

The Primates of All the Canonical Churches

Joint Statement of the Orthodox Primates

March 15, 1992
Constantinople

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1. Gathered together in the Holy Spirit in consultation, the 15th day of March, 1992, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, by the initiative and invitation, and under the presidency of the first among us, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, after the expressed will of other brother Primates, we, by the mercy of God, the Primates of the local Most Holy Patriarchates and Autocephalous and Autonomous Orthodox Churches:

Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople and New Rome, and Ecumenical Patriarch
Parthenios, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa
Ignatius, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East
Diodoros, Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine
Alexiy, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia
Paul, Patriarch of Belgrade and All Serbia
Teoctist, Patriarch of Bucharest and All Romania
Maxim, Patriarch of Sofia and All Bulgaria
Elias, Archbishop of Metschetis and Tiflis and Catholicos, Patriarch
of All Georgia (represented by the Ecumenical Patriarch)
Chrysostomos, Archbishop of Neas Justinianis and All Cyprus (represented by the Patriarch
of Alexandria)
Seraphim, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece
Wasyli, Metropolitan of Warsaw and All Poland
Dorothej, Metropolitan of Prague and All Czechoslovakia
John, Archbishop of Karelia and All Finland

have conferred in brotherly love on matters preoccupying our One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church and have concelebrated the Holy Eucharist in the Patriarchal Church of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on this Sunday which for centuries has been dedicated to Orthodoxy. On this occasion we wish to declare the following:

2. The Most Holy Orthodox Church throughout the oikumene, sojourning in the world and being inevitably affected by the changes taking place in it, finds herself confronted with particularly severe and urgent problems that she desires to face as one body, adhering to Saint Paul, who said: "if one member suffers, all suffer together" (1 Cor.12:26). Moreover, looking in the future of humankind and the whole of God's creation, in light of our entrance into the third millennium a.d. of history, at a time of rapid spiritual and social changes, fulfilling her sacred duty, the

Church wishes to bear her own witness, giving account for the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15) in humility, love and boldness.

The twentieth century can be considered the century of great achievements in the field of knowledge concerning the universe and the attempt to subject creation to human will. During this century, the strength as well as the weakness of the human being have surfaced. After such achievements, no one doubts any longer that the domination of humanity over its environment does not necessarily lead to happiness and the fullness of life. Thus, humanity must have learned that, apart from God, scientific and technological progress becomes an instrument of destruction of nature as well as of social life. This is particularly evident after the collapse of the communist system.

Alongside this collapse we must recognize the failure of all anthropocentric ideologies that have created in people of this century a spiritual void and an existential insecurity and have led many people to seek salvation in new religious and para-religious movements, sects or nearly idolatrous attachments to the material values of this world. ...

“The careless and self-indulgent use of the material creation by humanity, with the help of scientific and technological progress, has already started to cause irreparable damage to the natural environment.”

3. All of these things call the Orthodox to a deeper spiritual as well as canonical unity. ...

6. Now at the end of the second millennium A.D., turning our thoughts more specifically to the general problems of the contemporary world and sharing in the hope but also in the anxieties of humankind, we observe the following:

The rapid progress of technology and the sciences, which provide the instruments for improving the quality of life and relief of pain, misfortune, and illnesses, has unfortunately not always been accompanied by analogous spiritual and ethical foundations. As a result the aforementioned progress is not without serious dangers.

Thus, in human social life, the fact that only a section of humanity accumulates the privileges of this progress and the power proceeding from it exacerbates the misfortune of other people and creates an impetus for agitation or even war. The coexistence of this progress with justice, love and peace is the only safe and sure road, so that this progress will not be transformed from a blessing into a curse in the millennium to come. ...

“The Orthodox Church... invites all Orthodox to dedicate the first day of September of each year... to the offering of prayers and supplication

for the preservation of God's creation."

Tremendous are also the problems that come out of this progress for humankind's survival as a free person created in the image and likeness of God.

Similar are the dangers for the survival of the natural environment. The careless and self-indulgent use of material creation by humanity, with the help of scientific and technological progress, has already started to cause irreparable damage to the natural environment. Unable to remain passive in the face of such destruction, the Orthodox Church, through us, invites all the Orthodox to dedicate the first day of September of each year, the day of the beginning of the ecclesiastical year, to the offering of prayers and supplication for the preservation of God's creation.

The Church also entreats all the Orthodox to adopt the attitude to nature found in the Eucharist and to ascetic traditions of the Church.

7. In view of such tremendous possibilities, as well as dangers, for contemporary humanity, the Orthodox Church hails every progress toward reconciliation and unity. ...

