



**Encyclical of Archbishop Demetrios of America for the Beginning of the
Ecclesiastical New Year and Day for the Protection of Our Natural Environment**

Protocol No. 123/18

September 14, 2018

Beginning of the Ecclesiastical New Year

Day for the Protection of our Natural Environment

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On this Feast of the Indiction at the beginning of the ecclesiastical New Year, we are led by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to observe the Day for the Protection of our Natural Environment. The relationship of this observance and our commemoration of the Feast was established in 1989 in an encyclical of Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I, in which he urged “all faithful in the world to admonish themselves and their children to respect and protect the natural environment,” and “all those who are entrusted with the responsibility of governing nations to act without delay in taking all necessary measures for the protection and preservation of natural creation” (Protocol No. 629).

Since then the Day for the Protection of our Natural Environment has been adopted by all Orthodox Churches, while many other Christian churches have also followed the lead of the Orthodox Church by adopting September 1st as the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation.

This proclamation and exhortation by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios, and the many years of global leadership and pastoral ministry of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in relation to care for our natural environment, affirm the priority of this observance as we enter the new cycle of feasts and commemorations. Today, in our hymns we sing, “O eternal Word and Son of God... You are the Author, the Creator of the visible and invisible world. Bless the crown of the year!” We proclaim, “O Word of God, who exists before all time, You have created all things in wisdom, and by Your all-powerful word, You organized the whole cosmos.” Thus, we encourage every parish and individual to heed this message by developing

programs to assist our communities in becoming better stewards of creation. As a practical way to help in this journey, a special toolkit has been compiled a toolkit that can be found at ecumenical.goarch.org.

This Feast and those that will follow in the months to come are a witness of our relationship with the created order through our relationship with Christ. We acknowledge before all of the world that our Lord “created all things by bringing them into being out of nothing.” We proclaim that He is our Creator, expressing our petitions and hope for peace and protection, for renewal and salvation. In our respect for all that He has made, in seeing the created order as the work of God and not merely natural resources, in affirming that each and every person bears His image and likeness, we are called to be wise and faithful stewards. Every time we gather in worship and for the Divine Liturgy we affirm this calling in the offering of the Holy Eucharist through the created elements of bread and wine. In his inaugural encyclical for this observance, Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios stated, “In this way the Church continuously declares that man is destined not to exercise power over creation as if he were the owner of it, but to act as its steward, cultivating it in love and referring it in thankfulness with respect and reverence to its Creator.” The celebration of the Holy Eucharist embodies our witness of caring for our natural environment. We care for the created order in reverence and love, cultivating it for our physical needs and for those of others; and we offer the elements as gifts to God in thankfulness so that He may consecrate them as a means of His grace.

As we enter upon a new season, a time of beginnings as the land is cultivated and our children and youth return to school, a time of renewal as we seek to strengthen our faith and follow the ways of the Lord, may we also strengthen our relationship with the created order. May we reconnect with the beauty, diversity, sustenance and life that comes from the world that God has made. May we affirm our divine calling to protect our natural environment as His creation, and as Orthodox Christians offer our support for the leadership and ministry of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and our beloved Ecumenical Patriarchate. May this ecclesiastical year be filled with the peace, blessings and protection of Christ, our Creator and Redeemer.

With paternal love in Him,

+DEMETRIOS

Archbishop of America