

21/02/2023

## Healing Humanity: Efforts Against Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery



With the blessing of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas travelled this past week to Thessaloniki, Greece to host a conference entitled Healing Humanity: Efforts Against Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery. The conference took place from Thursday, February 16 to Saturday, February 18, 2023, and was organized by the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, in collaboration with the Faculty of Theology of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

This undertaking was a continuation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's commitment to learn, to act, and to witness toward the goal of the elimination of the interconnected forms of enslavement, visible and invisible, which affect nearly 50 million people worldwide. The event gathered together a diverse and international range of experts, including academics, religious leaders, NGO heads and personnel, law enforcement agents, political actors and university students.

The invitees enjoyed a rich exchange of ideas and information, each drawing from their own first-hand experiences and unique perspective in combatting the complex and constantly evolving problems of human exploitation around the globe. The panel presentations on the second day of the three-day conference were open to the general public. Academics from the United Kingdom and from Greece presented their research to a full amphitheater in the Faculty of Theology at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The list of academics and the titles of their presentations can be seen on the official conference poster, and their presentations, which were live-streamed, may still be viewed on the Faculty of Theology YouTube channel.

His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew sent a message of support for the conference, as did His Beatitude Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece. Orthodox Hierarchs in attendance included Their Eminences Metropolitan Athenagoras of Belgium; Metropolitan George of Guinea from the Patriarchate of Alexandria; Metropolitan Platon of Langadas, Liti and Rentini; His Grace Bishop Nikiforos of Amorion, Abbot of the Holy Stavropegic and Patriarchal Monastery of Vlatadon, in Thessaloniki; and His Grace Bishop Spyridon of Amastris. His Grace Bishop Mar Awraham Youkhanis of the Assyrian Church of the East also travelled from London to attend the conference.

Other notable contributions at the conference included: Dr. Chrysostomos Stamoulis, Dean of the AUTH Faculty of Theology and Professor of Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology; Rita Theodorou Superman, Member of Parliament of the Republic of Cyprus, who previously served for 36 years in the Cyprus Police, including 15 years as head of the police anti-trafficking unit; Marina Ntonopoulou, manager of A21 Greece—the A21 Campaign was started in Thessaloniki in 2008 and currently has 19 offices across 14 countries—Dimitris Kontoudis, A21 Greece coordinator for training professionals; Police Lieutenant Vasileios Georgiadis of the Hellenic Police's Department of Combating Human Trafficking; Presbytera Maria Drossos, who has worked with World Vision Canada, the Christie Refugee Welcome Center in Toronto, St John the Compassionate Orthodox Mission, and Saint Catherine's Vision; the Rev. Dr Stavros Kofinas, Coordinator of the Network of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for Pastoral Health Care; and Stefania Gabriela Banu and Carmen Jitianu of Roconnect, a recently-established and award-winning NGO serving the Romanian communities in London and across the United Kingdom.

The conference closed with addresses by Patroklos Georgiadis, Secretary General of Migration Policy for the Ministry of Migration and Asylum of the Hellenic Republic, and by Elizabeth K. Lee, Consul General of the United States of America in

Thessaloniki.

On Sunday, February 19, after the conclusion of the conference, His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas ordained the newly tonsured Monk Gregory (Alexios Florides of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain) to the diaconate during a Hierarchal liturgy at the Holy Stavropegic and Patriarchal Monastery of Vlatadon.



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