Message from Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

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MERCY AND FORGIVENESS
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in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches

MESSAGE FROM JUSTIN WELBY, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

Once again I am delighted to send you greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May the theme of this Twenty Third International Conference on Mercy and forgiveness and the fresh reflections envisaged make an important contribution to our world in which many experience conflict, suffering, poverty, hardship and isolation at the hands of other human beings.

God's loving care for all creation and the pivotal responsibilities he has placed on humanity is an invitation to empathise with and alleviate the misery of others. We embrace God's mercy revealed and expressed through our Saviour's words and deeds. Jesus's encounter with those in need and the helpless is always life giving, and so the blind man's plea to Jesus for mercy (Mark 10:47-48) has become part of our Christian prayer life.

To practice forgiveness has always been at the heart of our faith in God and our love for one another. From the merciful forgiveness received through baptism and through our own acknowledgement and repentance of our sins, God, our Heavenly Father, has forgiven us first. We are expected to do likewise. In all that is relational and reciprocal we need forgiveness. According to Desmond Tutu, forgiveness does not condone what has been done. It takes what has happened seriously and does not minimise it, but draws out the sting in our memory, a sting that threatens to poison our entire existence.

I pray that as the conference reflects on questions, such as, how God's pardon can be proclaimed today, how wounded memories can be healed, how the joy of forgiveness and mutual communion can be rediscovered, those attending will be strengthened in their Christian confidence, and in their witness and service in the world.

+ Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury