

My Beloved Ones,

Having just returned from Greece, I would like you to join me in giving glory to Almighty God for the beautiful meetings that took place during the Holy and Great Council in Crete, the island of Saints and Heroes of our Orthodox γένος.

I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit, all throughout the Council: before we began, during the meetings, and especially during the Divine Liturgies which began and ended the Council; where all the Patriarchs and Archbishops of the autocephalous Churches celebrated together.

We missed the presence of the other Churches: the Antiochians, the Russians, the Georgians and the Bulgarians, who chose not to attend for personal reasons. To mention one, the Patriarchate of Antioch is involved in a dispute with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, over land they claim falls under their jurisdiction. Indeed, it is unfortunate that what amounts to a relatively small piece of desert prevented the Church of Antioch from attending; as to my mind it amounts to a person in a disagreement with the head of a utility company, depriving the other villagers of water—something that is of course, essential. I was naturally very sad, as were all the Archbishops and our Ecumenical Patriarch that these disputes led to some of our sister Churches to miss this very important historical event.

Even so, those of us who were present surely felt the presence of the Holy Spirit, because we did not simply have an open dialogue, or even just discuss the texts that the committees had prepared all the way back to the 1960s, but everyone was free to express his own thoughts and mind, and had the opportunity to convince others of their point of view. Therefore, many things have been changed from the proposals and texts that had been prepared, because situations that exist today were not in existence then.

Everyone had the opportunity to express his mind, and heart, and feelings. When where there were debates or arguments, they often came about because we were thinking of the best way to protect our church—until one party or another reminded us to think of the unified Church, and not simply our own.

I believe that all this happened because of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and of course I was praying to the Holy Spirit to prevail upon us to express God's will, and not our own thoughts and feelings. This succeeded no doubt because of the prayers offered by you, the laymen and the clergy. I am also very thankful for the emails and letters I received supporting the Holy Council, praying for the Holy Spirit, and now I am sharing the results that I felt there. Therefore, I am very thankful to you all individually and as the Metropolis of Atlanta.

God bless us all, let us pray for a good and safe summer for ourselves and our children as we travel, and I look forward to seeing you in your communities when I begin to travel during the Ecclesiastical New Year in September.

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta

