

President Obama Receives Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in the Oval Office



(photo by N. Manginas)

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew with President Barack Obama

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WASHINGTON – His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew was received today at the White House in the Oval Office by President Barack Obama. This reciprocal visit to the one paid by President Obama earlier this year (April 7, when he made his first overseas visit to a Muslim country, Turkey) followed up on their conversations at that time on the subjects of the recently concluded environmental symposium on the Mississippi River and the re-opening of the Theological School of *Halki*.

“The President with his kindness and openness received me and my delegation with love and honor,” said His All Holiness to the Press as he was exiting the White House.

During the more than half an hour meeting, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew raised the subjects of climate change and commended the President for his initiatives, urging him for an even more intensive campaign on behalf of ecological responsibility. For his part, President Obama thanked the Ecumenical Patriarch for his moral and ethical leadership for all the world’s faith communities in responding to

environmental concerns. In particular, the President thanked His All Holiness for his recent environmental symposium on the Mississippi River and his opening address. They both shared their experiences of the Lower Ninth Ward and their concern for the redevelopment of this hard hit neighborhood of New Orleans.

President Obama stressed his appreciation for the unique role of the Ecumenical Patriarch as the leader of the Orthodox Christian world, and the unique character of the Ecumenical Patriarchate as an institution. He expressed to His All Holiness his commitment to the re-opening of the Theological School of *Halki*, citing the advantage to Turkey itself that the full operation of *Halki* would bring.

At the close of their very substantive meeting, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew assured the President of his prayers for his healthcare initiatives for the sake of the poor and needy.

Present at the meeting of the President with His All Holiness were, from the White House: Tom Donilon, Assistant to the President, Deputy National Security Advisor; Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director of European Affairs; Joshua DuBois, Director of Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships; Bridget Brink, Director for Aegean and South Caucasus; and accompanying the Ecumenical patriarch were: Archbishop Demetrios of America, Geron Metropolitan Athanasios of Chalcedon, Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea and Protopresbyter Alexander Karloutsos.

Lecture at Georgetown and other events

Immediately after their meeting, His All Holiness, returning to the campus of **Georgetown University**, gave a major address entitled "**A Changeless Faith for a Changing World.**" The Center for American Progress, together with Georgetown University, sponsored the event. (for the full text see http://www.patriarchate.org/documents/georgetown_2009)

Tomorrow, His All Holiness will give another major address at the **Brookings Institution** entitled, "**Saving the Soul of the Planet,**" on environmental responsibility.

In the afternoon, the **Speaker of the House** and the **Majority Leader** will co-host His All Holiness at a luncheon in the Capitol. A private meeting with the **Speaker Pelosi** will follow the luncheon. In the evening, **Vice President and Dr. Biden** will host him at the Vice Presidential Residence for a private meeting and formal dinner.

On Thursday, Nov. 5, His All Holiness will meet with **Secretary of State Clinton** and that evening, she will host a dinner in honor of the Ecumenical Patriarch in the Ben Franklin Room at the State Department.

The Ecumenical Patriarch has just concluded his **Eighth Religion, Science and Environment Symposium** in New Orleans, focusing on the Mississippi River. His Apostolic Visit to the United States has just concluded stops in New York and Atlanta, and continues in Washington D.C. until November 6.

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