

Message from Bartholomew I, ecumenical patriarch

His holiness the ecumenical patriarch Bartholomew I

Bose, 5 - 8 September 2012

XX International Ecumenical Conference

Religious leaders and theologians throughout the world today recognize that the ecological crisis is much more than an issue of environmental preservation

XX International Ecumenical Conference on Orthodox spirituality

MAN-CUSTODIAN OF CREATION

*Bose, Wednesday 5 - Saturday 8 September 2012
in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches*

At the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the 12th of May, 2012

Dear Brother in Christ, Prior Enzo,

Beloved members of the Community in Bose,

Assembled conference speakers and participants,

It is with great pleasure and sincere delight that we respond to the gracious invitation of the Prior of your sacred community and the organizers of the 20th international ecumenical gathering to address a message on the occasion of the conference entitled "Man: Custodian of Creation" to be officially delivered by His Eminence Metropolitan John of Pergamon as our formal representative to this auspicious assembly.

Your conference will consider various aspects of the protection and preservation of God's creation from the biblical to the liturgical, from the patristic to the monastic, from the theological to the ethical, as well as from the eschatological to the contemporary. At the very heart of your discussion will be on the one hand how to define the role and responsibility of human beings, and on the other hand how to discuss the sacredness of creation in today's world.

Religious leaders and theologians throughout the world today recognize that the ecological crisis is much more than an issue of environmental preservation. Insofar as human-induced, it is a profoundly moral and spiritual problem. To persist in the current path of ecological destruction is not only folly. It is no less than suicidal, jeopardizing the diversity of the very earth that we inhabit, enjoy and share. This is why we have repeatedly described this phenomenon as a sin against God and creation.

It is painfully evident that our response to the scientific testimony has been generally reluctant and gravely inadequate. Unless we take radical and immediate measures to reduce emissions stemming from unsustainable – in fact unjustifiable, if not simply unjust – excesses in the demands of our lifestyle, then the impact will be both alarming and imminent.

In this regard, churches must undoubtedly first put their own houses in order; our faithful must learn to embrace the urgency of the issue. All of us must realize the need for a change deep within our hearts. And we must discern the connection between spiritual commitment and moral ecological practice. Religious communities are well-placed to take a long-term view of the world as God's creation. In theological terminology, this is called "eschatological." And they are well-equipped to appreciate how creation is a gift of divine communion. In theological language, this is called "eucharistic."

Beloved friends, from the warm embrace of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, we extend to all of you our fervent prayers and wholehearted wishes for a successful and memorable conference.

Prayerfully yours,

+ Bartholomew,
Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome
and Ecumenical Patriarch