

**UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF CANADA  
OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS**

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Date: May 14, 2010**

**Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew:**

*On the Environmental Tragedy In the Gulf of Mexico!*

Once again, in a matter only of a few years, the eyes of the world are turned with suspense toward the Gulf Coast. Sadly, the oil spill is following a path similar to Hurricane Katrina and threatening the coast of Louisiana as well as neighboring states.

As citizens of God's creation, we perceive this monumental spill of crude oil in the oceans of our planet as a sign of how far we have moved from the purpose of God's creation. Our immediate reaction is to pray fervently for the urgent and efficient response to the current crisis, to mourn painfully for the sacrifice of human life as well as for the loss of marine life and wildlife, and to support the people and communities of the region, whose livelihood directly depends on the fisheries of the Gulf.

But as the first bishop of the world's second-largest Christian Church, we also have a responsibility not only to pray, but also to declare that to mistreat the natural environment is to sin against humanity, against all living things, and against our creator God. All of us -- individuals, institutions, and industries alike -- bear responsibility; all of us are accountable for ignoring the global consequences of environmental exploitation. Katrina -- we knew -- was a natural calamity. This time -- we know -- it is a man-made disaster. One deepwater pipe will impact millions of lives in several states as well as countless businesses and industries.

Therefore, we must use every resource at our disposal to contain this disaster. But we must also use every resource to determine liability for the fact that 11 people have died and 5,000 barrels of oil are flowing daily into the delicate ecology of the Gulf of Mexico. In exchange for the benefits and wealth generated by deep underwater drilling, individuals, institutions, and industries assume responsibility for protecting the earth and its creatures from the well-known potential hazards. In this instance, they have clearly failed in those responsibilities; that failure must be acknowledged and strong measures taken to avert future catastrophes.

Although we are halfway around the world from this incident, our interest in it is

deeply personal. We visited Louisiana and its bayous only four months after its devastation by Hurricane Katrina and we returned there just last October to convene our Eighth Religion, Science, and the Environment Symposium, "Restoring Balance: The Great Mississippi," in New Orleans. At that time, we noted:

Although the time we have been on the planet is insignificant in the context of the life of the planet itself, we have reached a defining moment in our story. Let us remember that, whoever we are, we all have our part to play, our sacred responsibility to the future. And let us remember that our responsibility grows alongside our privileges; we are more accountable the higher we stand on the scale of leadership. Our successes or failures, personal and collective, determine the lives of billions. Our decisions, personal and collective, determine the future of the planet.

In the spirit of responsibility, the White House and certain Congressional leaders have declared that, before beginning new offshore drilling for oil, there must be greater understanding of the environmental impact and responsibility for such endeavors. We support this approach. For, as confident as interested parties were that a disaster like this could not occur because of watertight controls and fail-safe mechanisms installed, those controls and mechanisms failed, with the horrific results we witness unfolding each day.

Until such understanding and responsibility have been determined, may God grant us all the strength to curtail the spill, the resources to support the region, and the courage to make the necessary changes so that similar tragedies may be avoided in the future.

With prayers,

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