

My Beloved Ones,

I greet you with love and joy in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Today, September 1st, marks two important observances in our Church. The first is the Ecclesiastical New Year, a tradition handed down to us from the Eastern Empire. The second, though it is a more modern observance instituted by His-All Holiness our Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, is appropriate to this harvest season: Protection of the Environment Day.

According to His-All-Holiness, *“Climate change affects everyone. Unless we take radical and immediate measures to reduce emissions stemming from unsustainable... excesses in the demands of our lifestyle, the impact will be both alarming and imminent.”*

A report written by the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America understands the Patriarch’s assessment that, since we are called to be both stewards and priests of our Lord’s creation, our dependence on things like coal and oil is not simply an environmental issue for our own future, but a moral and spiritual problem. The report states that though the United States of America makes up only 4% of the world’s population, we consume 25% of the world’s resources. Our behavior surely acts as an alarming contrast to Christ’s example of charity and concern for the least among us.

The report states very eloquently that *“[w]e must live in a manner that is consistent with what we believe and how we pray. At minimum, this means caring about the effect of our lives upon our neighbors, respecting the natural environment, and demonstrating a willingness to live within the means of our planet.”* We can demonstrate our love for God’s creation by relying on other means of energy (such as solar or wind power), and by modifying how we consume resources such electricity and water.

I echo the sentiments of fellow my Hierarchs when they write that beyond the individual and the family, more must be done to encourage environmental change on a governmental level, as well as within our own parishes. For it is when we come together as the Body of Christ, in both prayer and action, that we shall truly become protectors and examples of God’s creation.

Praying for favorable weather, an abundance of the fruits of the earth, temperate seasons, as well as a spiritually uplifting Ecclesiastical New Year I remain,

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta

