

Encyclical Letter from the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew on the occasion of IEPC

To the Plenitude of the Church:

Grace, Mercy and Peace From our Savior the Lord of Peace

Sunday, May 22, 2011

Beloved brothers and children in Christ,

At the celebration of each Divine Liturgy, after glorifying the divine name and blessing the heavenly kingdom, we offer three petitions “to the Lord” “for peace,” “for the peace from above,” and “for the peace of the whole world.” It is our passionate yearning that our world may reflect the kingdom of God, that the God’s love may reign “on earth as it is in heaven.”

Nevertheless, while such peace is foremost in our prayer, it is not always central in our practice. As faithful disciples of the Lord of peace, we must constantly pursue and persistently proclaim alternative ways that reject violence and war. Human conflict may well be inevitable in our world; but war and violence are certainly not. If this century will be remembered at all, it may be for “the pursuit of what makes for peace.” (Rom. 14.19)

The pursuit of peace has always proved challenging. Yet, our present situation is in at least two ways quite unprecedented. First, never before has it been possible for one group of human beings to eradicate as many people simultaneously; second, never before has humanity been in a position to destroy so much of the planet environmentally. We are faced with radically new circumstances, which demand of us an equally radical commitment to peace.

This is why we welcome with great joy the WCC/International Ecumenical Peace Convocation to be held on May 17–25, 2011, in Kingston, Jamaica, as a fitting conclusion and continuation of the World Council of Churches decade to overcome violence, a global inter-church initiative to strengthen existing efforts and networks for preventing violence and to inspire the creation of new ones.

Now, the pursuit of peace calls for a radical reversal of what has become the normative way of survival in our world. Peace requires a sense of conversion or metanoia; it requires commitment and courage. Moreover, peacemaking is