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Riportiamo di seguito il testo della Lettera che il Patriarca Ecumenico di Costantinopoli, S.S. Bartolomeo I, ha inviato al Santo Padre Francesco in occasione della Solennità dei Santi Apostoli Pietro e Paolo.

La Lettera è stata consegnata al Papa questa mattina nel corso dell'Udienza alla Delegazione del Patriarcato Ecumenico di Costantinopoli:

Lettera di S.S. Bartolomeo I

To His Holiness Pope Francis of Elder Rome: rejoice in the Lord.

In concelebrating with You the venerable memory of the Chief among the Apostles Peter and the Apostle to the Gentiles Paul, who were martyred in Your See and honored greatly by the Elder as well as the New Rome, we adhere to the blessed tradition of exchanging official visits through Delegations of our Churches on the occasion of our respective Thronal Feasts. Wherefore, we address You fraternally with a festive greeting, embracing Your Holiness with a sacred kiss and praying that the Lord of glory may strengthen You for the good of the Church and the unity of Christians as well as for the benefit of a humankind so troubled.

We recall with warm sentiments and profound gratitude our recent encounter on the blessed island of Lesbos in order to extend support to the refugees and migrants, encouraging them and offering them hope, but also jointly

to declare with His Beatitude Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece the need to secure a peaceful resolution to the greatest humanitarian crisis since the end of the Second World War, victims of which have been countless people, among them also native Christian populations of the East. Our Churches hear the cry of “those who labor and are burdened” (cf. Matt. 11.28), the victims of violence and fanaticism, discrimination and persecution, social injustice and poverty and hunger; and we boldly place the lantern “on the bushel” (Matt. 5.15) before the tragic rejection of respect for the sacredness of the human person.

The contemporary crisis of refugees and migrants has demonstrated the need for European nations to address this problem on the basis of the ancient Christian principles of fraternity and social justice. We recognize that the European civilization cannot be understood without reference to its Christian roots and that its future cannot be as a society entirely secularized or subjected to economism and various forms of fundamentalism. The “culture of solidarity” nurtured by Christianity is not preserved through the progress of standards of living, the Internet and globalization.

No one honors humankind created in the image and likeness of God as much as the Church of Christ, who was revealed as God “with us” (Matt. 1.23) and as God “for us” (Rom. 8.32). This is why the word of the Church is and shall remain to the ages an intervention for the sake of humanity and its divinely-granted freedom. Life in the Church incorporates, along with the Holy Eucharist, the splendid worship and life of prayer, the ascetic and internal struggle against the passions, as well as the resistance against social evil and the struggle for the prevailing of justice and peace.

We are convinced that our common efforts and initiatives with regard to the global challenges of our time will continue because they constitute a good witness for the Church of Christ, serving humankind and the world, while at the same time manifesting and strengthening our spiritual responsibility before the challenges of our time for the benefit of the Christian world and humanity as a whole.

We express our joy and pleasure for the fact that Your Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, which made kind reference to the ecological initiatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate as well as to our own emphasis of the spiritual and moral roots of the ecological crisis, together with the need for repentance, a radical conversion of attitude and conduct for its resolution, was widely appreciated and demonstrated the social dimensions and consequences of the ecological problem. Whosoever loves God with one's whole heart, soul and strength (cf. Mark 12.30) also loves humanity and cares for God's creation as the blessed home of humankind. The dual “great commandment” of love, upon which “the entire law and the prophets are grounded” (cf. Matt. 22.37, 40-41), also embraces care for the creation.

Your Holiness and dear Brother, we have been blessed as guardians of invaluable traditions of divine love and human charity, heirs also of vital truths pertaining to human beings as citizens of the world and citizens of heaven, which we are obliged to preserve in their integrity, remaining faithful to the Lord who “came not to be served, but to serve” (Matt. 20.28) as well as to the venerable founders of the Churches of Rome and Constantinople, the brothers Peter and Andrew, who sealed their witness to His truth on the cross in a manner worthy of Christ. Our endeavors are nurtured by this endless source for the advancement of the journey toward the desired unity of our Churches. The dialogue that continues between the Orthodox Church and the most holy Church of Rome is a domain that produces theological knowledge, ecumenical experience and mutual enrichment. The texts of this dialogue of truth confirm our common Christians models and express our faith that the Truth of the Church is a person – namely, the incarnate, suffering and risen Word of God. Dialogue “in Truth” implies “speaking the truth in love” (cf. Eph. 4.15), “abiding” in love (cf. John 15.9) as “the bond of perfection” (Col. 3.15).

These sentiments and fraternal wishes of congratulations on the occasion of the glorious feast of the Church in Rome will be brought and expressed in person to Your Holiness by our Patriarchal Delegation led by His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios of Boston, accompanied by His Excellency Archbishop Job of Telmessos and the Very Reverend Patriarchal Deacon Nephon Tsimalis.

Having arrived, with the good will of the beneficent God, at the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church,

we ask Your Holiness to pray for the fruitful yield of its deliberations in the Holy Spirit for the glory of the triune and undivided Divinity, and remain with profound love and particular esteem in the Lord.

June 29, 2016
Your venerable Holiness'
beloved brother in Christ

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