

**Message of Welcome From  
His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I**

Eleventh Academic Consultation Between  
Judaism and Orthodox Christianity  
“Jewish-Orthodox Christian Dialogue:  
Navigating our Relations to the World and to Each Other”  
*December 4, 2022*

Your Eminence Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon,

Most Honorable Rabbi David Fox Sandmel, Chair of the International  
Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations,

Esteemed Participants of the Eleventh Academic Consultation between  
Judaism and Orthodox Christianity,

May the grace and peace of God be with all of you.

The theme “Jewish-Orthodox Christian Dialogue: Navigating our  
Relations to the World and to Each Other” invites us to reflect on the most  
authentic and salient messages of Judaism and Christianity, as we face each  
other, the world, and the Almighty.

The Church has often been portrayed as the Ark of Salvation, a ship that  
serves to aid all of creation into the Kingdom of Heaven.

For more than two thousand years, Our Mother Church has continued  
this spiritual mission, though sometimes through adverse weather and  
tumultuous conditions. The Holy Scriptures has been our perpetual map, and  
our Holy Tradition has been the compass that enables us to follow it faithfully  
as we navigate our relationships to each other and to the world.

The city of Vienna is a fitting choice for this consultation. While the city  
has been rightfully known as the “City of Music,” the home of some of the  
world’s greatest composers, it has also long served as a bridge on the East-West  
frontier and an important center of Jewish culture in Europe. However, the  
unspeakable effect that the Holocaust had on the latter reminds us of the  
importance of unceasingly engaging those outside of our traditions both with  
love and with ears to hear. As the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox  
Church declared on the Island of Crete in 2016: “Honest interfaith dialogue  
contributes to the development of mutual trust and to the promotion of peace  
and reconciliation. The Church strives to make ‘peace from on high’ more

tangibly felt on earth. True peace is not achieved by force of arms, but only through love that 'does not seek its own' (1 Cor 13:5). The oil of faith must be used to soothe and heal the wounds of others, not to rekindle new fires of hatred." (*Encyclical*, par.17)

We thank God that this dialogue in Vienna is a personal link between Jews and Orthodox Christians and not a virtual one due to the pandemic which has claimed nearly 15 million lives. May their memory be Eternal! We were already blessed to meet together in person last November 2021 in New York on the occasion of our official visit to the United States. That meeting was a result of your series of small meetings that have been constantly committed to sustaining our relationship in hopes of meeting together in person once again. May this meeting in Vienna over the next few days be a fulfillment of that hope.

Let us therefore rejoice in this meeting as a milestone in our long series of academic consultations, now aiding us in understanding our relationship with each other and with the world. Let it, so to speak, make The Other less "Other" and more a part of ourselves.

The erudite words of Metropolitan Jean Zizioulas of Pergamon, an eminent theologian of our Ecumenical Patriarchate, can help us understand this common purpose: "The person," he writes, "is otherness in communion and communion in otherness. The person is an identity that emerges through relationship; it is an 'I' that can exist only as long as it relates to a 'thou' which affirms its existence and its otherness. If we isolate the 'I' from the 'thou' we lose not only its otherness but also its very being; it simply cannot be without the other."<sup>1</sup>

Let this meeting in Vienna therefore be for us a means to allow the other to be more a part of ourselves.

Let us share with each other the sources that determine our relationships; let us speak to each other about the ways that we enact those sources in contemporary crises, whether crises of environment, crises of war, or crises of prejudice and hatred that often corrupt the relationship between majority and minority populations.

Let us speak honestly to one another about what is most important to us, what it is we would hope that the other understands better about us.

Let us acknowledge, understand, and rejoice in our differences so that together we may become a beautiful symphony reflective of the Viennese past

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<sup>1</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*.

that contributes astutely to the flourishing of the other and to the love that our shared world so desperately needs.

May the Grace of God be with you all!