

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew honored by Church of Sweden



Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I has received the Plaque of St Erik for his commitment to religious freedom, human rights and care for creation. Church of Sweden Archbishop Dr Antje Jackelén presented the award on 1 October during the Orthodox church leader's visit to the Lutheran church.

The citation reads: "His All Holiness, Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome & Ecumenical Patriarch. For his efforts to promote religious freedom and human rights, for calling the attention of the world to the needs of refugees and for across the globe showing that care for creation is an ecumenical and spiritual responsibility."

Recognizing work for unity, justice and peace

The Church of Sweden Archbishop presents the St Erik award to church leaders and others who have made an impact through their work for the unity of the church, humanitarian assistance and support to Swedes living abroad. Awarded since 1996,

it also recognizes engagement for peace, gender justice and combatting discrimination.

The Ecumenical Patriarch is the 25th recipient of the Plaque of St Erik. Previous recipients include South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1999) and Church of England Archbishop Rowan Williams (2006). In 2007 the award went to Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, former General Secretary of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and Walter Cardinal Kasper, then President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

‘The green patriarch’

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew is first among equals among Eastern Orthodox bishops and serves as the primary spokesperson for the Orthodox communion, especially in ecumenical contacts with other Christian church bodies. In office since 1991, he has always insisted that ecological issues are basically also existential and spiritual issues. He is often referred to as the “the green patriarch” because of his work on care for creation.

The Ecumenical Patriarch is visiting Sweden and the Greek Orthodox Metropolitanate of Sweden and all Scandinavia this week. He addressed the Church of Sweden General Synod, where he was the guest of honor.

A joint call to action: Give the earth an opportunity to heal

In anticipation of the visit Archbishop Jackelén and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew wrote a joint op-ed for Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*, calling for action on climate justice.

“There is a need for climate justice,” wrote the two church leaders, adding that often those who have contributed the least to global warming are most affected by climate change. The climate crisis is fueled by lifestyles that “make greed seem like a virtue,” they noted. What is needed is “rational action inspired by the best science available, while also needing to have an existential understanding of how and why we feel and act as we do.”

Archbishop Jackelén and Patriarch Bartholomew I concluded the article with a call to action: “We must choose life. Give the earth the opportunity to heal, so that it can continue to provide for us and so that people can live in a world characterized by fairness, justice and freedom.”

- Source: lutheranworld.org