Your Eminence,

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It is with profound joy that I greet you all at this important ecumenical gathering welcoming Most Rev. Suheil Dawani and the Church delegation from Jerusalem, the Holy Land. Jerusalem is the birthplace of Christianity and it is a place where our sacred and most holy traditions were born. It is a place where we, as Christians, are supposed not only to know but also to visit and to encounter the great legacy and renew ourselves following the footsteps of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Armenians are historically present there. As a matter of fact, there is proven historical evidence that the Armenian Church traces its origins to Jerusalem as early as the 5th century. From the 7th century onwards we have had archbishops residing there as Patriarchs of Armenian Church of Jerusalem.

When you visit Jerusalem you will not only witness the great legacy of the Armenian Church, but also will learn that Jerusalem provided a shelter for thousands of Armenians rescued from the Genocide of the 20th century. Many of the Armenian Church leaders in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem were orphaned children who found refuge in the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. St. Paul says: “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace”. Unfortunately, in our world today, we witness atrocities and crimes committed against humanity even using religion. I am praying for our brothers and sisters in Syria who are in desperate need of help, shelter and most importantly that of peace.

There are ongoing conflicts in other parts of the world and I believe that the Churches and Church Leaders have a task to express the prophetic voice of the Church to stop this violence against the creation of God. I recall the song of David: “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity”. Once, the Church was a small unity of a few enthusiasts and believers who spread the word throughout kingdoms after the crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of their teacher. Now it is our turn to preach the message of the Resurrected Lord to the world so that “all may be one” and “so that the world may believe”, as I strongly believe that this true and authentic faith is the only thing that will unite us and allow us to overcome the challenges that humanity is facing, not only in the Middle East but the entire world.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Archbishop Michael Jackson for organising this wonderful event. I would like also to thank the Archbishop for embracing our small and new but very vibrant Armenian community here in Ireland.

May God bless you all.

With best wishes,

Bishop Hovakim Manukyan