11/03/2024

Archbishop Makarios: “We are ready for the future”



An encyclical to the Christ-loving plenitude of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia was released by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, to be read on Sunday, 10 March, on the occasion of two important and historical events for the Orthodox Church in Australia. The first is the one hundred years since the establishment of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia, whose Tome of Foundation was signed on the 7th of March 1924; and the second is the recent decisions of the Mother Church of Constantinople, according to which “the Archdiocese of Australia will henceforth be governed by a Holy Eparchial Synod, presided by the Archbishop and having as its members his assistant Bishops in their capacity as Regional Bishops [chorepiskopoi], while retaining their current titles”.

Clearly moved, His Eminence our Archbishop calls both clergy and faithful to a common Doxology in order to commemorate his blessed predecessors—the Hierarchs Metropolitan Christophoros, Metropolitan Timotheos, Metropolitan Theophylaktos, Archbishop Ezekiel and Archbishop Stylianos; all the clergy who served the Archdiocese of Australia during the last one hundred years; and all the Greek immigrants who created the pre-conditions for a bright future for generations that would follow. At the same time, His Eminence does not fail to express his gratitude to the God-loving Bishops, the members of the Archdiocesan

Council, and all those who worked and assisted in its drafting the Constitution to have it ready for voting, while he concludes his encyclical by expressing his deep gratitude to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and the members of the Holy and Sacred Synod for their beneficial decisions in favour of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia.

It should be noted that on Sunday, 10 March, after the Divine Liturgy, a Doxology Service will follow, at the end of which the Encyclical of His Eminence will be read and the Ecumenical Patriarch's Polychronio [a hymn for the granting of many years] will be chanted.

The entire Encyclical of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia follows.

MAKARIOS

by the mercy of God, Archbishop of the Most Holy Archdiocese of Australia, Primate and Exarch of All Oceania, to the God-loving Bishops, the gracious clergy and monastic communities, and to all the Christ-loving plenitude of the Orthodox Church in Australia, grace and peace from our glorified Saviour Jesus Christ.

Most honourable Brothers fellow-bishops, and my beloved children,

Following the sacred tradition and ethos of our ancestors, we ceremoniously celebrate the anniversaires of historial events which have been significant and decisive for the advancement of the Church and the Greek People. One such important anniversary presents itself resplendently before us with the dawning of the month of March of this year, according to which one hundred years are fulfilled since the establishment, by the ever-remembered Ecumenical Patriarch Gregory, of the then "Holy Metropolis of Australia and New Zealand" (March 1924 – March 2024), subsequently elevated to "The Holy Archdiocese of Australia" (1st September 1959). Two years before its establishment, under the the Patriarchy of Ecumenical Patriarch Meletius IV (March 1922), the ecclesiastical eparchy of the Fifth Continent was reinstated to the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, following the lifting of the concession to the Church of Greece with respect to its canonical right of protection and oversight within Australia. This is the point of time, during which a change of ontological proportions takes place in the course of the Orthodox Church in Australia.

It is rather unlikely that the protagonists of the events of that period would have realised the historic magnitude and significance of the moments they were experiencing. We, however, today, are in a position to know and to have fully understood just how blessed and catalytic—for the future advancement of

Orthodoxy in Australia—was the inclusion of our local Church within the spiritual shelter of the Ecumenical Patriarchate: which protected us during difficult times; ensured the consolidation of the faith of the Greeks in Oceania; healed on countless occasions the liturgical, spiritual and social needs of the immigrants; and during these times directed the Chief Shepherds of Australia in their ecclesiastical, educational, national and salvific work.

Our Ecumenical Patriarchate never ceased in its solicitude and care for the flock in this blessed country in which we live, our second homeland. An immense attestation of this great reality are the recent decisions of the Holy and Sacred Synod regarding our Archdiocese, which were taken following a positive commendation byour Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew—and which, by divine coincidence, come to seal the first hundred years and inaugurate the beginning of our new course. On many occasions we have stressed that “we are ready for the future”. However, after the great and historic decision of the Mother Church of Constantinople and our Patriarch, regarding the new Constitution of the Archdiocese, we are now certain that the future, which we are preparing for our children, will be free from the divisions and dissensions of the past and, above all, will be free from ecclesiastical schisms and divisions.

The new Constitution of our Archdiocese is the fruit of the cooperation of my own humble person with distinguished Professors of Canon Law of the Theological School of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Prof. Theodoros Yiangou and Revd Prof. Chrysostomos Nassis. It has been approved by their Graces the Bishops who serve within our Holy Archdiocese, by the members of the Archdiocesan Council, but also by a group of experienced lawyers, led by the most honourable Archon of our Ecumenical Patriarchate and distinguished Lawyer, Dr Nicholas Papanastasiou, so as to satisfy the demands of the legal order of the Commonwealth of Australia, within which we operate.

The new Constitution comes to replace its outdated counterpart of 1959, to attend to the modern needs, which have naturally arisen after the passage of so many decades, to cover many gaps created by the increase of the population and the establishment of many of our institutions and organisations and, finally, to institutionally secure, even more so, the position of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in relation to the Australian authorities. The most important change introduced by the new Constitution is that the governance of the Church will now be exercised by the “Holy Eparchial Synod”, at which the incumbent Archbishop will chair and at which all Bishops who serve within our Archdiocese will take part and will henceforth be called “Regional Bishops [Chorepiskopoi]”. This new situation is a milestone for the

ecclesiastical reality of Australia, as it introduces a system of governance which corrects past dysfunctions and aligns with the ecclesiological and canonical imperatives of the Orthodox Church.

Having all this front and centre of my mind, I commemorate with gratitude my blessed predecessors all the Hierarchs, from 1924 to 2019, Metropolitan Chirstophoros, Metropolitan Timotheos, Metropolitan Theophylaktos, Archbishop Ezekiel and Archbishop Stylianos, who shepherded our Archdiocese with divne zeal and dedication. I commemorate our reverent clergy, who literally ploughed the Australian land to support the early Greeks and attend to their needs. It is with great gratitude that I also commemorate all the immigrants who arrived in the Fifth Continent and worked tirelessly, and greatly struggled during the previous hundred years in order to build a better future for the future generations.

At the same time, and following the historical decisions of our Patriarchate, I invite all to come together in doxological prayer, giving thanks to our Lord, the Benefactor of all Gifts, for this great benefaction that we have received, praying that the new Constitution will be an important springboard for greater progress in God, and an occasion for the higher spiritual advancement of the Holy Archdiocese and of our flock. Finally, I am asking you to express in a united manner, “with one mouth and one heart”, our deepest gratitude to our Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and the holy Synodal Hierarchs for their decision in support of our Archdiocese, and to testify, once again, our most sincere sentiments of filial devotion and love for the Mother Church of Constantinople.

Bartholomew
Your All-Holiness and Ecumenical Patriarch
May Your years be many!

In Sydney, 10th of March 2024,

The Archbishop

† Makarios of Australia
Primate and Exarch of All Oceania

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