



*The Good Citizen and the Pope: The Moral Implications of Laudato Si*

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# The Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Environment

St Paul's College Symposium,  
December 1, 2015



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# The Contribution of the Ecumenical Throne

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- ❖ renewed interest in the doctrine of creation
- ❖ Encyclical of Patriarch Demetrios in 1989 declaring 1st of September - day of prayer and supplication for the environment





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# The Contribution of the Ecumenical Throne

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The initiatives of the present Patriarch, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew have earned him the title “Green Patriarch”



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# Patriarchate's Initiatives and Activities

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- ❖ emphasis on the value of theological and spiritual values for determining a way forward out of the environmental crisis

- ❖ **Oxford Union Lecture** (November 4, 2015):  
“the way we relate to nature and the biodiversity of creation directly reflects the way we relate to God and to our fellow human beings”



# The meaning of sin broadened

- ❖ **Santa Barbara Symposium (1997):**

“to commit a crime against the natural world is a sin. For human beings to cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God’s creation; for human beings to degree the integrity of the earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the earth of its natural forests, or destroying its wetlands; for human being stop injure other human being with disease; for human beings to contaminate the earth’s waters, its land, its air, and its life, with poisonous substances, these are sins.... It is certainly God’s forgiveness, which we must ask, for causing harm to his own creation.”
- ❖ **Sin no longer narrowly understood as the harm caused by human beings on others, but equally importantly humanity’s harm of creation as well.**





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# The meaning of sin broadened

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# Vespers for the Protection of the Environment

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- ❖ “Fence round the whole creation, Christ our Saviour... and deliver the earth we inhabit from the corruption which threatens it... turn aside from the earth every destructive action of the works of human hands which contrive corruption leading to perdition... watch over the environment of the earth.”
- ❖ **No longer do we only pray to be protected from plague, famine etc, but also we pray that the earth may be protected from humanity’s harm**





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# Patriarchate's Initiatives

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- ❖ **1989 Encyclical**
- ❖ “under the influence of an extreme rationalism and self-centredness, humanity has lost the sense of the sacredness of creation and acts as its arbitrary ruler and rude violator. instead of the eucharistic and ascetic spirit with which the Orthodox Church brought up its children for centuries, we observe today a violation of nature for the satisfaction not of basic human needs, but of man’s endless and constantly increasing desire and lust, encouraged by the prevailing philosophy of the consumer society”





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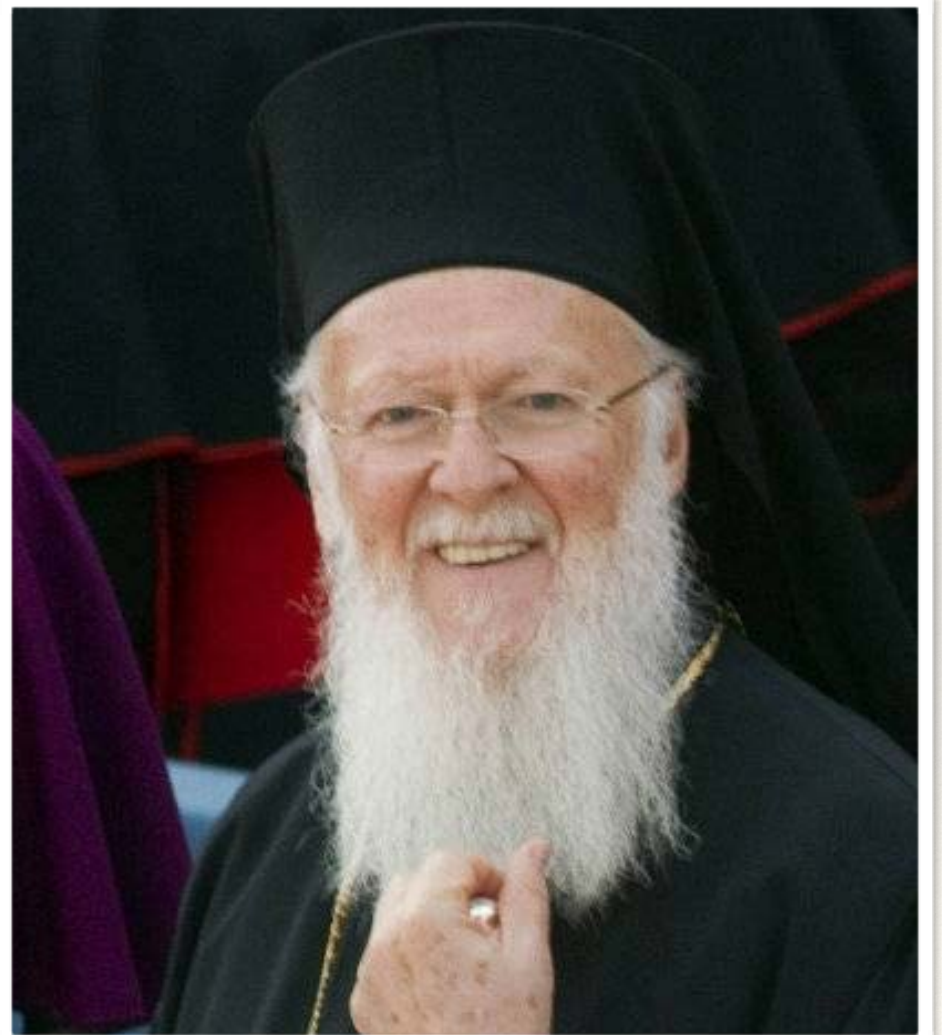
# The Contribution of the Ecumenical Throne

