

**MESSAGE  
OF HIS ALL HOLINESS THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH  
DIMITRIOS I  
ON THE DAY OF THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

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This Ecumenical Throne of Orthodoxy, the keeper and proclaimer of the centuries-old spirit of patristic tradition and the faithful interpreter of eucharistic and liturgical experience of the Orthodox Church, with great anxiety follows the merciless trampling down and destruction of the natural environment which is caused by man with extremely dangerous consequences for the very survival of the natural world created by God.

The abuse by contemporary man of his privileged position in creation and of the Creator's mandate "to have dominion over the earth" (Gen 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 various other forms. Scientists and others learned individuals are now warning us of the danger and speak of phenomena which are threatening the life of our planet, such as the so called "phenomenon 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 as being "the 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 simultaneously a partaker of the material and the spiritual world, he was created in order to refer creation back to the Creator so that the world may be saved from decay and death.

This great destiny of man was realized after the failure and fall of the "first Adam" by the "last Adam," the Son and Logos of God Incarnate, our Lord Jesus Christ, who united the created world with the uncreated God in his person and who increasingly refers creation to the father as an eternal eucharistic anaphora and offering.

The Church in each Divine Liturgy continues this reference and offering (of creation to God), in the form of the Bread and the Wine which are elements taken from the material universe. In this way the Church continuously declares that man is destined not to exercise power over creation as if he were the owner of it, but to act as its steward, cultivating it in love and referring it in thankfulness with respect and reverence to its Creator.

Unfortunately, in our days of the influence of an extreme rationalism and self-centeredness, man has lost the sense of sacredness of creation and acts as its arbitrary ruler and a rude violator. Instead of the eucharistic and ascetic spirit with which the Orthodox Church brought up her children for centuries, we observe today the violation of nature for the satisfaction not of basic human needs, but of man's endless and constantly increasing desires and lust, encouraged by the prevailing philosophy of a consumer society.

But creation "groans and travails in all its parts" (Rom 8:22) and is now beginning to protest its treatment by human beings. Man cannot infinitely and at his pleasure exploit the natural resources of energy. The price of his arrogance, should the present situation continue, will be his self-destruction.

In full consciousness of our duty and in paternal spiritual responsibility, having taken all the above into consideration and having listened to the anguish of modern man, we have come to the decision, in common with the sacred and Holy Synod surrounding us, to declare the first day of September of each year, on the occasion of the Feast of Indiction, which is the first day of the ecclesiastical year, to be the day of the protection of the natural environment with prayers and supplications for all creation to be offered by this holy Center of Orthodoxy.

Therefore, we invite the entire Christian world through this our Patriarchal Message to offer together with the Mother Holy Great Church of Christ (The Ecumenical Patriarchate) every year on this day prayers and supplications to the Maker of all, both in thanksgiving for the great gift of Creation and in petition for its protection and salvation. At the same time we paternally urge, on the one hand, all the faithful in 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 nations to act without delay in taking all necessary measures for the protection and preservation of natural creation.

Finally, we ask the Lord for all good things for the world and bestow upon all, those near and far, our wholehearted Patriarchal and paternal blessing.

At the Phanar the 1st of September, 1989  
+ PATRIARCH DIMITRIOS