

# GATHERING OF HEADS OF CHURCHES IN CONSTANTINOPLE

Keeping our readers up to date with the Patriarchate's participation in the Gathering of the Heads of Churches in Constantinople, we would like to inform you that His Beatitude Theophilos, our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem, accompanied by His retinue, arrived safely in Constantinople on the evening of Lean Wednesday, the 20<sup>th</sup> of February/5<sup>th</sup> of March 2014.

Acting on behalf of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Most Reverend Iacovos, Metropolitan of Princes islands, and Hierodeacon Gregorios welcomed His Beatitude at the airport and escorted him to the Hilton Hotel to rest on the first day of His arrival.

The following day, Thursday the 21<sup>st</sup> of February/6<sup>th</sup> of March 2014, the Pan-Orthodox Gathering convened at the Church of St George the Great Martyr, in the Phanar.

Participating in the Gathering are all the Heads of Orthodox Churches, with the exception of the Patriarch of Antioch, who is represented by a delegate, and the Church of the Check Republic, which is troubled by leadership problems.

A prayer requesting the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit was followed by a speech by His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

After welcoming the Heads of Churches, the Ecumenical Patriarch referred to previously held Gatherings in Jerusalem, Patmos, and elsewhere, aimed at providing an answer, by means of the declared unity of the Orthodox Church, to problems facing man today, especially those recently emerged, i.e. technology, bioethics, the natural environment and society's

economic structure. The unity of the Orthodox Church is secured through the long established institution of the synodality of the Orthodox Church. Through this institution, Orthodox Churches have, for the past fifty years, since the days of the late Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras, been preparing for a series of Pan-Orthodox Conferences. In keeping with this tradition, the present Gathering will look into the topics to be discussed during the future Great Synod of Orthodoxy, and into the Message to be announced to the contemporary world.

Following the address of the Ecumenical Patriarch, each of the Heads of the Orthodox Churches went on to refer, in their own speech, to the importance of the Gathering, as well as to problems that are specific to their respective Churches.

In His address, His Beatitude Theophilos expressed the wish that the Spirit of the Pentecost cast its light upon everyone present during the days of their Gathering, and that it enable all to experience the Holy and Great Forty-Day Period through fasting and praying before celebrating with joy the Holy Resurrection.

After lunch hosted by His All Holiness, Patriarch Bartholomew, at a Bosphorus restaurant, the meeting resumed in the afternoon.

**From the Secretariat-General**

