

## **Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: “The Great Mother Church of Christ, embraces all people, all the races of the earth.”**

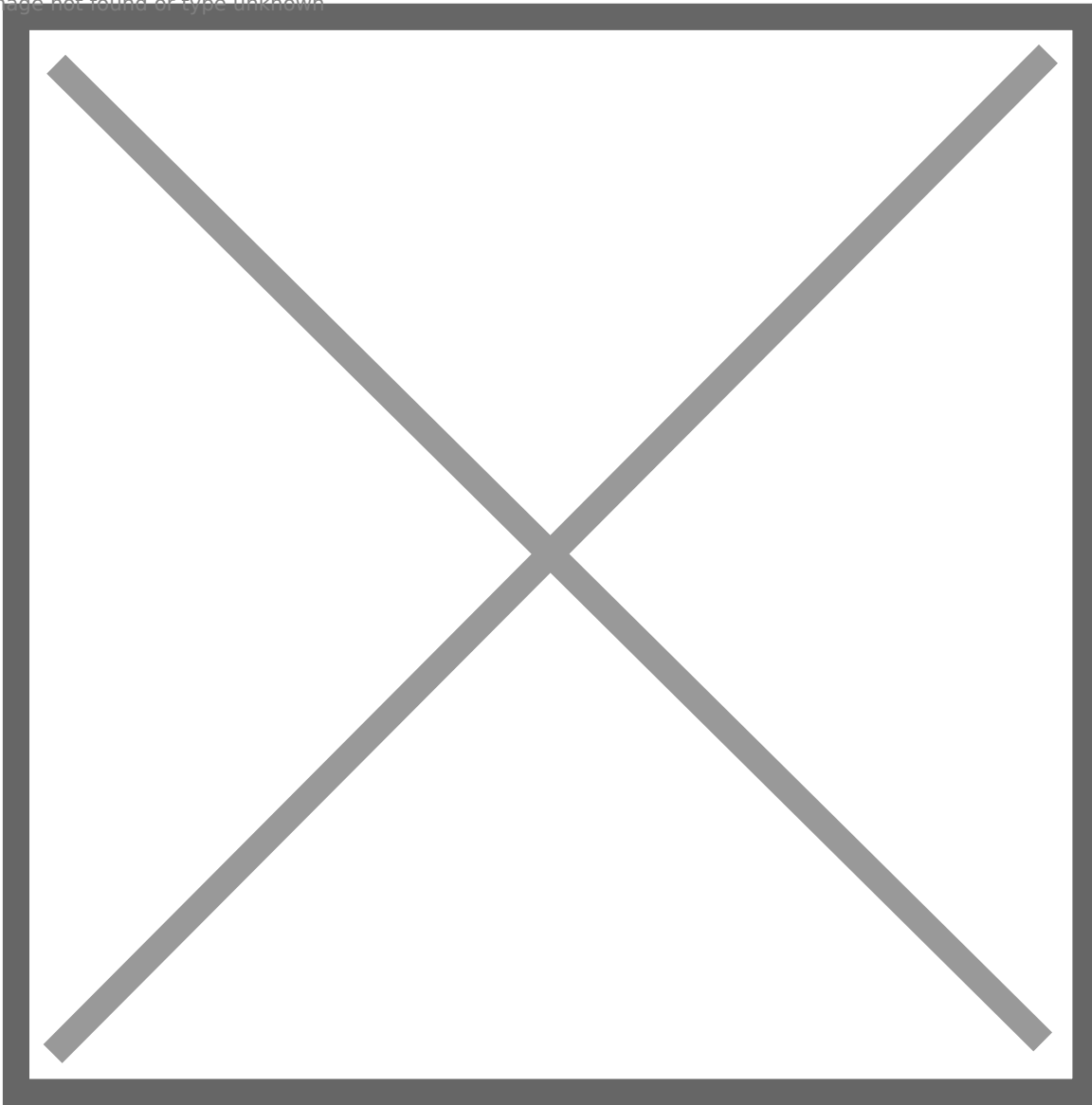


With feelings of joy and gratitude, the President of the Hellenic Republic, Mr. Konstantinos Tasoulas, welcomed His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and his entourage to the Presidential Mansion, underscoring his invaluable contribution over these 35 years of Patriarchal ministry and 65 years of priestly service.

Addressing the Primate of Orthodoxy, Mr Tasoulas stressed that “you represent an institution of immense radiance, as you are the spiritual leader of millions of Orthodox Christians throughout the world.” At the same time, he expressed the boundless respect held by the Greek State for the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Ecumenical Throne, noting that it “always follows with interest, concern, and admiration your efforts, which you undertake with great fortitude, overcoming the challenges faced by the Great Church.”

