

ARMENIAN CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2013

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, amen.

“Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people, For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.’”(Lk. 2:10-13)

Dear faithful of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church in Armenia and in Nagorno-Karabagh, in Jordan and in Palestine, in Jerusalem and in Israel and in the Armenian Diaspora.

We greet you from the Grotto of that Holy Manger of the Nativity Church, in the city of Bethlehem, where we are gathered tonight on the Armenian Feast of the Birth and Revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, together with the members of the Saint James Brotherhood of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and pilgrims from Armenia, Turkey, and faithful from Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa and surroundings. We are here to celebrate the divine birth of a baby who was to be our Savior Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who took flesh and was born of a virgin called Mary. This was the miraculous and wonderful birth that was a great breakthrough in history in that it changed the history by God becoming man so that man would become like God.

Yes, we are gathered here in joyful celebration of the incarnation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ together with our spiritual brothers, archbishops and priests that have hastened to Bethlehem from distant lands to join us. We extend them our hearty welcome.

We are very honored to have with us present His Excellency the Prime Minister Mr. Salam Fayyad, representing the President of the newly recognized the State of Palestine, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, with his entourage, representatives of the Palestinian Government, as well as the Honorable mayor of Bethlehem Mrs. Vera Baboun and other dignitaries. We take the opportunity to congratulate President Abbas on his courageous policy of leading the Palestinian people in a non-violent way towards the diplomatic achievement of recognition of their right of having a

State of their own for which they have been struggling for over sixty years. President Abbas has proved to be a man of peace, like our Lord Jesus Christ whose coming into this world was heralded by the angelic hosts singing “Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God,” says Our Lord (Mt. 59.) We thank the President for becoming a pioneer of peace for Palestinians, Moslems and Christians alike, and even for Israelis. God bless him and you Mr. Prime Minister and keep both of you in good health and to give you continued wisdom to lead this nation. And we thank you for honoring us tonight with your presence. We pray for you and wish you success for full independence of Palestine to live in peace and justice alongside Israel. And as your name “Salam” indicates, Peace, Salam, shalom.

Archbishop Aris Shirvanian

Locum Tenens of the Armenian Patriarchate

19-01-2013

Bethlehem