

TOAST
OF HIS HOLINESS
BARTHOLOMEW
Archbishop of Constantinople - New Rome
and Ecumenical Patriarch
DURING DINNER AT
THE SPANISH EMBASSY TO THE HOLY SEE

(Rome, May 24th, 2018)

Your Excellency Mr. Ambassador, Your Eminences, Honoured Guests, Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the invitation extended to me and those accompanying me to attend this important convivial gathering, which strengthens and consolidates the significant links of dialogue between Churches, religions, cultures, societies and nations.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate, which presides in love over all the Holy Orthodox Churches and I myself, have always considered dialogue a cornerstone of interpersonal relationships. These subsequently lead to further interactive steps which indicate the way towards all human knowledge and everything that derives from this knowledge.

In a world increasingly burdened by ideological, economic and religious fundamentalism, where the human being runs the risk of no longer being the central focus of every human action but a mere object who suffers the consequences of the pure folly of exclusion, then dialogue remains the sole element of inclusion where differences, difficulties and misunderstandings can be overcome.

Our Churches, being faithful to the teaching of the Master, and witnesses to the two-thousand-year history of many men and women, Fathers of the Church and Saints whose lives were conspicuous for their understanding of the other person and their expression of Divine compassion, have never been afraid of dialogue, even at times of theological or cultural conflict, when it seemed that the fundamentalism of a few would have the last word.

And so even today, as Christian Churches, as witnesses of the love of God the Father and Creator towards His Creature and Creation, as witnesses to the grace that through the Son becomes effective among us, and as witnesses to that communion which

the Holy Spirit pleads for throughout man's history, we can respond together to today's global crises, we can address the issues of social justice, the biblical-sized migrations occurring in so many parts of the world, peace that is continually threatened by the interests of a few and safeguarding this natural environment that God has given us, so that we may protect it and not merely exploit it through the barefaced greed of irresponsible consumption.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate and myself are personally committed to ensuring that dialogue is the only sure answer to the many fundamentalisms that cover many regions of the world in blood. We are certainly aware of the difficulties that so often stand in the way of dialogue, but the Orthodox Church, as expressed in the Holy and Great Council "does not underestimate the difficulties involved in this effort, but sees them as the path towards a common understanding of the tradition of the Ancient Church and hopes that the Holy Spirit who "joins together the entire institution of the Church" (Stichirà of Vespers for Pentecost) "will overcome shortcomings" (a prayer for ordination). In this regard, the Orthodox Church in its relations with the rest of the Christian world, does not rely solely on the human efforts of those involved in dialogue, but before everything else, places its trust in the Holy Spirit and the grace of the Lord who prayed "... that all may be one" (*Jn. 17:21*). (Relations of the Orthodox Church with the rest of the Christian world, ch. 8)

Mr. Ambassador and Honoured Guests,

Allow me with these brief thoughts to thank the Embassy of Spain for this fraternal moment, for the honour you have shown me and the Ecumenical Patriarchate and I ask you to convey our best wishes to the Royal Family and the rulers of this noble country and all its inhabitants. May the Lord of Peace grant Spain gifts of serenity and material and spiritual development to which I add my prayers and blessing.