedral in the salvific events of our sacred history.

The blessing of the Mother of God remains with us. From her was born the Incarnate Logos, the God –man who took on our own human life for the sake of destroying death and giving life to the whole creation. And through her witness, we receive the unblemished Orthodox faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ. She it was who entered into the mystery that had been hidden from the beginning of the ages, and so by her obedience she enables us also to share in this same divine inheritance. In this and every Eucharist, we too are caught up in the mystery of the Incarnation, of the union of heaven and earth of the promise of *theosis*.

For the Mother of God, her witness began from the moment that she conceived: "*she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit*". (Mt,1:18). So the creative energy of the Holy Spirit moved in her, and we sing:

"In giving birth, O Mother of God, thou hast retained thy virginity, and in falling asleep thou hast not forsaken the world. Thou who art the Mother of Life hast passed over into life, and by thy prayers thou dost deliver our souls from death".

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the *Theotokos* and our God, confirmed his two natures by dying as man and rising as God. In the same way, the Mother of God was content to die according to the law of nature so that the mystery of the divine *oeconomia* should not be seen by the unfaithful to be an

illusion.

We are therefore invited, dear brothers and sisters to open our hearts to the divine *oeconomia*, to the salvation of God, and to lay our hope before the Mother of God, who is also our Mother. This Great cathedral, dedicated to her Dormition, stands as a reminder to us of the promises of God that are made known to us in her life, death and *metastasis* and that are our inheritance of faith. We, too, are shown the way to eternal life, and in this way we do not journey alone, but we journey in the company of the Virgin Mary and all the saints, whose presence surrounds us mystically here in this liturgical gathering.

Let us join our voices with the hymn writer and praise the Mother of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, and entrust ourselves to her prayers, saying:

"From all generations we call thee blessed, O Virgin Mother of God: for Christ who cannot be contained was pleased to be contained in thee. Blessed also are we in having thee as our succour: for day and night thou dost intercede for us...Therefore, singing thy praises we cry aloud to thee: Hail, thou who art full of grace, the Lord is with thee".

As we return to the Holy Land, we carry with us affectionate remembrances of our days among you here in your beloved Finland. We pray that the ties that bind the Patriarchate of Jerusalem with the Finnish Orthodox Church and all the Finnish people will be strengthened in the years to come, and we look forward to welcoming you in pilgrimage to the Holy Places, and especially to Jerusalem, of course.

We thank you once again, Your Eminence, Archbishop Leo, our brother bishops in Finland and all the Orthodox faithful for the graciousness that you have shown us. And we express our deep gratitude to the President of Finland, the Honorable Tarja Halonen, and all the civic leaders who have so

courteously welcomed us to this wonderful country.

May Christ our Lord, through the prayers of his All-Pure Mother, continue to bless this great country and all your people.

Amen.

H. B. SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMMEMORATION OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE MONASTERY OF NEW VALAMO

His Beatitude **THEOPHILOS III,**

Patriarch of Jerusalem

11 September 2010

Your Eminence, Archbishop Leo,

Your Eminences,

Archimandrite Sergei,

Beloved Brethren of New Valamo,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is a great joy for us to concelebrate this Liturgy with you, dear brother Archbishop Leo, with our brother bishops, with Archimandrite Sergei, the hegumen, and with the monastics and the faithful gathered here. We give thanks today for the

foundation of this monastery and as we commemorate Saint Sergius and Saint Herman, we ask for their prayers for you all and for this beloved monastery.

We celebrate today not simply the 70th anniversary of the foundation of New Valamo in 1940; we celebrate also the noble monastic tradition that you trace through the monastery of Valamo at Lake Ladoga in Russia and back to the earliest days of the monastic life of the Church.

Monasticism is at the heart of the Orthodox Church, and it is fitting that one of the most important signs of the enduring power of monasticism is here in the Church of Finland. For us the desert is a spiritual oasis, and this Monastery of New Valamo, truly a “desert of the North”, unites us with the desert of Palestine. We trace the ascetical tradition of the Church back to Our Lord himself, for it is Our Lord Jesus Christ who is the model for all monastics in the example of his self-giving.

