

By His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew During His Visit to His Excellency Constantine Catsambis Ambassador of Greece to Estonia (September 6, 2013)

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Your Excellency the President of the Republic of Estonia,

Your Eminence Metropolitan Stephanos of Tallinn and All Estonia,

Your Eminences and Your Graces,

Your Excellency Ambassador Kokonas,

Beloved friends in the Lord,

It is a great delight for us to be here with our honorable entourage at this hospitable household of Orthodox Greece and we duly express our gratitude for this reception organized in our honor, which we feel expresses the gracious sentiments of the Greek people toward the Orthodox Church in general and our Ecumenical Patriarchate in particular.

We greet with particular honor and joy the presence of His Excellency the President of the Estonian Republic, who extended the invitation for us to visit this land. Our

encounter and communication with Your Excellency, Mr. president, as the supreme leader of this cultured nation – both yesterday in the Presidential Palace and today in this dwelling – constitutes an occasion for great emotion and sincere pleasure for the most holy Mother Church of Constantinople and personally. Once again we wholeheartedly congratulate Your Excellency for the extraordinary national and cultural service carried out and wish you every success in its accomplishment. May the giver of all wisdom and grace abundantly send down upon you His divine illumination so that your tenure as President of this country may prove profitable, peaceful and productive, resulting in a harmony and unity that is pleasing to both God and all people. Our Patriarchal prayers and wishes accompany you for this task, as well as for your health and wellbeing. Furthermore, we express our warm thanks to Your Excellency for the commemorative stamp issued in our honor by the Post Offices of Estonia – an honor that we ascribe to the Holy and Great Church of Constantinople, the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

Your Excellency, Mr. Ambassador,

Greek civilization has been characterized since classical times by its breadth of spirit, which also permits us to describe it as ecumenical. This is still more true of the conversion of Greeks to Christianity, as well as its doctrinal synthesis and formulation, for which the expression and precision of the Greek language cultivated and developed the uttermost potential through the means of Greek philosophy.

It is from the Greek people that we have the rise of great missionaries, such as Saints Cyril and Methodius, who were commissioned by the Holy and Great Church of Christ in Constantinople – in accordance with the Lord's commandment to His disciples, that they "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28.19) – to evangelize to the world, and especially the nations of Eastern Europe, further contributing in an essential way to the advancement of the local civilization through the composition of an appropriate written alphabet and the cultivation of letters.

More generally the contribution of the Greek component to Orthodox Christianity and particularly to the Ecumenical Patriarchate was quite noteworthy in the past, just as the concern of the Mother Church for the spiritual progress of its children was always attentive. Therefore, we express once more our conviction that this relationship of reciprocity will also continue in the future. In this regard, it is important to nurture the circumstances of the time: For example, the diaspora of

Orthodox Greeks, which is again increasing because of various labor and other situations, could create a renewal of international relations on a national but also on a spiritual level. Each of us is called to serve our fellow human beings from our particular position and vocation in a spirit of love and solidarity. For it is through these values alone that we can secure not only our coexistence but our very survival on this planet, which is burdened by selfish overconsumption. This is how we can ensure a favorable and promising future.

Mr. Ambassador, we wish you every strength and support from above in this distant land from your homeland for the sake of the progress and prosperity of the Greek people, for the friendship and cooperation of the Greek and Estonian peoples, and for the cultivation of a Christian spirit of love and peace throughout the world.

Peace be with you! Peace be with this land and the whole world. Peace be with all.

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