



CENTER OF ECUMENICAL, MISSIOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES
“METROPOLITAN PANTELEIMON PAPAGEORGIU” (CEMES)
ΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΩΝ ΙΕΡΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΕΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΝΤΙΚΩΝ ΜΕΛΕΤΩΝ
«ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΗΣ ΠΑΝΤΕΛΕΗΜΩΝ ΠΑΠΑΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΥ» (CEMES)

A SHORT MESSAGE

on behalf of CEMES to the organizers of the inaugural conference of the International Orthodox Theological Association (IOTA) at Iasi, Romania

Dear Dr. Paul L. Gavrilyuk,
Founding President of IOTA

I would like to express our sincere gratitude to you and all the organizers of the inaugural conference of the International Orthodox Theological Association (IOTA). CEMES is enthusiastically grateful for your coordinating this God-pleasing project, as it is shown by the participation of so many of our foundation's members, in addition to its President: Profs. Aggeliki Ziaka, Dimitrios Keramidas, Eleni Kassekouri, Evi Voulgaraki, Nikolaos Kouremenos, and Fr. Gregory Edwards, who will contribute as speakers to this great event.

CEMES is grateful to your untiring efforts to keep the ecumenical vision for Orthodox unity and conciliarity alive. After all its members have greatly contributed to the “Plea for Pan-Orthodox Unity” initiative, which is widely considered as the foundational event for the for IOTA's establishment (<http://cemes.weebly.com/pialpharhoepsilonmubeta940sigmaepsiloniotasigmaf.html>). We consider the conference you have organized and the entire project of creating an international network of all the Orthodox scholarly and academic resources as an important contribution to our Church's witness, as well as to her titanic effort to carry further the vision of the recent Pan-Orthodox Synod.

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.

The conciliar process and the authentic use of consensus, both as a decision-making mechanism, but primarily as a *spiritual* process, a new ethos of “*faith working through love*” in the spirit of humiliation, tolerance and loving submission of the different theological views, are of paramount importance, so that the body of the living Christ be able to faithfully witness together to their faith in the Triune God.

Conciliarity, which is the focus of this inaugural conference, has a much wider circle of application. In the early stages the Church functioned as a corporate entity, a real “body of Christ,” and all top theologians were bishops, and *vice-versa*. all bishops were top theologians; and those of profound

theological knowledge (even deacons, like St. Athanasius) played a decisive role in the conciliar processes. Gradually, however, all the canonical decisions were taken without a real *consensus* by the entire Christian community, and in some cases without an in-depth theological examination, or scholarly expertise. The 3rd millennium, with the enormous scientific and technological development, sooner or later will inevitably demand an increase of the horizon of the *conciliar process* of the Church to include at least her academic theological resources. This new “*conciliar paradigm*” will not be delayed for long, and IOTA’s contribution will certainly be quite instrumental to this development.

Wishing you a good success, I remain sincerely yours

Prof. Emeritus Petros Vassiliadis

President of CEMES and WOCATI

Director of the Inter-Orthodox Post-Graduate Program of the IHU

(www.cemes-en.weebly.com, and <http://hum.ihu.edu.gr/index.php/en/courses/masters/master-in-orthodox-ecumenical-theology>)

Thessaloniki, 28 December 2018