As Saint Paul said in the Letter to the Philippians,

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave”. (Phil. 2: 5-6).

And as Our Lord himself said in the Gospel of Mark,

“The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve.” (Mk, 10:45).

This is the essence of the monastic life, and this is the lesson that monasticism teaches the whole Church. Monasticism is not a movement; it is a response in love to God. All faithful Christians are called to imitate Our Lord, and, whether God calls us to life in the convent or in the world, monasticism keeps us all true to this ascetical ideal.

This monastery of Valamo, whose founders we commemorate today, is a proof to us that monasticism is not something that existed only long ago in the ancient life of Egypt or Palestine. As Our Lord has said, "the Spirit blows where it chooses" (Jn, 3:8), and here we experience the truth that, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, in the reality of the genuinely ecumenical life of the Church, the distance between Palestine and Valamo has been bridged.

Christ the Pantocrator is our common earth and our common heaven. And monastic communities like New Valamo are nurseries of the spiritual life and the ladders for us from earth to heaven. Here monasticism survived at a difficult time for the Church in this region, and you kept alive the ascetical traditions of the Church in the face of great trials. So you have kept burning the true ecumenical vocation of monasticism, for in our monastic communities people are themselves the instruments of the love of God, which seeks not its own good, but the salvation of all without exception.

The members of the Orthodox Church are untied one to the other in this Eucharistic feast. In this and every Liturgy we experience unity in Christ and at the same time we have a foretaste of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is precisely here, in this act of love that we demonstrate our oneness, and in spite of the fact that there are thousands of Eucharistic tables around the world, the Body of Christ is always one and undivided.

As the priest says in this and every Divine Liturgy, when he breaks the Holy Bread for Communion:

"The Lamb of God is broken and distributed, broken yet not divided, ever eaten yet never consumed..."

Our presence in Finland is a sacramental sign of this eternal reality and we bring to all the faithful of the Finnish Orthodox Church the blessings of the holy Places, and

especially of the Tomb of the Anastasis and the Tomb of the Metastasis in Gethsemane. We also offer our special prayers for you, Your Eminence, dear Archbishop Leo, to you, Archimandrite Sergei on your Name Day, which is your spiritual birthday, and to this monastic community.

May Christ, who is the pattern of our life and our True God, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, and by the prayers of Saint Sergius and Saint Herman, the founders of Valamo, bless us all and save us, for he is good and he loves humankind.

Amen.

H. B. SPEECH ON THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THEOTOKOS AT SAINT NICHOLAS IN JOENSUU, FINLAND.

An Address on the Feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God during the Divine Liturgy at the Church of Saint Nicholas in Joensuu at the beginning of the Academic Year

His Beatitude Theophilos III

8 September 2010

Your Eminence, Archbishop Leo

Your Eminences,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On this great feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God, we bring to you, dear brother Archbishop Leo, and to all the faithful of the Finnish Orthodox Church, the greetings of your fellow Orthodox Christians of the Holy Land. We are especially glad to convey to you the blessings of the Holy Tomb of Jesus Christ and the Tomb of the Mother of God, where we have just recently celebrated the feast of her Dormition.

Today the grace of the Holy Spirit has made us worthy to celebrate in this Eucharistic synaxis her blessed Nativity. As the apostles were miraculously gathered from the corners of the world to be by her side at her death, so we have been gathered here with you to honour the Mother of God at her birth. She is the Mother of the Church, and therefore the Mother of us all.

This is a special day for us. Not only are we celebrating in this holy place, but this is the first occasion – and we hope not the last – that Jerusalem bears her witness in Finland in and through our presence with you. This is a great joy, because in this Eucharist we realize the fruits of our unity, a unity that is grounded in the fullness of our common faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ, and that is supported by the prayers of his All-Pure Mother.

