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Archbishop of Constantinople and New Rome

## **Encyclical Letter on the Day of Protection of the Environment**

September 1, 1989

The abuse by contemporary man of his privileged position in creation and of the Creator's order to him "to have dominion over the earth" (Genesis 1.28) has already led the world to the edge of apocalyptic self-destruction, either in the form of natural pollution which is dangerous for all living beings, or in the form of the extinction of many species of the animal and plant world, or in other forms.

Scientists and other men of learning warn us of the danger, and speak of phenomena which are threatening the life of our planet, such as the "phenomena of the greenhouse" whose first indications have already been noted.

In view of this situation, the Church of Christ cannot remain unmoved. It constitutes a fundamental dogma of her faith that the world was created by God

the Father, who is confessed in the Creed to be “Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.” According to the great Fathers of the Church, Man is the prince of creation, endowed with the privilege of freedom. Being partaker simultaneously of the material and the spiritual world, he was created in order to refer back creation to the Creator, in order that the world may be saved from decay and death. ...

*“We, together with the ... Holy Synod,  
declare the first day of September  
of each year... to be the day  
of the protection of the environment.”*

Unfortunately, in our days under the influence of an extreme rationalism and self-centeredness, man has lost the sense of the sacredness of creation and acts as its arbitrary ruler and rude violator. Instead of the eucharistic and ascetic spirit with which the Orthodox Church brought up her children for centuries, we observe today a violation of nature for the satisfaction of basic human needs, but of man’s endless and constantly increasing desires of lust, encouraged by the prevailing philosophy of the consumer society.

But creation “groans and travails in all its parts” (Romans 8.22), and is now beginning to protest at its

treatment by human beings. Man cannot infinitely and at his pleasure exploit the natural sources of energy. The price of his arrogance will be his self-destruction, if the present situation continues.

*“The Church of Christ cannot remain unmoved. It constitutes a fundamental dogma of faith that the world was created by God the Father... Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.”*

In full consciousness of our duty and paternal spiritual responsibility, having taken all the above into consideration and having listened to the anguish of modern man, we, together with the Sacred and Holy Synod surrounding us, declare the first day of September of each year a day on which, on the occasion of the feast of Indiction, is the first day of the ecclesiastical year, prayers and supplications are offered... for all creation – to be the day of the protection of the environment.

*“We invite... the entire Christian world to offer prayers and supplications to the Maker of all... as thanksgiving for the gift of creation and as petitions for its protection and salvation. At the same time we urge all the faithful to ... respect and protect the natural environment...”*

Therefore, we invite through this our Patriarchal Message the entire Christian world, to offer together with the Mother Great Church of Christ (the Ecumenical Patriarchate) every year on this day prayers and supplications to the Maker of all, both as thanksgiving for the great gift of creation and as petitions for its protection and salvation. At the same time we paternally urge all of the faithful of the world to admonish themselves and their children to respect and protect the natural environment, and on the other hand all those who are entrusted with the responsibility of governing the nations to act without delay, taking all necessary measures for the protection and preservation of the natural creation.

