

Dossier – October, 2015

His All Holiness, Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch

Biographical Profile

Biography

His All Holiness Archbishop Bartholomew I, was born Demetrios Archondonis, in 1940 on the island of Imvros (today, Gokceada, Turkey). He has worked tirelessly for the reconciliation among Christian Churches and acquired a prestige recognized internationally, in raising environmental awareness. He has worked persistently to advance reconciliation with the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion, as well as with other confessions, through theological dialogues and personal encounters with respective leaders. As a member of the World Council of Churches, he has worked with the Executive and Central Committees and with the 'Faith and Order' Commission. Moreover, he has initiated numerous meetings and conversations with Muslim and Jewish leaders in an effort to promote mutual respect and religious tolerance globally.

Background

His All Holiness pursued his postgraduate studies at the Pontifical Oriental Institute of the Gregorian University in Rome, the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey (Switzerland) and at the University of Munich. He received his doctorate in Canon Law and was a founding member of the "Society for Justice for Eastern Churches." In 1961 he was ordained deacon (and given the name Bartholomew) and in 1969 ordained a priest. He served as Assistant Dean of the Theological School of Halki (1968-72) and was later appointed secretary to his predecessor, the Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios (1972-90). In 1973 he was consecrated bishop and named Metropolitan of Philadelphia (Asia Minor), until his enthronement in 1990 as Metropolitan of Chalcedon. On October 22, 1991 His All Holiness was unanimously elected Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch. He has been awarded honorary doctorates by a number of prestigious academic institutions around the world. He is fluent in Greek, Turkish, Italian, German, French and English, as well as classical Greek and Latin.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's roles as the primary spiritual leader of the Orthodox Christian world and a transitional figure of global significance continue to become more vital with each passing day. His All Holiness has co-sponsored international peace conferences, meetings on the subjects of racism and fundamentalism, bringing together Christians, Muslims and Jews, with the purpose of creating greater cooperation and mutual understanding. His work has always treated numerous topics of international importance such as cooperation between Orthodox, inter-Christian and inter-religious dialogues; environmental issues, human rights and religious freedom. In 1997 he was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal by the U.S. Congress.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

The Ecumenical Patriarchate is the primary ecclesiastical center of the Orthodox Church throughout the world, tracing its history to the day of Pentecost and the early Christian communities founded by the Apostles of Jesus Christ. According to tradition the 'protocleto' (the first called) of the Apostles, Andrew, preached the Gospel in Asia Minor, the Black Sea, Thrace and Achaia, where he was martyred.

In 36 A.D. he founded the Church along the banks of the Bosphorus, in the city later named Byzantium and then Constantinople, today Istanbul. Saint Andrew is the Patron Saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The feast of the Patron Saint is celebrated on November 30. As Archbishop of Constantinople and New Rome, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew occupies the First Throne of the Orthodox Christian Church and presides in historical honor and fraternal spirit among all the Orthodox Primates. These include the ancient Patriarchate of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, as well as the more recent Patriarchates of Moscow, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and Georgia. In addition, the Ecumenical Patriarch has the historical and theological responsibility to initiate and coordinate actions among the Orthodox Churches of Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Albania, Czech Lands, Slovacchia, Finland, Estonia, as well as numerous archdioceses in the old and the new world: Europe, America, Asia and Australia.