

The President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, met today in Kadriorg with the Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome, and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who arrived in Estonia at his invitation.

According to President Ilves, the third visit to Estonia by Patriarch Bartholomew serves as confirmation of our wonderful relations and mutual understanding. This year, 90 years will also pass since the Holy Synod of Ecumenical Patriarch released an instrument on the autonomy of the Church of Estonia.

"Just like the people of Estonia for over almost a century have had the chance to enjoy freedom and the regaining of freedom, while having to experience painful moments in a tragic and unjust way, these times have also seen days of both happiness and suffering for the Orthodox Church of Estonia," President Ilves said. "These times have also proven that walls built on fear and injustice cannot remain standing. The great European, former president of the Czech Republic, Václav Havel, was right when he defined one of the most hopeful and beautiful laws to describe the course of time: "Truth and love will suffocate lies and hate.""

This wisdom holds hope for all these who are still forced to suffer from want and hunger, feel fear and lack the power to fight oppression, emphasised the Estonian Head of State.

Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and Patriarch Bartholomew has stood for those who have suffered for years from mental and physical violence; the Patriarch has also been a person to build bridges in order to overcome gaps and search for conciliation – attempting to bring together those who share common values yet who are forced to take different ways in the course of time, President Ilves told, addressing patriarch Bartholomew: "Your Holiness has proven that caring and speaking out, dialogue and understanding, compassion and consolation are characteristics that can change people and the world. The power and influence that your words and deeds have can overcome obstacles."

According to President Ilves, Estonia has, over the last two decades, created a free democratic society and, being a responsible member of an international community, will contribute to a more peaceful, safer and sustainable world.

"Therefore, we will not remain indifferent when children are killed by chemical warfare attacks, when civilian people become victims of brutal violence, when thousands of people die from hunger every day, when virgin forests are devoured by fires and meadows wither and lakes dry as a consequence of our negligence. Your efforts in raising awareness of and emphasising environmental problems is also a source of valuable inspiration and motivation," told the Estonian Head of State, in greeting Patriarch Bartholomew.

Ecumenical Patriarch confirmed in his greeting address that "a journey through history, the turns and twists of fate and difficulties demonstrate the diligence and perseverance of the Estonian people, striving and yearning for ideals." "Estonia has done lots of work and laid a strong, steady foundation for its future and considered environment protection and the dignity of the human being important, walking in faith, love, gentleness, patience and truth towards everything that is good and praiseworthy," told Patriarch Bartholomew.

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