

14/11/2024

## **European Catholic-Orthodox Seminar in Crete on migration and human trafficking - “Migration & Human Trafficking as a Result of War”**



The European Catholic-Orthodox Seminar was held from 3 to 5 November 2024 in Rethymno, Crete, on the theme, “Migration and Human Trafficking as a Consequence of War”.

After a welcome address by His Eminence Metropolitan Prodromos of Rethymno and Avlopotamos who hosted the event, the working sessions were opened, introduced by the Seminar’s two co-presidents, His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain, and H.E. Msgr. Archbishop Gintaras Grušas, Archbishop of Vilnius and CCEE president.

In his opening remarks, H.E. Archbishop Gintaras Grušas expressed his hope that

the Seminar would strengthen the dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox. He added, "The theme of this seminar in Crete focuses on migration and the ways in which we can bear witness to Christ's mercy for our neighbour. We need to walk together as Christians in this war-stricken world".

Finding pastoral and practical solutions to common problems related to migration, war and human trafficking was the focus of the first working session. "We are facing very difficult times, in which many migrants are coming to Europe looking for safety. What can our churches do for these people?" was the question posed by His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain for the opening of the first panel discussion, in which participants discussed the possibilities of cooperation between Catholics and Orthodox on practical issues and noted the great usefulness of sharing experiences at the continental, national and parish church levels. It appears necessary, in fact, to better identify those in need, create active networks and share available resources, while also placing greater emphasis on education and the creation of school programmes.

In the second working session, Ms. Tetiana Stawnychy, vice-president of Caritas Europe and president of Caritas Ukraine, presented the work of Caritas and its experiences in Ukraine on migration and human trafficking during the war. To date, since the beginning of the war in Ukraine in February 2022, there are 7 local Caritas centres engaged in prevention and anti-trafficking activities. They provide assistance to about 150 people each year.

The third panel was on *"The Bishop as Shepherd and Pastor: Ministering to those affected by war"*, presented by His Eminence Metropolitan Athenagoras of Ilion, followed by the fourth panel session, in which Ms. Miriam Cakebread of the *Santa Marta Group* presented the activities of this foundation that she represents, which is an alliance of police chiefs and bishops from around the world who cooperate with civil society to eradicate human trafficking and modern-day slavery. The *Santa Marta Group* works to encourage governments and businesses to act proactively in preventing human trafficking and modern-day slavery in their operations involving purchases, sales, procurement, and all aspects of their business and financial activities.

The Seminar was concluded on 5 November with a fifth panel discussion, opened by **Rev. Dr. Augustinos Bairactaris**, Associate Professor of Ecumenical Studies and Orthodox Theology, with his presentation on *"The Nicene Creed: Challenging the Christian Churches Toward Peace and Reconciliation"*. In response to the question *"What does Nicaea mean to us today?"* the those convened emphasised the importance of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, which underlies the

common expression of the Apostolic Faith. For all Christians, the Nicene Creed is the sufficient condition for the full participation of the faithful and the baptised in the life of the Church. Next year 2025 will mark the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.

[vema.com.au](http://vema.com.au)