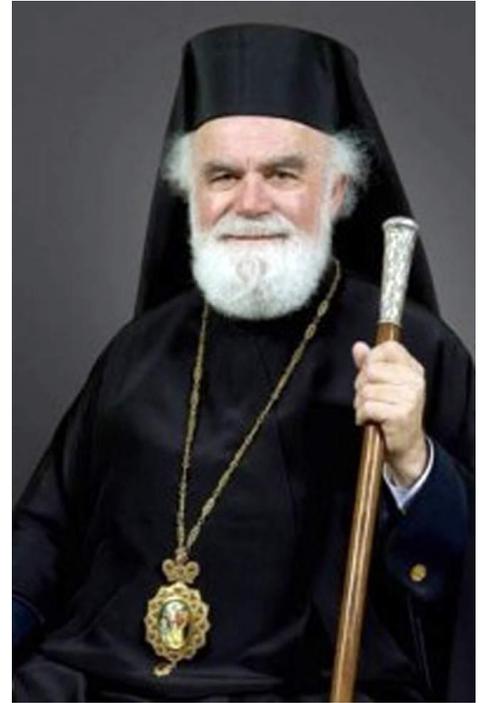


My Beloved Ones,

Yesterday, the Orthodox Church celebrated a beautiful milestone in its recent history, for November 2nd marked the 25th anniversary of His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew's elevation to the Ecumenical Throne.

I know I echo the thoughts of my fellow Bishops and Metropolitans when I say that it has been a privilege and honor to serve the Holy Mother Church, with His All-Holiness as a guiding example.

I am particularly thankful to have been able to spend time with His All-Holiness during my service in the Holy Synod. From celebrating Divine Liturgy with him and my fellow Bishops, to—on a more personal level—discussing the Metropolis of Atlanta, His All-Holiness exudes a true Christ-like love and concern for all his flock.



He has exhibited true leadership for the Holy Orthodox Church, taking firm stands on positions such as the environment, the recent refugee crises throughout the world, as well as interfaith dialogues with fellow Christians and non-Christians alike. In all these things and many more, Patriarch Bartholomew has been a true disciple of Christ, demonstrating both his firm commitment to the message of the Gospel, while never forgetting the fruits of the Spirit, including patience and love for all men.

Our Lord ended His earthly ministry by charging His disciples to “...go and make disciples of all the nations...” (*Matthew 28:19*). In his twenty-five years as Ecumenical Patriarch, His All-Holiness has never wavered in that commitment to proclaim Orthodoxy to a world which was often either indifferent or ignorant. The joy with which he has proclaimed the Good News means multitudes are certainly no longer ignorant of Orthodox Christianity; and indeed, those who truly hear witness His All-Holiness' evangelizing do not come away unmoved.

Truly, we as a Metropolis, and the entire Universal Body of Christ, should consider ourselves fortunate and blessed to have a Hierarch who so selflessly serves others, with an untiring spirit, no matter the trials or obstacles he encounters.

May the Lord our God continue to bestow health and peace upon His All-Holiness, our Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, granting him many more years in the service of Orthodoxy!

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta