

Translation of the original Greek text

† BARTHOLOMEW

**by the grace of God, Archbishop of Constantinople,
the New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarchate**

To all our beloved brethren in Christ, the chaplains who minister spiritually in various airports around the world and now participate in the 39th annual conference in Cape Town in South Africa, Grace, Blessing and Mercy of our God who bountifully bestows His gifts.

Knowing the ever-increasing worldwide use of airport facilities around the world, and the consequent communication and meeting which takes place between nations, races, languages and religions, one can see the very important role and potential for spiritual contribution by you all who are responsible for serving as chaplains in international airports everywhere.

Of course there are many doctrinal differences on some points and this affects the theological basis of your pastoral ministry, which has as its common point of reference the one and unsurpassable Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is both God and man.

Having Him as our prototype, you all come each time as good Samaritans and sometimes without apprehension about the spiritual results, to minister to our fellow human beings' diverse perceptions and cultures, to people who often are either ignorant or who refuse to regard themselves as living images of our common Creator and the Heavenly Father of every living race under heaven.

Therefore, we trust that your annual meeting together can offer much, through the mutual exchange of each one's personal experiences and enrich your spiritual armoury with new weapons of the Spirit.

With heartfelt blessing, appreciation and prayerful support of our unique contribution, Our Holy and Great Church of Christ,

sends His Grace Bishop Athenagoras of Sinope, our beloved brother and fellow minister as its official representative. As such he will express our fervent Patriarchal good wishes and blessing and participate in the work of the conference. May the Lord our God bless your gathering with abundant fruits, and may He strengthen you all to fulfil your pastoral mission in a manner most pleasing to God.

August 31st, 2006

+ Bartholomew of Constantinople, beloved brother in Christ and fervent intercessor to God