

# Encyclical Letter to the Whole Church

Prot. No. 862

## + B A R T H O L O M E W

BY THE MERCY OF GOD ARCHBISHOP  
OF CONSTANTINOPLE, NEW ROME AND  
ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH  
TO THE PLENITUDE OF THE CHURCH

GRACE AND PEACE  
FROM THE CREATOR OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE  
OUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

September 1, 2009

As we come again to the changing of the Church year, we reflect once more on the state of God's creation. We think about the past and repent for all that we have done or failed to do for the earth's care; we look to the future and pray for wisdom to guide us in all that we think or do.

These last twelve months have been a time of great uncertainty for the whole world. The financial systems that so many people trusted to bring them the good things of life, have brought instead fear, uncertainty and poverty. Our globalized economy has meant that everyone - even the poorest who are far removed from the dealings of big business - has been affected.

The present crisis offers an opportunity for us to deal with the problems in a different way, because the methods that created these problems cannot provide their best solution. We need to bring love into all our dealings, the love that inspires courage and compassion.

Human progress is not just the accumulation of wealth and the thoughtless consumption of the earth's resources. The way that the present crisis has been dealt with has revealed the values of the few who are shaping the destiny of our society; of those who can find vast sums of money to support the financial system that has betrayed them, but are not willing to

allot even the least portion of that money to remedy the piteous state the creation has been reduced to because of these very values, or for feeding the hungry of the world, or for securing safe drinking water for the thirsty, who are also victims of those values. On the face of every hungry child is written a question for us, and we must not turn away to avoid the answer. Why has this happened? Is it a problem of human inability or of human will?

If we believe that we are no more than consumers, then we shall seek fulfillment in consuming the whole earth; but if we believe we are made in the image of God, we shall act with care and compassion, striving to become what we are created to be.

We have rendered the Market the center of our interest, our activities and, finally, of our life, forgetting that this choice of ours will affect the lives of future generations, limiting the number of their choices that would probably be more oriented towards the well-being of man as well as the creation. Our human economy, which has made us consumers, is failing. The divine economy, which has made us in the image of the loving Creator, calls us to love and care for all creation. The image we have of ourselves is reflected in the way we treat the creation. If we believe that we are no more than consumers, then we shall seek fulfillment in consuming the whole earth; but if we believe we are made in the image of God, we shall act with care and compassion, striving to become what we are created to be.

Let us pray for God's blessing on the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December, so that the industrially developed countries may co-operate with developing countries in reducing harmful polluting emissions, that there may exist the will to raise and manage wisely the funds required for the necessary measures, and that all may work together to ensure that our children enjoy the goods of the earth that we leave behind for them. There must be justice and love in all aspects of economic activity; profit and especially short-term profit cannot and should not be the sole motive of our actions.

Let us all renew our commitment to work together and bring about the changes we pray for, to reject everything that is harming the creation,

to alter the way we think and thus drastically to alter the way we live.

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