On behalf of the Greek people, the President congratulated the Ecumenical Patriarch for his recent address in the Hellenic Parliament, emphasising that the highlighting of the three pillars upon which the modern world is or ought to be based, namely human dignity, ecological responsibility, and the need for peace, “showed how firmly you grasp global problems and how valuable the contribution of Orthodoxy and religion in general can be to global reconciliation, which we so greatly need, especially in these troubled times.”

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He continued: “Your All-Holiness, your commonwealth is in heaven, as you said. Yet your witness also exists here and illuminates the world, and this witness is important. That is why you receive such acceptance, such welcome, and such recognition. You defend sacred shrines, extinguished lamps, with pilgrimages to Cappadocia, to Asia Minor, and to Eastern Thrace. You uphold interreligious dialogue and the unity of Orthodoxy, and recently you stated the emblematic truth that ‘if there is no peace among religions, there can be no peace in the world.’” He concluded by noting that this mission for interreligious dialogue and Orthodox unity is of paramount importance, adding that “our hopes and our trials, those of our nation, which the Patriarchate also represents, rest upon your shoulders and your spiritual struggle, so that peace and reconciliation in the world may come through your exhortations to humanity and your supplications to God.”

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, after thanking President

Tasoulas for the warm reception, recalled that “during your exceptionally successful presidency of the Hellenic Parliament, I had the opportunity to be received by you, and I remember that after your address I told you that I admired your eloquence and the beauty of your Greek speech.” He added: “Today, this impression is confirmed, and I add that it is not only your eloquence that moves and inspires our admiration, but also your sentiments towards the Mother Church and towards my humble person. These feelings fill us with emotion, but also with strength and encouragement for the humble ministry we carry out from the martyric Phanar all these years.”

He further noted that “indeed, we who serve at the sacred centre of Orthodoxy have the honour and privilege to represent an institution that survives through the centuries under changing political circumstances and upheavals, yet by the grace of God continues to endure and to bear witness to the whole world, a witness of love, unity, reconciliation, and respect for the sanctity of the human person.”

As he stated: “I emphasise in all my speeches, and also recently in Parliament, that for the mission of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the human being is at the centre of all our thoughts, words, and actions. For every human person is unique and irreplaceable, created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, we respect the sanctity and uniqueness of every human person.”

Within this same framework, he stressed that “racism and racial discrimination are far removed from the ethos of Orthodoxy; the Mother, the Great Church of Christ embraces all people, all the races of the earth. This is evident in the flock of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which is scattered throughout the world and includes not only Greeks but also Orthodox Christians of many other ethnic and cultural backgrounds, whom we serve from the Phanar with the same care and love.”

Addressing Mr Tasoulas, he observed: “You pointed out three central elements of my humble address in Parliament. These are indeed the pillars of our thought and action, because they constitute the essence of the Gospel message, centred on the human person and governed by love, which is the quintessence of Christianity.”

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However, he maintained that “the ministry of the Patriarchate from its centuries-old seat at the Phanar in Constantinople is not always easy,” and clarified: “We face temptations and challenges. Ethnophyletism, unfortunately, has re-emerged after the collapse of the Communist regime where it had prevailed. And this ethnophyletism, which in 1872, at a great Synod convened at the Phanar, was condemned as a heresy, continues even today to divide Orthodoxy, for whose unity and cooperation the Ecumenical Patriarchate, especially during the years of my humble Patriarchate, has made many efforts. It has sought to strengthen intra-Orthodox or pan-Orthodox dialogue and cooperation; we hastened the convocation of the Holy and Great Council, which met ten years ago in Crete; we did everything we could as the First-Throne Church, which has not only the right but also the responsibility to guide and coordinate pan-Orthodox affairs. Yet, I repeat, the curse of ethnophyletism has penetrated even into the body of the Orthodox Church and afflicts Orthodoxy today. Unfortunately, our Slavic brethren, led by the Most Holy

Church of Russia, are chiefly those who are fragmenting pan-Orthodox unity.”

Continuing, he stressed that “we shall continue our work in conscience, always with the support of the Hellenic State, to which, on the occasion of our meeting, I convey the gratitude and blessing of the Mother Church, and I express the certainty that in the future we shall always have the full support of the Hellenic State, of each Greek government, so that we may be able to fulfil the universal mission of our Patriarchate without hindrance.”

Concluding, the Primate of Orthodoxy thanked the President of the Hellenic Republic, Mr. Konstantinos Tasoulas, for the warm reception, recalling that “even last year, during my visit, you were then a new President, you had only just assumed office, yet you did not deprive us of your love and your expressions of honour,” and finally he wished that “our Holy God may protect Greece, safeguard the one who expresses the unity of the Greek nation, namely Your Excellency, grant you and your family, in your personal life, health, happiness, and long life, and that Greece may live in a climate of prosperity, unity, and peace. Amen!”

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