

HE Joachim of Bursa, message for the young ITO 2023 participants: „You are the torchbearers of our faith”



Metropolitan Joachim of Bursa transmitted a message for the closing of the International Meeting of Orthodox Youth (ITO) 2023, held in Timișoara, Romania, between August 31 and September 3.

His Eminence participated in the event personally, as the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and in the end left a message for the young participants, saying: „ You are the torchbearers of our faith”.

ITO reunites Orthodox youth from Romania and the Romanian diaspora, from the Romanian historic communities around the Romanian borders and other Orthodox Churches.

Full text of Metropolitan Joachim of Bursa’s message after the conclusion of the youth meeting:

Your Eminence Ioan, Archbishop of Timișoara and Metropolitan of Banat,
Your Eminences, Your Graces,
Distinguished Clergy, Honoured Guests, and Beloved Orthodox Youth,

It is a profound honour to stand before you today in the vibrant city of Timisoara, Romania, where I have seen the Orthodox faith shine so brightly in the hearts of our youth. As we gather here, I am deeply moved by the spirit of unity and devotion that permeates this gathering, and am filled with hope for the future.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate, under the wise and visionary leadership of His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, has also been a beacon; a beacon of hope, dialogue, and spiritual guidance for Orthodox Christians worldwide. His tireless efforts to promote dialogue, ecological awareness, and justice for all resonate with the aspirations of our youth.

Today, I would like to share with you some insights into the youth initiatives

undertaken by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and how they empower our young Orthodox believers:

The Ecumenical Patriarchate recognises the immense potential of our youth as the future leaders of our Church.

Through programs and events like this one and the Youth Conference organised last year by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, participation in other Pan-Orthodox youth initiatives, retreats and events held across the Ecumenical Patriarchate, from America to Australia, Great Britain to Canada, and within the historic City of Constantinople, young Orthodox Christians are given a platform to voice their ideas, concerns, and hopes for our faith.

Dialogue

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has been a pioneer in fostering dialogue and understanding between different religious traditions. The youth initiatives of the Patriarchate encourage our young believers to engage in meaningful conversations with people of other faiths, promoting peace and harmony in an increasingly diverse and challenging world.

Environmental Stewardship

His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew's commitment to environmental stewardship has inspired countless young Orthodox Christians to take action in protecting God's creation. Through initiatives like the "Green Patriarchate," our youth are actively involved in caring for the environment.

Charity

Finally, the Patriarchate's youth initiatives extend a helping hand to those in need. Young Orthodox Christians are encouraged to participate in charitable activities, reaching out to the marginalised and vulnerable in our societies.

As we reflect on these initiatives, let us remember that our youth are not just the future of our Church but also its vibrant present. You are the torchbearers of our faith, and your passion, dedication, and faithfulness to the teachings of Christ are a source of inspiration for us all.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, all youth ministry should have as its fruit the participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

This should be our goal and aim, that through our initiatives, through showing our love and support to the young members of Christ's body – especially throughout such a crucial period in their lives – they are directed to Him, to His Church.

We witnessed this yesterday night at the beautiful Vigil here at the Cathedral. It is important that you, the Church's youth, become good examples and by acquiring 'the Spirit of peace... thousands around you will be saved,' in the gracious words of St Seraphim of Sarov.

It is also essential that we speak to our young people with an understanding of their contemporary context and way of life, never judging or speaking down to them. Without this Spirit of peace, the presence of Christ in our lives, the wide and easy path that the fallen world offers can lead to catastrophic consequences.

The academic field of psychology reminds us that a young person – particularly throughout adolescence – searches for, and is in need of, a communion of persons greater than their own family, offering them identity, faithfulness, joy and comfort, in a troubled world. This is offered in the sacramental, ascetic and philanthropic life of the Church.

In conclusion, I urge our Orthodox youth gathered here today to embrace the opportunities and inspiration offered by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and His All-Holiness' Bartholomew's youth initiatives. Let us work together to strengthen our faith, promote unity among Orthodox Christians, and be active participants in your churches and the broader global community.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all as we embark on this journey of faith and service.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

Photo credit: Basilica.ro archive / Mircea Florescu (Metropolitan Joachim of Bursa, second from left, took part in the Procession of Friendship, organized within ITO 2023)

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