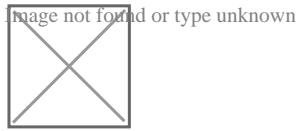


Response by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to His Eminence Archbishop Irenaios of Crete (Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



RESPONSE
BY HIS ALL-HOLINESS
ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW,
CHAIRMAN OF THE HOLY AND GREAT COUNCIL OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH,
TO HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP IRENAIOS OF CRETE,
PRESIDENT OF THE HOLY EPARCHIAL SYNOD OF THE CHURCH OF CRETE,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE ARRIVAL OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH
AND THEIR BEATITUDES THE PRIMATES OF
THE ORTHODOX AUTOCEPHALOUS CHURCHES
AND THE DOXOLOGY AT THE HOLY CATHEDRAL
OF THE HOLY APOSTLE TITUS

(Heraklion, June 18, 2016)



Your Eminence, beloved brother in Christ, Archbishop

Irenaios of Crete and beloved brothers Eminences and Graces, members of the

Holy Eparchial Synod of the Church of Crete, beloved eparchy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate,

Your Excellency the Regional Governor,

Most honorable Mayor of Heraklion, and representatives of local and regional authorities,

Beloved and heroic Orthodox flock of Crete,

Truly, all of us, the brother Primates of the Most-Holy Orthodox Churches throughout the world, our Modesty and each member of our delegations, proclaim that “today, the holy and great festival of the Orthodox rejoices,” and reiterate the witness of Patriarch Sophronios of Jerusalem: “today, heaven celebrates with earth, and earth converses with heaven,” because on the island of Crete, which was blessed by the visit of the Apostles, all the Orthodox “celebrate Pentecost and the descent of the Holy Spirit at the time it was promised to fulfill hope.”

Our Holy Orthodox Church that spreads throughout the universe, adorned with the “kingly dwelling of dignity and a crown of beauty” (Wisdom Solomon 5:16), gathers this evening in this Holy Church of the Apostle Titus, and celebrates Pentecost in a living experience. Today, the promise is fulfilled and the Holy and Great Pan-Orthodox Council becomes a reality.

Along with the brother Primates, we personally feel great joy for being here, at the apostolic and historic holy Church of Crete. We are especially touched by the fact that we are all here praying in this beautiful Cathedral dedicated to Saint Titus, a true spiritual child of Paul, the Apostle of the Nations and founder of your Church in Crete (cf. Tit. 1:4). Moreover, because in this great island of Crete the holy head of the Apostle Titus rests.

The sacred Ecumenical Throne has always been proud of the Apostolic Church of Crete, which has been a leader and pioneer in good and beneficial deeds, *for building up the body of Christ* (Eph. 4:12). By following this course, she heeds faithfully the exhortation of the Apostle Paul to the first Bishop of Crete, and fellow Apostle Titus, *so that those who have believed in God may be careful to apply themselves to good deeds* (Tit. 3:8).



We, too, proud of this pure and devoted sister of the holiest martyric Apostolic and Patriarchal Ecumenical Throne, convened the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church here, at the agreement of all the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches, extending in a historical and symbolic way the creative presence and the future course and alignment of the Church of Crete according to the long-suffering of her founder and builder our Lord Jesus Christ.

The tangible **witness** of the **unity** of the Orthodox Church, that is expressed in the presence of representatives from throughout the universe in worship and subsequently by the synodal spirit of Pan-Orthodox collaboration, is highly **significant** in itself for both the **Pan-Orthodox community** and for all the **people** of God.

We are here brethren to talk together and decide together on a Synodal level about the problems and issues that plague our local Churches and their interrelations as well as our relationships with one another, within the context of the constantly changing world and the serious problems this world faces.

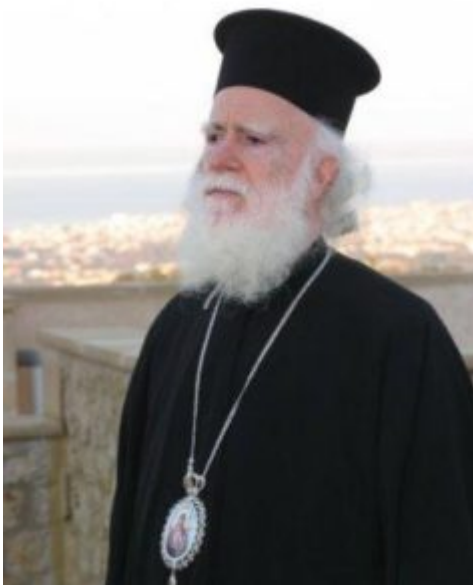
It is widely admitted that we live in a time period of violent and disruptive changes in all areas of life. We are called to take a stand and express our Orthodox positions in the Holy Spirit faced with new situations and things and in view of the new environment within which the Orthodox Church lives, moves and walks her path today, and the atmosphere that engulfs and motivates her flock.

People have focused their attention primarily on the economy and became self-

centered. Thus, they have dampened their love for God and their relationship with the Christian faith and life. This materialistic spirit has selfishly reigned and still reigns, and the Christian spirit and spiritual values have been pushed aside. Persons have turned to numbers and have been treated as biological units. The personal relationship of man to God has been ignored, feelings of brotherhood weakened between the faithful, the traditional spirit of co-operation crippled, and now everything revolves around a secularism that is fleeting, passing and devoid of perspective.

But, when the relationship of man to God and to others ends, and when communion with God disappears from social life and also does away with the communion with others, which is propelled by the communion with God, then the moral system and political life, that is, the entire conduct of man, is driven to destruction and disintegration. This phenomenon characterizes especially the modern world that doubts authenticity, rejects traditional values and is imbued with the catalytic consequences of ego-centrism, eudemonism and secularism.

However, all these negative aspects of our society and civilization also possess a positive aspect. They point out the great necessity and the utter timeliness of our Orthodox ecclesial and synodal **word**. Here in Crete, in the land of **courage** and **bravery**, ethos and persistence in tradition, the respect for Orthodox life and worship that is handed-down to us by our fathers, the **word** of Orthodoxy, must and will be heard as *active, sharper than any double-edged sword* (cf. Heb. 4:12), and also the practical witness and the example for the benefit of the flock of our Church and of the whole Universe must and will be delivered.



Your Eminence, beloved brother in Christ, Archbishop Irenaios of Crete, beloved brother Eminences and Graces and members of the Holy Eparchial Synod of the

Church of Crete,

We speak on behalf of our entire Holy Orthodox Church, which extends from one end of the world to the other, which is here represented as she once was in Nicea in Bithynia, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon. All of us who comprise a “song of harmonious theology” and are spiritual leaders of the One Orthodox Church, express to you, Cretan brothers and concelebrants, the word of encouragement and supplication, that Christ is the only One Who governs and holds the universe in His providence. “Christ is everything,” now and forever and unto the ages of ages, we all proclaim together with all the Saints with one mouth and in one heart.

We wholeheartedly bless the holy clergy, the orders of monastics and the Christ-loving people of Crete for your warm reception and cordial hospitality and invoke your prayers and the prayers of all the Orthodox everywhere for the success of the work of

the Council in the Holy Spirit, for the light of the God-inspired Orthodox Teaching to shine upon the whole world, and for us who comprise the Council to follow the example of the Apostles and the Holy Disciples thereof with divine inspiration so that we can synodally safeguard and fasten the faith and the polity of the Orthodox Church, because we well know that everything becomes better, stronger and built up when it is in order.

May the Lord, through His Most-Holy Spirit, Who calls everyone to unity, *grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus* (cf. Rom. 15:5). Amen.