

FINAL

A Homily at the Global Ecumenical Service
of the World Council of Churches
for the World Week of Prayer for Peace
in the Holy Land

His Beatitude Theophilos III
Patriarch of Jerusalem

18 September 2023

Jesus said to the scribe,
“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests,
but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

(Matthew 8:20)

We greet you warmly and we extend to all the participants in this Global Ecumenical Service the blessing of the Holy Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy City of Jerusalem. We wish to express our gratitude to Dr Pillay, the Secretary-General, and to the staff of the WCC for holding this World Week of Prayer for Peace in the Holy Land.

We who live in the Holy Land are the living witness of the divine-human encounter. Here the Eternal Logos took on our human flesh, and lived among us. And while he had no specific home during his ministry, but went about the countryside and the cities with the message of salvation, still we say that our Lord Jesus Christ made his home among us in the Holy Land.

We remember that our Lord's words were in response to the statement, “I will follow you wherever you go.” This is the vocation of the Christian community of the Holy Land. We follow our Lord wherever he leads us, and our spiritual mission is to proclaim his message of salvation to all.

The Holy Land is the home to all people of good will, and there is room for all. For centuries the Holy Land has been a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious civilisation, and though there are some radical groups who now seek to change this and to alter the integrity of the Holy Land, we are witnesses to a sacred history that embraces all the children of the monotheistic faiths. Without this diversity of life and faith in the Holy Land, the region will lose its fundamental character and mission.

Our Lord Jesus Christ may have had nowhere to lay his head, but we have both a real and a spiritual home in the Holy Land because of this divine-human encounter, a home on earth that points to our heavenly home and to the common human destiny that we all share.

We pray and work earnestly and without ceasing for peace in the Holy Land. We encourage all people of good will to come as pilgrims to the land which the blood of the Blessed One has made holy, and we pray that the Holy Spirit will enlighten our minds and our hearts as we seek to be faithful to our mission to ensure that the Holy Land remains the spiritual home of all.

As the Church of Christ in the Holy Land, which is grounded in the moral values of the Bible, we are those who stand firm against anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, and we remain steadfast in supporting the fulfilling of the aspirations of all the people and communities that call the Holy Land their home.

As we read in the Letter to the Ephesians, *Peace be to you, our brothers and sisters, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ* (Eph. 6:23–24).

Thank you for your prayers and support.