

Address on Behalf of His All-Holiness
The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew
Third Distinguished John Zizioulas Lecture

Faculty of Theology, University of Athens

Athens, 20 May 2026

Rev Dr Isidoros Katsos, Ass. Professor at the Faculty of Theology, NKUA

*Very Reverend Archimandrite Cherubim, representative of His
Beatitude the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece Hieronymus II,*

Your Eminence, Metropolitan Gregorius of Peristeriou,

Honorable Dean of the School of Theology,

*Esteemed Chair of the Faculty of Theology and esteemed Chair of the
sister Faculty of Pastoral Theology and Religious Studies,*

Distinguished Faculty Members,

Reverend Fathers and Mothers,

Dear Students and guests,

Christ is risen!

His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has appointed me to convey his paternal greetings and patriarchal blessings to all gathered here for the Third Distinguished John Zizioulas Lecture. His All-Holiness has followed this lecture series with attentive interest since its inception, and he offers his prayers for the continued fruitfulness of this academic initiative, which brings international scholars of the highest calibre to the Faculty of Theology of the University of Athens. He expresses, moreover, his particular satisfaction that this year's speaker is the Protopresbyter of the Ecumenical Throne, Father Alexis Torrance, distinguished Professor of Orthodox Theology at the University of Notre Dame and co-secretary of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church.

His All-Holiness recalls that the late John Zizioulas, Elder Metropolitan of Pergamon, served the Ecumenical Patriarchate for decades with singular dedication. He represented the Phanar in theological dialogues of the highest order, gave voice to the Orthodox tradition in international and academic forums, and discharged every responsibility entrusted to him with both theological precision and ecclesial fidelity. His was a life placed entirely at the service of the Mother Church of Constantinople.

The theological work he leaves behind constitutes a substantial and enduring contribution to Christian thought, and it is studied with profit across theology faculties throughout the world. Of the many threads that run through this work, perhaps the most defining is this: that Metropolitan John anchored all of his thinking, consistently and deliberately, in eschatology. It is precisely for this reason that His All-Holiness wishes to address a particular word to the students of this Faculty. The study of theology is not, and must not be understood as, an exercise in the retrieval of a closed past. Metropolitan John expressed this with characteristic clarity. His insistence that Christian eschatology transforms the very meaning of memory is a summons to attend to the Spirit who draws the Church forward toward a fullness already active and already determinative of the present. His last printed words — *remembering the future* — name the real vocation of theology today; and that vocation is, in the proper theological sense, *hypostasized*, i.e. instantiated, in you, the students, *who are the future* of Orthodox theology.

In conclusion, I convey once more the patriarchal blessing of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew upon the Faculty, upon this assembly, upon the distinguished speaker, and upon the work of this lecture series.

May we remember the late John Zizioulas, Elder Metropolitan of
Pergamon — looking *ahead*.

On behalf of His All-Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew,

Bishop of New Rome