

Η ΕΠΙΣΚΕΨΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΠΡΙΓΚΙΠΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΟΥΑΛΙΑΣ ΕΙΣ ΤΗΝ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΚΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΓΕΝΝΗΣΕΩΣ ΤΗΣ ΒΗΘΛΕΕΜ

Τήν 11ην π.μ. ώραν τῆς Παρασκευῆς, 11^{ης} /24^{ης} Ἰανουαρίου 2020, ἐπεσκέφθη τὴν Βασιλικὴν τῆς Γεννήσεως τῆς Βηθλεέμ ἢ Αὐτοῦ Βασιλική Ὑψηλότης, ὁ Πρίγκιψ τῆς Οὐαλίας Κάρολος, συνοδευόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ Γενικοῦ Προξένου τῆς Αὐτῆς Μεγαλειότητος τῆς Βασιλείσης τῆς Ἀγγλίας Ἐλισάβετ κ. Philip Hall, ὑπὸ τοῦ Ἀγγλικανοῦ Ἐπισκόπου εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα Σεβασμιωτάτου Σουχέιλ Νταουάνη καὶ ὑπὸ κλιμακίου συνεργατῶν αὐτοῦ.

Τόν Ἐξοχώτατον Πρίγκιπα ἅμα τῇ ἀφίξει Αὐτοῦ ὑπεδέχθησαν εἰς τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς Αὐλῆς τῆς Βασιλικῆς οἱ ἀντιπρόσωποι τῶν Ἡγουμένων τῆς Βηθλεέμ, ἐν οἷς ἐκ τῶν Ὁρθοδόξων ὁ Ἀρχιμανδρίτης Πολύκαρπος καὶ ὠδήγησαν αὐτόν ἄχρι τῆς Πύλης τῆς Βασιλικῆς ἔξω.

Ἐνταῦθα ὑπεδέχθησαν τόν πρίγκιπα οἱ Ἡγούμενοι τῆς Βηθλεέμ, ἐκ τῶν Ὁρθοδόξων ὁ Πατριαρχικός Ἐπίτροπος Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Ἰορδάνου κ. Θεοφύλακτος, ὁ Φραγκισκανός καὶ ὁ Ἀρμένιος καὶ ὠδήγησαν αὐτόν ἐντός τῆς Βασιλικῆς.

Εἰς τό μέσον αὐτῆς ὑπεδέχθη τόν Πρίγκιπα πρῶτος ἡ Α.Θ.Μ. ὁ Πατήρ ἡμῶν καὶ Πατριάρχης Ἱεροσολύμων κ.κ. Θεόφιλος, ἀκολουθοῦντων τοῦ Κουστωδοῦ τῆς Ἀγίας Γῆς ὀσιολογιωτάτου Πατρός Φραγκίσκου Πατόν, καὶ τοῦ ἀντιπροσώπου τοῦ Ἀρμενίου Πατριάρχου Σεβασμιωτάτου Σιβάν.

Ἐντεῦθεν ὁ Μακαριώτατος ὠδήγησε τόν Πρίγκιπα εἰς τό Καθολικόν, πρό τοῦ εἰκονοστασίου, ἔνθα καὶ ἀπό τῶν ἀγίων βημοθύρων προσεφώνησεν Αὐτόν διὰ τῆς κάτῳθι προσφωνήσεως αὐτοῦ ἀγγλιστί:

"Your Royal Highness, it is a great honour for us to welcome you here in Bethlehem the birthplace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the place that brought peace and justice upon the whole world.

Bethlehem is indeed a symbol of peace here, for Christians and Muslims, who live as a family and a united community, and the Church is also the place that is offering spiritual refreshment to thousands of pilgrims of all faiths and of all cultures and nationalities without any discrimination.

Your Highness's presence here is highly appreciated and heartfelt for our region, which is facing many challenges, and your pilgrimage here is a tangible sign of your commitment to promoting and advancing peace and justice in the very birthplace of peace.

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."

(Luke 2.14)

Please allow us to present to you on behalf of the church communities of the

Holy Land this humble blessing.

Thank you". καί ἐπέδωσεν Αὐτῷ ἀστέρα τῆς Γεννήσεως ἐκ μαργαριταρορρίζης.

Ἐκ τοῦ σημείου τούτου καί διά τοῦ παρεκκλησίου τοῦ Ἁγίου Νικολάου ὁ Μακαριώτατος ἐσυνώδευσε τόν Πρίγκιπα εἰς τό παρεκκλήσιον τοῦ Ἁγίου Γεωργίου, προσκείμενον τῇ Βασιλικῇ νοτιοανατολικῶς.

Ἐνταῦθα, ὁ Πατριαρχικός Ἐπίτροπος Βηθλεέμ Σεβασμιώτατος Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Ἰορδάνου κ. Θεοφύλακτος ἀνέγνωσε τό Εὐαγγέλιον τῆς Γεννήσεως τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἑλληνιστί, ὡς συμβαίνει ἐκάστη Παραμονῇ τῶν Χριστουγέννων συμφώνως τῷ Γρηγοριανῷ Ἡμερολογίῳ ὑπό τῆς Ἀγγλικανικῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ὁ Πρίγκιψ ἀνέγνωσε τοὺς Μακαρισμούς τοῦ Κατά Ματθαῖον Ἁγίου Εὐαγγελίου καί ἕκαστος τῶν Ἀρχηγῶν τῶν Χριστιανικῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν ἄνευ ἀμφίων ἀνέγνωσαν προσευχήν συμφώνως τῷ ἐκτυπωθέντι προγράμματι.

