30/08/2021

Message from His Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch on the feast of Indictus



† B A R T H O L O M E W
By God’s Mercy Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome
and Ecumenical Patriarch

To the Plenitude of the Church
Grace, Peace and Mercy from the Maker of All Creation
Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ
Esteemed brethren and beloved children in the Lord,

The Feast of the Indiction, the solemn day of prayers for the natural environment, finds once again humanity confronted with intense weather conditions due to mounting climate change, with devastating floods and fires across the globe, as well as with the Coronavirus pandemic and its socioeconomic consequences.
The fact that the restrictive measures in transportation and the limits imposed on industrial production have resulted in a reduction of pollutants and emissions, offered an additional valuable lesson on global interconnection and on the interdependence of all dimensions of life. Moreover, it has been also revealed anew that the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s ecological initiatives, which comprise an

extension of the Church's theology and liturgical tradition, correspond with scientific findings and with experts' recommendations calling for multifaceted mobilization in order to protect the integrity of the natural environment.

We thus pray for the swift overcoming of the consequences of the health crisis and for the illumination from above of governments throughout the world, so that they do not return to or persist upon economism, to those principles of organization of the economic life, of production and consumption, of exhaustive exploitation of natural resources, principles that prevailed prior to the pandemic. Further, it is our genuine desire that the dissemination of pseudoscientific opinions concerning the purported dangers of the Covid-19 vaccines, the slander aimed toward specialists of the medical field, and the unfounded degradation of the seriousness of the disease, be terminated. Unfortunately, similar opinions are propagated in regard to climate change as well, its cause and its disastrous effects. The reality is entirely different, and must be faced with responsibility, collaboration, joint actions, and common vision.

Inactivity is inconceivable when in full knowledge of the shared great contemporary challenges of humanity. Indifference toward our suffering brethren and toward the destruction of the "very good" creation, is an offence against God and a violation of His commandments. Wherein exist respect toward creation and tangible love toward man, the "beloved of God," therein God is present.
After the Holy and Great Council (Crete, 2016), the Ecumenical Patriarchate, in accordance to its spirit and decisions, appointed an official commission, comprised of theologians, to draft a document on the social implications of our faith and on the social mission and witness of the Orthodox Church in the contemporary world. This text, which was approved for publication by the Holy and Sacred Synod and is entitled For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church, states the following: "The Church encourages the faithful to be grateful for—and to accept—the findings of the sciences, even those that might occasionally oblige them to revise their understandings of the history and frame of cosmic reality. The desire for scientific knowledge flows from the same wellspring as faith's longing to enter ever more deeply into the mystery of God" (§ 71).

The Holy Great Church of Christ emphatically highlights the indivisibility of the natural environment's protection and the philanthropic care for one's neighbor. Both an eco-friendly stance and the recognition of the sacredness of the human person are a "liturgy after the Liturgy," vital dimensions of the Eucharistic actualization of the Church. The life of the Church is a manifest respect for creation, as well as the place and the way of experiencing the culture of

personhood and of solidarity.
Most honorable brothers and cherished children,

Throughout this difficult period, it is an essential pastoral duty of the Church to undertake initiatives for the containment of the pandemic. And it is also a categorical ethical mandate to support global access to the immunization against the coronavirus, especially in poorer nations, in accordance with the words of our Lord, “Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:40). We ought to love one another “as Christ has loved us” (Eph. 5:2) and to show ourselves as “priests” of creation, safeguarding and cultivating it with care and affection, and, offering in thanksgiving this exceedingly precious gift of God’s Grace unto the Creator of all.

In closing, we wholeheartedly wish unto all a blessed, healthful and fruitful new ecclesiastical year, and we call upon you, through the intercessions of the Theotokos Pammakaristos, the grace and mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory and the dominion unto the everlasting ages. Amen!

September 1,
†Bartholomew of Constantinople
Fervent supplicant of all before God

photo: Nikos Papachristou / Ecumenical Patriarchate