

Commentaries and Reflections

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's Message on the Earthquake Catastrophe in Japan

It is with burdened and painful heart that the entire world is witnessing the drama of the tragic earthquake, which over the last days has afflicted Japan and cost numerous lives of our brothers and sisters.

Moreover, it is with much anguish and sorrow that we behold the related devastation in the Land of the Rising Sun as well as in other nations of the Pacific.

Every corner of the planet is offering prayers both for the repose of the departed souls and for the support of those who continue to be grieved and imperiled by the ensuing seismic tremors and ferocious tsunami. Lamentably, yet another calamitous consequence has struck the region with the explosion of the nuclear plant at Fukushima, rendering still

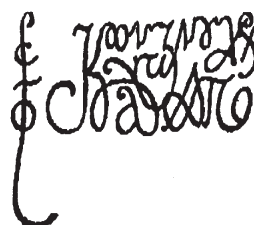
more frightening the recent nightmare in Japan.

The disastrous ramifications of this event will become more evident over the next days. Of course, with regard to the earthquake, no human response is adequate. The causes and results eclipse human words. Nevertheless, with regard to the explosion of the nuclear reactor and the aftermath of a nuclear adversity, there is indeed a response that we are called to make. With all due respect to the science and technology of nuclear energy and for the sake of the survival of the human race, we counter-propose the safer green forms of energy, which both moderately preserve our natural resources and mindfully serve our human needs.

Our Creator granted us the gifts of the sun, wind, water and ocean, all of which may safely and sufficiently provide energy. Ecologically-friendly science and technology has discovered ways and means of

producing sustainable forms of energy for our ecosystem. Therefore, we ask: Why do we persist in adopting such dangerous sources of energy? Are we so arrogant as to compete with and exploit nature? Yet, we know that nature invariably seeks revenge.

From the Ecumenical Patriarchate, we raise fervent prayers for our beloved Japanese people for the trial and tribulation it currently faces, while at the same time passionately appeal to all those responsible for a reconsideration of the nuclear policy of nations throughout the world.



Your beloved brother in Christ and fervent supplicant before God

† Bartholomew of Constantinople



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Holy Pascha The Feast of Feasts

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of renewal. In praise and thanksgiving, we present before all people the new life that is offered to us because Christ is risen from the dead!

Our commemoration of this great Feast through hymns, prayers, and the proclamation of the Gospel, leads us to consider the relationship of His Resurrection to all areas of our lives, to our innermost being, to our thoughts and actions, and to our aspirations and hopes for life now and for eternity. Just as we come with a candle and receive the light of Pascha, so too the light and power of our Lord's Resurrection should be received into our entire being. Through His presence and grace, we are transferred from death to life, we are renewed in the image and likeness of God, and in newness of life we carry this light into all the world.

Pascha is a feast for our hearts, a celebration for our souls. Today, repentance is embraced with grace and forgiveness. Hope overcomes despair. Heavenly joy replaces grief. Divine and assuring peace reigns over our inner struggles. Our hearts are renewed with the strength to continue the journey of liberation from sin and evil.

Pascha is a feast for our minds. On this day, Truth is revealed as a superb light for all of humanity. Today, the light of Pascha illuminates our minds. We receive the gift of the divine wisdom that guides us through life. We are blessed with a vision of what is holy, pure, and just. In the light of Pascha, our minds contemplate all of the implications of our Lord's glorious Resurrection.

Today and in the days and weeks to come we will proclaim over and over again, "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and to those in the tombs bestowing life!" After Christ's Resurrection, the tombs are no longer places of death but of life, bestowed to us by Him as this most precious gift.

On this blessed Pascha, I offer to you and your families my warmest wishes for a beautiful day of celebration and fellowship. May your souls, hearts, and minds be filled with peace and love, and may your joy in Christ and His Resurrection be a true witness of the new life we have in Him.

With paternal love in the Risen Lord,



† Archbishop DEMETRIOS of America

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Archbishop Urges Aid for Japanese Disaster Victims

To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the Distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox Family in America

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our hearts are filled with sadness and compassion as we have seen the apocalyptic images of mass destruction and suffering following the earthquake and tsunami which struck Japan last Friday. In response to this historic tragedy, we may be rendered speechless, seeing the extent

of the devastation and the plight of so many. However, our faith in our gracious God leads us to respond to human need both in prayer and in action to sustain life and offer solace in a time of great loss.

For the people of Japan, I ask first and foremost that the faithful of the Greek Orthodox Church in America offer their fervent prayers. May we join with so many throughout our world in asking God to grant them comfort in this hour of pain. May we pray for renewed strength and hope, so that livelihoods may be restored and families and friends be re-united. We also pray for the containment of the tremendous damage caused by the malfunction of the nuclear plants in the area. Mostly, we pray for the eternal repose of the countless lost in this disaster.

The restoration of life and community will require the effort of our global community. I encourage you to join IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities, www.iocc.org) or other local and national efforts, such as the Red Cross, as so many of you do in response to needs around the world.

Please select the agency of your choice to contribute for the relief of this disaster. In love, you give generously, and through this offering we can offer a witness of the love of Christ as Orthodox Christians.

With paternal love in the Risen Lord,



† Archbishop DEMETRIOS of America

Archdiocesan Council Executive Committee Meets

NEW YORK – Archdiocesan Council Executive Committee members, meeting March 15 at Archdiocese headquarters, discussed several legal, financial and administrative issues facing the Church, and also met with the Holy Eparchial Synod.

Archbishop Demetrios addressed the Committee and stressed that these are difficult times for the Church, the faith and the world and we must continue to pray and be vigilant.

The Archbishop reviewed some of the major events around the world including those being dealt with by the Archdiocese. They included the recent Earthquake and Tsunami in Japan, the death of Metropolitan Nicholas of Amisos and the work of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America.

Archbishop Demetrios also outlined some of the on-going work of the Holy Eparchial Synod and discussed the recent very successful meetings of Leadership 100 and FAITH Endowment.

The members also heard reports on various issues, progress and activities from

the Legal, Administration, Finance and Monastery Review committees.

The Legal Committee gave updates on several issues, including action against the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey regarding St. Nicholas parish at Ground Zero, an appeal from the Salt Lake City parish addressed by the Holy Eparchial Synod and other cases involving the Archdiocese.

The Committee also heard a report from the Monastery Review Committee formed by the Executive Committee and Synod at its Fall 2010 meeting. This special committee was created to collect certain data from the monasteries around the country and provide a report to the Executive Committee as to how they work and interact with the life of our Church in America.

The Administration Committee reported on a planning committee formed at the last Executive Committee meeting to deal with establishing a five-year strategic plan and special strategic planning session for the Synod and Executive Committee scheduled for Fall 2011.

The Finance Committee reported on progress of the National Ministries Commitment program and the successful 100 percent parish collection rate from five out of the nine Metropolises. This is a first time this many Metropolises achieved a 100 percent collection rate. The Executive Committee also received a summary of the Archdiocese 2010 finances and its current financial condition.

The Finance Committee also reported on the special situation regarding St. George Greek Orthodox Church in Lynn, Mass. and its failure to comply with Archdiocese regulations.

The Executive Committee unanimously endorsed a statement supporting the actions of Metropolitan Methodios of Boston.

Subsequent to the Executive Committee, the full Finance Committee and Metropolitan Finance committees met in Chicago on March 22 and issued a similar statement urging the Lynn parish to comply with the Regulations of the Archdiocese.