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## Sophie Award

### Remarks by Norwegian Minister of Environment

His pioneering efforts in linking faith to the environment, reminding all people of faith of their direct responsibility to protect the earth. his spiritual and practical environmental leadership, managing to raise the environmental awareness of 300 million faithful of the Orthodox Church worldwide and challenging religious leaders of all faiths to do the same. His tireless efforts to bring attention to both rights and obligations, criticising both the over-consumption in the first-world countries and the lack of justice that causes growing inequity in developing countries





# The Contribution of the Ecumenical Throne



## Seminars and Symposia

- ❖ 5 successive annual summer seminars (1994-1998)
  - ❖ 1. *Environment and Religious Ethics*
  - ❖ 2. *Environment and Ethics*
  - ❖ 3. *Environment and Communications*
  - ❖ 4. *Environment and Justice*
  - ❖ 5. *Environment and Poverty*

“everything that the Patriarch says and does is coloured by his keen awareness of and deep concern for environmental issues” (J. Chryssavgis)



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# The Contribution of the Ecumenical Throne

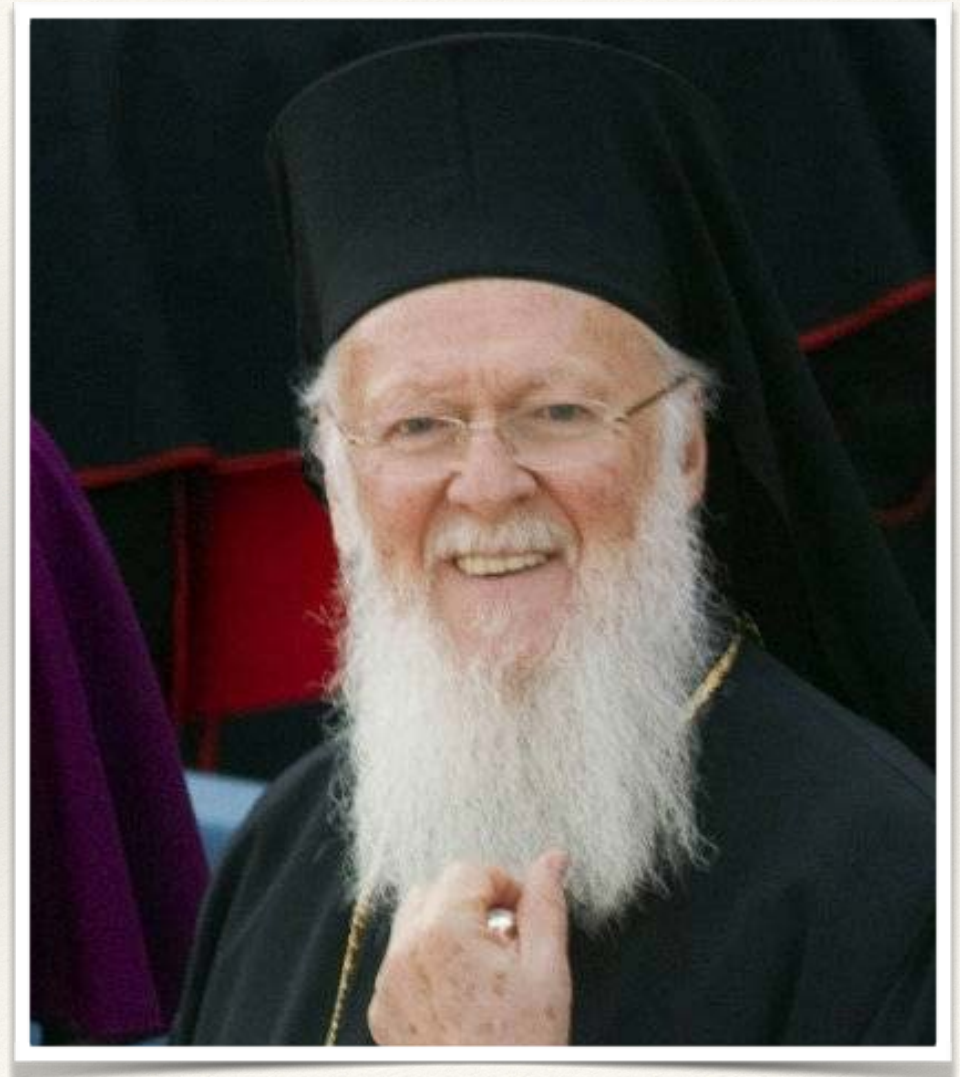
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## Seminars and Symposia

