03/03/2026

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: “We pray for the prevalence of peace in our deeply troubled world”

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With all due solemnity and in accordance with the tradition formed over the centuries, the Sunday of Orthodoxy was celebrated on 1st of March 2026 at the Sacred Cathedral of the First-Throned Church of Constantinople.

The Divine Liturgy was presided over by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, concelebrating with Their Eminences the Metropolitans Ambrosios of Karpathos and Kasos, Apostolos of Miletus, Joseph of Proikonnesos, Meliton of Philadelphia, Athanasios of Koloneia, Dionysios of Zakynthos, Antonios of Glyfada, Joseph of Buenos Aires, Cleopas of Sweden and All Scandinavia, Nathanael of Chicago, Myron of New Zealand, and Constantine of Denver.

During the Divine Liturgy, the ordination to the Diaconate of Subdeacon Mr. Vladimir Konichshev took place. He was given the name Platon, after the Holy Hieromartyr Platon, Bishop of Estonia, who was martyred in 1919. The newly ordained cleric will serve in the Exarchate of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Lithuania.

The festal homily was delivered by His Eminence Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon.

In attendance were His Eminence Archbishop Nektarios of Anthedon, Representative of the Holy Sepulchre in Constantinople; Their Eminences Metropolitans Eirinaios of Myriophyton and Peristasis, Theoleptos of Iconium, Ioakeim of Bursa, and Gregorios of Ankara; His Eminence Cardinal Blase Joseph Cupich, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Chicago; Their Graces Bishops Adrian of Halicarnassus and Savvas of Donetsk and Slavyansk from the Church of Ukraine, who headed a large group of Ukrainian pilgrims; clergy; Athonite monks; Archons of the Great Church of Christ, led by Mr. Athanasios Martinos, President of the Brotherhood of Archons “Panagia Pammakaristos”; Ambassador Mr. Konstantinos Koutras, Consul General of Greece in Constantinople; the Civil Governor of Mount

Athos, the Honourable Mr. Alkiviadis Stefanis, Archon of the Great Church of Christ; and a large number of faithful from Constantinople and abroad.

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In his address prior to the ordination of the new deacon, the Ecumenical Patriarch emphasised that especially on this day “we pray to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ for the prevalence of peace in our deeply troubled world, which is tragically afflicted by war, conflicts, violence, and bloodshed. May the Prince of Peace hear our prayer, strengthen those who strive for the restoration of peace, and have mercy on us all!”

At another point in his homily, His All-Holiness referred to the struggles of the Mother Church of Constantinople for the preservation of the faith and reminded the faithful that she bears upon her shoulders the heavy cross of responsibility for the stability and well-being of the Churches of God.

“A living reflection of those ancient struggles for the spiritual freedom of the human person can be discerned today in the persons and ministry of the clergy of our newly established Exarchate in Lithuania. The brothers who stand before Our Modesty carry the pulse, the anguish, and also the hope of a land that experienced harsh conquests, maps redrawn by force, and identities imposed through violence. The establishment of the Patriarchal Exarchate transcends the narrow limits of a formal legal protocol. It constitutes an act of spiritual emancipation. The Holy Great Church of Christ does not forget her flock. The Orthodox people of the Baltic countries, refusing to equate canonical order with subjugation and the instrumentalisation of faith by worldly empires, have once again found in the Ecumenical Patriarchate their true spiritual heart, a paternal haven that remains wide open, ready to offer the freedom of life in Christ far from ethnophyletism.

“At this sacred altar, within the compunction-filled atmosphere of Paschal expectation, you approach today, beloved Subdeacon, to be clothed with divine grace. You are the first to receive the rank of Deacon for the Exarchate of Lithuania, offering literally your entire existence as the first-fruits of a new and hopeful ecclesiastical planting in the northern geographical latitudes. We invoke today the grace of the All-Holy Spirit, the life-giving Bestower who ‘constitutes the entire institution of the Church,’ that He may render you an instrument of divine good pleasure and a humble servant of the people of God.”

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At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, together with the concelebrating Hierarchs, celebrated the customary Trisagion for the repose of the souls of all “who struggled and were perfected in our Orthodox faith.” This was followed by the customary procession of the Holy Icons in the courtyard of the Patriarchate, during which the Ecumenical Patriarch blessed the faithful from the balcony.

In the afternoon, the Ecumenical Patriarch presided at the Lenten Vespers at the Church of the Dormition of the Theotokos at Exi Marmara.

The homily was delivered by Archimandrite Lazaros Theodosiou, cleric of the Most Holy Archdiocese of Constantinople.

Photographs: Nikos Papachristou

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