Ὁ Μακαριώτατος Πατριάρχης Ἱεροσολύμων κ.κ. Θεόφιλος προσεφώνησεν Αὐτόν διά τῆς κάτωθι προσφωνήσεως Αὐτοῦ ἀγγλιστί:

Your Royal Highness,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Members of our Brotherhood,

Honoured Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your Royal Highness, we welcome you warmly to Bethlehem and to the Church of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we are delighted that you are in the Holy Land. Your presence among us is a great encouragement to the peoples of our region, and we are deeply grateful for the careful attention that you pay especially to the well-being of the Christian presence here. Whether we are meeting in London or here in the holy City of Jerusalem, we are always heartened by your commitment.

As you are fully aware, the Christian presence here is an integral part of our social fabric and is crucial in maintaining the historic multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious landscape of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Without a thriving Christian community in the Holy Land, this region would lose its essential character, and no longer be the living land of the divine-human encounter to which the Christian presence here is a living witness;

"You are the salt of the earth: but if the salt has lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted?"

(Matthew 5:13)

The Church communities are no doubt facing challenges and the Heads of the Churches and Christian Communities are united in our firm opposition to this

threat, and we have been supported in this by leaders locally and from around the world both in government and religion. We have had particularly strong support from Her Majesty's Government and other British political leaders, as well as from His Grace, our dear brother, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

While we emphasise these challenges, we must also say that all the local authorities of the Holy Land have been working with us positively to help in dealing with these threats and challenges, and we are very grateful to all those who have joined in this effort;

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God"

(Matthew 5:9)

Together with the other Churches and Christian communities of the Holy Land, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem stand ready to partner with all governments and people of good will to ensure the well-being of all the peoples of our region; for this is our pastoral mission entrusted to us by the Divine Providence;

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind...Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself".

(Matthew 22: 37-39)

One of the prominent achievements of the growing body of international support for the Christian community in the Holy Land is the recent establishment of the International Community of the Holy Sepulchre [ICoHS];

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy".

(Matthew 5:7)

While at the moment this society is drawing membership and support mostly from the United Kingdom and the United States, our hope is for a truly international representation in membership. ICoHS is an intentionally ecumenical society, not bound to any one confession, with the active support of, among others, the Orthodox, the Roman Catholic, the Anglican and the Protestant communities.

This is the first such ecumenical society of its kind to be established from the Holy Land, and it is our dearest hope that it will be a major source for good, both in bringing Christians from different communities together in common support of the Christian presence in the Holy Land, and in strengthening international attention to the life and witness of the Christian community here.

Needless to say, Your Royal Highness, that we are deeply aware of your personal commitment to the Holy Land and to the Churches, here which keep and guard the holy places not as mere monuments but as places of worship, and we also understand that, in addition to your official and royal mission, you also come here as a pilgrim.

MAY the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you and the Sun of righteousness enlighten your mind and warm your heart.

Thank you.

Τῆς ἐκδηλώσεως ταύτης ληξάσης, ὁ Πρίγκιψ κατῆλθεν ἀπό τό παρεκκλήσιον τοῦ Ἁγίου Γεωργίου τῆ συνοδεία τοῦ Μακαριωτάτου Πατριάρχου Ἱεροσολύμων κ.κ. Θεοφίλου διά τῶν βαθμίδων τοῦ Ἱεροῦ Βήματος εἰς τό παρεκκλήσιον τοῦ Ἁγίου Νικολάου.

Ἐντεῦθεν ὁ Πρίγκιψ κατῆλθεν εἰς τό Σπήλαιον καί εἰς τόν ἀστέρα καί εἰς τόν χῶρον τῆ Ἁγίας Φάτνης ὑπεδέχθη καί προσεφώνησεν Αὐτόν ὁ Κουστωδός τῆς Ἁγίας Γῆς ὀσιολογιώτατος π. Φραγκῖσκος Πατόν, ἠγούμενος τῶν Φραγκισκανῶν τῆς Ἁγίας Γῆς.

Ἐν συνεχείᾳ ὁ Πρίγκιψ ἀνῆλθε καί διά τῆς βορείου πύλης τοῦ Σπηλαίου, ἔφθασεν εἰς τό παρεκκλήσιον, τό χρησιμοποιούμενον ὑπό τῶν Ἀρμενίων καί ἐγένετο δεκτός ὑπό τοῦ Ἀρμενίου Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Σιβάν, ἠγούμενου τῶν Ἀρμενίων εἰς Βηθλεέμ. Ἀπό τοῦ παρεκκλησίου τούτου ὁ Πρίγκιψ διῆλθε διά τῆς Αὐλῆς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἁγίας Αἰκατερίνης τῶν Φραγκισκανῶν, ἔνθα ἀπεθανάτισθη ἡ ἐπίσκεψις διά συλλογικῆς φωτογραφίας.

Ἐν συνεχείᾳ ὁ Ἐξοχώτατος Πρίγκιψ διά τοῦ Βρεττανοῦ Προξένου κ. Hall παρέθεσε δεξιῶσιν εἰς τόν παρακείμενον ξενῶνα τῶν Φραγκισκανῶν Casa Nova.

Ἐκ τῆς Ἀρχιγραμματείας