This, in the love of the Lord, we proclaim on the Great and Holy Sunday of Orthodoxy, urging the pious Orthodox Christians in the oikoumene to be united around their canonical pastors and calling all those who believe in Christ to reconciliation and solidarity in confronting the serious dangers threatening the world at this time.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The Primates of All the Canonical Churches

Joint Message of the Orthodox Primates

The Island of Patmos
September 26, 1995

*"Blessing and glory and wisdom and
thanksgiving and honor and power and might
be to our God forever and ever! Amen."*

(Revelation 7:12)

1. We offer glory, praise and thanksgiving to our Triune God for once again deeming us worthy, the Primates of the local Most Holy Orthodox Churches by His mercy and grace, to convene at this time “on the island called Patmos” (Rev. 1:9) for the celebration together of the completion of 1,900 years since St. John wrote the sacred book of Revelation, the conclusion of the Church’s Holy Scriptures.

Radiantly solemnizing together and concelebrating in the Lord the sacred commemoration of the holy glorious Apostle and Evangelist John, and partaking of the Bread and the Cup of our common faith, hope and love, it is our desire to direct a message of peace and love to the faithful of our Most Holy Orthodox Church, to all those who believe in Christ, as well as to every person of good will so that we may unite with them in listening to “what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev. 2:11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22) during these critical times.

*“The misunderstanding of freedom...
leads to... the violation of the natural
world and to ecological destruction.”*

2. These are indeed critical times, making the responsibility of the Church of Christ, not only to her children, but also to all of humanity in general and to all of God’s creation, a somber and multifaceted matter. The apostasy of humankind from God and the effort to deify human power and happiness, the altar upon which everything – our fellow human beings and all the rest of the material creation – is sacrificed, prompt and intensify this crisis, which many characterize as “apocalyptic.”

During this time, we believe it is our obligation to underscore what the revelation in Christ means for the progress of humanity, peace and fellowship of all peoples. It is the responsibility of the Orthodox Churches to contribute in every way possible to the realization and prevalence of these principles throughout the world, by becoming bearers and messengers of the spirit and ethos of the revelation. Therefore, from this sacred place, sanctified by the Evangelist of love, we make an appeal to all – foremost to those who exercise power on earth and those who live in the regions of conflicts and wars – for the sake of peace and justice for all. ...

4. This message is addressed during a critical point in human history, as we approach the end of the second millennium after Christ and the dawn of the twenty-first century.

8. During these times of rampant secularization, there is an even greater need to point out and underscore the significance of the holiness of life in view of the spiritual crisis that characterizes the modern world. The misunderstanding of freedom as permissiveness leads to increased crime and to a lack of respect for the freedom of one’s neighbor and for the sanctity of life. What is more, it leads to the violation of the natural world and to ecological destruction. The Orthodox tradition is the bearer of a spiritual ethos that must be emphasized particularly in our times....

*“...we reiterate through this present message
the vigorous concern of the Orthodox Church*

for the right use of the environment.”

10. Most especially with regard to the ecological crisis, which for all of us is crucial and threatening, we reiterate through this message the vigorous concern of the Orthodox Church for the right use of the environment. Already during our previous meeting at the See of the Ecumenical Patriarchate [1992], we expressed this conviction while recording that, by the initiative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, conferences related to this issue have been organized and September 1st of each year has been designated as a day of prayer for the protection of the natural environment.

Once more, we affirm that we consider this issue eminently threatening, and we call upon all to be vigilant and to take every necessary avenue in order to save and protect God's creation. The Orthodox Church considers humankind to be a steward and not the owner of material creation. This perception is particularly expressed in the tradition and experience of the ascetic life and worship, and above all in the Eucharist. It is imperative today that we all display love and keep an ascetic attitude toward nature.

15. In a world confronted by all kinds of sects and terrifying interpretations of the Book of Revelation, all of us, especially the younger generation, are called to learn and to bear witness ... to the fact that only the love of God, of our fellow human beings, and of all His creation offers meaning and salvation to our lives, even during the most difficult periods of history. ...

From this sacred island of Patmos we address this message to you, beloved ones in Christ, embracing you in His name and bringing to you and all the world the voice of the sacred author of the Apocalypse, a voice of faith, hope and love. "Behold, the dwelling of God is with (people). He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:3-4).

*"The Orthodox Church considers
humankind to be a steward and not the owner
of the material creation."*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

On the sacred island of Patmos, this 26th day of September, 1995, the feast of the holy glorious Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian.

+ The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew
+ The Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine Diodorus
+ The Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa Parthenios
+ The Patriarch of Antioch and All the East Ignatius, (represented by Metropolitan John of Pergamon)

- + The Patriarch of Belgrade and All Serbia Pavle
 - + The Patriarch of Bucharest and All Romania Teoctist
 - + The Patriarch of Sofia and All Bulgaria Maximos, (represented by Metropolitan Gelasios)
 - + The Archbishop of Tiflis and Catholicos, Patriarch of All Georgia Elias (represented by Bishop Abraham of Nikortzminta)
 - + The Archbishop of New Justiniate and All Cyprus Chrysostomos
 - + The Archbishop of Athens and All Greece Serapheim
 - + The Archbishop of Tirana and All Albania Anastasios
 - + The Archbishop of Prague and All Czechoslovakia Dorotheos
 - + The Archbishop of Karelia and All Finland John
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