



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SEVENTH SYMPOSIUM
OF THE RELIGION, SCIENCE AND THE ENVIRONMENT MOVEMENT**

*To His Holiness Bartholomaios I
Archbishop of Constantinople
Ecumenical Patriarch*

It gives me great joy to greet you and all those taking part in the Seventh Symposium of the Religion, Science and the Environment movement, which this year turns its attention to the subject: "The Arctic: Mirror of Life". Your own dedication and personal commitment to the protection of the environment demonstrates the pressing need for science and religion to work together to safeguard the gifts of nature and to promote responsible stewardship. Through the presence of Cardinal McCarrick I wish to reaffirm my fervent solidarity with the aims of the project and to assure you of my hope for a deepening global recognition of the vital relationship between the ecology of the human person and the ecology of nature (cf. [*Message for the 2007 World Day of Peace*](#), 8).

Preservation of the environment, promotion of sustainable development and particular attention to climate change are matters of grave concern for the entire human family. No nation or business sector can ignore the ethical implications present in all economic and social development. With increasing clarity scientific research demonstrates that the impact of human actions in any one place or region can have worldwide effects. The consequences of disregard for the environment cannot be limited to an immediate area or populus because they always harm human coexistence, and thus betray human dignity and violate the rights of citizens who desire to live in a safe environment (cf. *ibid.*, 8-9).

This year's symposium, dedicated again to the earth's water resources, takes you and various religious leaders, scientists, and other interested parties to the Ilulissat Icefjord on the west coast

of Greenland. Gathered in the magnificent beauty of this unique glacial region and World Heritage site your hearts and minds turn readily to the wonders of God and in awe echo the words of the Psalmist praising the name of the Lord who is “majestic in all the earth”. Immersed in contemplation of the “work of his fingers” (*Ps 8*), the perils of spiritual alienation from creation become plainly evident. The relationship between individuals or communities and the environment ultimately stems from their relationship with God. When “man turns his back on the Creator’s plan, he provokes a disorder which has inevitable repercussions on the rest of the created order” (*Message for the 1990 World Day of Peace*, 5).

Your Holiness, the international and multi-disciplinary nature of the symposium attests to the need to seek global solutions to the matters under consideration. I am encouraged by the growing recognition that the entire human community – children and adults, industry sectors, States and international bodies – must take seriously the responsibility that falls to each and every one of us. While it is true that industrializing countries are not morally free to repeat the past errors of others, by recklessly continuing to damage the environment (cf. *ibid.*, 10), it is also the case that highly industrialized countries must share ‘clean-technologies’ and ensure that their own markets do not sustain demand for goods whose very production contributes to the proliferation of pollution. Mutual interdependence between nations’ economic and social activities demands international solidarity, cooperation and on-going educational efforts. It is these principles which the Religion, Science and the Environment movement courageously upholds.

With sentiments of deep appreciation, and mindful of our commitment to encourage and support all efforts made to protect God’s works, (cf. *Common Declaration*, 30 November 2006), I pray that the Almighty will abundantly bless this year’s symposium. May he accompany you and all those gathered with you, so that all creation may give praise to God!

From the Vatican, 1 September 2007

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