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New Greek education minister: Church an inseparable part of our culture, heritage



The new Mitsotakis government was that sworn-in this week, and now awaits the convening of Parliament plenum arising from the July 7 election in order to receive a confidence vote for its mandate, will face a series of pending issues revolving around Church-state relations and the Orthodox faith, all “leftovers” from a failed attempt by the previous government to effect Church-opposed changes.

Center-right Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, in fact, had directly criticized past practices by the previous government and even blasphemous claims – aired on paid television programming – by the leader of newly formed party regarding “handwritten epistles” of Christ.

In recent statements indicative of the new government’s direction, newly sworn-in Education & Religious Affairs Minister Niki Kerameos emphasized that the Orthodox Church “is an inseparable part of our culture and heritage.”

“... Constitutional revision in the hands of the (previous) SYRIZA-ANEL (government), unfortunately, comprised a petty partisan and communications flare. ND has signaled its opposition towards revision of Article 3 of the Constitution regarding Church-state relations. Article 13 consolidates religious freedom, while any open issues in Church-state relations can be solved through a legislative initiative.”

The Harvard Law School graduate and veteran Athens attorney also cited the Church’s major humanitarian work, one which decisively dealt with the repercussions of the economic crisis.

At the same time, a bevy of last-minute changes to Greece’s penal code, passed by a slim majority of deputies in the previous Parliament that supported the Tsipras government, generated sharp reaction in the country, as well as by the Church.

Among others, articles against insult to religion and the deceased were abolished, causing a stern rebuke by members of the Church’s permanent Holy Synod.

Before the election, ND had committed to examining all of the revisions passed by the previous government in a “fast-track” process, days before the official date for snap elections was published.