

Orthodox Patriarch Urges Defense of Planet

Writes Message for Today's World Environment Day

ISTANBUL, Turkey, JUNE 5, 2009 (Zenit.org).- No one is exempt from the "indisputable obligation" to protect the planet, says the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople.

Bartholomew I affirmed that climate change is the biggest threat for all types of life on earth in a message for today's World Environment Day, sponsored by the United Nations Environment Program.

The Orthodox patriarch urged people "independently of their religious origins, to take the ecological crisis into consideration," L'Osservatore Romano reported.

"Today more than ever there is an indisputable obligation for everyone: that of realizing that environmental considerations on our planet are not just romantic ideals of a small group," he said.

Bartholomew I affirmed that there is a direct correlation between the protection of the environment and economic and social life.

"Nature is part of creation and has a sacred character," the patriarch contended, "such that to abuse it and destroy it is a sacrilege and a bad act, a defiance of the work of God the Creator."

He added: "To care for and protect creation is the responsibility of everyone, in an individual way and collectively."

Bartholomew I acknowledged that it falls to political authorities of every nation to "evaluate the situation and propose actions, means and other norms."

But he added that "individual responsibility is important, not only in personal and family life, but also in their function as active citizens."

The patriarch concluded with an appeal for "a deeper sense of vigilance for the protection of nature and creation."

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