

Our planet unites us in a very unique way



For over thirty years now, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has pioneered global and local awareness on climate change. This is not a matter of personal pride for the Orthodox Church and our own pastoral ministry. On the contrary, it is a matter of urgent priority.

As a result, we have concentrated our efforts in mobilizing all faithful and people of good will, as well as all people of authority in all segments of society, to recognize and remember that our external actions are a reflection of our innermost attitudes. By the same token, what we witness in our world is an extension of what we want in our heart.

So the question we would like to address to all this afternoon is: what do we really want in our heart and for our world? After all, we know what needs to be done and we know how it must be done. We have heard the facts; we have been made aware of the science; we surely envisage the future. Unlike previous generations, we have no excuse; we cannot claim that we did not know. Nevertheless, despite the information at our disposal, it is becoming abundantly clear that so little is unfortunately being done.

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This is because the crisis that we face has less to do with nature or the environment, and more to do with the way we perceive and treat the world. We are abusing the earth in an irresponsible and godless manner precisely because we look at it in this way. Unless we radically change the way we see the world, unless we voluntarily transform our pattern of consumption, then we will continue dealing with symptoms, rather than with their causes.

What we propose to you is that there is an enormous gap and an immense distance between the head, the heart, and the hands. It is a long and difficult journey from the head to the heart; and it is an even longer and rigorous journey from the heart to the hands. We are called to bridge that gap; to close that distance.

It is of course comforting and promising to witness so many diverse categories of people – many of them here among us in Davos! – increasingly accepting the challenge and embracing the urgency of climate change. The fact that we are here today as concerned citizens and leaders makes us optimistic. However, we can no

longer transfer the responsibility to others; we cannot afford to shift the blame elsewhere. There is no excuse for any delay.

We have experimented with our world's sustainability and exhausted our planet's resources; we have exploited the earth and prematurely led species to extinction; what is worse, we have exposed the most vulnerable among us to the consequences of our reckless consumption of energy.

In order to restore the balance of our planet, we need a spiritual worldview, which promotes humility, respect and solidarity. We must become conscious of the impact of our actions on creation and other people. We must direct our focus away from what we want to what is our duty and to what the planet needs. Otherwise, we are just entertaining convenient conversations and idle talk.

Distinguished guests,

We believe that our planet unites us in a very unique way. The earth transforms the global into the profoundly local. Think about this: each one of us is different with regard to background and status, position and prestige, ideology and belief. Everyone in this room may hold a different conviction or opinion about the origin and destiny of our world. All of us may disagree on social policy or political action. However, we all agree on the need to protect our world and its natural resources – which are neither infinite nor debatable – for future generations.

So the earth makes everything local and personal. We are all in this together! We are all in the same boat! There is no place for indifference; and there is no time for indecision. Many of our world's global and political leaders are among us. We urge them to be more ambitious in their legislation and more tenacious in their action. We ask them to take the proper measures with clarity and commitment. We encourage them to pay attention to the momentum on the grassroots level and the swelling protests around the world – not only by those suffering from the impact of climate change, but also by the youth imploring for their future and calling for solidarity of generations. Their world – our world – is not negotiable!

The world is waiting; the world is watching. We are responsible for our inadequate and inconsistent action. We are accountable for our role in the plight of refugees and our contribution to natural calamities. By some mysterious connection that we do not always understand (and sometimes choose to ignore), the earth reminds us of our vocation to protect our planet and its natural resources, of our obligation to preserve and sustain these for our neighbors and for future generations. We will be judged by the urgency with which we respond to the ecological crisis of our age. The earth has the resilience to heal, but only if we allow it to remain whole.

Dear friends,

We pray that the results of this panel and conversation will provide means to explore ways for bridging the untenable and unacceptable gap between theory and

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presence in our collective vocation and moral obligation to respond to climate change with a sense of priority, gravity, and sincerity.
May God bless your noble efforts to care for His creation.
Thank you for your attention.

