

APOSTLES OF PEACE



Pope Benedict XVI, the 265th successor of the St. Peter, joining hands in solidarity with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the 269th successor of St. Andrew, the first called Apostle and the older brother of St. Peter, at the Patriarchal Cathedral of St. George, Istanbul, Turkey, November 30, 2006 during the historic Papal Visitation to the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS OF AMERICA THANK POPE BENEDICT XVI FOR THE CONTINUED SUPPORT OF HIS FELLOW APOSTLE OF PEACE, ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW.

In this season of goodwill, we are thankful that two of the most revered spiritual leaders of the Christian world, Pope Benedict XVI and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, provided such a moving and powerful demonstration of the desperate need for peace and understanding in the world today at their historic meeting last month in Istanbul.

Their efforts to bring Christians closer together, to reach out to Moslems and to show that violence in the name of religion is violence against religion itself, proved that they are vital forces for peace and reconciliation between different faiths and cultures.

We appreciate the support the Pope demonstrated for Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the spiritual leader of the second largest Christian communion in the world, and the efforts that the Pontiff made to relieve painful pressures on the Ecumenical Patriarchate. These pressures are exerted by misguided forces in Turkey who do not understand the great asset the Ecumenical Patriarchate is in the efforts of the Turkish people to achieve a place in the family of European nations.

We call on the leaders of Turkey, our NATO ally, to prove that their country deserves recognition as an enlightened and compassionate nation and act as a bridge of tolerance between the Moslem and Christian communities. We call on Turkey to act now - by ending the

harassment of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, by recognizing his ecumenical status (as do all other countries), by recognizing with legal personality the Orthodox Church, as well as the Roman Catholic and Protestant Christian communions and Jewish community, by returning confiscated church property belonging to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, by respecting the right of Apostolic succession in the Orthodox Christian Church and ending all interference in the selection of future Ecumenical Patriarchs, and by allowing the reopening of the Halki seminary, which has trained Orthodox clergy and religious leaders in Turkey and around the world for generations.

We call on the leaders of the European Union to show their commitment to religious freedom by doing everything in their power to convince the leaders of Turkey that it is in their country's best interests to end the discriminatory restrictions on the spiritual leader of 300 million Christians, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. We call on all our European friends of all faiths, to join Pope Benedict and many other religious and political leaders throughout the world who have raised their voices in support of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which stands at the crossroads between the Christian West and the Moslem East and can be a crucial bridge between these two great faiths.

SINCE 1936, 7,000 ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN PROPERTIES HAVE BEEN CONFISCATED BY THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING CHURCHES, ORPHANAGES, CEMETERIES AND SCHOOLS, 1,500 IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND ADMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION GO HAND IN HAND. TURKEY MUST BEGIN TO COMPREHEND THAT ONE CANNOT OCCUR WITHOUT THE OTHER.

Archon Anthony J. Limberakis, MD
National Commander



ORDER OF
SAINT ANDREW
THE APOSTLE
ARCHONS OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE

Archon John A. Catsimatidis
Chairman, Religious Freedom Committee

The Order of St. Andrew / Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in America is comprised of the leading Orthodox Christians in the United States whose mission is to support and defend the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the first See of the Orthodox Christian Church comprised of 300 million faithful worldwide.
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