This is also a suitable day on which to be making the beginning of a new academic year, for the Virgin Mary was not only the Mother of our incarnate Lord; she was also the first disciple. So she embodies for the faithful Christian a model of true learning. Her life as a disciple began in the humble town of Nazareth at the Annunciation, when, having been chosen by God, she was proclaimed the *Theotokos*. And so she has taught to us all who seek to follow in her footsteps as disciples to say willingly and obediently “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word”. (Lk 1:38).

As the simple girl, Mary of Nazareth, entered into the mystery

that had been hidden from the beginning of the ages, she attained to the highest knowledge. In a similar way she is the sign to us that we are given the potential by the grace of the Eucharist to attain to the *theoria* – the contemplation – of the glory of God, that is to say, the knowledge of God, and to union with him in true *theosis*.

As the Virgin Mary is for us the *naos*, the temple, of the Holy Spirit, so we may say she is the first spiritual academy. She teaches us where true and eternal knowledge is to be found, and she is our patron today as we begin this new academic year. So we are all students of the divine knowledge. May this year be for all of the pupils in the schools and the students at the universities here a year of deep learning and true devotion, and may it be for all their teachers and professors a year of attentive teaching and fruitful research. For, as Scripture says, “you shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free”. (Jn 8:32).

We thank you, Your Eminence, for your kind invitation to make this fraternal visitation of the Finnish Orthodox Church and for your warm welcome, and we ask the prayers of the Mother of God for you, for our brother bishops, for the Orthodox faithful, and for all the citizens of this country.

Amen.

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THE HEADS OF THE CHURCHES OF

JERUSALEM INVITE FOR AN IFTAHR ON THE OCCASION OF THE ISLAMIC FEAST OF RAMADAN.

On Thursday, 19th August/ 2nd September 2010, the Heads of the Churches of Jerusalem invited Moslems and Christians in an Iftahr in Notre-Damme Hotel. Among the invitees was the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit with his escort.

In this Iftahr His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III addressed the participants in the name of the Christian Leaders as follows:

“Your Eminences,

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Members of the Delegation of the World Council of Churches,

Dear Friends,

We greet you this evening in the name of Almighty God.

This Iftahr, hosted by the Leaders of the Churches for the Muslim community of Jerusalem, is a very special occasion for all of us in the Holy Land and especially for the peoples of Jerusalem. Our gathering this evening demonstrates the experience that is ours in this Holy City as we strive to live out the unique cultural and religious character of Jerusalem.

Our faith in the One God, and our religious diversity, find a unity in Jerusalem. Our diversity is not a cause of difficulty and misunderstanding, but a cause of private and public strength. Here we see that the essential values of our monotheistic religious traditions have a common root. And we

Muslims and Christians take pride in being the stewards and servants of the sacred heritage that has been passed down to us by the great leaders Omar ibn al Khattab and Patriarch Sophronios of Jerusalem.

On this occasion this evening we are glad to be able to welcome distinguished guests in the delegation from the World Council of Churches, headed by the new Secretary General, the Reverend Dr Olav Tveit. The World Council of Churches has committed itself to promote love of God and neighbor, peace, mutual respect, justice and reconciliation, which are religious values that we all share.

As we gather together to share this Iftahr, we are reminded that, despite the challenges before us as the peoples of this Holy City and this Holy Land, we are people of faith and God is our living hope. We remain firm in our mission here to preserve the Holy Land as a place where people of different religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds may live together in peaceful and genuine co-existence.

May our God in heaven, who is the author and creator of our common humanity, give us the strength and the courage to remain steadfast in the unique mission of Jerusalem. And may we show the world that is by prayer that the human community builds is firm foundation. For we are in Jerusalem a community of prayer.

May God bless you all".

Chief Secretary's Office.

H. B. THEOPHILO'S ADDRESS ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT BY REV. DR. OLAV FYSKE TVEIT TO THE PATRIARCHATE.

