30/06/2021

Introductory Remarks By H.E. Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden αt the Webinar, organized by CEC, entitled: Impact of Covid-19 on Churches



June 30, 2021

Dearly Beloved Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

It gives me great pleasure to greet all of you today during the framework of the 2021 General Assembly of the CEC. While today's meeting is being conducted virtually, I add my prayers and hopes to those existing in your hearts and souls for a quick return to in-person meetings as new treatments and preventive measures to combat the epidemic challenging us for the past year and a half continue to be rolled out and countries around the world gradually prepare for the post-Covid era.

Today's Assembly finds our churches and societies facing major challenges – many arising directly from the effects of the epidemic, and others that pre-existed it but were made even more acute by the disruption of our daily norms.

During these most difficult times, humanity banded together and people from every sector and country collaborated to help neutralize this deadly disease that sprung upon us with the speed and stealthiness of a venomous viper. At the same time, however, Christians around the world were faced with striking provocations. Governments hastened to shut down churches and unilaterally intervene in the sacramental life of the Church and divine worship, without so much as consulting religious leaders or working to find mutually agreed upon solutions. Christians worldwide were targeted by certain politicians, members of the media, and their

fellow citizens.

The vast experience of the Church in dealing with disease and safeguarding the health of its flock – which far outdates that of all nation states and current international entities – was largely overlooked, with all the consequences that this entails for society and the citizenry.

Nonetheless, it is through these tribulations and trials that the Church grows stronger and the faithful search for the presence of God in their lives all the more intensely. Today's afternoon session will feature a stimulating discourse on the impact of Covid-19 on Churches and whether or not there were any positive outcomes from it.

Like all of you, I look forward to hearing the views of the distinguished guests who have been invited to speak; our keynote speaker Rev. Dr. Richard Sudworth, as well as Rev. Protopresbyter Stavros K. Kofinas & Rev. Dr. Vilmos Fischl.

While the battle against the coronavirus continues to be fought daily, today's assembly will allow us to take the time and reflect on successes and shortcomings experienced by our churches in this struggle, as well as consider the state of other key issues like migration, poverty, democracy, and the role of our churches in contemporary society.

One of the things that this crisis has demonstrated is that churches remain essential and must be recognized as such by governments worldwide and social partners. In my humble opinion, the CEC's advocacy for this cause can provide a great service to our individual and collective ministries.

I wish you all health and fruitful participation in today's webinar. Thank you.

Metropolisofsweden