



On the final day of his pilgrimage to Cappadocia in Turkey, the Archbishop gave this address during Vespers in the former church of St Constantine and St Helena in Sinasos.

All-Holiness, Beloved Brother in Christ,

Christos aneste!

It is with great joy I greet you, and all those gathered here in this Orthodox paschal season, in the peace of our risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I thank you most cordially for inviting me to join this pilgrimage to Cappadocia. I bring the greetings of the whole Anglican Communion.

I have fond memories of my first visit to you in January 2014 at the Phanar. This was the beginning of a friendship that I cherish. The warmth of your welcome at our first meeting, the significance of the city Istanbul, in which you hold your seat as Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch, impressed themselves on me as a moving experience.

Since then, over a number of significant milestones, our bond has grown. Through the brief Common Statement we had agreed on at the Phanar in January 2014, we established a basis and vision for witnessing to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in today's troubled world. Then during your reciprocal visit to Lambeth Palace, we displayed greater unity and closer fellowship by our presence at ecumenical services filled with symbolic significance, by our participation together at formal functions organised by the Nikaeian Club and the Greek Community, as well as our shared private conversations. It was a delight to congratulate you at a service held in Lambeth Palace Chapel on the twenty-fourth anniversary of your enthronement.

With great pain in our hearts we prayed for those affected by conflict, persecution, climate change and the refugee crisis. In the face of such great concerns, we agreed to undertake the joint organisation of an international conference in Istanbul on overcoming modern slavery and human trafficking, a conference taking place next year.

Finally, at a choral evensong in Westminster Abbey, a copy of the latest Agreed Statement, entitled *In The Image and Likeness of God: A Hope-Filled Anthropology* was presented to us by the Co-Chairmen of the International Commission for the Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue. We were able to celebrate what Anglicans and Orthodox affirm together about the human person. This milestone provides the theological foundation for forthcoming discussions on the practical consequences of our shared theology to address the key themes, including the protection of the environment, ethical questions around medical interventions, and family life, and our call to reconciliation in the world around us. You yourself have been an untiring advocate for peace and reconciliation - politically, with the natural world and in your historic visit at the installation of His Holiness Pope Francis.

Historically I see these achievements as signs of a further deepening of the deep-rooted friendship between our two churches. As noted by Your All Holiness during the visit to Lambeth Palace, as early as the 17th century Cyril Lukaris, Patriarch first of Alexandria and then of Constantinople, had many contacts with the English Church and State. The Anglican and Eastern Churches Association and the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius have both fostered and continue to strengthen ecumenical friendships.

In a time when, for the first time, surveys show that those in the UK who say they have no faith outnumber those who say they are Christians, the importance of our visible expression of love and support is inestimable. Each day the Community of St Anselm at Lambeth Palace prays that “we may experience the suffering caused by division, may see our sin and hope beyond all hope.” This pilgrimage draws us closer to Christ and thus to each other.

We have seen today the signs of churches and monasteries emptied by the shock of war. We know also the long term decline caused by secularism and churches consequently giving in to individualism, to a lack of holiness, to fear, yet together we know hope. I am grateful and humbled for this ecumenical love, extended to myself and my wife, to Bishop Jonathan and his wife.

Today, at this gathering for Vespers in the former church of St Constantine and St Helena in Sinasos, we continue to be moved by history. And we commemorate the greatest Christian teacher from this region, St Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, “belongs not to the Church of Caesarea alone, nor merely to his own time, nor was he of benefit only to his own kinsmen, but rather to all lands and cities worldwide, and to all people he brought and still brings benefit, and for Christians he always was and will be a most salvific teacher.” Thus spoke St Basil’s contemporary, St Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium. St Athanasius the Great had a high regard for St Basil, for his reverence, his deep knowledge of Holy Scripture, his great learning, and his efforts for the welfare of Church peace and unity.

Your All Holiness, as I have mentioned once before to you, the history of the Orthodox Church has demonstrated over the centuries the martyrdom to which we are called in scripture, the call to witness in word and life, a call more important than life itself. The cost of that martyrdom is witnessed in so many places today. Close to this place we continue to seek the mercy of Christ and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Lord, on Syria and the Middle East as a whole, in particular for His Eminence Metropolitan Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo of the Syrian Patriarchate of Antioch, and His Eminence Metropolitan Boulos Yazigi of Aleppo and Alexandrette of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch.

Finally, the whole Christian world is aware that you are meeting later this month for the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church. You have been in all our prayers, in particular during the last months as you and your co-workers have coordinated the final preparatory phases of the Council, looking also to find ways to enable the Council to be an event experienced by all the Orthodox Faithful.

The proposal after so many centuries to hold a Council concerns the whole Church. All other churches and Christian bodies can only be encouraged and strengthened by a renewed and more visibly unified Orthodox Church in our midst. From you we find great blessing and strength of faith and purpose. So we pray that the Council will be greatly blessed by the guidance of the Holy Spirit and prove to be as you have said not only a first but also ‘a most decisive step’ that, by God’s grace, will give Orthodox witness the authoritative seal of unity and conciliarity.

Your All Holiness, dear Brother, our experience as Anglicans this year, in far simpler meetings, has taught me more of the complexities of convening and presiding at such global gatherings; and it leads me, with a deep sense of fraternal love, to assure you of my prayers as you now look to the inauguration of this great gathering. May the Holy Spirit be ever present during your deliberations and may it be a Council of hope and love. I look forward to our continuing pilgrimage together. In a world crying out for redemption and reconciliation may we be strengthened to point together to the only eternal hope and lasting treasure as we confess and witness to Christ, our risen Lord and Saviour.

Source URL: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-and-writing/speeches/archbishop-gives-vespers-address-during-pilgrimage-cappadocia>