



ΕΛΛΗΝΟΡΘΟΔΟΣΙΟΝ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΕΙΟΝ

ΙΕΡΟΣΟΛΥΜΩΝ



GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE

JERUSALEM

A Message from His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III

As we come upon the completion of the restoration of the Church of the Nativity and the upcoming restoration of the Holy Grotto, the birthplace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we rejoice in the fact that this holy shrine will be protected and better visible for all those who come to venerate and seek its spiritual refreshment. Firmly and vibrantly restored, it will continue to be a symbol of hope and reconciliation for the whole world.

The Church of the Nativity is indeed a treasure, having borne witness to many centuries of history in Palestine. But beyond this, it is a living church, serving the needs of the ancient Christian community in Bethlehem and its surrounding region, whose presence is a living testament to our faith and to the millions of pilgrims from every corner of the globe who come to partake in the grace of the holy shrines, together with our local community.

The mission of the church in the Holy Land is to protect the holy shrines as places of worship for all people, regardless of their religious, ethnic, or cultural identity. The Church of the Nativity, the Church of the Resurrection, and thousands of other holy shrines in this land are meeting points between heaven and earth, where God's emanating grace can be felt by all. While we do not diminish the nature of these places by calling them national shrines, powerfully, it is through our human authorities that we may help to protect them as spiritual heritage.



In this regard, we would like to express our thanks to President Mahmoud Abbas for taking the initiative to start these necessary restoration works, and the Palestinian Presidential Committee, chaired by His Excellency Ziad Albandak, for its support throughout the duration of the project. We must also convey our appreciation to President Vladimir Putin of Russia, who made a generous donation through the Rum Orthodox Patriarchate for the first phase of the works, as well as several contributors who helped this project come to fruition.

In this spirit, and especially as we approach the Great Feast of the Nativity, we pray for our Christian flock, our brothers and sisters around the world, and our local authorities, to be encouraged and strengthened by this immense accomplishment. And may the newly restored Church of the Nativity, where the Incarnate Logos assumed our nature in order to save us from our human predicament, remain a beacon to all in this region and beyond.

With Our Patriarchal blessings,

THEOPHILOS III
Patriarch of Jerusalem

Holy City of Bethlehem
Christmas 2020