



To the Rev. Michael A. Perry, Minister General of the Order of Friar Minors, our beloved in the Lord: Grace be unto you and peace from God.

It is with the grace of God that we once again had the distinct honor of celebrating the blessed feast of Saint Andrew the First-Called Apostle here at our Venerable Center in the historic Queen of Cities. And having been made worthy to gather together in Eucharistic prayer with our fellow brother hierarchs in order to solemnly rejoice and partake in the heavenly splendor of this glorious defender and champion of our Faith, we humbly offer—as an earnest act of thanksgiving—much praise to the Giver of all good things for the many blessings that He has granted us over the course of our Patriarchal tenure.

As is the case every year, it is with great joy and heartfelt delight that we exalt this most esteemed Apostle; him, who through God's divine providence became the founder, protector and guardian of the centuries-old Holy and Great Church of Christ; him, who was the first to bring the radiant light of Christ to Byzantium; and him, who was the first to bless the land that would later become the Roman Empire's triumphant capital in the East.

The martyric and apostolic Church of Constantinople—the Church of the Ecumenical Councils and the First Throne of Orthodoxy—is, indeed, established upon the very words that were preached by this venerable and God-bearing Apostle; that is to say, it is rooted in the authentic continuation of the Lord's veritable teachings as evangelized by His righteous disciples and apostles, and steadfastly preserved by the Holy Fathers throughout the ages.

It is precisely in this spirit, then, that this sacred Institution has always safeguarded the eternal Truth of the Gospel—that is, the Truth that was passed down from Andrew to Stachys, which began the long, unbroken line of our saintly predecessors and, in turn, connects all of us as “imitators of the faith” (Heb. 13:7) through the Truth that is both “the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Heb. 13:8) And thus, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, as the Phanar and inexhaustible lamp of the Orthodox Faith, shall always endeavor to defend and promote this Truth unto the ends of the earth, for the sanctification of all creation and for the spiritual enlightenment of the entire oikoumene.

In thanking you for your kind wishes and thoughtful sentiments on the occasion of our Thronal Feast, we extend to you our wholehearted prayers and greetings, and we invoke upon you and the brothers of the Order of Friar Minors the endless grace and mercy of Almighty God. May you enjoy a most blessed Christmas season and a new year filled with every good and perfect gift from above.

At the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the 20th of December, 2018

Prayerfully yours,

✠ BARTHOLOMEW

Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome
and Ecumenical Patriarch