

Message from Karechin II, Catholikos of All Armenians

XXIII International Ecumenical Conference on Orthodox spirituality

MERCY AND FORGIVENESS

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in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches

MESSAGE FROM KARECHIN II, CATHOLIKOS OF ALL ARMENIANS

From the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, the Spiritual Center of All Armenians, we bring our Pontifical blessings to all participants of the 23rd International Ecumenical Conference, themed this year as "Mercy and Forgiveness".

It is admirable that in this gathering you will revalue the exhortations and teachings on mercy and forgiveness of the significant authors and theologians of the Church; and presenting your own thoughts, also discuss issues on the actuality of harmony and cooperation between the churches.

The core of the salvation, offered us by our Lord, is the limitless love. The Savior ordered us to love and forgive, and gave us an example of absolution in the Lord's Prayer, as the Lord's forgiveness of us. The Apostle teaches us saying, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (*Ephesians 4:32*). The realization of these commandments is the guarantee of peace and harmony in the life of humanity. But the suffering and sorrow plaguing the safe progression of mankind in different countries, and unceasing conflicts especially in Syria, the Middle East, and Ukraine; is witness to the absence of mercy, forgiveness, and tolerance. The discord and conflict in families and communities are caused by ignoring the love and forgiveness inherited from our Lord Jesus Christ. All actions driven and conditioned by material wealth, political and economical interests, disrupt the importance of spirituality, and the enduring awareness and perception of virtue, as commanded by the Lord. Facing these issues, it is a challenge to keep the passion of faith bright in the World, to spread the life-giving light of the gospel commandments, so that the words of St. Gregory of Narek turn into reality - sighs retreat from human's life, darkness flees, sins melt away, demons flee, corruption is cleansed, sadness withdraws, chains undone, evil is destroyed, infirmities are cured and Lord's omnipotent hand rules redeemer of all. (cf. Book of Lamentations, 41A)

It is appreciated that during this conference you will also reflect on the deepening of solidarity between churches and the importance of cooperation. Our churches have been divided for centuries as a result of dissent in doctrinal teachings, and were not in harmony with one another. Nowadays ecumenical movements and inter-church, theological, Christological and ecclesiological dialogues promotes the discussion of current challenges, and increases the cooperation between churches for the sake of reinforcing a common mission of the wellbeing of mankind in accordance with Christ's prayerful commandment. "I do not ask for these only but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you" (*John 17:20-21*). Indeed, efforts towards this and such assemblies are significant impetus in the strengthening of the mission of the Church of Christ.

Dear Ones, we offer our blessings to the participants of this conference once again: and to the organizers of this conference, to devoted and pious brothers and sisters of the monastery of Bose led by the prior Enzo Bianchi, wishing them all good health and heaven sent success in service to the Lord.

We pray that mercy and forgiveness increase the world over, that peace be spread across the countries, troubled by military situations, and that humanity creates a safe and just future according to the wishes of the Lord. We pray to Almighty God to grant you strength and drive to make your work fruitful within this conference. May God protect you all under his Almighty Right Hand.

With blessings,

+ Karekin II
Supreme Patriarch and Catholikos of All Armenians