2 September 2010

Dr Tveit,

Mrs Tveit,

Your Eminences,

Dear Friends from the World Council Of Churches Staff,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a pleasure to welcome you once again, Dr. Tveit, to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem as you continue your mission to the Holy Land, and we are glad to receive you here in your new role as Secretary General of the World Council of Churches. We welcome warmly also your wife, Mrs Tveit, and the members of your delegation.

As you know, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem has long supported and continues to support and encourage, the mission of the World Council of Churches, a mission that is based firmly in the common witness that we bear to the Triune God and to the Gospel of our Incarnate Lord Jesus Christ.

The Orthodox Church participates in the life of the World Council of Churches not in order to create some sort of "super Church", but to work together for the unity of all Christians in faith, in the creation of, to use a Chalcedonian phrase, "unity without confusion". In our ecumenical journey we are all obliged to maintain a spirit of Christian love one for the

other as well as a spirit of integrity.

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem is especially keen to assist you in your concern for lasting peace in the Middle East, for the well-being of all the people of the region, and for the ongoing presence of Christians in the Holy Land. The Patriarchate plays a unique role in all these endeavors, and as a consequence has, over the years, gained the great respect of the historic Churches, the other Abrahamic traditions, Judaism and Islam, and the political authorities of our region.

We have long experience in fostering peaceful co-existence and that way of life we like to call by the Greek word *symbiosis*, for this expresses a true ideal of us. In addition to being an historical witness to the 2000-year presence of Christians in the Holy Land, we have also guaranteed the unique cultural and religious character of Jerusalem.

Because of the Patriarchate's role and witness, we fully endorse the work of the World Council of Churches and of your office especially in the struggle for peace, justice and reconciliation.

As we recognize the shared values and goals that are ours, we also recognize the ongoing work that we must do together. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem stands always ready to support you in your role as Secretary General in addressing the challenges that the World Council of Churches faces and we pledge to speak the truth in love as we strive for the unity of all Christians for which Our Lord prayed, and for which we Orthodox pray in every Divine Liturgy.

Now, therefore, in token of our pledge, and in recognition of your devotion in promoting the unity of all Christians in faith and in deepening the values of the Gospel among the members Churches of the World Council, we bestow upon you the Cross of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

May this Cross be a reminder to you of the daily death and

resurrection that is the vocation of every Christian believer and of the way of the cross that leads to the triumph of new life. May this Cross bring to you both the courage that the cross demands, as well as the joy that the resurrection promises, and may it be strength to you in your important new ministry as Secretary General of the World Council of Churches.

As you and your delegation continue your pilgrimage to the Holy Land, we impart our Patriarchal Blessing on you all and we thank you for the dedication that you show to our beloved Holy Land and to all our people.

His Beatitude

THEOPHILOS III

Patriarch of Jerusalem.

THE PRIME MINISTER OF GREECE HIS EXCELLENCY MR. GEORGE PAPANDREOU VISITS THE PATRIARCHATE

Within the framework of his two day visit to the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, the Prime Minister of Greece, His Excellency Mr. George Papandreou, visited the Patriarchate of Jerusalem on Wednesday, the 8th / 21st of July 2010, around 7:00 pm.

The Prime Minister was received at David's Gate, by the Elder

Chief Secretary of the Patriarchate His Eminence Aristarchos Archbishop of Constantina and by the coordinator of Ceremonies Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Porfyrios.

Thence, approaching the Patriarchate, he was shown around the grounds of the Christian neighborhood of the Patriarchate surroundings and of the Greek Community. At the junction of the streets of the School of Saint Demetrios and of the Patriarchate, and below his house, the physician Mr. John Tlyle, one of the elders of the Greek Community, received him and presented him with his book entitled "I am Jerusalem".

The Prime Minister was accompanied by Mr. Demitrios Droutsas, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. George Petalotis, Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Government Spokesperson, Mr. Yiannis Zeppos Ambassador and Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with members of his political entourage and by the Ambassador of Greece to Israel His Excellency Mr. Kyriakos Loukakis, the Consul General of Greece in Jerusalem His Excellency Mr. Sotirios Athanasiou and a number of Greek and international journalists. The Prime Minister was received and welcomed with honour and acclaim by the Archbishops members of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, Priests and monks of the Patriarchate and members of the Greek Community at the entrance of the Central Monastery, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The Prime Minister was then greeted by His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III at the entrance of the Throne Hall.

