

† D I M I T R I O S

By the Mercy of God,

Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome, and Ecumenical Patriarch,

To all the Faithful of the Church:

Grace, mercy, and peace from the Creator of all Creation

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ¹

September 1, 1990

STEWARDS, NOT PROPRIETORS

A year has passed since we issued a message declaring September 1st of each year as the day of prayers for the protection of the environment. In that message, we called upon the Orthodox faithful and, indeed, upon every man and woman of good will, to consider the extent and the seriousness of the problem generated as a result of the senseless abuse of material creation by human beings. On this day, which for the Orthodox Church is officially the first day of the ecclesiastical year, the Orthodox faithful are invited to offer prayers to the Creator of all, thanking Him for the good of His creation and beseeching Him to protect it from every evil and destruction.

The message offered last year continues to echo and to express the inquietude of our Church toward the continuing destruction of the natural environment. For this reason, we considered it expedient, rather than communicating in some other way, to present once again today that same message, unabridged, to our faithful and to all people in order to renew our fervent appeal to all.

¹ The customary address in Patriarchal encyclical letters for September 1, the opening of the ecclesiastical year and the day dedicated to prayer for the protection and preservation of the natural environment.

Beloved brothers and spiritual children, use the natural environment as its stewards and not as its owners. Acquire an ascetic ethos bearing in mind that everything in the natural world, whether great or small, has its importance for the life of the world, and nothing is useless or contemptible. Regard yourselves as being responsible before God for every creature and treat everything with love and care. Only in this way shall we be able to prevent the threatening destruction of our planet and secure a physical environment where life for the coming generations of humankind will be healthy and happy.