



Ref. No 4708/18.05.2012

His Royal Highness Prince GHAZI bin MUHAMMAD,
Special Advisor and Personal Envoy to
His Majesty King ABDULLAH II,
Director of Board of Trustees, Baptism Site Commission,
Amman, Jordan

Your Royal Highness,

It is with deep esteem that we greet Your Royal Highness wishing You good health and prosperity.

As it is well known, Jordan – the biblical land and cradle of the Islamic civilisation – has always played a crucial role in building bridges of understanding, respect, and acceptance between different civilisations and religions of the world. Thus, the vision of its wise leadership – beginning with its founder, King Abdullah I, and developed later on by the late King Hussein I, through the *Amman Message*, and completed by the present King, His Majesty Abdullah II, through his valuable initiative *The World Interfaith Harmony Week* – was put in practice by making the Baptism Site at Jordan River a multi-Christian area, where Christians from all over the world will be hosted and welcomed to experience the hospitality, warmth and spiritual life of the people of Jordan.

The place of the Baptism Site situated “*beyond Jordan*” was a refuge of the Prophet Elijah who lived close to Al-Kharrar fountain (2 Kings 2:6-7 and 13), and where Saint John the Baptist, later on, baptised Jesus Christ, as it is recorded in the Gospels. Our Church considers this place is important as other holy places where Jesus Christ lived and preached, such as Bethlehem, Nazareth and Jerusalem.

Moreover, the Baptism of Jesus Christ, as a crucial historical and spiritual event, which took place in the Jordan River in the area called Bethany “*beyond Jordan*” (John 1:28 and 3:26), is confirmed by numerous Christian historians and pilgrims throughout the centuries, such as Bishop Meliton of Sardes (+180), Eusebius of Caesarea (+339), Egeria or Aetheria (often called Sylvia), who visited the Holy Places between 381-384 and others.

Your Royal Highness,

The relationship between the Romanian Church and the Arab countries has a long and rich history, since the time of Saint Hierarch Antim Ivireanul, Metropolitan of Wallachia, who printed, in the year 1701, at Snagov Monastery, near Bucharest, for the first time all over the world, a book in the Arabic language.

Such cultural relations continued throughout the following centuries and culminated with a very large number of Jordanian students, who studied in Romania, including students in our schools of Theology. This kind of relations has greatly contributed to further deepening and enriching the cooperation and mutual understanding between our nations.

In this favourable and promising context, taking into account the huge number of our Romanian pilgrims, who are eager to visit the Holy Land which Jordan is part of, we would like to make Jordan a centre of their programs in the region.

In order to fulfil this programme, and since Your Royal Highness is the *Director of Board of Trustees, Baptism Site Commission*, we are kindly asking for Your approval to offer the Patriarchate of Romania a piece of landscape at the Baptism Site (cc. 5,000 – 6,000 sqm.), to build a pilgrimage house, as a space where our believers can be hosted during their stay in Jordan, and to share spiritual experiences with its faithful people, Muslims and Christians.

In order to develop such solid relationships, we would urge our believers in Romania and in the Diaspora to dedicate a yearly pilgrimage day to visit this holy and important Site, to enrich their spirituality.

While hoping that Your Royal Highness will respond favourably to our request, we wish that the Almighty God will grant Your Highness and His Majesty King Abdullah II His blessings and keep You both in good health for many years to come!

With deep esteem and respect,



Daniel

†DANIEL
Patriarch of Romania