- ❖ five successive annual summer seminars (1994-1998)

## Religious and scientific committee

- ❖ Symposium I: *Revelation and Environment*
- ❖ Symposium II: *The Black Sea in Crisis*
- ❖ Symposium III: *River of Life: Down the Danube to the Black Sea*
- ❖ Symposium IV: *The Adriatic Sea: a Sea at Risk, a Unity of Purpose*
- ❖ Symposium V: *The Baltic Sea - A Common Heritage*
- ❖ Symposium VI: *The Amazon: Source of Life*
- ❖ Symposium VII: *The Arctic: Mirror of Life*
- ❖ Symposium VIII: *The Great Mississippi River: Restoring Balance*





# Theological Pointers

- ❖ his theology grounded in the realism of divine-human communion
- ❖ significance of creation *ex nihilo* as a way of preserving the sovereignty of God, yet at the same time his real involvement in the world
- ❖ stewardship of God's creation together with a sacramental vision of the world
- ❖ complementarity between theology and the sciences

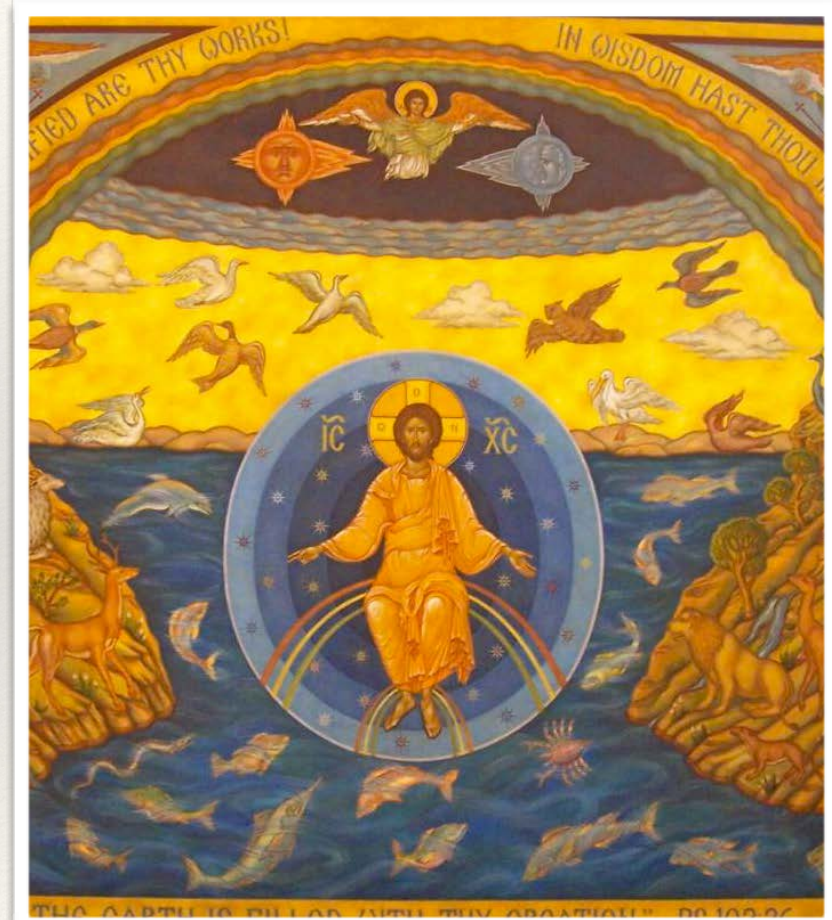




# Theological Contribution

❖ **Scenic Hudson Address, New York, 2000**

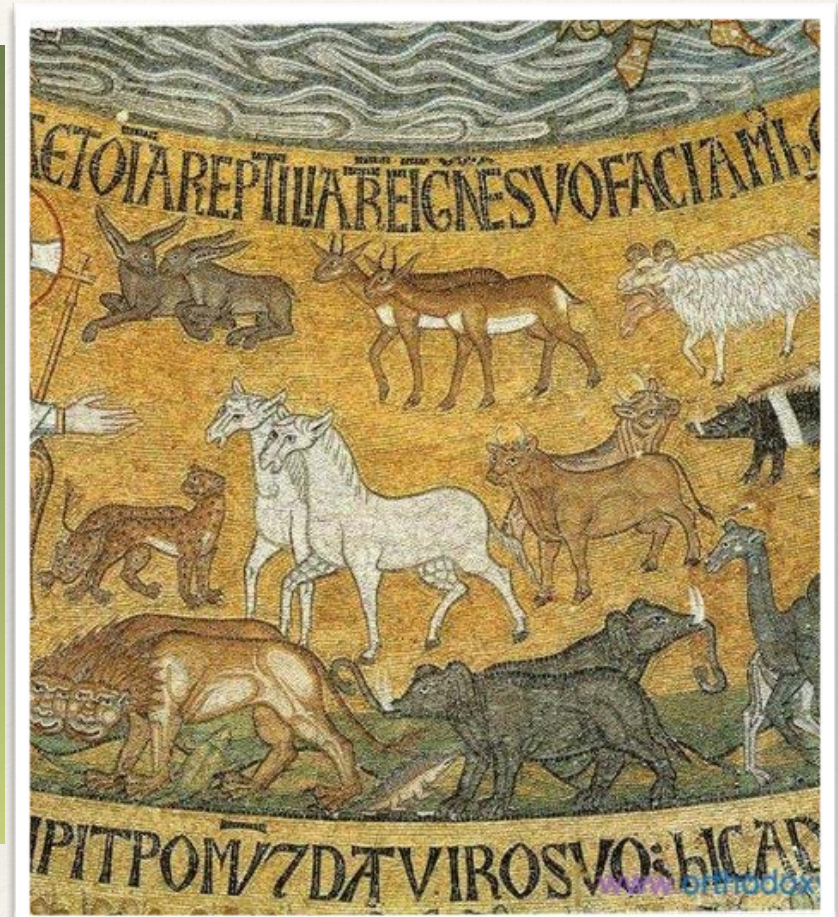
“The Lord intervenes and fills his creation with his divine presence in a continuous bond. Let us work together so that we may renew the harmony between heaven and earth so that we may transform every detail and every element of life.... With love, let us share with others... [so that] they may sanctify God’s creation for the glory of his holy name.”





# Theological Contribution

- ❖ sacramental vision of the world
- ❖ creation compared to an icon
- ❖ icon - a window into eternity holding together this world and the next
  - ❖ creation understood in terms of an icon is a helpful way of connecting this world with God





# Theological Contribution



- ❖ eucharistic understanding
- ❖ Keynote address at the Santa Barbara Symposium, California (1997):  
“our sin towards the world, or the spiritual root of all our pollution, lies in our refusal to view life and the world as a sacrament of thanksgiving, and as a gift of constant communion with God on a global scale.”



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# Theological Contribution

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- ❖ the need for an ascetical predisposition
- ❖ “asceticism requires from us a voluntary restraint in order for us to live in harmony with the environment”
- ❖ “By reducing our consumption - what in Orthodox theology we call *enkrateia* or self-control - we come to ensure that resources are also left for others in the world”



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# Hospitality of Abraham

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.....“the mystery of the holy Trinity is not only inextricably linked with the three persons, but also indissolubly connects with “the oak of Mamre”





It is not too late....

