



## PATRIARCHS AND HEADS OF LOCAL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN JERUSALEM

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### **The Christmas Message of the Heads of Churches of Jerusalem**

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among all people!" (Luke 2:14)

We, the Heads of the Churches of Jerusalem, share with you in praising God for the birth of the holy child on a cold night in Bethlehem so long ago. We praise God for the faithful examples of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of Joseph. We praise God for the shepherds who were first to share the Good News of the Savior's birth. We praise God for the witness of all the heavenly host in their joyous proclamation of God's desire for peace on earth that good will among all people will prevail against the darkness of sin.

Peace continues to elude the world our Lord was born to save. Too many people live under the threat of violence and political persecution. We, the Heads of Churches of Jerusalem, see the role of the Church to be one of encouraging all people to build bridges of understanding and not walls of separation. We condemn violence in any form. Violence has not and can never be accepted as the way to bring about a just and lasting peace between peoples.

We believe that hope for peace and reconciliation requires our active participation as people of faith. For hope to remain alive in the hearts of the faithful, we must take an active role in bringing hope for peace into reality. To this end, we want to inform you that the Heads of Churches take a serious role in building bridges of peace and reconciliation through our participation in the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land.

This Council brings together Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders to discuss issues of shared concern for our people here and for mutual understanding around the world. We strongly believe that "on earth peace, good will among all people" starts with developing relationships built on mutual respect and understanding. We believe this Council's experience of cooperation and communication is an encouraging example to our people and to the world that in building bridges, God's peace is possible.

Believing, with Mary, that "with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37) we proclaim with the heavenly host this Christmas, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among all people," praising God as we hope for the future of all of God's people.

May God bless the celebration of the Savior's birth this Christmas season. May God bless every effort for peace and may the one and living God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit bless, preserve and keep you, now and always. Amen.

- +Patriarch Theophilos III, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Patriarch Fouad Twal, Latin Patriarchate
- +Patriarch Torkom II Manoogian, Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Fr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, ofm, Custos of the Holy Land
- +Archbishop Anba Abraham, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, Jerusalem
- +Archbishop Swerios Malki Murad, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Archbishop Joseph-Jules Zerey, Greek-Melkite-Catholic Patriarchate
- +Archbishop Abouna Matthias, Ethiopian Orthodox Patriarchate
- +Archbishop Paul Ssayah, Maronite Patriarchal Exarchate
- +Bishop Suheil Dawani, Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East
- +Bishop Munib Younan, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land
- +Bishop Pierre Malki, Syrian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate
- +Fr. Rafael Minassian, Armenian Catholic Patriarchal Exarchate

(Christmas, 2010)