



ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE

PATRIARCHAL STAVROPEGIC MONASTERY OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

*Founder: The Very Reverend
Superior: The Very Reverend*

Message to the Congress of Benedictine Abbots 2016

Right Reverend Abbot Primate,

On behalf on the Patriarchate of Constantinople and His All-Holiness Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople and Ecumenical Patriarch, I greet this sacred Congress of the Abbots of the Benedictine Confederation. We are very grateful to you for this fraternal invitation and for your kind hospitality.

It is a great consolation, in a world of spiritual confusion and despair, to witness how monasticism still continues in the 21st century both in the East and in the West; a sign of which this Congress also is. The church of Constantinople, whom I represent here, has throughout the centuries highly valued the contribution of monks and nuns to Christian life both locally and worldwide. Many monastic establishments affiliated with the Patriarchate of Constantinople have had and continue to have a significantly important impact on people's spiritual lives. Christian people seek after spiritual nourishment: guidance, healing, support and encouragement. And very often they discover it among monks, whether these live in monasteries or serve in institutions elsewhere. Such recently canonized monastic saints of the Orthodox Church as Porphyrios of Kavsokalyvia, Paisios of Mount Athos, and the Monk Nicephoros (Tzanakakis), are powerful examples of this.

Although we may not have reached the level of spirituality of these holy men, it is good, nevertheless, to remind ourselves, as monks and nuns, that if people respect our spiritual way of life, then we too must be truthful to the principles of our calling. Healthy monasticism is built on foundations such as obedience, repentance and prayer: humble obedience addressed in freedom to a person; repentance that transforms and gives spiritual joy; and prayer which grows gradually and with patience from a personal prayer of repentance into a prayer for the entire mankind.

If we build on such spiritual foundations as these, God will surely, in due time, by the Holy Spirit sanctify our monastic life and through us the world we live in, even if in a very small measure. Without such inner principles, however, no external organization will provide monastic life with the ‘salt of the earth’ that monks and nuns should manifest in themselves. St Silouan the Athonite maintained that monks serve the world through prayer and weeping, and that it is thanks to this spiritual labour of monks that the world continues to exist.

I would, therefore, like to leave with you, as a greeting from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, this one short word of Saint Silouan; a word which is of value to all of us: ‘A monk is someone who prays for the whole world, who weeps for the whole world; in this lies his main work.’

With these thoughts I greet you from the ancient see of Constantinople. I thank you again warmly for your hospitality, and wish you all a spiritually fruitful continuation of your work.

Hieromonk Melchisedec

Monastery of St John the Baptist, UK