

# His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

## Keynote address at the opening ceremony of the 2012 Halki Summit

Halki Theological School  
June 18, 2012

Your Eminences, Beloved friends,  
Distinguished participants of the Halki Summit, Esteemed guests,

It is indeed a special privilege to welcome you to the Monastery of the Holy Trinity, the sacred site of our precious and venerable Halki Theological School, for the official opening of the Halki Summit on Global Responsibility and Environmental Sustainability. The Halki Summit follows the tradition of five educational seminars held in this building from 1994 to 1998, as well as eight international symposia held from 1995 to 2009 in the Mediterranean and Black Seas, on the Danube and the Amazon Rivers, in the Adriatic and the Baltic, in the Arctic and along the Mississippi.

Our gathering today is co-sponsored by Southern New Hampshire University, the first carbon-neutral campus in New Hampshire. We are profoundly grateful to President LeBlanc for his generous support and gracious partnership in making this summit a reality. We envisage this summit as a conversation on environment, ethics and innovation. And we are particularly honored by the presence of eminent scholars and experts, church and corporate leaders, but also authors and activists. We all have the same vision, the same aspiration, the same prayer. And we all share the same purpose, the same pledge, the same inspiration: to pass along to our children a clean world with clean water and clean air.

This is the vision behind Dr. Jane Goodall's Institute, which this year celebrates its 35th anniversary with branches in over 120 countries; this is what mobilizes the grassroots 350.org campaign of Mr. Bill McKibben, which in the short span of a few years has emerged as the largest green movement in history; and this is the mission behind Mr. Gary Hirshberg's pioneering work in organic farming and sustainable business. Indeed, there is not a single person in this

historic hall, among this exceptional assembly of participants, who has not assumed extraordinary leadership and exemplary initiatives with regard to the preservation of our planet.

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Our effort over the last two decades has been to promote dialogue and cooperation among various disciplines and faiths, contributing to global awareness and discerning changes in attitude and lifestyle related to the ecological crisis. The Halki Summit is a vital step in this critical dialogue. We are convinced that any real hope of reversing climate change and addressing the environmental pollution requires a radical transformation of the way we perceive and treat our planet. Our humble gathering seeks to bring this dimension of change more firmly into the international dialogue on sustainability.

Dear friends, our summit takes place in anticipation of the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainability. Many of us have witnessed positive changes over the last decade. Nevertheless, all of us are deeply frustrated with the stubborn resistance and reluctant advancement of earth-friendly policies and practices.

Permit us to propose that perhaps the reason for this hesitation and hindrance may lie in the fact that we are unwilling to accept personal responsibility and demonstrate personal sacrifice. In the Orthodox Christian tradition, we refer to this “missing dimension” as *ascesis*, which could be translated as abstinence and moderation, or – better still – simplicity and frugality. The truth is that we resist any demand for self-restraint and self-control.

*Each of us is called to draw a distinction between what we want and what we need, or – more importantly – what the world needs.*

However, dear friends, if we do not live more simply, we cannot learn to share. And if we do not learn to share, then how can we expect to survive? This may be a fundamental religious and spiritual value. Yet it is also a fundamental ethical and existential principle.

Each of us is called to draw a distinction between what we want and what we need, or – more importantly – what the world needs. Greed and gratification reduce the world to a survival of the fittest; whereas generosity and gratitude transform the world into a community of sharing.

We are invited to pursue a way of sacrifice – not a sacrifice that is cheap, but a sacrifice that is costly. As King David once said: “I will not offer to the Lord my God a sacrifice that costs me nothing” (2 Samuel 24.24). We must be prepared to make sacrifices – material and financial – that are genuine and even painful. And in this regard, whether we like it or not, more is demanded from the rich than from the poor.

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Of course, sacrifice is primarily a spiritual issue and less an economic one. Similarly, in speaking of the environmental crisis, we are referring to an issue that is not technological or political, but ethical. The real crisis lies not in the environment but in the human heart. The fundamental problem is to be found not outside but inside ourselves, not in the ecosystem, but in the way we think. Without a revolutionary change within ourselves, all our conservation projects will ultimately remain insufficient and ineffective.

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We know what needs to be done and we know how it must be done. Yet, despite the information at our disposal, unfortunately very little is done. It is a long journey from the head to the heart; and it is an even longer journey from the heart to the hands.

We pray that this Halki Summit will explore ways and means to bridge the unacceptable gap between theory and practice, between ideas and life.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to

all of you for taking time out of your busy schedules together to revive our enthusiasm and revitalize our mutual commitment.

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and it is an even longer journey from the heart  
to the hands.*

It will take no less than a high-profile crusade by religious leaders and civil society to force change among our political leaders. We must persistently remind our political leaders that there is no way of endlessly manipulating our environment that comes without cost or consequence. There is no doubt in our mind that this is a movement as critically urgent and as morally imperative as any campaign for fundamental human and civil rights.

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We wish you a pleasant stay on the island of Halki and in Turkey. We hope that you will enjoy making acquaintances and conversations during the summit. May God abundantly bless you and guide our deliberations over the next days.

*“The real crisis is not in the environment,  
but in the human heart”*

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