ΔΕΙΠΝΟΝ ΠΑΡΑ ΤΩΝ ΑΡΧΗΓΩΝ ΤΩΝ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΩΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΠΡΟΞΕΝΟΥΣ ΙΕΡΟΣΟΛΥΜΩΝ

Τό ἑσπέρας τῆς Τρίτης, 13ης /26ης Ὀκτωβρίου 2021, οἱ Ἀρχηγοί τῶν Τοπικῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν Ἱεροσολύμων ὑπό τήν ἰδιότητα αὐτῶν τοῦ Συμβουλίου Ἐκκλησιῶν, τῇ προτάσει καί ἐπιμελείᾳ τοῦ Γενικοῦ Προξένου τῆς Ἑλλάδος κ. Εὐαγγέλου Βλιώρα καί φιλοξενίᾳ τοῦ Ἀρχιεπισκόπου τῆς Ἀγγλικανικῆς Ἐκκλησίας εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα κ. Χουσάμ Ναούμ, παρέθεσαν δεῖπνον εἰς τό ἑστιατόριον τῆς Ἀγγλικανικῆς Ἐκκλησίας εἰς τήν Νέαν Ἀνατολικήν Ἱερουσαλήμ πρός τιμήν τῶν Προξένων τῶν κρατῶν, τῶν συνδεομένων μετά τοῦ Προσκυνηματικοῦ Καθεστῶτος: (CORPS CONSULAIRE DE JERUSALEM), Ἑλλάδος, Γαλλίας, Μεγάλης Βρεττανίας, Ἱσπανίας, Ἰταλίας, Βελγίου, Σουηδίας, Τουρκίας καί Βατικανοῦ.

Τούς συνδαιτημόνας εἰς τό δεῖπνον τοῦτο ἐκαλωσώρισεν ὁ Ἀγγλικανός Ἐπίσκοπος εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα κ. Χουσάμ Ναούμ.

Διαρκοῦντος τοῦ δείπνου τούτου προσεφώνησεν τούς προσκεκλημένους ἡ Α.Θ.Μ. ὁ Πατήρ ἡμῶν καί Πατριάρχης Ἱεροσολύμων κ.κ. Θεόφιλος διά τῆς κάτωθι προσφωνήσεως Αὐτοῦ ἀγγλιστί:

Your Excellencies,

Respected Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are grateful to be with you here in this distinguished gathering, and we wish to express our thanks to His Excellency the Consul General of Greece, Mr Vlioras, for his initiative in bringing us together, and to His Grace Archbishop Husam for his kind hospitality.

The mission of the Churches in the Holy Land is very specific. We have pastoral responsibility for the Christians who live here, and a moral obligation to support and sustain the Christian population so that Christians remain in the Holy Land.

It is also our duty to ensure that the Christian character of Jerusalem and the Holy Land be maintained, for a Holy Land devoid of its Christian population would lose integrity. We have a further responsibility to accommodate and minister to the many thousands of pilgrims who, in normal times, come to the Holy City of Jerusalem and the Holy Land from around the world, many of them from the countries you represent. We are also called to the diakonia -the service- of the Holy Places, so that they MAY remain places of worship open to all without distinction.

As you are well aware, the Christian presence in Jerusalem and the Holy Land

faces challenges unprecedented in our lifetime.

We live in a delicate balance that rests on ancient privileges and rights that history has confirmed, and there is now a concerted assault on these privileges and rights by radical groups who exercise a growing and considerable influence. Among these assaults are intrusion attempts on Church properties as well as proposed taxes on Church properties, moves which will diminish and cripple the ability of the Churches to carry out our charitable and educational mission. These matters are grave, and will require the attention of not the Churches alone, but also of the international community for their resolution.

We are appreciative that the Jerusalem diplomatic corps as well as the political leadership of many nations understand that religion plays an indispensable role in the life of our region, and we are pleased that the foreign ministries of so many countries recognise this role. There can be no sure path to a secure and peaceful future for all the people of the Holy Land and the Middle East unless we take this reality seriously.

The Churches do not wish to intrude into the proper role of diplomatic and political leadership. We are, however, ready and willing to be effective partners with you to do all in our power to find ways forward that ensure that the existing Status is respected. One should not underestimate that interfaith religious leadership has proven to be effective in opposing all forms of violence and in advancing peace. In this regard, we mention especially the countries of the European Union, which because of their long history in our region, and because of their involvement in the shaping of the Middle East, have a moral commitment to assist with this work. We remain committed to being in close contact with the European Union in their efforts to be peacemakers in our region.

Allow me to bring to your attention the establishment by the Churches of the NGO: ICoHS (the International Community of the Holy Sepulchre), which is seeking to be an advocate on behalf of the Christian communities of the Holy Land in global forums. A significant recent achievement of ICoHS is its new report on the positive impact of the Christian community in the coming days.

We wish to express our gratitude to each of you in your respective consular roles for the care and attention that you give to the serious concerns of our Christian communities. MAY GOD bless you as you carry out your duties on behalf of your own countries, and on behalf of all the people of our beloved City and Holy Land.

Thank you.

Ἐκ τῆς Ἀρχιγραμματείας