



GREETING
By His All-Holiness
Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

Distinguished and beloved friends,

It is with great joy that we greet all of you gathered together in Tirana, where we were personally present nearly one year ago. During that unique occasion in June of 2014, we presided over the consecration service of the newly built Resurrection of Christ Cathedral, together with Their Beatitudes Patriarchs Theophilos of Jerusalem, Irinej of Serbia and Daniel of Romania, Archbishops Chrysostomos of Cyprus, Ieronymos of Athens, Sawa of Warsaw and, of course, Anastasios of Tirana, as well as other hierarchs representing the Patriarchates of Alexandria and Antioch, Moscow, Bulgaria and Georgia.

For those of us who came together in Tirana during that time, and for our Orthodox Christian faithful throughout the world as well, such instances – when we act with one heart, speak with one voice, and think with one mind – serve as living testimonies to the need for greater peace in our present day and age, as well as to how much more of an opportunity we now have for greater communication, collaboration and dialogue. As we are presented with more chances for meeting, cooperating and understanding, then, perhaps more today than in any other period of time, what remains absolutely necessary is the need for greater action.

As it concerns the establishment of peace, dear friends, we can certainly all agree with the Apostle Peter – that peacemaking is not just to be yearned for, but to be *sought after* and *pursued*. (1 Pet. 3:11) However, it is our own personal opinion that if the religious communities of our world do not *seek after and pursue* peacemaking on their own – and not just for their own communities but for the sake of peace throughout the whole world – then we should never expect to see a world without intolerance and violence. If we ever hope to see peace and reconciliation between the peoples and civilizations of our world, then the same would need to exist first and foremost between the religions of our world.

Thus, congratulating the Community of Sant'Egidio for championing the very fact that peace is, indeed, possible, especially when religions and cultures pursue dialogue, we remain grateful for the invitation to greet all of you assembled on this day and extend our heartfelt prayers and wishes. May you always walk *in peace*, as the Community of Sant'Egidio has demonstrated for decades through their love of prayer, the Gospel and the poor.

Thanking you very much and congratulating you once again, we invoke upon you and yours the love and mercy of Almighty God, while remaining with much love and honor.

At the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the 8th of September 2015