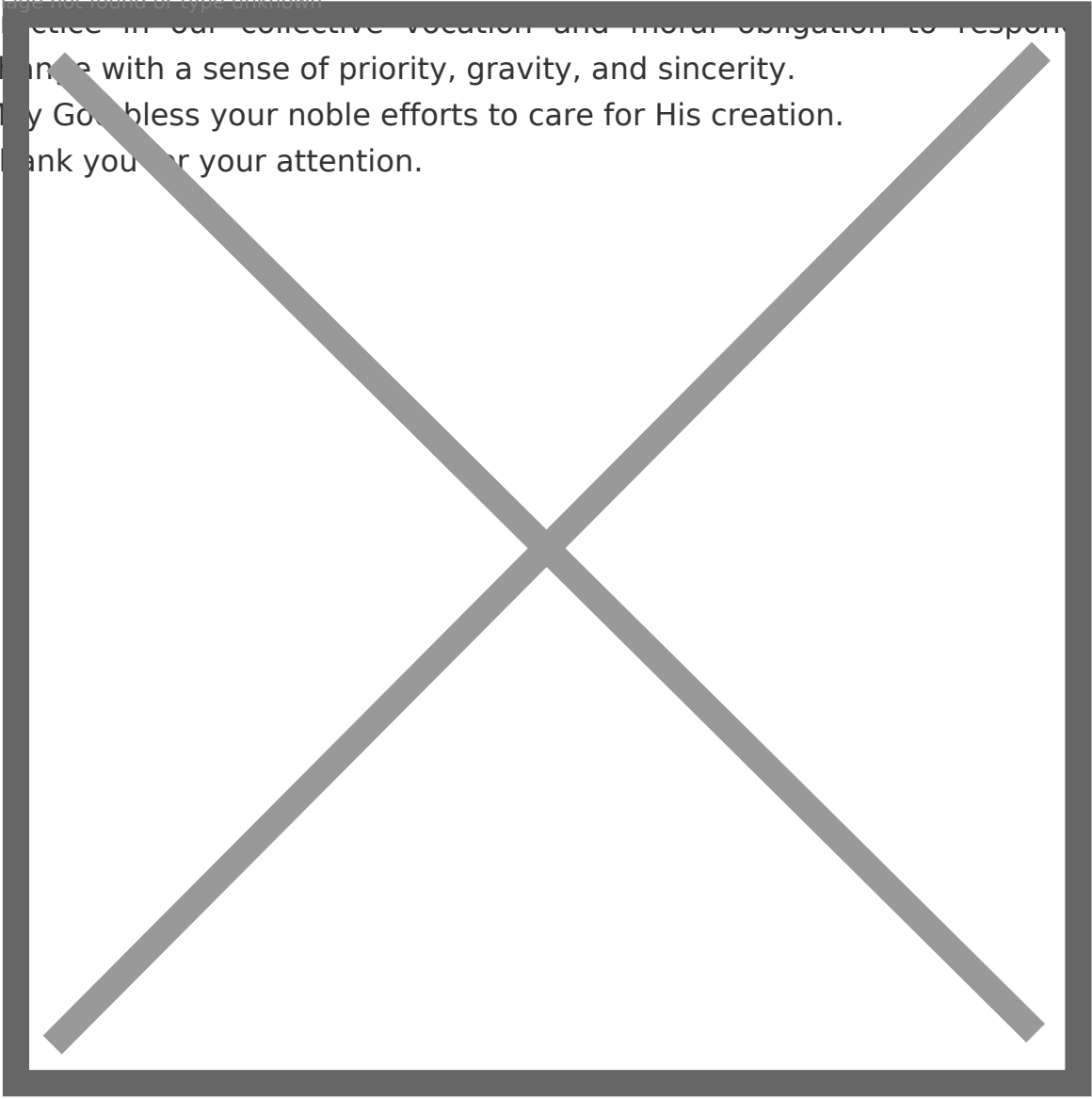
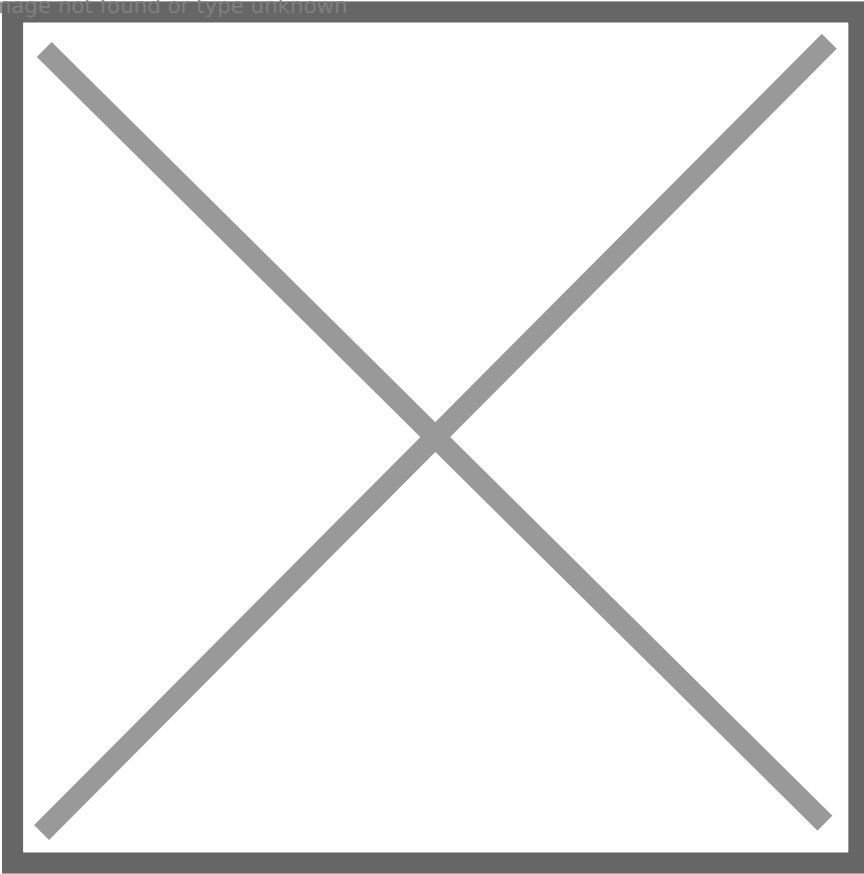




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