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Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to Give Commencement Address at Notre Dame



Patriarch Bartholomew, Orthodox Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch, will deliver the principal address and receive an honorary degree at the University of Notre Dame's 175th commencement ceremony May 17.

"Patriarch Bartholomew has been a champion for understanding and encounter among the world's religions, as well as for environmental initiatives, religious freedom and human rights," said Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C., Notre Dame's president. "We are honored that on his visit to the United States in May, the Patriarch will take time to offer his reflections to our graduates and their families."

The ecumenical patriarch is the spiritual leader of 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide, with a church history that dates to the Day of Pentecost and the early Christian communities.

Patriarch Bartholomew was elected the 270th archbishop of Constantinople and ecumenical patriarch in October 1991. His tenure has been highlighted by ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue — including formal visits with Roman

Catholic, Old Catholic, Orthodox, other Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders — as well as efforts to promote religious freedom, human rights and protection of the environment. Known as the “Green Patriarch,” he has said: “For human beings to destroy God’s creation, degrade the integrity of the earth and contaminate the planet’s waters, land and air — all of these are sins.”

The recipient of 35 honorary degrees, Patriarch Bartholomew was honored in 1997 with the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian award bestowed by the U.S. Congress.

Born Demetrios Arhondonis in 1940 on the island of Imvros (today, Gökçeada, Turkey), Patriarch Bartholomew completed his undergraduate studies at the Theological School of Halki and graduate studies at the Pontifical Oriental Institute of the Gregorian University in Rome, the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland and the University of Munich.

Ordained to the diaconate in 1961 and to the priesthood in 1969, Patriarch Bartholomew served as an assistant dean at the Theological School of Halki for four years, then was appointed personal secretary to the late Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios. He also served as metropolitan (the leader of a diocese or archdiocese) of Philadelphia and then metropolitan of Chalcedon.

Other 2020 honorary degree recipients will be announced later this semester.

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