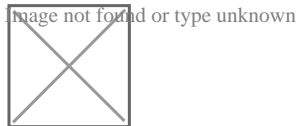


Response by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the Honorable Mayor of Heraklion, Crete, Vasilios Lambrinos (Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



(Heraklion, June 18, 2016)

Your Eminence Archbishop Irenaios of Crete and Your Eminences and Graces, as well as holy brothers comprising the Holy Eparchial Synod of the Church of Crete,

Most honorable and beloved Mr. Vasilios Lambrinos, Mayor of Heraklion, and the representatives of local and regional authorities,

Beloved people of this historic city of Heraklion,

All of us here today, both our Modesty the Ecumenical Patriarch, and our colleagues, their Beatitudes the Primates of the Most-Holy Orthodox Autocephalous Churches, are overjoyed by the convocation of the Holy and Great Council of our Orthodox Church on the glorious island of Crete.



We wholeheartedly thank you, Mr. Mayor, and all the authorities of Crete and the God-loving children of the Mother Church of Constantinople in Crete; for, you have embraced this important event of world Orthodoxy. The people of Heraklion and all Crete have always stood by the side of the Mother Church, and receive today as a crown of thanksgiving the blessing and spiritual support brought by the convocation of this Council on the sacred soil of their island, an event of ecumenical magnitude. Thus, the Primates and representatives of the Orthodox Churches, honor and recognize all the civil offices of the Great Island who labored for the good things, as glory and honor (cf. Heb. 2:10). We know that you sense the honor and responsibility that befalls the island of Crete as a result of this event, and are certain that all of us shall work together and make every possible effort during this ten-day period for the best outcome to be obtained for our Orthodoxy and for the Holy Center of Orthodoxy, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, for Greece, for Crete, and for the entire world.

The heart of Orthodoxy will be beating in Crete for ten whole days. The eyes of the Orthodox faithful, but also of the entire world are already turned toward Crete, in a time when the world remains bitterly broken and experiences throughout the consequences of tragic events and deviations, such as wars and disorder in various areas, the destruction of the natural environment, social changes of inconceivable magnitude, the collapse of economic systems, the unprecedented spread and

exacerbation of terrorism, the establishment of unprecedented deviations in the natural course of human life, the unprecedented distortion of the concepts of the human person and morality, the refugee crisis, the intolerance and the merciless persecution of Christians and other minority populations, just as the Evangelist Matthew describes them two thousand years ago, by conveying the timeless words of the Lord (cf. Matt. 24:3-42). The devaluation of the human person, the scorning of freedom and her dignity as well as the systematic erosion of the spirit have tipped off the balance of mankind and have created a multi-faceted crisis for humanity. Our youth in their search for the truth have been misled by destructive pseudo-solutions and call upon us to reveal the salvific truth.

In a world in which everything within it, that is, life itself, humanity and conceptions, changes forcibly and rapidly, at times even unconsciously, the Holy and Great Council that is about to begin is called upon to give the good witness that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever” (Heb. 13:8). It is also called to give solutions to the internal problems of Orthodoxy and convey the message of its truth to the modern world that is in conflict. It is the fervent desire of all the Church leaders that the voice of the Council will be truly the voice of the invisible God. Only then will the Council be able to provide support to the people.

Our Lord Jesus Christ reassured us that where two or three are gathered in His name, there He is in the midst of them (Matt.18:20). We are therefore certain that in this Council, which is convened in His Name, He shall be also present and guide the participants to what is true and beneficial.

Moreover, the unity among the Orthodox, which is manifested by and through this Council, respecting the differences of peoples, is projected as a **model** for the unification of our broken world, too. The **ecumenicity** of the Church, which constitutes authentic **universality**, is an antidote to the pseudo-globalization of our time. The message of the **unity of humanity** in Christ is the only one that satisfies the human heart and it is this that we must proclaim.

The Holy and Great Council, which is beginning, shall bring the message of unity, fulfill its goal and contribute to the liberation from the various impasses of modern life. This Council shall bear witness to the **truth** of the Orthodox faith that has been handed down to us and shall demonstrate the unity of the Orthodox.

We thank you again, Honorable Mayor, personally, as a member of the Organizing Committee, and we also thank the members of the Municipal Board for their important contribution and the contribution of all the local offices, for the word of Orthodoxy to be heard through this Council as the **word of life**.

We pray that God will bless your work and efforts for the development and welfare of the city of Heraklion and we, together with all the Primates of the Orthodox Churches, invoke upon you and the people of your city peace from God and every blessing. Amen.