Following the Greeting, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos addressed His Excellency the Prime Minister of Greece as follows:

"Your Excellency Prime Minister,

The eminent Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre today receives and welcomes Your Excellency and distinguished escorts at the

august Patriarchate of Jerusalem, with abundant joy. Your peaceful and mediating visit to this region of the Holy Land, which exhibits a political and religious turmoil and where the three Monotheistic religions namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam coexist is of important significance.

It entails particular significance, both for our Patriarchate, which embodies the holy and secular history of Jerusalem diachronically, a history which is connected with the multicultural amplitude of Romiosini and thus, with the history of the Christians in Palestine, Jordan, and of course Israel, and moreover for our venerable genus and nation which said nation constitutes the moral and material patron and, even more so, the natural guarantor of the inalienable and ab antiquo vested privileges and sovereign rights on the Holy Shrines with a worldwide character.

The religious and spiritual mission of the Rum Orthodox (Greek Orthodox) Patriarchate, based on the holy scriptures and evangelical commandments: "love thy neighbour as yourself", (Mathew 19, 19), as well as "love thy enemies . . . you are rightly doing so to your enemies", (Mathew 5, 44), this constitutes a vehicle of respect towards the each person and on the other hand provides us with a place of peaceful coexistence and conciliation among the followers of other religions and dogmas.

We say this now more than ever before, that the Patriarchate today emerges as a natural and moral institutional factor, one which can contribute towards the solution of the theocratic or the religious Gordian knot that pertains to the diplomatic and political status quo of the future of Jerusalem (it is understood of the Old City of Jerusalem).

This is attested by the fact of the local and international recognition of the standing of the Patriarchate via its participation, not only in interreligious and interchristian dialogues but also, in international political – social

conferences.

Your Excellency, Prime Minister,

Being grateful for your genuine interest in the Holy Places and in the Palestinian people as affirmed by the respected Greek Government and You personally, we ask you to accept the wishes of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre and Our Patriarchal blessings towards the success of Your peace mission to the region.

Furthermore, please accept this decoration of the Grand Cross of the Holy Sepulchre, as an expression of our deep appreciation towards your person and support to the governance and the financial-political task that you are undertaking with such patience and determination.

Thank you”

Following the address, His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III, decorated His Excellency Mr. George Papandreou the Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic with the Order of the Grand Cross of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre along with the golden necklace as a sign of recognition and accolade for his services to the Hellenic Republic, the nation and to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Visibly moved, His Excellency the Prime Minister of Greece Mr. George Papandreou responded with the following:

“Your Beatitude, it is for me and for the whole of Christianity an exceptional honour to have bestowed upon me this highest medal, that of the Grand Cross of the Holy Sepulchre, and I will carry this cross with the utmost honour and respect, as a symbol of the unbreakable bond between Greece, Fatherland of the Greek People and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Holy Places. I thank you especially for this honour, which will remain unforgettable for me”.

In addition, His Beatitude offered the Prime Minister an icon of the Nativity, done on the occasion of the celebration of the 2000 years of Christianity. The Prime Minister reciprocated by presenting His Beatitude a round silver plate with the depicting the 12 Apostles.

Subsequently His Excellency the Prime Minister signed the visitors book and venerated at the Chapel of Sacred Pentecost adjacent to the Throne Hall.

Following this, His Beatitude and His Excellency, accompanied by members of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, descended to the Church of Resurrection where they venerated the Stone of Anointing, the Life Giving Tomb of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ-the Holy Sepulchre, and then proceeded to the Catholicon of the Church, venerated the Holy Calvary and the Holy Cross which is located at the Office of the Church of Resurrection.

From the Church of Resurrection the Prime Minister departed in order to carry out his peace mission to the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Chief Secretary's Office.

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