



**ΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΩΝ ΙΕΡΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΕΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΝΤΙΚΩΝ ΜΕΛΕΤΩΝ**  
**ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΗΣ ΠΑΝΤΕΛΕΗΜΩΝ ΠΑΠΑΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΥ**  
**Center of Ecumenical, Missiological and Environmental Studies**  
**Metropolitan Panteleimon Papageorgiou**

A SHORT MESSAGE

on behalf of the Center for Ecumenical, Missiological and Environmental Studies  
“Metropolitan Panteleimon Papageorgiou” (CEMES),  
to St. ANDREW’S BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE for its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary

Dear Dr. Bodrov,

I would like to express our sincere gratitude to St. Andrew’s Biblical Theological Institute for the 25 years of its invaluable contribution to promote the theological renewal and the ecumenical awareness of our Church. Your untiring efforts keep the ecumenical vision alive, especially in your local Orthodox Church. CEMES is enthusiastically grateful to your work, especially because of the biblical focus, which is so neglected in our present day Orthodox theological reflections. We consider the series of festive conferences you have launched this year to commemorate your small jubilee as a humble contribution to our Church’s titanic effort toward her Pan-Orthodox Synod next year.

Driving force to promote this vision in our local Church, the Church of Greece, for more than two decades – unfortunately as a lonely figure in a widely even to our days conservative ecclesiastical and social environment – was the late Metropolitan of Thessaloniki Panteleimon Papageorgiou (1902-1979), a close companion of the visionary Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras. To revitalize his vision and further contribute to the ecumenical cause, a great number of academics, as well as some of his direct or spiritual relatives, established in his name the afore mentioned Center.

Last year one of CEMES’ international conferences came to a conclusion that not only inter-Christian but also inter-faith dialogue is a *sine-qua-non* in our Church’s witness to the gospel. Even the articulation of a "theology of religions" from the Orthodox point of view is possible, and if our ecumenical efforts do not aim at an anti-modern front but at working together instead of fighting one another, can enormously contribute to a tolerant, peaceful, just, and sustainable society.

Early this year CEMES organized another international conference on the restoration of Order of Deaconesses (or women deacons), which came to the conclusion

that an institution so deeply rooted in the Orthodox tradition, theologically, historically and most importantly with conciliar and canonical validity, despite falling for the time being into disuse, must be urgently revived in order to support and strengthen the authentic witness of our Church in society and the world.

Congratulating you again for the 25 years of your significant theological contribution we wholeheartedly wish you many happy returns and to your great jubilee.

Petros Vassiliadis  
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