

# MESSAGE

from His All-Holiness  
Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It is a great joy to address your Meeting of the EIIR, in Tallinn (July 5-10, 2016).

The life of blessedness and the life of merciful love uniquely and inseparably coincide in the monastic life as a way of prayerful service in obedience to the commandments.

An essential aspect of religious life - whether in the community of a monastery or the center of society - is the revelation of God in the world. And God is reflected in mercy, which attracts the blessedness of God. Mercy is the personal experience and practical expression of God's love, which every Christian is called - indeed, mandated - to realize in accordance with the Lord's command: *"Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful"* (Luke 6.36).

As you will no doubt be aware, *"Lord, have mercy"* (Κύριε ἐλέησον, Kyrie, eleison) is what we chant in so many tones and diverse tunes during the Orthodox liturgy. This is because to be blessed by God is to show compassion, to care for every living person, and to love every living thing. Recall the seventh century mystic, Abba Isaac the Syrian, who describes *"a merciful heart as burning out of compassion for birds, beasts, human beings, unable to bear or hear of the slightest pain suffered anywhere in creation"*.

Blessedness, therefore, means showing mercy. In fact, the life according to the Gospel is synonymous with the quality of mercy. A Christian cannot win God's mercy, but a Christian can certainly lose God's mercy by not extending it to others and to creation. There are no excuses for not being involved in the suffering of the world. We must choose to care; otherwise, we are not being merciful; otherwise, we are not acting like God.

We wish you every blessing in your deliberations. May your Conference be filled with the mercy of God and may you continue to share that same mercy with the whole world.

At the Phanar, July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

+ **Bartholomew of Constantinople**