

Message from Youhanna X, Patriarch of Antioch

XXIII International Ecumenical Conference on Orthodox spirituality

MERCY AND FORGIVENESS

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in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches

MESSAGE FROM YOUHANNA X, PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH

Dear participants,

"Blessed are the merciful, because God will show them mercy" (Matt. 5:7).

Where there is forgiveness and mercy, there is also life. Living in the Middle East, we see many who are receivers of inherited patterns of conflicts from before time. What breaks the cycle of violence is not forgetfulness. It is rather initiating our people into true forgiveness, which leads to healing. Forgiveness is a journey of inner struggle that needs personal accompaniment. It is ultimately an act of self-preservation. It is not something to be bestowed by the forgiver on others, but is received as a gift of Grace by surrendering our lives, including our deepest pain, to the Crucified and Risen Lord.

Thus, we commend you on the theme of your 23rd International Ecumenical Conference of Orthodox Spirituality "Mercy and Forgiveness." We entreat you, esteemed hierarchs and distinguished theologians in this conference, to pray fervently for our suffering people in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and all the Middle East, and for the release of all captives, especially our Bishops Paul and Youhanna of Aleppo. Despite all painful challenges, the mission of our Church remains that of practicing forgiveness and incarnating mercy.

Finally, Brethren, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 1:21). May you have fruitful and spirit filled meetings with God's care.

With our Apostolic Blessings,

+ Youhanna X
Patriarch of Antioch and all the East